

THE HAKA: WHAT IT MEANS & WHY IT'S PERFORMED



The Haka is iconic throughout the world. If you're interested in rugby, then you probably know that the All Blacks perform a haka at the start of each of the rugby games. But, did you know why they do it? There are multiple reasons; and it comes back to the fact that the haka is important to the indigenous people of New Zealand; the Māori. It is an important, iconic part of their history and traditions.

Origin Of The Haka

According to Maori ethos, Tama-nui-to-ra, the Sun God, had two wives, Hine-raumati, the Summer maid, and Hine takurua, the Winter maid. [1]. Tane-rore is the trembling of the air as seen on the hot days of summer, and represented by the quivering of the hands in the dance. Haka is the generic name for all Maori dance. Today, haka is defined as that part of the Maori dance repertoire where the men are to the fore with the women lending vocal support in the rear. [2]. More than any aspect of Maori culture, this complex dance is an expression of the passion, vigour and identity of the race. Haka is not merely a pastime of the Maori but was also a custom of high social importance in the welcoming and entertainment of visitors. Tribal reputation rose and fell on their ability to perform the haka (Hamana Mahuika) Haka reflected the concerns and issues of the time, of defiance and protest, of factual occurrences and events at any given time.

The Haka Started As A War Dance

The first hakas were created and performed by different Māori tribes as a war dance. It is an ancestral war cry. It was performed on the battlefields for two reasons. [3]; the warriors would use aggressive facial expressions such as bulging eyes and poking of their tongues. They would grunt and cry in an intimidating way, while beating and waving their weapons. The second reason they did this was for their own morale; they believed that they were calling upon the god of war to help them win the battle. They were heavily choreographed and performed in time. [4]. This type of haka is called a peruperu haka.

Over Time, It Took On New Meanings

Overtime, the haka evolved and it came to be used for more than just battles. It became a way for communities to come together and it was a symbol for community and strength. This type of haka is called a ngeri haka. [5]. Their purpose is different; they are performed to simply move the performers and viewers physiologically, rather than to cause fear. This different goal is reflected in the way that they are performed. Their movements are more free, giving each participant the freedom to express themselves in their own movements. Both males and females can perform a haka; there are special ones that have been created just for women.

In New Zealand, you will find that the haka is performed for a lot of different reasons. Nationally, it is used at important events; an example of this is rugby games where it is performed at the start of each match. It is also performed for personal reasons, too. [6]. It is not exclusive to Māori; anyone is welcome to perform a haka, given that it is performed with all the seriousness and respect that it deserves and that the performers are aware of what they are doing and what it means.

History Of The Ka Mate Haka

"Ka Mate" is a haka that has been the haka most performed by the All Blacks when they play against international teams. It is a ceremonial haka, and it was written by Te Rauparaha. It is a celebration of life triumphing over death. Te Rauparaha created the haka after he narrowly escaped death at the hands of enemy tribes from Ngāti Maniapoto and Waikato by hiding in a dark food storage pit. [7]. The famous first line, "Ka mate, ka mate! ka ora! ka ora!" Translates into "I might die! I might die! I may live! I may live!" And the last line, "Ā, upane, ka upane, whiti te ra! Hi!" Translates into "A step upward, another... the Sun shines! Rise!"

Kapa O Pango – The All Blacks' Own Haka

In August 2005, before the Tri Nations Test match against South Africa at Carisbrook, the All Blacks performed for the first time 'Kapa O Pango', a new haka for and about the All Blacks.

A year in the making, Kapa O Pango was written for the team by Derek Lardelli, an expert in tikanga Maori (Maori culture and customs) of the Ngati Porou iwi. Its words and actions celebrate the land of New Zealand, the silver fern and its warriors in black. 8

Rather than replace the traditional haka, Ka Mate, Kapa O Pango sits alongside it as a new addition to the All Blacks' tradition. Kapa O Pango is performed from time to time at the team's discretion.

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- ☐ • It is performed at weddings, funerals, local events and times when a display of respect and solidarity is required.towards special guests.
- ☐ • The child born to him and Hine-raumati was Tane-rore, who is credited with the origin of the dance.
- ☐ • The name might be translated simply as 'team in black'.
- ☐ • When he came out of it, he was greeted by light and a friendly tribe chief.
- ☐ • Firstly, it was done to scare their opponents
- ☐ • Unlike the peruperu, the ngeri does not use weapons.
- ☐ • It gave them courage and strength.
- ☐ • Most haka seen today are haka taparahi, haka without weapons.

Complete these sentences.

1. Haka is an expression of _____
2. The first hakas _____
3. The warriors would use _____
4. The haka became a way for _____
5. Their movements are more _____
6. The Ka Mate Haka is _____
7. It is a celebration of _____
8. The words and actions of Kapa O Pango _____

