

Manaakitanga — The story of two schools

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My family is made up of many legendary scone bakers and good old pikelet makers — sadly I am not one of them. Our whānau scones are so legendary, that we've been known to have scone bake-offs when we're together on special occasions to see if there is actually one baker better than the other. Competition is fierce and luckily there are always plenty of taste testers around; ensuring there are compliments for all, so as not to offend anyone (or put them off baking scones). The younger kids are usually not so kind and will often back their Mums as the best baker.



My early memories include Sunday lunches with extended whānau and friends always welcome with many impromptu visitors calling throughout the weekend. Nana, my Mum, or my Aunty were always quick to whip up scones or pikelets to go with the cups of tea for our visitors. Be it a happy occasion or a sad occasion, scones and pikelets always seemed fitting and were devoured while the conversation flowed, with either raucous laughter or tears flowed.

It wasn't until I was at Intermediate school and learning tikanga and te reo Māori that I first came across the word 'manaakitanga'. There, it was a way to express the hospitality, kindness, and caring attitudes of my whānau. I could see that we were a whānau that always welcomed others into our home, sharing our time, and our scones, as we cared and supported others. There were many good conversations and world problems solved around our kitchen table.

Fast forward a fair few years to the story of now. As a facilitator, I get the opportunity to visit many schools, and, recently, have had two occasions that have got me thinking and reflecting on manaakitanga in our schools. Let me give you my perspective through the story of two schools — schools I will simply call Tahi and Rua.

Tahi — A group of facilitators and I had travelled a few hours to deliver after-school workshops for the whole teaching team at Tahi School. We all met at the school office having travelled from various directions and signed in. We were met by the Deputy Principal and

shown to the various spaces throughout the school, where we would be presenting our workshops. As we dropped each person off, the rest of us followed behind to then be shown our rooms, wondering if we'd be able to find each other again at the end of the day. We were left to set up, and once I was organised, I went next door to find a colleague, and we went off in search of the wharepaku. Roll on bell time. The participants arrived, introductions were made and conversations were held as our workshops began. The happy ending is, at the end of the day, we all managed to find each other in the staff room and headed off to our accommodation for the evening. As a team we shared our experience about being hosted by Tahī School and realised what was lacking was manaakitanga. None of us went in expecting scones with jam and cream, but we would have each appreciated a warm welcome to make us feel valued.

Rua — Again, another facilitator and I traveled to Rua School to meet with the Principal and discuss professional learning services. We were greeted at the school office with a warm welcome — a smile from the office admin person, who came around from the other side of her desk to hug us and thank us for traveling to their school. We were told the Principal was currently engaged with students, and were shown the bathroom before being offered a cup of tea in the staffroom while we waited. As teachers came into the staffroom they greeted us, introduced themselves, and, again, welcomed us to their school and offered us another cup of tea and/or fruit and biscuits. When the Principal arrived, we were welcomed yet again, and we assured her we were well watered and fed before we headed to her office for our hui. During the hui, the Principal asked what time we were planning on leaving as they had brought in lunch for us. No it wasn't scones, but a home-made chicken and salad sandwich. True manaakitanga in action.

Both Tahī and Rua Schools were schools I had never been to before and teams I hadn't met. The difference in how I felt leaving each school was immense, and promoted rich discussion within my team and plenty of reflection on my part. Of course, this reflection doesn't just apply to how I or my colleagues are greeted, but is about how anyone who visits the school may be welcomed. To me, manaakitanga is essential in welcoming people anywhere, be it in our homes, our office space, or our schools. That first 'taste' of hospitality leaves a lasting impression. As a facilitator, I truly value the manaakitanga shown to me in many New Zealand schools and would like to think this is something that is openly discussed and reflected on by staff.

So, I'd like to invite you to think. Think about manaakitanga. What does manaakitanga look like, feel like, sound like in your school? If a visitor was to arrive at the office, what would the process be? If a visitor was in the staffroom, what would happen? If a visitor was in your classroom, how would they be greeted? But, it works the other way, too! Facilitators can also think about this. As a visitor to a school, it is important that we manaaki also, as it is a reciprocal thing. So, as a new facilitator in a school we could take kai on our first visit. Let's make sure all of our New Zealand Schools are not dusty marae.

Whakataukī:

He tangata takahi manuhiri, he marae puehu

A person who mistreats his guest has a dusty Marae (Meeting house)

Someone who disregards his visitors will soon find he has no visitors at all. This accentuates the importance of manaakitanga, or hospitality within Maori society and culture.

LINKS:

CORE Professional Learning Services to support Culturally Responsive Practice

- [Who you teach: Maori students](#)
- [What you teach: te reo Māori](#)

TKI:

- [Culturally Responsive Learning Environments – Manaakitanga](#)



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