



HEI WHAKAPIKI  
MAURI

## Your Mihimihi/Pēpēhā - An Introduction

### What is a mihimihi/pēpēhā and when is it used?

At the beginning of any hui, following the pōwhiri (*formal welcome*) or the mihi whakatau (*a welcome, as practised off marae across the Ngāi Tahu tribal region*), a round of introductions and speeches – or mihimihi – usually occurs. During this time, people ordinarily stand to share a little bit about where they come from and who they are in relation to this (i.e. share their pēpēhā, or *tribal aphorism*); many share significant parts of their whakapapa (*genealogy*).

### The importance of your whakapapa

While whakapapa is about the recitation of genealogy – lineage or ancestry – it also literally means to ‘*place in layers*’ or ‘*create a base*’. It places our people in a wider context, linking us to a common ancestor, our ancestral land, our waterways and our tribal (and sub-tribal) groupings. Hence, the literal translation fits with the broader meaning of ancestry and the expansive nature of its ‘layers’.

As alluded to previously, whakapapa is about relationships, with both the land and with people. The name tangata whenua or ‘people (*tangata*) of the land (*whenua*)’, our nation’s first people, makes reference to this relationship, as does the term mana whenua, the mana (*prestige*) held by the people of that place. Another significant term which highlights this relationship is tūrangawaewae, literally, a *place* (tūranga) to *stand* (waewae). Tūrangawaewae tends to be where we were either born or brought up, or alternatively, our ancestral land. It is a place where we feel we have a strong sense of belonging and a deep spiritual connection. The importance of our foundational relationship with the whenua and its enduring ability to sustain us is described aptly in the following whakatauki (*proverb*):

**Whatu ngarongaro te tangata, toitū te whenua.**  
*People will perish, but the land is permanent.*

Everything we do as a people is derived from our whakapapa, the way we:

- Greet the dawn and farewell the day
- Gather kai (*food*) and ensure our food collection methods are sustainable for future generations
- Farewell our loved ones who have passed on
- Communicate with our Atua (*gods*) and call for their protection and guidance
- Cut, prepare and utilise natural fibres for our clothing
- Go about our day

Our tikanga (*traditions, practices, beliefs*) are derived from whakapapa and dictate the way our society functions, in terms of the 'lore' we adhere to as well as the 'law' we abide by.

Whakapapa is also about our connections to people and our relationship with them. So often when we meet others, we listen out for tell-tale signs of where they come from; it could be a common land feature (e.g.: Ko Aoraki te mauka/Aoraki is my mountain – linking that person to the South Island, and most likely, the iwi of Ngāi Tahu) or a well-known name (e.g. Ko Brooking te ingoa whānau/Brooking is my last name – linking that person to the East Coast of the North Island, and probably, the tribe of Ngāti Porou). People, and therefore relationships, are the cornerstone to the essence of being Māori.

Hutia te rito o te harakeke, kei hea rā te kōmako e kō?  
Kī mai kī ahau, he aha te mea nui o te Ao?  
Māku e kī atu, he tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

*If you were to pluck out the centre of the flax bush, where would the bellbird sing?*

*If you were to ask me, "What is the most important thing in the world?"*

*I would reply, "It is people, people, people."*

## What to include in your mihimihī/pēpēhā

You can include as much as you know about the topics shown below. If you do not know all of the information, leave it out. As your life unfolds, you will, overtime, pick up other bits and pieces of information and you can add it in. Hence, as you grow learning Māori, your pēpēhā will grow with you.

### Your mihi



<b>Traditional</b>	<b>Modern</b>
Māunga/mountain	Home
Awa/river	Family
Moana/sea	Work/role
Iwi/tribe	Experience
Waka/canoe	Hobbies
Marae	Passions
Ancestors	
Your name	

*Always put the oldest and biggest things first*

# Your pēpēhā



Māunga

Awa

Waka  
Tīpuna  
Marae

Iwi

Hapu

Mātua

Whānau

Ko Au

## Mihimihi/Pēpēhā-Hai Tauira (examples)

Mihi atu, Mihi mai – (*Greetings to you all, greetings received*)

Ko wai au? (*Who am I?*)

Maunga (*Mountain*)

Kei whēa mai te ātaahua, (*How absolutely beautiful*)

Tiro atu, tiro mai, (*To look forwards and backwards*)

Ka huri tākū titiro, kī tōkū Maunga Ko\_\_\_\_\_

E te Maunga\_\_\_\_\_ (*Add describing word*)

**Describing words:**

Teitei - Tall

Rangatira - Majestic

Awa (*River*)

Rere atu, Rere mai - Flow

Waimārino - Calm

Waikura - Beautiful

Waka (*Canoe*)

I hoea mai – (*Row*) \_\_\_\_\_

I tae mai – (*Arrived*) tōkū waka\_\_\_\_\_

I ū mai – (*Landed*) tōkū waka\_\_\_\_\_

He waka whakairo, ko \_\_\_\_\_ (*Carved*) waka is

**Direction:**

I - From

Kī - To

Marae-Wharenui-Kauta

He Kura Pounamu tōkū Maraе ko\_\_\_\_\_ (*My Precious/Beauty*)