



**Te Puni Kōkiri**  
MINISTRY OF MĀORI DEVELOPMENT

# Preparing for Succession

If you and your whānau have decided you're ready to start the succession journey, these are the first steps. If you need a hand at any stage, kaimahi at Māori Land Court can help.



## Information you'll need

To get your succession application underway, you'll need:

- details about the whānau member who died
- details for everyone you think is eligible to succeed to their whenua.

Kaimahi at Māori Land Court (MLC) will use this information to confirm the Māori freehold land or Māori incorporations your whānau member had interests in. The details you provide will help MLC:

- make sure they're looking at the right records for your whānau member — and not someone else with the same name, for example
- ensure you succeed to all the whenua you're entitled to, and
- keep whenua ownership in the right hands.

It can take time to gather all this information together — particularly if you have a large whānau or lots of family based overseas. For some whānau, it can take years. There's no time limit for succession though, so take as long as you need.



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## Gather details about the person who died

When you're preparing for succession, it helps to find out as much as you can about the whānau member who died. To start the whakapapa discussion, talk with whānau — here's a checklist of the kind of information kaimahi at Māori Land Court (MLC) will need to get your succession application underway.

### Names

When MLC look for records related to your whānau member, they'll start by searching for them by name.

The name you knew them by might not be the only name they had. Check with whānau to find out:

- every name your whānau member was known by (or at least as many as you can)
- any variations on the spelling of their name, or shortened versions of their name — like Joseph, Joe or Jo
- any nicknames they used.

## Whakapapa

When you're talking about the person who died with whānau, ask about their parents, siblings, grandparents, great-grandparents, aunties, uncles and cousins.

Every whānau is unique, and finding out as much as you can about yours helps MLC make sure their research is comprehensive and accurate first time round.

For example, your whakapapa details can help MLC confirm they've found the right person when they're searching their records.

## Whenua

When you're talking to whānau or friends about the whānau member who died, ask them if they know about any land interests or Māori incorporation interests they might have had.

You can also do a search online or at Māori Land Court offices.

## A death certificate

One of the things that MLC will need when you make a succession application is the death certificate for the person who died. If you don't have a copy, you might need to talk to whānau to find out if anyone else has one. If not, or you can't find it, you can apply to the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) to get a copy.



Get a death  
certificate from the  
**Department of  
Internal Affairs**

## A will

Find out if anyone knows if your whānau member left a will. If so, they might have left instructions in it about what they wanted to do with their whenua. Any instructions will need to meet the rules set out in Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993 to be valid, though.



Find out if anyone knows if your **whānau** member left a **will**

If your whānau member did leave a will, check to see if it has instructions about whenua Māori in it. If so find out:

- who the executor is
- if the will has been probated — if not, you may not need to probate it.

If it doesn't mention whenua Māori, have a chat to the kaimahi at Māori Land Court. They can help you understand your next step.

If your whānau member didn't leave a will, or you're unsure about it, that's fine — MLC kaimahi are happy to help out.

## If you can't get information from whānau

There are government agencies you can talk to if:

- you can't find the information you need from whānau, or
- you're not in touch with whānau.

For example, the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA), the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), or Oranga Tamariki may be able to help you find information about your whānau and where you came from.

See contact details for DIA

Contact MSD

Find contact details for Oranga Tamariki