

**Case Study Report :New Zealand
A Case Study of KAPA HAKA**

Ministry for Culture and Heritage

WHAT IS KAPA HAKA?

KAPA: is to stand in a row or rank

HAKA: to dance (the dance of Tanerore; the quivering of the air on a hot day)¹.

Kapa haka is commonly used to describe modern day performance of traditional and contemporary Māori song. The performance can be competitive or non competitive. The kapa haka can be performed by any number of people. Most people in New Zealand have encountered at least some form of Māori performance, whether it was a cultural tour of a traditional Māori village or the famous 'ka mate ka mate' haka performed by the New Zealand All Blacks². Māori culture and heritage is what makes New Zealand unique, and is one of the most powerful expressions of mana for iwi groups all around the country. The traditional aspects of Māori Intangible Cultural Heritage in Kapa haka have been retained, through their key symbolic dimensions – *wairua* (spirituality), *te mana* (respect), *te ihi* (essential force), *te wana* (authority), *te wehi* (awe) and *te mauri* (life force) – expressed through aesthetic features of the dance such as *pūkana* (dilating of the eyes), *whētero* (the protruding of the tongue) and *pōtētē* (the closing of the eyes at different points of the dance)

Nowadays, the *Te Matatini Festival*, the premier national showcase for the retention and development of Māori performing art, particularly kapa haka. The Festival is primarily a competition among the top kapa haka teams from around New Zealand but is also a focus for the development and transmission of Māori Performing Arts generally.

TE MATATINI FESTIVAL

Established in 1969, the main function of the New Zealand Polynesian festival Committee was to develop and manage regional competitions and a biennial national festival competition. The first national festival was held in 1972. Since then it has evolved to the Aotearoa Traditional Māori Performing Arts Festival now more commonly referred to as the Te Matatini Festival. The first national Kapa haka competition was held in 1972 which drew 13-15 teams to Rotorua. Since that time the festival has grown significantly.

The Te Matatini Festival is held biannually. Thirty groups competed at the 2007 Festival at Arena Manawatu, Palmerston North, over 3 days in front of an audience of over 40,000 people. The 2007 Festival had the support of UNESCO, which promoted Te Matatini through its global networks and United Nations agencies as a premier cultural event on the international festival calendar. UNESCO sees kapa haka as a cultural treasure to be sustained for future generations³. The winner of the premier Festival represents NZ at the South Pacific Arts Festival.

¹ www.tematatini.org.nz

² Kaiwai, H. & Zemke-White, K. Kapa Haka as a 'web of cultural meanings'. In C. Bell & S. Matthewman (Eds). *Cultural studies in Aotearoa New Zealand: identity, space and pace*. pp. 139-160, 2004, Oxford University Press.

³ http://www.unesco.govt.nz/unesco/unesco_current_initiatives.htm?article=2007088121430200002.

The official launching of the Te Matatini brand was held at Parliament on 24 March 2004. The name Te Matatini (*The Many Faces*) was bestowed by Professor Wharehuia Milroy who said: “Māori performing arts bring together people of all ages, all backgrounds, all beliefs, Māori and non-Māori alike, participants and observers. When I look, I see many faces, young and old – Te Matatini.”⁴

The Regions Competing

Since inception, regions have varied in name, geographic boundary and waka affiliation and have included the regional winners from 18 various regions stretching from Northland (Te Tai Tokerau) to Australia (Whenuamoemoea).

The journey to the kapa haka nationals begins in these regions as groups battle in fierce competition to represent their respective rohe (regions) at Te Matatini. Only the finest groups are selected to attend the national competition.

The opportunity to compete in Te Matatini is not by right and an appearance at the national competition is often the culmination of two years of unrelenting commitment, dedication and hard work. Other commitments, sporting, work or even family may be sacrificed as the group focuses all energy into learning, perfecting and polishing a 20-25 minute routine for Te Matatini.

The festival generally opens with a powhiri (welcome), performed by the host tribal group, followed by mass pageants, and four days of competition. Te Matatini teams are required to perform six disciplines within their performance piece - *whakaeke* (a choreographed entry), *moteatea* (traditional chant), *poi* (raupo ball swung on the end of a flax cord), *waiata-ā-ringa* (action song), *haka*; and *whakawatea* (exit)⁵. They must perfect every discipline in a polished 25-minute performance. They are judged on correct pronunciation of Māori language; time-keeping and innovation (while adhering to tradition); original composition; leadership; unity; energy and costumes. The Festival also features oratory, carving, weaving and ta moko, along with contemporary Māori drama, poetry, and fine art.

Te Matatini focuses on the long-term development of Māori performance art, by supporting:

- the national kapa haka competitions;
- regional development for 14 rohe (regions);
- festivals, events, and exhibitions;
- wananga, workshops and master classes;
- Māori performance art in schools;
- the South Pacific Arts Festival; and
- international festivals and events.

In its early years, the festival was run by the National Committee of committed individuals and consisted of 15 members. The funding for the festival was limited and was highly dependent on volunteers, fundraising and community goodwill. In 1995 a business plan was developed by the committee which indicated a desire to be reconstituted into an independent body in the nature of a charitable trust or incorporation as a means to access more funding for the future. The Ministry of Māori Development (Te Puni Kōkiri) investigated options for an appropriate structure for the

⁴http://www.labour.org.nz/speeches_page_5/03092008_te_matatini_2009_national_kapa_haka_festival_launc_judith_tizard.html

⁵http://www.newzealand.com/travel/media/features/maoriculture/maoriculture_kapahakamatatini_feature.cfm

festival. In 1996, the Committee was constituted as an Incorporated Society, the Aotearoa Traditional Māori Performing Arts Society.

For the first 30 years of its existence, prior to the 1998/99 financial year the Festival received funding from government on ad hoc basis. The Committee received administrative support from Te Puni Kōkiri, and some occasional additional funding from Vote Māori Affairs, to host the Festival. Funding to send the winning kapa haka group from the festival to represent New Zealand at International events was also periodically granted by New Zealand's Arts Council (Creative New Zealand).

It became very difficult to survive on ad hoc funding and every year, the National Committee and Host Regional Committee had to raise the necessary funds to host each festival. This was a challenging and time consuming task which although necessary, limited the organisations ability to channel its energies into more proactive activities. In 1998 in recognition of the Festival's promotion and preservation of the Māori language and its ability to enrich wider New Zealand's appreciation of excellence in Māori arts, the government agreed to provide annual funding of \$1.103 million to support the Festival and its associated activities.

The Ministry for Culture and Heritage continues to provide funding through to Te Matatini, and the funding for the 2008/09 financial year totalled \$1.248 million. The 2008 Annual Plan clearly outlined eight objectives which looked to develop and promote the sustainability of kapa haka through strengthening events and activities that add value to the overall national objectives of Te Matatini and to encourage and increase Pakeha participation in kapa haka

Kapa Haka celebrates Māori contribution to New Zealand's uniqueness in this modern world. Kapa haka removes the battlefields of Māori ancestors, with inherent combativeness now taking place on stage in a controlled environment. Kapa haka while, recognising the many differences within Maoridom, between iwi, between hapū, and between whānau, still allows for Māori to come together and celebrate its oneness. The New Zealand Government, through The Ministry for Culture and Heritage will continue to work with Te Matatini to support its development and current evolution in Aotearoa.