

Te Mūki' Avaiki



Culture of Waka Ama



waka ama
Aotearoa New Zealand

Introduction

The Waka Ama Aotearoa NZ *Culture of Waka Ama* booklet aims to share, educate, and develop the culture within the sport of waka ama here in Aotearoa with all of our waka ama whānau.

This booklet provides basic information on the history of waka ama, the shared values that underpin our sport, and the culture within our sport.

We encourage our waka ama whānau to engage in the culture of waka ama to ensure the shared vision, values, and integrity of waka ama is upheld and brings to life, *‘Waka Ama - mā te katoa, mō āke tonu!’* *‘Waka Ama - for all, for life!’*.



Waka Ama History in Aotearoa

The sport of waka ama in Aotearoa originates from the powerful history and waka traditions of Polynesian transportation methods throughout the Pacific. Waka were used not only as methods of transport, but also as a way for understanding the deep cultural values, practices, and connection with the environment.

The revival of waka ama in Aotearoa began in 1980's, after Matahi Whakataka-Brightwell was inspired by waka ama racing in Tahiti in 1981. Matahi, alongside others including Kris Kjeldsen, Greg 'Ace' Cuthers, and Pili Muaulu, then began the revitalisation of waka ama in Aotearoa. Matahi founded the first waka ama club in Aotearoa, Mareikura Canoe Club, on the East Coast in July 1985. Shortly after, Ōkahu Bay Canoe Club was formed in Auckland in January 1986, followed by Ngā Hoe Horo o Pawarenga and Mitamitaga o le Pasefika Va'a Alo in the North in May 1987.

The establishment of a waka ama national body, originally named Tātou Hoe, followed, with the formation and first meeting held in Pawarenga in May 1987. Waka ama grew and developed over the years throughout Aotearoa with the establishment of clubs, increase in participation numbers, and presence of local, regional, and national events. In May 2012, a CEO was employed and a national office was established, now known as Waka Ama Aotearoa NZ.

Waka Ama Aotearoa NZ continues to grow and develop waka ama throughout Aotearoa with the support of six regions, over one hundred local clubs, and all of our waka ama whānau to ensure quality waka ama experiences for all.

Note: More information on Waka Ama History in Aotearoa is available on our website.



Pictured from left: Pili Muaulu, Matahi Whakataka- Brightwell and Kris Kjeldsen.



Picture: First meeting of Tātou Hoe at Taiao Marae, Powarenga. Waka pictured: Maroro.

Waka Ama in Aotearoa

Waka ama in Aotearoa is a popular water sport enjoyed by thousands of all ages, abilities, backgrounds, and skill levels. It is an inclusive and intergenerational sport with participants ranging from tamariki (children) and rangatahi (youth) to pakeke (adults) and kaumātua (elders). Waka ama is engaged in at social, competitive, and performance levels with opportunities throughout Aotearoa at local, regional, and national levels provided by clubs, schools, regions, and the national body.

Waka ama plays an important role in uplifting hauora, strengthening identity, and creating community connections. Many describe their engagement in waka ama as a way to connect to their whakapapa (ancestry), build whanaungatanga (relationships), and practice kaitiakitanga (care) for the taiao (environment).

To engage in waka ama, head to our [Waka Ama Aotearoa NZ website club list page](#), and contact a club near you!

Waka Ama Aotearoa NZ Values

>>> *Manaakitanga*

>>> *Whanaungatanga*

>>> *Hauora*

>>> *Tū Tangata*

Waka Ama Aotearoa NZ values, as set out in our constitution, underpin our sport and create a sense of identity, respect, and unity amongst our waka ama whānau. These values aim to develop a culture of sharing, building and maintaining positive relationships, adopting a healthy and active lifestyle, and treating everyone with respect.

Upholding and applying our values within waka ama is what contributes to the culture within our sport and ensuring everyone enjoys quality waka ama experiences.

Waka ama connects us to the wider Pacific and global waka ama community. While the values and traditions that underpin waka ama are often shared, they may be expressed and implemented differently in different places. It is important that we uphold and maintain our own values while also respecting the local values, customs, and tikanga of the communities hosting us.

The following outlines each of the values, what they mean within the waka ama context, and some general ways in which they can be applied in our waka ama communities.

Manaakitanga

We encourage the practice of reciprocity through sharing of ourselves and our resources, nurturing all people and accepting our differences.

- Support and encourage all paddlers regardless of skill level, background or abilities.
- Implement effective health and safety practices on and off the water.
- Develop inclusive environments where everyone feels welcomed and included.
- Show respect to all members of our waka ama community.
- Share equipment, knowledge, and time with others.
- Volunteer to support and help with club operations and events.
- Recognise and value the contributions of officials, coaches, administrators, and whānau.

Whanaungatanga

Is our sense of belonging, identification and collective strength, not only through kinship but being related to all within the waka ama community.

- Take time to connect and build strong relationships with others.
- Develop a strong sense of club culture through club engagement activities.
- Acknowledge and welcome everyone to create a sense of belonging.
- Encourage a collective environment and support each other on and off the water.
- Share knowledge, skills, and experiences to help others grow.

Hauora

We support and promote the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being of all our participants.

- Encourage healthy lifestyles and behaviours for long-term health.
- Implement safe paddling practices.
- Manage training and paddling loads at all levels.
- Encourage open communication and supportive environments.
- Develop inclusive environments where everyone feels valued.
- Implement relevant practices that support spiritual well-being.
- Acknowledge and respect the connection to the waka, water, and environment.

Tū Tangata

We are accountable for our actions. We have respect for each other, our waka, and our environment. We stand proud in our integrity and passion.

- Show respect to one another and acknowledge all within our waka ama whānau.
- Care for the taiao (environment) by paddling responsibly and protecting waterways.
- Care for and maintain the waka and all relevant waka ama equipment.
- Respect any rāhui (ritual of prohibition/restricted access) in place.
- Adhere to the Waka Ama Aotearoa NZ Race Rules and Code of Conduct.
- Represent yourself, your club, and your whānau with pride.
- Engage in waka ama with honesty, fairness, and integrity.
- Uphold and encourage all Waka Ama Aotearoa NZ values.

Connection to the Taiao

Waka ama is deeply connected to the taiao (environment) and is practised on the many bodies of water throughout Aotearoa, including the ocean, rivers, and lakes. Being on the water gives paddlers direct awareness of the quality and health of the environment and how much our sport depends on it. Therefore, caring for the taiao is a natural and an essential part of waka ama culture.

- Encourage environment friendly and sustainable practices within clubs.
- Care for the taiao by keeping it clean and not leaving waste behind.
- Adhere to all relevant maritime laws and bylaws.
- Recognise the spiritual and cultural significance of the water, including tāngata whenua connections to waterways.
- Practice marine care of cleaning equipment and reducing transfer of invasive species.
- Recognise the relationship between the taiao, weather, and waterways, and make safe decisions on the water.

Club Connection & Identity

In waka ama, clubs are more than just a place to train and participate, they are places of community, connection, identity, and belonging. Waka ama clubs bring together people of all ages, abilities, backgrounds, and skill levels into one big whānau where everyone feels welcome. It is where skills are developed, connections are formed, and values are upheld. Clubs are the heart of our sport.

- Build club connections through club days and whanaungatanga activities.
- Have shared responsibilities and team work to contribute to the success of the club.
- Uphold club values, traditions, and Code of Conduct.
- Carry your club name with pride, humility, and respect.
- Foster an environment where everyone feels welcomed, valued, and included.
- Strengthen connections with the wider waka ama community and neighbouring clubs.
- Provide opportunities for club members to contribute to the club through roles such as committee members, safety officers, and other volunteer responsibilities.

Cultural Practices

Cultural practices play an important role in the culture of waka ama, with how we paddle and connect with each other, to the environment, and the traditions that guide us.

The following outline some cultural practices commonly seen within our waka ama communities.

We encourage you to engage with your waka ama club, whānau, or local hapū/iwi to learn more about each of the mentioned cultural practices, get support to implement them appropriately, and ensure these practices are upheld with understanding and respect.



➤➤➤ *Karakia*

In the waka ama context, a karakia (incantation, prayer) can be used to simply acknowledge the body of water to be paddled on, the weather conditions, and/or for the safety and well-being of everyone for that day or during the event. It is also a way of helping create a sense of respect and unity before and after paddling.

➤➤➤ *Pōwhiri / Whakatau*

Pōwhiri and/or whakatau is a traditional Māori welcoming practice and is commonly practiced within waka ama settings, especially at local, regional, and national events throughout Aotearoa. This cultural practice is a way for tāngata whenua and/or hosts to welcome manuhiri (visitors), helps bring people together, and creates connections between people, place, and kaupapa. A pōwhiri is a more formal welcoming ceremony, while a whakatau is usually shorter and less formal.

➤➤➤ *Waka Blessings*

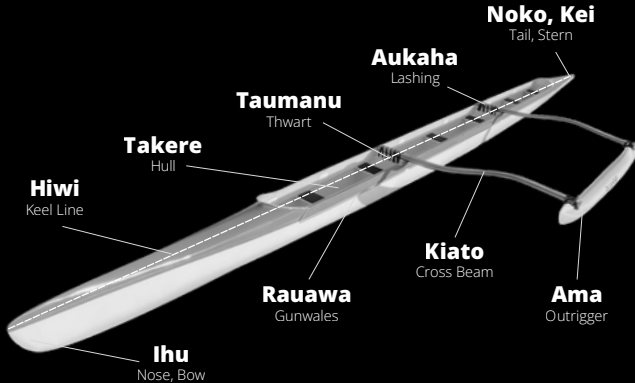
Waka blessings are a common cultural practice at the naming and launching of a new waka to acknowledge the significance of the waka, the people who will paddle it, and the waters it will travel on. This practice usually includes karakia, kōrero, waiata, and the sharing of the waka name and meaning. Performing waka blessings helps establish a respectful relationship and connection between paddlers, the waka, and the water.

This practice derives from cultural tradition when trees were felled for waka building and appropriate karakia was offered in thanks and acknowledgement of the mauri (life-force) within the waka. Although many waka used in waka ama are now made from modern materials, this cultural practice remains a significant element.

Waka Ama Puna Kupu

The use of te reo Māori is common within the sport of waka ama. Here are some kupu (words) you may like to use when engaging in waka ama.

Ngā Wahanga (Parts of the Waka)



Mahi a te Kaihoe (Paddling)

Kaihoe	Paddler	Paratīti	Rudder Stroke
Kaiurungi	Steerer	Huaki	Draw Stroke
Whakatika	Righting (a waka)	Tuki	Timing
Tahuri	Capsize	Hoe	Paddle (action)

Whakataetae (Races/Events)

Whakataetae Hūkere	Sprint Race
Whakataetae Pae Tawhiti	Long Distance Race
Whakataetae Urungi	Turns Race
Ara Whakataetae	Race Course
Kārewa	Buoys
Ara	Lane
Wi Ngapunga	Startline
Haki Kākāriki	Green Flag
Haki Whero	Red Flag

Taputapu (Equipment)

Kahu Kautere	Lifejacket
Pīkau Maroke	Dry Bag
Tīheru	Bailer
Hoe	Paddle (object)
Taura Tō	Tow Rope
Puru	Bung
Kawe Reo Haumarū	Communication Devices
Taura Herenga Waewae	Leg Leash
Tūrāma Ita	Fixed White Light



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