

INCORPORATING MĀORI CULTURE INTO YOUR CONFERENCE



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New Zealand was home to the Māori people before the first Europeans arrived. Recognised as the tangata whenua – or people of this land – Māori have a unique Pacific culture and world view with a strong emphasis on hospitality and respect for the natural environment. Meeting and interacting with Māori gives visitors an authentic insight into the country, its people and culture.

While Māori culture has always given New Zealand a distinct identity on the international stage, Māori involvement in conferences hosted in New Zealand is going far beyond the well-known hongi (pressing noses in greeting) or haka (cultural dance).

Te ao Māori (the Māori worldview) is increasingly being embedded in conferences held in New Zealand, providing unique and innovative content, knowledge, and values. Taking this approach enables greater opportunities for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and ensures an authentic connection with the local culture and host community.

“If a country’s appeal for events could be compared to a gift box, with solutions for the organisation’s and delegates’ business, educational and scientific objectives as the contents of the box, and the destination’s tourism and culture as the emotional wrapping paper, then New Zealand is uniquely positioned to include its cultural appeal inside the box as well as on the wrapping paper.”

– **Martin Sirk, founder of strategic consultancy Sirk Serendipity.**



Opportunities to incorporate Māori culture into your conference

PRE-EVENT PLANNING

Have Māori representation on your Local Organising Committee

It is helpful to have a diverse range of members on your organising committee as this will bring less common perspectives into focus. By having Māori representation within your local organising committee you may find it easier to incorporate Māori knowledge and values, bring any local stories to life, connect with mana whenua or Māori tribal groups, and generally support authentic co-creation.

Incorporate Māori knowledge (Mātauranga Māori)

With an asset base worth circa \$70bn, Māori are rapid risers in the wider New Zealand economy. They are frequent innovators of new technologies and methods – whether that be in commercial areas like fisheries, tourism, or food; or in education and health, where they have developed their own models of delivery that are improving outcomes. They can bring fresh thinking to conference themes and content, based on values and principles handed down through generations and of increasing relevance today, from sustainability to diversity. Consider including Māori speakers or facilitators to bring this knowledge to life.

Incorporate Māori values into your event

Weaving cultural values into your conference and explaining their significance can set the scene for a collaborative and impactful conference.

For example, The ILGA 2019 conference incorporated the following Māori values into their conference:

- **Mana Motuhake** | Autonomy and Leadership – Respect between each organisation of their respective skills, experience, and motivation
- **Whānau** | Intergenerational Roles and Responsibilities – The strength of intergenerational collaboration
- **Manaaki Manuhiri** | Honouring Our Guests – Providing a warm welcome to all and valuing diversity
- **Whanaungatanga** | Extended Relationships – Providing solidarity and building on relationships and understanding
- **Pārekareka** | Having Fun!

Inviting Māori to attend

Where appropriate, conference organisers can extend invitations to Māori involved in the conference subject matter to ensure better engagement. Another example could be inviting mana whenua beforehand to stay and listen to a few keynote speakers as often the best keynotes are immediately after the pōwhiri and they speak to general topics that can be of interest to everyone. It can be useful for mana whenua to know high level what's going on in their rohe/area, furthermore, the mana whenua doing pōwhiri will often be involved with local boards or enterprise.

DURING THE EVENT DELIVERY

Begin with a Pōwhiri/pohiri (ceremonial welcome)

Greetings are important in Māori culture, and the ritualised welcome of a pōwhiri is a powerful, emotional, and memorable way to open your conference. See details here: newzealand.com/int/feature/powhiri-maori-welcome

This interaction between the tangata whenua (hosts) and manuhiri (visitors) brings everyone together and draws focus on what is about to occur. The role of tangata whenua would best be undertaken by representatives of the local tribes or sometimes by a local professional performing group or less formally by a local school. Sufficient time should be allocated to ensure the whole ceremony can be performed.

Open each day with a karakia (incantation or prayer)

Consider starting each day with a Māori karakia. This is done to increase the spiritual goodwill of a gathering and bring focus to the purpose of the day. Some examples can be found here:

tpk.govt.nz/en/mo-te-puni-kokiri/karakia/he-karakia

Although there are some Christian karakia, most traditional karakia are spiritual rather than religious in nature. Alternatively, incorporate a song or a well-chosen quote during an opening session to help connect and focus attendees. Having a Māori facilitator or MC can help with achieving this.

Include a Māori cultural performance

Often a gala dinner or other social occasion in the conference programme will include a cultural performance. Song, dance, and music are important ways of celebrating, retaining and transmitting the life, customs and history of Māori. The storytelling of an emphatic haka or the rhythmic beauty of a poi dance are powerful ways to engage your delegates. Many Māori venues will already have established networks or internal capability to entertain guests. Alternatively, you could obtain a list of local performers from the convention bureau where you are hosting your conference.

Use a Māori MC or guest speaker

Māori have a long tradition as exceptional hosts and orators. Your local convention bureau, speaker bureau, or organising committee may have contacts to assist.

Choose a cultural venue

Consider hosting a social function at a Māori venue or tourism provider. A local marae, where Māori retain their tribal history and stories, genealogy, customs, and traditions, could be used for an opening pōwhiri or as a venue for special breakout workshops.

Promote Māori tourism

Encourage delegates to incorporate Māori tourism in their pre- and post-event touring, for the ultimate authentic New Zealand experience. See further information and key operators here:

newzealand.com/int/maori-culture

A wider list of Māori Experiences is available here:

maoritourism.co.nz

Use Te Reo Māori

Greeting someone in te reo, the Māori language, is a simple way of communicating respect, appreciation, and friendliness. Teach your delegates some Māori phrases to use whilst they are in New Zealand.

- **Kia ora** - hi, hello or thank you
- **Tēnā koe** - hello to one person
- **Tēnā kōrua** - hello to two people
- **Tēnā koutou** - hello to three or more people
- **Mōrena** - good morning
- **Haere mai** - welcome
- **Kei te pēhea koe?** - how are you?
- **Kei te pai** - I'm great
- **Ka pai** - that's good
- **Ka kite anō** - see you later

Are you interested in incorporating Māori culture into your conference?

Speak to your local convention bureau or convention centre, who can make introductions to the relevant local iwi or operators.



For further information, please contact us at
businesssevents.newzealand.com/contact

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