Mihi Whakatau – Formal Welcomes

**Background for teachers**
A mihi is a formal way of respecting people by acknowledging their mana and tapu (dignity and sacredness). It is a sign of hospitality and respect to mihi on important occasions.

Below is a starter mihi, using a typical form. It is useful for welcoming visitors to the school. A mihi for Catholic schools could go like this. The convention in mihis like this is child-to-child or adult-to-adult. It is wise to prepare one child to mihi for the school if required, or one adult if required. You must use the most appropriate speaker for the situation. It is preferable to memorise the mihi, but it may be necessary at times to refer to notes.

You could use the mihi below in class but you would add your name, mountain, river (or lake or harbour), birthplace and occupation. This would go just after the ‘welcome to the living’ and before the concluding line.

**Mihi**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Māori</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa</td>
<td>Hello everybody here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nga mihi nui ki a koutou katoa</td>
<td>warm greetings to everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ki te atua-tēnā koe</td>
<td>to God – greetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ki a papatuanuku – tēnā koe</td>
<td>to mother earth – greetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ki te kura/whare – tēnā koe</td>
<td>to the school/house – greetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ki te hunga mate</td>
<td>farewell the dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ki te hunga ora</td>
<td>welcome the living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tēnā koutou katoa</td>
<td>greetings to all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Welcoming visitors to the school or going on some school trips**
It is best to consult with the Māori community within your school or if this is not possible, with the authorised Māori Catholic body within your diocese or your local kaumātua, you may have a kaiāwhina who knows what to do.

You may cause offence if you don’t follow the local (customary) tikanga norms so find out what the local rules are. For instance, in the Waikato, customary mihis include the Māori king. It may also be respectful in a Catholic school to mihi to your bishop.

1. Show your local Māori community your plans and ask them to improve your plans.
2. Telephone the visitors coming and tell them to prepare one senior male speaker.
3. Prepare one senior girl student from your school to lead the prayer. The prayer is the Our Father in te reo. It is printed towards the end.
4. Arrange 2 lines of chairs parallel to each other, approximately 4 metres apart.

5. You call your welcome a mihi whakatau. A low-risk English language translation of mihi whakatau that might reassure your Māori and non-Māori community could be ‘welcoming liturgy’.

6. Print and photocopy an order of service – this helps put some people at ease.

7. Your visitors arrive and in one group proceed quietly and respectfully to their seats. Tradition says that male school leaders sit in the front. Female school leaders could sit in the second row. The school may karanga (call on) for these visitors but if there is not the capacity, you could chant ‘Tōia mai-te waka’. If you karanga, then you are in a pōwhiri.

8. The senior girl stands and begins the mihi whakatau with the Sign of the Cross and Our Father in te reo. It is appropriate for everyone to join in.

9. After she sits down the school’s speaker stands and gives his standard mihi.

10. When he finishes the whole school stands and sings to support him (a waiata). A song in te reo is preferable.

11. The senior student from the visitors stands and delivers his mihi. Then the visitors stand to sing a waiata to support him. A song in te reo is preferable.

12. The senior male from the local school stands and says ‘Ka hikitia te tikanga’ (We postpone the custom).

13. The opportunity is there for all those who want to speak, especially the female school leaders, in any language they want to use, including English. Everyone must be free to participate. Generally, the locals will go first, supported by a waiata, preferably in te reo.

Usually, though not always, the visitors reciprocate with a speech of their own plus a waiata. This is a good opportunity for migrant children to speak in their own language. It’s polite for all mihis to begin and end with at least some te reo (e.g.Tēnā koutou katoa). This could be a time for teachers to speak but this is a time to build relationships, for welcoming and for respect – it’s not a time for administration.

14. When the senior male student thinks that everyone has had an opportunity to speak he stands and says ‘Timata anō te tikanga’ (We recommence the custom).

15. The local lead speaker beckons and invites the visitors to hongi. He says ‘Haere mai ki te hongi’. Depending on local custom this will be one or two presses of the nose, a firm handshake and a kiss on the cheek for the females. The front line of the visitors hongi the front line of the locals. A suggestion as to what to say is ‘Tēnā koe - peace be with you’. Locals who wish to join in the hongi may join the front line. In the mainstream Catholic world this would be called a Sign of Peace.

16. Generally food and drink follow. During this less formal time announcements and any details, organisation and management can take place. Remember that hospitality is an important value to be demonstrated throughout the visit.
E to mātou Matua i te rangi (Our Father)

E to mātou Matua i te rangi,
kia whakatapua tōu ingoa,
kia tae mai tōu rangatiratanga,
kia whakaritea tōu hiahia i te whenua
kia pērā i to te rangi.
Homai ki a mātou ai ane he taro mā
mātou mō tēnei rā.
Whakakāhoretia ō mātou hara, me
mātou e whakakore nei i ngā hara o te
hunga e hara ana ki a mātou.
Kaua mātou e tukua kia whakawaia,
Engari whakaorangia mātou i te kino.
Amene

Poroporoaki/farewells

- The leaders from both groups sit down in one circle out of the wind.
- Begin with a prayer.
- All mihis begin and end with ‘Tēnā koutou katoa’.
- Open the floor for anyone who wishes to say anything positive, in any language. Begin and end with ‘Tēnā koutou katoa’.
- End with a prayer.