



HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND
POUHERE TAONGA

Caring for Marae Taonga after Floods



Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga supports marae to care for their heritage taonga through the Māori Built Heritage Programme. Caring for these taonga can be a challenge, requiring specialist knowledge, especially after significant weather events like floods. Our team can support marae that have been impacted by flooding to ensure the survival of tukutuku, whakairo, and other heritage fabric of their buildings and marae structures.

Re-entering your marae after flooding

- **Your safety is important.** Do not enter a building that is significantly damaged or has moved off its foundations. Look for buckled walls, holes in floors, broken glass, and other potentially dangerous debris. Exterior carvings may be loose and could fall, so take care around the mahau.
- **Turn off the main power switch** and unplug all electrical devices that have been flooded. These pose a risk of shock or fire when turned on. Do not use any appliances until they have been thoroughly cleaned, dried, and inspected by an electrician.
- **Wear protective gear**, such as gloves, face masks, eye protection, sturdy footwear, long sleeve shirts and pants. Flood water can be heavily contaminated and could cause illness and infections. If mould is present a face mask can prevent you inhaling spores.
- **Contact your insurance company** as soon as possible and do not dispose of anything before speaking to your insurer.
- **Photograph and document the damage.** Photos and videos taken on your phone are sufficient. Write down and describe the damage. Do this as soon as possible, and on an ongoing basis – this is important for insurance purposes.

Taonga such as tukutuku and whakairo are often able to be salvaged and restored following flooding events. Our team can help you to clean, dry and conserve these taonga.

If there are slips or damage to your urupā, we also have a team that can provide advice on archaeology. There may sensitive sites that have been revealed as a result of flooding, and your marae tikanga will guide the approach to these. Support from our Māori Heritage Team is also available.

If you would like additional support and advice please email maraeheritage@heritage.org.nz

Clean-up Equipment

Protective Gear: Gloves, eye protection, sturdy footwear, long clothing, whistle, mask.

Documentation supplies: Notepad, pencils, pens, labels, markers, camera/phone

General equipment: Stanley knives, scissors, masking tape, torch, batteries and string, Twine or rope to create drying lines and drying racks. Tarpaulins to create a clean space, or cover items removed from the whareniui.

General cleaning equipment: Detergent, sponges, cloths, rags, brushes, rubbish bags, paper towels, towels, buckets, mops, shovels, and brooms. Plastic shovels cause less damage than metal ones.

Plastic boxes and bags: These can be used for moving or storing items. Large containers can be used for soaking bedding, clothing and linen. Small zip-lock bags also come in handy.

Powered Equipment: Wet & dry vacuums, dehumidifiers and fans, power banks, phone charging cables, and extension cords. Remember to keep electrical cords away from water.

Drying and Clean-up

Cleaning, repairs, and drying should start as soon as is practical. **The removal of water must be done slowly**, as rapid drying can damage the traditional materials used to create whareniui.

- **Remove all debris**, such as mud, silt, branches and anything that has come through with the flooding - we have even found tuna inside! Clear the outside of the whare to encourage better airflow under the building. Have one team working carefully around the walls of the inside, taking extra caution with tukutuku, whakairo and other precious wall linings. Another crew can work quickly through the main area of the whare, and around the exterior.
- **Remove wet items and sodden floor coverings.** Carpet will need to be removed, as well as furniture, curtains, heaters, bedding, mattresses, and chairs. If left, they'll dry slowly, trapping moisture and encouraging mould growth, decay, and a bad smell.
- **Remove water and debris from the under-floor spaces.** It may be necessary to lift floorboards to ventilate the space below. Even if the floorboards are dry, lifting every sixth board will help create vents for the damp area below. The easiest floorboards to raise will be those that are butt jointed or that have already been altered to accommodate fittings.
- **Ensure your whareniui is weathertight.** If it has lost roofing material, it's important to repair this early on in the clean-up process.
- **Open doors and windows and set up fans to generate air circulation.** Position fans to channel airflow around the room (pointed towards the ceiling). Don't point fans directly at objects.
- **You may need to remove some weatherboards, at least 50 centimetres above the high-water line** to air and clean out the wall cavity. Remove any saturated insulation and debris. We recommend removing weatherboards on the exterior if you have tukutuku or other heritage linings on the inside.
- **Wash and wipe down all surfaces and structures with detergent and water.** We can advise on a good detergent to use.
- **Taonga such as tukutuku, whakairo, kākaho and kōwhaiwhai can be carefully wiped clean** with a cloth dampened in detergent and water, then patted dry and vacuumed with a wet vacuum. Please get in touch with the HNZPT Māori Built Heritage team or an expert in traditional arts for further advice.
- **Set up dehumidifiers to remove moisture until the building is completely dry.** Keep the windows closed if you have a dehumidifier running. Empty the tank regularly.
- **Avoid using heaters.** The combination of heat and humidity will encourage mould growth. Heat can also cause items to distort. Heat and forced air movements should only be used if there is significant ventilation.
- **Repainting and installation of new wall and floor coverings should be avoided until the whareniui is thoroughly dry.** This could take many months. Rushing into remedial work before the building is fully dry could result in having to re-do the work later, doubling the disruption and expense. Most paints do not adhere well to damp substrates, the paint will blister, and underlying materials will decompose.

When salvaging taonga such as photographs and woven works, handle these objects with care, as wet items are generally more fragile. Waterlogged items will be much heavier and weaker than usual. Provide support when possible and try to avoid any unnecessary handling.

The National Library provides advice regarding recovering water-damaged belongings such as photographs, books, and artworks. Advice is available at <https://natlib.govt.nz/collections/caring-for-your-collections/disaster-recovery> or contact preservation@dia.govt.nz

Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand also has advice and support online relating to disaster planning and recovery: <https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/disaster-planning-and-recovery> and <https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/learn/formuseums-and-galleries/how-guides/collection-management/cyclone-gabrielle-impact>

The Ministry of Health also has advice available at <https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/emergency-management/protecting-your-health-emergency/floods-and-health>

