

TANGIHANGA Guidelines During COVID-19

By Che Wilson on 31 March 2020

Ko Te Paepae Ngāhuru e pupuhi ana, e hau mai ana ngā tohu o te wā, e taukumekume ana hoki me te ngārara nui a te mate koroua kua pae mai nei. He mea whakamataara i a tātau i tēnei whiu nui kua pā kau mai ki Tīreni, a puta noa i te ao.

Nō reira, ko te ringa kaha o aituā hoki e ngau tonu nei te tangata kia tuku atu ki te waro hunanga o te pō, e moe, e oki. Ko tātau tēnei ko ngā mahuetanga iho e tangi nei, e mihi nei i roto i tēnei 'riarati hou', tēnā koutou, tātau.

Nō te puna o te aroha tēnei tuhituhinga hei wānangatanga, hei wherawheratanga mā koutou, nei pīrangī ana. Ehara ite mea he mea tohutohu tēnei, engari kē, ko te aronga matua, ko te whai whakaaro kia ora ai tātau, inā:

*Maia, maranga
Maia, maranga te rangi e tū iho nei
Maia, maranga te papa e takoto ake nei
Maia, areare ki roto, maia, areare ki waho
He uru ora! He uru ora!
Tina
Tina toka te manawa ora!
Manawa ora ki te whakatipua
Manawa ora ki te whakatawhito
Hōmai te mouri ora!
Ko te ora i te pū, i te weu, i te aka, i te tāmōre
Tēnei te ora ka tupu
Tuputupu nunui te ora, tuputupu roroa te ora
Rere mai te waiora
Ka uru ora! Ka uru ora... eee hai!
Hui e! Tāiki e!*

This paper has been developed to help people navigate through this period – te riarati hou – and the adaptations we must make to our tikanga to ensure we live through this pandemic. This isn't a tohutohu to any whānau, hapū or iwi, instead it is a paper to help whānau have discussions to know how to work through our grief if in the unfortunate circumstance a whānau member may pass away during this time of adaptation.

This is my second paper on Tangihanga during COVID-19. The first paper I wrote between 23-25 March, has become obsolete and we have revised protocols from the Ministry of Health. This is not a formal paper, though I have been communicating with the Ministry of Health and Te Rōpū Whakakaupapa Urutā (National Māori Pandemic Group) to ensure consistency of messages and mahi tahi. So, feel free to use this document if it helps you, there is no need to ask for permission. I'm also reminded by the whakatauki I always heard as a child:

*Moea tō rākau, moea tō poi
Always be ready for the unexpected.*

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MINISTRY OF HEALTH ADVICE – see www.covid19.govt.nz

On **Monday 30 March 2020**, the Ministry of Health provided revised protocols for tangihanga and funerals during COVID-19 Alert Level 4 period. In short, the advice is:

- No tangihanga or funerals are to be held either publicly or privately;
 - Burials will be as soon as possible;
 - Cremations will occur and a delayed process for burial of ashes later;
 - Only whānau from the same bubble as the tūpāpaku can attend the funeral directors premises for a short ceremony;
- As per normal, we must inform funeral directors, health providers and/or police that a whānau member has passed away;
- Funeral directors will be wearing full protective gear to pick up tūpāpaku which may be traumatic for whānau, but remember, they are trained and know what they are doing;
- Access for whānau to tūpāpaku will be limited irrespective of the nature of the death;
- Access to COVID-19 tūpāpaku is prohibited or limited as the body is potentially contagious;
- Burials will be local to where the tūpāpaku has passed;
- There will be no travel including transporting of tūpāpaku between regions;
- If your tūpāpaku lives away from their tribal rohe or overseas, they will not be able to be buried back home at this time so whānau need to consider cremation or storage if you have these options in your area.

This table (not formal advice) provides a basic overview.

Death at:	Home (urban)	Hospital	Home (rural)	Overseas
Who to contact?	Funeral director, health provider and/or police			Work with authorities
What happens to tūpāpaku?	Taken to funeral directors	Taken to mortuary then funeral directors	Taken to funeral directors	Work with authorities
Can we go to funeral directors?	Only if you are part of the whānau bubble			Check with funeral directors
Will there be a service?	A short karakia and poroporoakī will be provided, but only for those within the whānau bubble before tūpāpaku is taken for burial or cremation			Check with funeral directors
Can we attend burial or cremation?	No	No	No	No repatriation to Aotearoa at this time
Can we use whānau urupā?	Only if it is local to your city or town	Only if it is local to your city or town	Most probably if your urupā is local	You may wish to cremate so this can happen later
Do we have to be cremated?	If you wish for your remains to be buried at urupā outside of your local region	If you wish for your remains to be buried at urupā outside of your local region	Only if you wish to be cremated.	If you want to return remains home to your rohe

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INTRODUCTION

This is a time of change and the practices adapted at this time are like the time of the 1918 Influenza. During that influenza, Māori lost more people than Pākehā at a rate of 6:1 and we can't have a repeat, therefore iwi and community leaders are publicly speaking about how we work through this. Many of our urupā, have the unmarked graves where too many were lost and tribal and community leaders as well as officials are trying to stop an outbreak.

There won't be answers for every situation in this paper, so I encourage you to work with the keepers of tikanga in your whānau, hapū, iwi or community rather than rely solely on this paper. This is only a guide for those looking for help. In addition, if the situation worsens then some of this guidance will change and may become obsolete, so please be mindful of the changing nature of this pandemic and the fact that further steps may be required in due course. Keep an eye out on the Ministry of Health or COVID-19 websites.

He aha tēnei mea te tikanga – what is tikanga?

To answer this question, we should start with context. Kawa are the principals of life dictated from Atua and tikanga is how each tribe or grouping puts these principals into practice to live a good life, ko ngā mea e tika ana mō taua wā tonu – living a balanced life within a certain context. Ritenga are then the habitual practices that we live, often without thinking about how or why we do those things.

Therefore, our tūpuna adapted to change and we also adapt to change. At one stage, our people would smoke on the paepae and in wharepuni/wharenui but now that's seen as offensive even though it was still happening 20 years ago. Approximately 60 years ago, most iwi around the country kept their tūpāpaku outside in whare mate or on the mahau and over time, iwi adapted their tikanga to allow for tūpāpaku to be taken inside. During the 1918 Influenza, too many died at once so there were no tangihanga and there were often mass graves which were never marked with the names of those that were buried in those mass graves.

So if tikanga means, ko ngā mea e tika ana mō taua wā tonu, it's important to remember that we have always adapted and the rigidity of tikanga needs to be worked through as whānau and hapū to ensure ora as the primary focus while navigating the mamae and trauma of death. As noted above, the following is only a guide to hopefully help you through this Alert 4 period. I will refer to the Ministry of Health Advisory on Tangihanga but this paper is not a formal government document. Instead, this has been developed to ensure we maintain our mana as whanaunga and adapt tikanga in a practical and safe way while working through this challenging time.

TE KARANGA O MATE – What to do when you hear about a death

It is normal when we hear that a whānau member or loved one has passed to want to go around to the whare and share your aroha with the whānau. Any of us could be carriers of or contract the virus while we are out. Therefore, tangihanga/uhunga and funerals have been stopped and is why the lockdown is in place.

*Tukuna tō aroha ki te rangi
Mā te hau e kawē atu*

*Send your love to the heavens
And know that the wind will direct it to those most in need*

Instead of physically visiting, ring or connect online with the whānau to share your aroha. You can also organise a set time to have karakia with the whānau to help them and yourselves through the loss. More information is provided below around how to hold tangihanga/uhunga without having the body.

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TE WHAKARITE TŪPĀPAKU – Dealing with death during this time

Aotearoa is in lockdown as the virus is contagious and we must eliminate this ngārara to stop it from taking too many lives. Natural and accidental deaths will still happen and sadly, strict restrictions have been imposed on all tangihanga/uhunga and funerals to stop the spread of the virus.

*Tukuna ngā mate kia moe, kia okioki
Mā ngā roimata, te waka tūpāpaku e tuku ki te pō*

*Let the dead sleep eternally
Let your tears speed the journey on their waka to the next world*

Formal advise is noted above and the following are extra considerations to help you through this period of change.

- As hard as this is, tangihanga are currently prohibited to stop the spread of the virus among the living;
- Funeral directors will be wearing full protective gear and this may be a shock for whānau;
- If the whānau member dies at home, only those in the bubble of the tūpāpaku may have limited time with the tūpāpaku;
- If the whānau member dies at hospital, access to the tūpāpaku will either be limited or prohibited;
- If the death is unknown or an accident, normal autopsy procedures will kick in if required;
- If the facility is available, funeral directors may be able to organise a livestream service;
- Tūpāpaku will be buried at a public cemetery or at a whānau or marae urupā only if it is within the region and you have grave diggers;
- For whānau urupā, social distancing is still required so you may wish to use a digger and graves may have to be dug immediately even if this is normally not allowed based on your local tikanga;
- Alternatively, whānau may want to consider that tūpāpaku be cremated and ashes returned at the end of the pandemic and buried back home wherever the tūpāpaku is from;
- Whānau may elect to have their loved one placed in storage (refrigerated) or long term embalming, if these facilities is available locally. You can discuss these options with the funeral director if you wish to though we are uncertain of how long we may be in lockdown;
- Hāhu could also be an option after the pandemic is over (for non-COVID 19 cases only) but this will incur extra costs later, especially if the tūpāpaku is buried in a public cemetery.

Death at home for those based in the cities or large towns that have funeral directors

Once the funeral director arrives in full protective gear, access to the tūpāpaku will be prohibited or limited depending on what can be organised with authorities. Generally, whānau won't be permitted into public cemeteries and access to urupā will be limited to the funeral director, pall bearers and grave diggers.

Death at hospital

If a loved one passes away at hospital during this period, having access to your tūpāpaku could be more problematic. Work with authorities and negotiate what can work but be prepared for no access.

If your whānau member leave home due to a serious illness (including COVID 19), this could be the last time you see them as hospitals may be limiting or restricting public access.

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Death at home in a rural community or papa kāinga where the urupā is very close

It is important to still contact your closest funeral director, health providers and police to work out how to prepare the tūpāpaku. It is likely that whānau preparation of tūpāpaku could be prohibited during the Alert Level 4 period.

Once the tūpāpaku is ready, it will be taken directly to the urupā. When digging the grave, there are no legal requirements around depth and though six (6) feet is a common practice that we adopted from Europe.

If a natural burial is permitted, a one (1) metre grave is sufficient and a lot more practical if numbers to carry and lower the body into the grave are limited especially with the need to maintain social distancing. You may also consider making a stretcher out of manuka. Remember, using natural fabric will help the tūpāpaku to naturally decompose whereas synthetic clothing and shrouds will struggle to decompose.

Keeping a log of where tūpāpaku are buried in the urupā during this time will be essential to help whānau identify where their loved ones are buried after the pandemic.

TE KAWE TIKANGA – Adapting our tikanga during this period

As noted above, tikanga is dynamic and allows for adaptation. This is an extraordinary time where we must talk about how we work through our grief and protect life to ensure our whakapapa doesn't go through the same challenges our tūpuna went through during the 1918 Influenza. Therefore, the decisions we make must be focused on us being good tūpuna for our mokopuna here now and to come.

E pai ana te hunga mate

Ko tā te hunga ora, he tangi, he kimi i te ora

The dead are fine

But for the living we must grieve and find ways to live on

Tangihanga/Uhunga

This will be hard, but it is still important to hold a vigil in your whānau bubbles for a period. Though you won't have a tūpāpaku to cry over, having some form of formality will help with the grieving process. If you don't have any formality to recognise your loss and pain, you could easily fall into a daze and sink into depression.

Therefore, like a normal tangihanga/uhunga it should still have an end point, say up to three (3) days to help you move through the process of grieving. This may change depending on when the tūpāpaku is buried or cremated.

Having a little shrine with a photo of your loved one that has passed in the lounge or another place where you can maintain separation between tapu and noa will help you be conscious of the vigil you are maintaining in your bubble. Write a letter of love – he rau aroha, to the person who has passed which you will send up on the final day. This letter will help you and the whānau express your love and feelings towards your loved one that has passed. Whānau in other bubbles may also wish to do this.

Confirm a set time with other whānau members in their whānau bubbles to connect by phone, online or ā-wairua and hold morning and evening karakia and then go about your day. If you need to chill out by your shrine and talk to the wairua of your loved one then do that and talk as you would if you had a tūpāpaku to touch.

During evening karakia, allow time for whānau members and friends to talk about the whānau member that has passed and on the last night hold a pō whakamutunga to celebrate your whānau member. Rules around prohibitions associated with whānau pani will have to be relaxed to navigate through this time of adaptation. If you don't know any karakia, link to the numerous karakia being held online, mainly on facebook or ring a whānau member who would normally help during these times.

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Service Day and Hākari

The next day, hold a service by your shrine and then go outside and burn the letter of love – he rau aroha (it's ok if you keep a copy) and as the smoke rises, send the smoke up with karanga and waiata and know that you are sending your loved ones wairua to the heavens to become a star – kia whetū rangitia. Please be careful when burning the letter so you don't cause any damage or harm.

Return into your whare when you are ready and share in a hākari. Times are financially tough so the most important part of the hākari is the intension to remember your loved one rather than the kai on the hākari

Takahi Whare – Blessing the Whare

Either before or after the hākari (whatever tikanga you would normally follow), bless the whare. Go around the outside perimeter and any other buildings of the kāinga and then inside the whare, going around each room. Use water or whatever your local or whānau practice is.

The most important thing is intention and seek advice from someone that would normally support your whānau during these times.

Role of whānau pani

Many hapū and iwi don't allow whānau pani to work during a tangihanga, this will need to change as whānau pani will have to do most of the work to prepare themselves at their kāinga, organise a hākari for their separate whānau bubbles and other things like organising karakia online.

Cremation

Cremation has been part of the culture at different periods of time and especially during war times. Where you may not be used to cremation, this may have to be an option especially as things continually change as we navigate the pandemic and new research continues to come out.

Have the discussion as whānau to work through whether cremation is an option. In addition, Sir Peter Te Rangihīroa Buck, was cremated in Hawai'i and it took some time before he was returned home to Aotearoa and his ashes were taken to a number of marae as if it were a kawē mate on his journey home to Taranaki. This is definitely an option for consideration one we have recovered from the pandemic.

Koha

It is common to send koha when you are unable to attend a tangihanga/uhunga. Therefore, a deposit into a bank account is the safest means of sending koha.

Whoever your main contact is during the tangihanga/uhunga, get that person to organise an account for people to deposit into so they can express their aroha though, times are tough financially with people losing jobs, so a message of love can also be just as meaningful.

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HARI MATE – RĀ WHAKAMAHARATANGA – Remembering our Loved Ones

We are unsure what will happen as the alert levels deescalate. However, there will come a time when we return to normal and where we can hold hari mate / kawē mate and rā whakamaharatanga (memorial days/ services).

Pūtikitia te hunga ora ki te tikitiki o te ora

Pūtikitia te hunga mate ki te tiki whakamahara

As humanity, our obligation is to live in balance

And our obligation to our loved ones that have passed is to remember them

These various forms of memorial ceremonies will be organised by whānau, hapū and marae, iwi, communities and/or even streets or neighbourhoods to remember whānau and friends. This will be the chance to hug each other and remember your loved ones that have passed. It is worth connecting as neighbouring hapū to ensure that you don't clash with dates where possible.

Also preparing for celebrations like neighbourhood, street, hapū or iwi parties will also be a great way to return to the new normal. This will be a new and unknown time ahead so having something to celebrate will help navigate the loss and help each other face the future together.

CONCLUSION

This is a time of change, making sure you diary this time as a memoir for your uri is important to ensure that your whānau, hapū and communities have a history written down for posterity.

Kāti ake, he pitopito kōrero hei ngaungau mā te whatu manawa. Ko te tūmanako, ka kite pea ngē i te māramatanga mō tōu karangatanga kei mōnenehuria e hēnei whakamātautautanga o te wā.

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31 March 2020

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