

Glossary of Māori Words and Terms

Word or Term	Meaning
ahi kā	those who have the right to occupy the land
ahi taitai	sacred fire lit for rituals associated with the departmental gods
aho	weft
aho tapu	in weaving, the thread that sets the rest of the pattern
āhua	feature(s), aspect(s); shape, look, nature of a person
āhua Māori	particular character, aspect that is relative to being Māori
āhuatanga	likeness, characteristics relative to the circumstances
aituā	misfortune resulting in death
aki	to encourage, urge on
ako	to learn
ao	world
Aotearoa	New Zealand
āpure	patch, circumscribed area
aroha	kindness, affection, love, compassion
atawhai	to show kindness to
atua	deities, gods
awa	river, channel, gully
awhi	help / helpful
āwhina	help, assist
āwhinatanga	to help or assist
awhitanga	assistance, help, guidance
e tiki	refer to hei tiki
hāhi	faith, religion
haka	vigorous dances with actions and rhythmically shouted words
haka pōwhiri	a ceremonial dance of welcome
hāngi	earth oven; food cooked in earth oven
hapū	sub-tribe(s) that share a common ancestor
harakeke	flax
Haramai a Paoa	name of an ancestral chant: 'The arrival of Paoa'
hari	dance, sing
haukāinga	home; true home
hauora	health
Hawaiki	traditional homeland of the Māori
hei matau	a neck ornament fashioned after the design of a fishhook
hei tiki	a tiki that is worn by both female and male and is regarded a heirloom
hinengaro	mind
Hine-te-iwaiwa	Māori goddess who presides over childbirth and the art of weaving
hoa tāne	husband
hoe waka	traditional canoe paddling
Horouta	ancestral canoe
hui	meeting
Huitau Te Hau	a Rongomaiwahine elder

ika tapu	first man slain in battle
inanga	a whitish variety of greenstone
iwi	tribal kin group; nation
kahawai	NZ fish
kahurangi	a light coloured variety of greenstone
kai ure	a traditional ritual of protection or self-preservation
kaiako	teacher, tutor
kaiāwhina	helper, assistant
kaikaranga	person making a ceremonial call of welcome.
kaikōrero	speaker, orator
kaimahi	worker, staff
Kaikōura	a town of the north-eastern South Island of NZ
Kaikōura-Wakatu	part of the north-eastern South Island coastline of NZ
kaimoana	sea food
Kaipara	a harbour in the northern North Island of NZ
kai-rā-mua	an offender of a rāhui
kairangahau	researcher
kaitiaki	guardian, minder; custodian over natural resources
kaitiakitanga	guardianship; cultural and financial guardianship; accountability
kanikani	to dance
kanohi	face, eye(s)
kanohi kitea	to be a seen face
kapa haka	a row/team/group performing haka/waiata/poi
kapu	the object invested by the tohunga rendering a rāhui effective
karaka	a native tree; fruit of the karaka tree
karakia	prayer(s); chant(s) and incantation(s)
karanga mate	inviting death
Katikati	township in the Bay of Plenty, North Island, NZ
kauī	a cord or string on which articles are strung
kaumatua	elder
kaumātua	elder(s)
kaupapa	topic, basis; guiding principles
kaupapa Māori	Māori based topic/event/enterprise run by Māori for Māori
kauri	a native forest tree of Aotearoa
kāuta	shack, lean to
kawa	professional practice, ethical practices, protocols
kawakawa	a dark variety of greenstone
kete	basket made of flax strips
kete whakairo	decorative basket
kiekie	Freycinetia banksii - a climbing plant
kina	sea egg
kiore	rat
Kiwa	famous ancestor of Te Aitanga-a-Māhaki tribe, North Island, NZ
kiwi	native bird of and international symbol of New Zealand
kiwīkiwi	species of fern

koha	gift, token, pledge
kōhanga reo	pre-school based on Māori language and culture
kōpaki	a present made to the relatives of a deceased person in token of respect
korari	flower stalk of harakeke
kōrero	speak, talk, discuss; discussion
kōrero tawhito	ancient story
koroua	male elder
korowai	traditional cloak
kotahitanga	unison/unity
kōwhaiwhai	painted scroll ornamentation - commonly used on meeting house rafters
kuia	female elder
kuku	mussel
kumara	sweet potato
kūpapa	collaborator; be neutral
kupu	word, anything said
kura	school; red; precious
Kura Kaupapa	Māori language immersion schools
kuru	an ornament of greenstone; the tongue on the end of the body of a canoe
māhakitanga	humility
mahetau	a variety of potato
mahi	work
mahinga kai	garden
mahi whakairo	to carve; carving
Māhia Peninsula	East Coast locality, south of Gisborne, North Island, NZ
MAI te Kupenga	The National Programme for Māori and Indigenous Post-graduate Advancement
mana	prestige, status, authority, influence, integrity; honour, respect
mana motuhake	autonomy, independence, authority
mana whenua	authority over land and natural resources, tribal estates
Manaaki Whenua	Landcare Research, New Zealand's foremost environmental research organisation.
manaaki(tia)	show respect or kindness; entertain; care for
manaakitanga	respect; hospitality, kindness; mutual trust, respect and concern
manaia	stylised figure used in carving; sea horse
manuhiri	visitor(s)
Māoritanga	the very essence of being Māori
marae	tribal meeting grounds; village common
Maraenui	settlement on the western side of the Motu River, North Island, NZ
marae ātea	village forecourt, village gathering point
maro	fronds of fern or twigs used in certain rites as rāhui
matā	flint
mataāwaka	original canoes; founding settlers, kinsfolk from original canoe
mātaitai	fish or other foodstuff obtained from the sea or lakes
mātauranga	knowledge, tradition, epistemology
mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge
mate	monthly cycle, menstruation, period
mātua	parents

mātua-tīpuna	forebears
Māui	a demigod
maunga	mountain
mauri	life essence, life force, energy, life principle
mauri ora	knowing who we are
moana	sea, ocean
mokemoke	lonely, solitary; homesick
moko	refer to tā moko
mokopuna	grandchild
mōteatea	lament
mōteatea	song, chant
Motu River	river in the Eastern Bay of Plenty, North Island, NZ
Mt Maunganui	a mountain east of the Tauranga Harbour, North Island, NZ
muka	prepared fibre of flax
Muriwai	famous ancestress of the Whakatohea people, North Island, NZ
ngā mate	the dead
Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga	The National Institute of Research Excellence for Māori Development and Advancement
Ngāti Kuri	a tribal group from Kaikoura, South Island, NZ
ngāwaritanga	patience, lenience
noa	not sacrosanct, having no restrictions/prohibitions; free from tapu
Nūhaka	situated south of Gisborne, North Island, NZ
ōhākī	deathbed wishes
Ohiwa	a harbour in the eastern Bay of Plenty, North Island, NZ
Okarea Pā	a traditional Māori settlement at Te Whaiti, North Island, NZ
Ōmaio	settlement on the eastern side of the Motu River, North Island, NZ
oriori	lullaby
pā	home
pā	a term used for a row of weaving; fortified Māori village
pā harakeke	a collection or plantation of flax; the material and process of weaving
pakanga	war
pakeke	adult
Pākehā	a person of predominantly European descent
pakiwaitara	legend
pā muka	a collection of rows or pā
papakāinga	village, homestead
Papatūānuku	Papa for short: the name given to the Earth Mother
Paritu	locality north of Māhia, North Island, NZ
patu	club like weapon
pāua	abalone, sea ear, edible univalve molluscs of rocky shores
peruperu	a variety of potato
pīngao	a sand dune plant used for weaving
pīpi	cockle
pītau	perforated spiral carving
piupiu	grass skirt

poro toroa	albatross bone
pou rāhui	rāhui post, symbol of a rāhui; a boundary post erected to warn people against trespassing
pou takawaenga	Extension Service Team of the Ministry of Fisheries
poua	grandfather, great grandfather
pounamu	greenstone, nephrite
poupou	upright slabs forming the solid framework of the walls of a whareniui
pōwhiri	to welcome; welcome ceremony
pū	bunch or clump
pūau	toggle of hei tiki
pu-harakeke	a variety of flax
pūkengatanga	teaching, preserving and creating Māori knowledge; skills, talents
Pukerua Bay	a bay of the south western North Island, near Wellington, NZ
pūmanawa	ability
pūmanawa moe	potential
puna	a spring of water; source, origin
puna mātauranga	source of knowledge
pūrakau	ancient legend, myth
rāhui	a custom used by Māori to prohibit the use of a resource; to instate an area out of bounds following a fatality
rāhui	restrictions
rāhui tūāhu	to claim ownership of the area
rāhuitia	banned, out of bounds, forbidden, prohibited, under sanctuary, reserved or preserved
rangatahi	youth
rangatiratanga	self determination, autonomy, the right of Māori to be self-determining
Ranginui	Rangi for short: the name given to the Sky Father
raranga	weave; weaving
raupatu	conquest, confiscation
reo	language
Rerewhakaitu	lake near Rotorua, North Island, NZ
Ringatū	literally, 'The Upraised hand,' name of the faith created by Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Tūruki
ringawera	kitchen hand, kitchen worker
rito	centre shoot or heart of the flax
rīwai	a general name for potato
rohe	area, region; boundary
rongoā	natural/herbal remedies; medicine
Rongomaiwahine	name of an East Coast Māori tribe, North Island, NZ
roro	brain
rua	two
rūnanga	council of collective hapū established to manage the affairs of the hapū
Rūnanga o Kirikiriroa	Māori Iwi Authority of Hamilton, North Island, NZ
tā moko	the art of Māori tattoo
taewa	potato
taha kikokiko	physical aspects

tahi	one
tai	sea or coast
taiaha	close quarters combat weapon
taiapure	a reserve management system under the Māori Fisheries Act 1989
take	basis
tamariki	children
Tāne	a son of Ranginui and Papatūānuku
tāne	male(s)
Tānewhirinaki	son of Muriwai
tangata	person(s), people
tangata whenua	indigenous people of the land, first people of the land
tangi	to cry/mourn; mourning rituals
tangihanga	funeral, rites for the dead
tangiwai	a transparent variety of greenstone
tāniko	weaving of threads to create bodice, bands.
taonga	precious; an heirloom to be passed down through the different generations of a family; protected natural resource
taonga pūoro	Māori musical instrument(s)
taonga tuku iho	traditions, knowledge, treasures handed down by ancestors
tapu	sacrosanct, prohibited, protected, restricted
taua	grandmother, great grandmother
tauirā	student(s)
taumata	orator's bench
tauparapara	a chant to start speech
Tauranga	city in the Bay of Plenty, North Island, NZ
tauru	personified head of the rāhui pole
tautoko	support
tautokotanga	supporting
taurima	treat with care
tawa	a native tree; fruit of the tawa tree
tāwhara	fruit of kiekie, a climbing plant/vine; source of food and drink
Te Aitanga-a-Māhaki	name of a east coast North Island Māori tribe
Te Ao Māori	Māori worldview
Te Arawa	name of a central North Island Māori tribe
Te Atua	God
te hāhi Ringatū	the Ringatū faith
Te Ika a Māui	the North Island of New Zealand
te iwi kāinga	the home people
Te Karere	current news programme delivered totally in te reo Māori
Te Kawa a Māui	School of Māori Studies, Wellington University of Victoria
Te Māngai Pāho	Māori Broadcasting Funding Agency, Aotearoa
Te Mata	a township in the North Island, NZ
Te Ohu Kaimoana	The Māori Fisheries Trust
Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa	The New Zealand Defence Force Medals Site
Te Puni Kōkiri	Ministry of Māori Development

Te Rā	the 12 th day of each month when the Ringatū faith hold service
te reo Māori	the Māori language
Te Rūnanga o Kaikoura	Kaikoura Iwi Authority, South Island, NZ
Te Tai o Marokura	The Environmental Health Team of Kaikoura
Te Wai Pounamu	South Island of New Zealand
Te Whakatōhea	name of an eastern Bay of Plenty Māori tribe, North Island, NZ
Te Whānau-a-Apanui	name of an eastern Bay of Plenty coastal Māori tribe, North Island, NZ
Te-Koau	a son of Muriwai
tī kouka	cabbage tree
tiaki	care for; give guidance
Tihirau	is situated near Cape Runaway
tika	true, authentic; right, correct
tikanga	customs and practices
tikanga Māori	Māori customs and practices
tiki	neck ornament usually made of greenstone, carved in an abstract form of a human
tiki popohe	crude or unfinished hei tiki
tinana	body
tino rangatiratanga	self-governing; having absolute independence and autonomy
Tionga	a famous Māori ancestor
tipuna	ancestor
tīpuna	ancestors; ancestral
tītī	muttonbird
tītī rāhui	prohibition of muttonbird harvesting
tohu	preserve
tohunga	expert, skilled, learned
toi	mountain palm
toi iho Māori	trademark authenticating that products are made by Māori
toki	adze, axe
tokotoko	walking stick, pole, staff
Toroa	captain of the Mataatua canoe
tōtara	a native and majestic forest tree of Aotearoa
tuakana - teina	elder-younger sibling
Tūhoe	name of an inland eastern Bay of Plenty Māori tribe, North Island, NZ
tukutuku	ornamental lattice work on interior walls of a whareniui or meeting house
tuna	eel
tungāne - tuāhine	male - female
tupuna	ancestor; ancestral
tūpuna	ancestors; ancestral
tupuna awa	ancestral river
Tūranga-Nui-ā-Kiwa	Gisborne, North Island, NZ
tūrangawaewae	a permanent place to stand, a place where one has the right to stand and be heard
tūrangawaewae o Patuharakeke	where the sub tribe of Patuharakeke have the right to stand and be heard
turuki	arouse, reinforce the force of a rāhui by supplementary incantations
tutaekuri	a variety of potato

tūturu	specific; definite
ūkaipōtanga	recognition of origins
urenika	a variety of potato
ureure	fruit of kiekie (Freycinetia banksii - a climbing plant)
urupā	burial ground, cemetery
uta	inland
utu	revenge; reciprocity
wahapū	gateway
wāhi Māori	a place or area having Māori spiritual/physical characteristics
wahine	female
wāhine	females
wai	water
waiata	sing, song, chant
waiata aroha	song of love similar to waiata tangi with no set actions
waiata tangi	lament
waiata-ā-ringa	action song
waihanga Māori	particular characteristics, aspects relative to being Māori
Waikokopu	Waikokopu stream
Waipiata	Waipiata Stream
wairua	spirit, soul; attitude
wairua Māori	Māori spirit, soul
wairuatanga	recognition of the spiritual dimension
waka	canoe
waka huia	treasure box
waka taua	war canoe
wānaka	Ngāi Tahu dialect for wānanga
wānanga	Māori houses of higher learning, tertiary institute; conscious thought-processing discussion; transmitting the knowledge of the culture from one generation to the next
waro rāhui	name of the theoretical pit that an offender of a rāhui will fall into.
wā tika	right, correct or appropriate time
wero	challenge
whaea	mother, aunt
whaikōrero	formal speech, oratory
whakahīhi	arrogant, conceited
whakairo	carve, engrave
whakairo upoko	carved head with protruding tongue
whakaiti	to belittle, ridicule, mock
whakamā	shy; ashamed/shame(d)
whakanoa	to make free from tapu/restriction
whakapapa	genealogy, ancestry, familial relationships; unlike the Western concept of genealogy, whakapapa crosses ancestral boundaries between people and other inhabitants in the natural world
whakapapa Māori	Māori genealogy
whakapiringatanga	a secure, well-managed environment
whakarite	justify

whakatau	critical assessment
whakatauki	proverb
whakawhanaukataka	Ngāi Tahu dialect for whakawhanaungatanga
whakawhanaungatanga	kinship, links, ties; facilitating a more open relationship than mere researcher and researched; network of interactive links
whakawhitiwhiti kōrero	discussion
whakawhitiwhiti whakaaro	consultation
whānau	family; nuclear/extended family
whanauka	Ngāi Tahu dialect for whanaunga
whanaungatanga	the interrelationship of Māori with their ancestors, their whānau, hapū, iwi as well as the natural resources within their tribal boundaries such as mountains, rivers, streams and forests; recognition of relationships iwi and waka.
whāngai	the introduction of new strips in weaving likened to the whāngai concept of fostering, adopting a child
whare	house
whare tipuna	ancestral house
whare pora	house of weaving
wharepuni	meeting-house
wharenuī	meeting house
whāriki	mat
whatu	twining (as in weaving)
whenu	twist or spin (in weaving) a strand of cord
whenua	land
whenua	afterbirth