

Pānui ki te iwi

From Horror to Hope – Lest We Forget

Ngahiwi Tomoana – Chairman, Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated

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I'm currently working as a deckhand on the trawler St Jude in the Bay, nets out fishing for our whānau. The backdrop is the white and grey cliffs of Te Kauae a Maui, Clifton to the Cape. ANZAC Cove and Chunuk Bair come to mind as that sentinel day approaches once more.

I picture our soldiers trying to assault and attack that unassailable terrain—the most futile of battles. Men mown down in the waves, slaughtered on the sands, hacked down on the hillslopes, trashed in the trenches. And yet we persisted. Back home here, mums and dads mourned the losses of their sons, sisters, their brothers, and so on.

It makes our COVID-19 lockdown feel like a walk in the park. No or little communication back then. Without telephones, TVs, texts, Instagram, or Zoom, they used art forms to express their love, grief, and gut-wrenching sorrow from far away, remotely. But spirits were joined nevertheless, and love and hope emerged and communicated through the arts.

Paraire Tomoana, a composer of that time, wrote songs of the war, I Runga o Ngā Puke, E Pari Ra, Te Ope Tuatahi, and others, including Pokarekare Ana. From the horrors came hope, from the mud and bloodbaths came beauty, from death and despair came dreams of glorious futures.

E Pari Ra talks of the beat of the waves on the cliffs of Gallipoli at high tide carrying the forlorn messages of the dead sons to their mothers in Aotearoa and Australia carrying these greetings on the crimson outgoing tides to the homeland shores. Tears of love from the mothers to their sons were born on the incoming cleansing tides, arms reaching, healing the hurt that only mothers tears and embrace can do. From horror came hope, from bloodbaths came beauty, from death came dreams of peace.

The oceans swells were a metaphor for the waves of soldiers killed in all the epic battles of WW1, Paschendale, the fields of Flanders, Greece, Belgium, Germany and Egypt. The lapping waves were the symbol of sobbing hearts and souls. The waiata 'I Runga o Ngā Puke' talks of the whispering winds of freedom amongst the satanic hills and valleys of death and destruction. It's a song of a love-stricken lass watching her boyfriend march onto a troop carrier never to return. Their love eternally reverberating amongst the mountains capes of war, neutralizing hate and reducing it to an inconvenience of the moment. Music can do that. Pokarekare Ana was written just before this period but has become the most famous love song this country has produced.

Great things have emerged from great despair, and Aotearoa New Zealand is leading the charge against COVID-19, against seemingly impossible odds.

ANZAC in WW1 was a renewal of our nationhood built on the signing of the Tiriti o Waitangi in 1840.

2020 should be a recommitment to those monumental events of the past as we recreate beauty from body bags, hope from horror, dreams from disaster.

Happy homebound, Anzac, everyone!

Tihei Mauri Ora!



Ngāti Kahungunu is the third largest iwi with 35,000 registered members. Geographically the tribe has the second longest coastline in the country from Paritū in the North to Turakirae in the South. Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated maintains an independent position to provide research, advice and advocate for the interests, rights, values, beliefs and practices of Ngāti Kahungunu alongside our whānau and hapū. Our mission is to enhance the mana and well-being of Ngāti Kahungunu.