Tangianga - What Is It?

A tangianga usually lasts three days and are held either on marae, or now-a-days, at the person's house. It is the Maori process of mourning.

Fundamental to this belief is the support for the whanau pani (bereaving family), those that have been left behind and have to deal with the loss of someone they love. People gather to spend time with the whanau pani, to grieve with them and to support them in their time of sorrow. A tangianga is a chance to re-affirm whanau (family) ties, to meet again with long lost relations, to meet relations that you may never have seen and a chance for the children of that whanau to meet their aunts and uncles.

A tangianga is not just about grieving, but about saying goodbye. It is about having one last time with the person, to talk to them, to laugh with them (have you ever heard the hard case stories that can come out at a tangianga about the person?) and to cry for them.

A tangianga is also about talking to others about the person. The general korero (talk) often revolves around the person. Some people find it hard to talk about their feelings concerning their loss to those that are as close to the person as they are, feeling that the other person is going through the same thing, and they do not want to impose themselves on anyone. However, at a tangianga there are plenty of people their to share your grief. This is all part of the support at a tangianga.

Some areas have a Po Whakangakau, or Po Whakamutunga which is the final night. On this night, people perform, sing, tell jokes and generally have a good night of laughter. It is to cheer the whanau pani up, knowing that the next day will be the hardest.

The tupapaku (body) is also not left alone at all during the whole tangianga. This is so the person has company for their final days on earth, and so that they know they will never be forgotten.
**Pohiri**
As with all Maori Hui (gatherings) each group that comes receives a pohiri. If you wish to go to a tangihanga, but are not Maori and do not know protocol, go along and wait for other people to arrive then join their group.

The wero is very rarely seen at a tangihanga.

Some areas will not pohiri at night and therefore it is a good idea to make sure that you arrive before dusk.

Traditionally where the koha is placed at a tangihanga dictates the purpose of the koha. Placed at the foot of the tupapaku signifies it is for the whanau pani to help defray the costs of embalming etc. Placed between the manuhiri and the tangata whenua signifies it is to help cover the costs of the marae, kai, etc. Some people put down two koha, one for each place.

Some whanau ensure that straight after the pohiri, the manuhiri are taken straight in for kai.

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**The Burial**
After the service the tupapaku (body) is taken to the urupa (cemetery) for the burial. There are never private burials from tangihanga - everyone is there to support the whanau pani. If the urupa is close by, the tupapaku is usually carried to the urupa, with everyone else following along behind. Sometime the carrying is taken in shifts. It is important to ensure that those carrying the tupapaku are all about the same height otherwise the person could be carried lop-sided!

When everyone is gathered at the gate of the Urupa with the tupapaku, the kai karanga (person doing the karanga) calls everyone in.

A final service is sometimes said and the person is then lowered to their final resting place.
Time is now given for people to speak and to say their final farewells. Some sing songs as well. When this is all finished, everyone files past the grave and throws either a flower or a piece of dirt in.

And so the cycle is complete, we are born of woman and we return to woman.

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**Takahi te Kainga**

Once the person has been buried, if they lived close by, people will go to their house to bless it. If they live in another area or far away, this is done at a later stage.

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**Hakari**

The final feast, which is a celebration and an affirmation of life. Often during the hakari, people will get up and speak and perform items.
## Terms used at a Tangihanga

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maori</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tr>
<td>Whanau Pani</td>
<td>Bereaved Family</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tupapaku</td>
<td>Body</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hakari</td>
<td>Meal after burial</td>
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<td>Takahi te kainga</td>
<td>Bless the house</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urupa</td>
<td>Cemetery</td>
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<td>Inoi / Karakia</td>
<td>Prayer</td>
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