

‘Moriari - Six Hundred Years of Peacekeeping on Rekohu (Chatham Islands/New Zealand) – Myths, Misconceptions and the Struggle for Truth’

The practice of peace, especially in times of provocation and conflict, requires a strong commitment to principle. The Moriari People (the original settlers of Rekohu or Chatham Islands), demonstrated such a commitment in taking a conscious stand for peace in response to the invasion of their island home by two Maori tribes from Wellington in 1835. Centuries earlier, Moriari had abandoned warfare and killing on their Island home and had successfully lived in peace for 500 years. They were not prepared to violate that ancient covenant with their gods even if it meant death and destruction for themselves and their culture. Not all would, today, agree with such a stance, but in taking it, Moriari steadfastly believe that they have held onto their mana as a people and the mana over their land. They had, collectively as a people, upheld the covenant they made with their gods to never again take a human life by violent means. The commitment to Peace is therefore at the center of Moriari culture and their modern-day renaissance. Over the last two hundred years, the Moriari people and their culture have struggled against genocide, oppression, suppression of identity, myth making and political manipulation. Over the past 30 years the descendants of this much maligned and misunderstood people have begun the long and arduous journey to recover and reclaim their culture and identity and rightful place in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This presentation will tell the story of the Moriari Peoples and their contribution to peace making in this country and of survival/revival against almost impossible odds. Most of all it will tell the story of the power of peace as a guiding beacon of light and hope that has inspired the current generation of Moriari People.

Mihi and Karakii

Acknowledgment of Dorothy Brown (and also Chris Barfoot)

Introduction

I have given a lot of thought to this presentation and decided that I wanted to make it a personal account of my own journey about my experiences over the past 35 years rediscovering and reclaiming my Moriari identity. The very heart of what the Moriari renaissance has been about: identity – the denial of that identity (by others) and the struggle to reclaim it. But it has also been about re-building our capacity to ensure our survival and prosperity into the future.

I first became involved in Moriari matters at the tender age of 23. I am now 58. I was appointed by the family as the Chairman of the Tommy Solomon Memorial Trust Foundation at a hunau reunion in Temuka in December 1983 and have been on every Moriari organisation from that time to the present.

I am currently the Chair of Hokotehi Moriori Trust as well as the CEO of our business entities which employ 14 staff on Rekohu and NZ. Today Hokotehi has 1800 registered members, we own numerous assets on Rekohu including conservation land, two sheep and cattle farms, a large portfolio of fishing quota, 50% ownership of a local fishing company, commercial real estate (in Wellington), a large Marae complex, a 24 room tourist lodge complex, a native plant nursery, 9 residential properties, a mechanics workshop and a fleet of vehicles and large machinery. We are also partnering with the ANZPCS Trust in the National Centre for Peace and Conflicts Studies at the University of Otago and have relationships with numerous governments departments, agencies, museums including Te Papa and the National Iwi Chairs Forum, to name a few. We also have extensive research relationships with institutions both nationally and internationally. We are currently about half way through negotiating a settlement of our historic grievances against the Crown and hope to sign a final deed of settlement by mid next year. Not very bad for a people who only 40 years ago were regarded as extinct and were left virtually landless on our own Island home.

I remember being told by my social studies teacher when I was in Form 3 at Temuka High School in the 1970s that Moriori were a myth and that we had never actually existed. I was confused by this because I knew that my grandfather, Tame Horomona Rehe (better known as Tommy Solomon), was the last known Moriori of full blood – so that made me part Moriori to, didn't it? My father, Charles Teteira Horomona was Tommy's eldest son, so there was a close family connection. I grew up being proud to be part Moriori, but I didn't know anything about our history or culture. For that matter neither did my father or even Tommy himself. By the time Tommy was born, in 1884, the people, language and culture had been almost entirely obliterated. I remember saying to my school teacher – "but Sir, my grandfather was a full-blooded Moriori." His reply was, "young man there is no such thing as a Moriori, they were just a myth." End of discussion. *[There is a nice sequel to this story because that very same teacher who told me I wasn't Moriori, was instrumental in helping me win a Rotary Scholarship to Canada in 1978 which was a major turning point in my life. In 1991, I was invited to give a keynote address at the 125th centenary of Temuka High School and my old teacher, Sandy Brown, was there and made a point of apologizing to me. We remained firm friends until he passed away in 2002.]*

I learned later that my experience at school was a very common one for many people of Moriori descent – being challenged about our identity growing up, being told never again to mention the word Moriori in the classroom, being laughed at and teased by other students – sometimes Maori kids – saying things like "haha, we ate all you Moriori" or "your people were weak and inferior to Maori" and on it went. Some of this still happens today if reports from my nieces and nephews attending school is anything to go by. Not as bad as it was but still damaging to the psyche and confidence of a young person's developing persona and sense of identity.

For 100 years, school teachers had been fed a diet of misinformation and myth about the Moriori people and were teaching this to successive generations of New Zealand

children. I'm sure many of you here this evening will be familiar with the myth that Moriori were the first people to arrive in Aotearoa before the Maori and were beaten up and driven out to seek refuge on the Chatham Islands? And this was because, according to the myth, Moriori were too weak to resist the newly arrived people who were superior in every way and much stronger? Ring any bells? A very convenient history to teach young New Zealanders if you are trying to justify the fact that your own ancestors came and displaced Maori from their lands and culture. '*We only did to Maori what Maori did to Moriori*', or so the story went. And the masses lapped it up and many still do as a convenient counter-argument against Maori Treaty claims – a la Don Brash and his band of merry red necks.

Little wonder then that for generations after the genocide that occurred on Rekohu in the early Nineteenth Century, that many of those surviving individuals consciously jettisoned their Moriori identity – especially those who had escaped to mainland New Zealand or were the descendants of slaves taken from the Island. In those times the name 'Moriori' was like a red flag attracting opprobrium and worse. From both Pakeha and Maori alike. But there was enough information, often secretly passed down from one generation to the next by these morehu (survivors), that today we are able to slowly and painstakingly piece together the tragic stories and threads of these families. But they are also stories of survival against incredible odds – not just survival of people but survival of the spirit of belonging and identity. Today there are dozens of families who can trace their hokopapa back to a Moriori rapuna or ancestor. But many still choose not to due to the lingering stigma that some associate with the old myths of Moriori as either a slave people or being too weak to resist the Maori invaders.

There are also stories of Moriori individuals such as Hirawanu Tapu, aged 11 at the time his homeland was invaded in 1835 by two Maori tribes – who remained on Rekohu and dedicated his life to the recording of Moriori traditions and the perpetuation of the Moriori blood lines. He was also a key advocate for justice for Moriori during the latter half of the 19th Century until his death in 1900. My own Solomon family are the result of a marriage Tapu arranged between my Moriori great grandfather, Rangitapua and my Moriori great grandmother Ihimaera TeTeira. He also arranged the marriage of another of the main Moriori families still on Rekohu today – the Riwai and Karaka families. He was determined to keep the Moriori bloodlines going because, I believe, he could foresee, that a day would come in the future when Moriori would again take our rightful place on Rekohu and in New Zealand history.

It is to Hirawanu Tapu that Moriori owe a huge debt of gratitude and so it is to Tapu that I dedicate my korero this evening. He was the man who wrote the 131 page heart-rending petition to Sir George Grey in 1862, seeking the intervention and protection of the Crown from the slavery his people had been brutally subjected to by Ngati Tama and Ngati Mutunga for 27 years. And the return of their lands stolen from them. All while the Crown stood by on the sidelines doing nothing. But Moriori were to be bitterly disappointed – and would remain so for 140 years. The following is a quote from the letter that accompanied the Petition for Justice:

Friend, greetings to you with the law of England and the law which comes from the Scriptures....England holds the cause of God and a cannibal people cannot rise above nor refute the law of England because God is the source of Pakeha law.....Friend Grey, here is our word to you concerning our two Islands...the rights of the Maori are not straight, they are stealing the rights to our land.....the rights of our islands are with us. We are the original inhabitants. This is our word...our law says that land taken unjustly must be returned to those whose it was before. Enough, come to set this island right...the doings here are not in accord with the law”

Sadly, this appeal for justice and fairness, which Moriori had been led to believe by the early missionaries to Rekohu was a hallmark of the British justice system was to no avail and Moriori were to be bitterly disappointed. I will return to this a bit later in my korero.

I want to now share with you something that has challenged and perplexed me for the past 30 or so years. I have often wondered what it would have been like to be present at the large gathering of Moriori in 1836 when they debated over a 3-day period what response they would make against the aggressive Maori invaders recently arrived from New Zealand? What would I have done faced with those dire circumstances? Last year I wrote a short story following a creative writing work-shop at Kopinga Marae that was run by one of New Zealand’s best emerging writers – Tina Makareti. *(I can highly recommend her books and especially ‘Where the Rekohu Bone sings’ – which is a fictional writing about a journey by a brother and sister to discover their Moriori heritage – a fantastic and emotional read!).*

The story places a young Tapu at the large hui held at Te Awapatiki on Rekohu in early 1836 where 1000 men are said to have gathered and debated their response to the invasion. I’m not sure if Tapu was at that meeting (he was after-all, only a boy of 11 at the time), but being the type of man, he became it is not difficult to imagine that he might have been there. The story is based partly on fiction and partly on fact. It tells of Tapu’s internal struggle with the decision his people have to make that will ultimately seal their fate. It reflects my own internal struggle to comprehend the scale of the decision that was made and how the outcome for Moriori might have been different had we made the decision to break with our ancient covenant of peace and fight the invaders. Many of the named characters are based on real people who were involved in this momentous hui, including my own ancestor, Torea Takarehe a tribal leader from Ouenga and also Koche who was the only Moriori known to have vigorously resisted the invaders – even if only by his steadfast refusal to have his iron will broken. I will read to you a few extracts from that short story:

The Gathering

by Maui Solomon (copyright 2018)

Tapu peered cautiously from his hiding place in the kopi bush at the scene unfolding in the sheltered hollows of the forest grove. One thousand of his kinsfolk had gathered at Te Awapatiki on the eastern coast of Rēkohu where the lagoon opens to the sea. A long finger of forested land bordered the sea on one side and the lagoon on the other. A sacred place. A place where his people met only to discuss very important matters. This was the largest gathering that Tapu could remember in his short lifetime.

His heart was pounding because he knew he wasn't supposed to be there. He had been told by his tane matua, Maikoua, to stay home and tend the fire in the kainga. He had always been a very bright child and now he was a precocious teenager. He just *had* to be at the biggest gathering of his people since the arrival of the 'Sun People' in Kaingaroa when his own father was a small boy. Tapu recalled his father telling him that the visit of the 'Sun People' had ended in tragedy for his people with the killing of Tamakaroro on the beach at Kaingaroa. His hunau had always claimed that Tamakaroro was only defending his fishing net from being taken by the white strangers. As his father had explained, the death-sound was like "the crack of the kelp of the god Hauoro!" Tamakaroro's people had later learned that it was the "crack" of a weapon the white man called a 'musket' that had ended his life. Their gods were indeed powerful! They were like the weapons that the strange and fearsome people from across the salt water had recently brought with them to Rēkohu.

It seemed like only a few moons ago that the New Zealanders – the name given by Tapu's people to the Maori invaders – had arrived in the white man's big waka in the bay at Whangaroa. The canoe was named 'Rodney'. They had come in two groups; the second group arriving not long after the first. Tapu recalled that he was visiting his uncle Tamahiwaki's hunau in Whangaroa, when the flax flowers were in bloom, so it must have been in the month of Whareahi when the New Zealanders came. What he didn't understand and what he desperately needed to find out was why, after his matu ke Tamahiwaki and their family had observed the tikane and shown the visitors the manawareka that the people of Whangaroa were famous for, had they later been chased down and killed by these people. He had seen with his own young eyes members of his own hunau lying dead and dying on the 'oka ohaere', some with bullets wounds in their backs, having tried to flee their attackers. Others had tomahawk blows cleaving their skulls apart. He had even heard, horror of horrors, stories that some of these family members had ended up in the umu pits of the New Zealanders. Had they offended them in some way? Had they violated a t'chap they did not know about? Something that the New Zealanders had brought with them? All Tapu knew was that he was scared for himself and for his hunau at the terrifying customs of these strangers. Although they looked like his own people, Tapu thought they had a darkness that hung over them and a cruelty about them that he had never thought possible.

A call had gone out to all the men, young and old, from the hunau groups living on Rekohu and Rangihau to attend a great gathering at Te Awapatiki to discuss what they were going to do about this invasion of their homelands. What to do about the strangers who had brought death and destruction with them to these peaceful islands. The old death-custom which Tapu knew from his own tohinga or baptism by his father several seasons ago had been outlawed by the ancient Tohuk', Nunuku-whenua. This

had been the law that had guided his people for countless generations since. But what were they to do now? Should they fight back against these people his father had called “kai tangata kaupeke” – *man eating demons* - and risk offending their own gods? Or should they hold fast to their ancient covenant of peace and by doing so honour their own laws and customs? Deep down Tapu, who had thought about almost nothing else over the past few moons, hoped that the men at The Gathering would decide once again to pick up the old weapons of war and fight back against these “man eating demons”. If they didn’t, Tapu feared that they might all be doomed to end up in the hangi pit.

Tapu could hear the korero going back and forth in the clearing. The young men, led by Koche, a strong willed and powerfully built man, were in favour of resisting the invaders. “Are we not strong of limb and strong of heart?” urged Koche, thrusting out his powerful right forearm and making a bunched fist to emphasise his point. Koche had seen twenty-five summers and was in the bloom of his strength and manhood. Tapu was in awe of this man and wanted to be just like him when he came of age. He hung onto every word that Koche spoke: “We are many and they are few; we should act now or it might be too late. Many of us may fall but I am confident we will prevail over the *kaupeke*. How many more of our people must die before we understand that our ancient peace laws are useless against these strangers!”

The blood in his neck muscles throbbed in time with Koche's fiery words. “They have no respect for our customs or for human life! They defile our t’chap and even feast on our dead like the skua’s that gorge on the defenceless hopo’ chicks!! ” Koche's eyes glowed with the horror-memory of his friend and mentor, Mauhika, being cooked in one of the earth ovens of the strangers while he was forced to look on, helpless to intervene. There were shouts of assent from among the young men at The Gathering, their flax maro whara wrapped around their toned bodies. Hopo feathers adorned their hair and beards. Some were carrying the tupurari or wooden staff, and were brandishing these above their heads in support of Koche’s words of revolt.

Torea Takarehe, the elder and leader of the Ouenga people, had been listening intently to Koche from his seated position at the head of the large gathering. He was becoming concerned at the rising passion of the young men to resist the invaders even if this meant breaking with the ancient laws. It was he, Torea, and twelve of the other tribal elders from Rēkohu and Rangihau who had called the men together on this spot two days earlier to consider what they should do in the face of the recent attacks.

Torea had learnt of the landing of the white man's ship in Whangaroa five moons ago and the cargo of four hundred and fifty New Zealanders that it had brought with them. He had travelled to Whangaroa with an ope of his own hunau members to find out what this meant and what their intentions were. He took stores of kai including smoked tuna, paua, kina, karengo, and dried kopi nuts to help feed the large numbers of people from the whiteman’s ship. He knew his relations in Whangaroa would struggle to feed all these additional mouths and it was the way of his people to provide manawareka to hunau and visitors to make sure they were well cared for. When he arrived, he was greeted by the sight of hundreds of men, women and children milling about, most of them still recovering from the ocean sickness, hungry and thirsty from the long voyage

from New Zealand to Rekohu. They had encountered a severe storm on the crossing and this had delayed their arrival by several days. Food stocks had run out the third day into the voyage and water on the fifth day. It had taken ten days before they made landfall and many of the strangers were in bad shape. With so many people crammed into the ship's hold, with standing room only and no sanitation, it was small wonder that many more deaths had not occurred during the crossing. As it was twelve bodies - mostly children - were buried at sea on the way over and another dozen or so were in critical condition under the make-shift tents erected on the beach.

What struck Torea the most about the strangers was the scarrings that many of the men – clearly the leaders among the group from their strong physiques and general demeanour – wore on their faces. This gave them a fierce appearance which Torea thought might be the intention as he had heard sailors from visiting sealing and whaling ships tell stories that the New Zealanders were a war-like people and revelled in the fight. Their hair was also tied in a top-knot similar to how his own men wore their hair with long feathers jutting out from the top. Apart from these facial scarrings they looked similar in body shape and colouring to his own imi and spoke a language that, with some differences, was not unlike their own re. The two groups could understand one another with little difficulty. Their women wore rain cloaks made of a fibre similar to that of harapepe or local Island flax.

Some of the women bore the same scarrings on their chins which Torea thought made them look dignified. Most of the women were busy either cooking over hastily made fires on the beach or taking care of the sick children and men. There looked to Torea to be about ten times the number of visitors than the total of those in the local kainga and there were about fifty people living at Whangaroa. But what were they doing here and how long did they intend to stay? These were the questions that Torea wanted answers to. Even feared the answers to.

The first person that Torea wanted to see was his hunaunga and leader of the Whangaroa hapu, Tamahiwaki. He made his way to his friends kainga nestled in among the kopi grove inland a few hundred paces from the beach. He followed the well-worn track past the familiar tree markings that signified he was getting close to his friend's home. These kopi trees spoke to Torea of old acquaintances and the spirits of those karapuna who had passed into the spirit world. They were both comforting and also a reminder to Torea of his own mortality. Would his own hunau take up the old tools and bruise the tree bark to memorialise his life and help his passage into the afterlife when his time came? He was sure they would, but he also hoped that that day was still a long way off in the future. With the tattooed strangers now darkening the shores of his Island home he was not so sure.

It had been some time since the two leaders had seen one another so Torea and Tamahiwaki greeted each other in the ritual manner by reciting the Hou rongu, karakii and hokopapa that connected their families and themselves. They then sung the songs of greeting and concluded with the hongu or pressing of noses that mingled their breath and made them as one again.

“Tell me old friend, what of the strangers who have arrived on your beaches and are eating all your kai? Who are they and what are their intentions? Will they be staying long?”

Tamahiwiki, who had been smiling happily upon reuniting with his old friend, suddenly darkened at the mention of the strangers' arrival. "They arrived unannounced following the last big storm. I was gathering paua from the reefs in the bay when the white man's big ship appeared on the horizon. They were moving against the wind and an ebbing tide so it took most of the day for them to reach the harbour. Once anchored four long boats were lowered from the deck and the people brought to shore. The first man ashore was the headman of the ship – a man calling himself Captain Harewood. I welcomed him in the traditional manner for strangers with a garland of kawakawa leaves on the end of my tupuari and invited him to take it. I then threw my cloak over his shoulders and made the speech of welcome." This had been the practice of the people of Rekohu since after the visit of the Sun People on the ship 'Chatham' forty-four summers ago. In this manner the hokomaurahiri or welcome for strangers was completed with the expectation that this would establish a firm and lasting peace between the tchakat henu and the visitors.

The ceremony was repeated for the next few boat loads of visitors comprising the New Zealand natives, some of whom responded with what Tamahiwiki described as much dancing, prancing, shouting, rolling of eyes and tongue poking. This performance reminded Tamahiwiki of the ancient stories of his own distant karapuna that his grandfather told him about when he was just a boy – they too had been a warlike warrior people in their ancient past but these practices had been set aside after Nunuku's law was laid down.

"Many of their people were very ill from the long sea crossing and I had my people provide food, shelter and water. Some needed the rongoa to aid their recovery, but many are still sick from the effects of the lack of food and water on board and from the ocean sickness" explained Tamahiwiki. "I asked their headman, Meremere, how long they intended to stay and the purpose of their visit but he did not answer me directly. Instead he said they needed help to get back their health and that they planned to then look around the Island for a time. He told me he was from the tribe called Ngati Tama and that he was expecting another group of his relations to arrive just as soon as the white man's ship could return to NZ and bring them back here."

At this juncture Tamahiwiki paused and furrowed his brow. He was a handsome man in his middle ages with high cheek bones and a hooked nose that was a feature of many of his people. He wore the hou or kura – a triangular shape made of muka interwoven with the red feathers of the kakariki– tied to the front of his forehead with a finely plaited cord of flax. The kura symbolised his senior status within the tribe along with the soft bunches of hopo feathers attached to his greying beard. "When I asked Meremere why more of his people were coming here he simply shrugged his broad shoulders and mumbled something about his people needing rest and getting food supplies for another voyage but when I pressed him for details he turned on his heels and walked off. Perhaps they intend to harm us but we don't know for sure. They have not shown any intention in this regard in the three days they have been here, but I am suspicious given that they avoid answering my questions. We have shown them manawareka since their arrival, so they have no reason to fear us." Torea listened intently while his friend continued: "As you know, Torea, the Council of Rangata Matua decreed after the first visit here by the white man's ship forty summers ago, that

we are to welcome visitors and show them kindness. It would be against our ancient laws to attack these people even though, collectively, we are much greater in number. No; we must be patient and help them recover their health and then perhaps once they are ready and have food supplies they will leave.” They had seen many white men’s ships come and go from Rekohu over the past forty seasons to hunt the seals and more recently the whales. Maybe these New Zealanders would do likewise?

Torea, who had already been feeling anxious about the stranger’s intentions before he arrived, was not in the least comforted by his friend’s words. But he also knew that he was right – their tikane forbade warfare and killing. Had these violent practices not been outlawed for good reason in the distant past? But would the strangers have any respect for their laws and customs? If they gave them no reason to fear or attack them and showed them hospitality would this be enough?

As Torea wearily stood to address The Gathering in the kopi grove he now knew the answer to this question. Not only had the strangers not left once they had fully recovered their health, but another ship load of New Zealanders, as portended by Meremere, had arrived in Whangaroa. This almost doubled the number of strangers arriving to Rekohu in less than one full moon cycle. This new group were called Ngati Mutunga and since their arrival, together with their tribal relations, Ngati Tama, they had been ‘walking the land’ killing and enslaving the local people as they travelled from village to village. Taken by surprise by this sudden turn of events and shocked to their atavistic core, the local villagers, apart from a few isolated cases, had put up no resistance. It had been rumoured that the captain of the Pākehā ship that had brought them from New Zealand had been paid handsomely for his services with barrels of pork, rum, tonnes of potatoes, two carved war canoes and most prized of all by the captain, six dozen muskets.

Tapu, who had been transfixed by the powerful korero from Koche, saw Torea stand and was shocked to see how much this great man had visibly aged over the last three days. He was an elder, sure, but now he looked like one of the ancient ones. Lines of worry and sorrow were etched deeply into his features like the markings he had seen on some of the older kopi trees. It looked, thought Tapu, that Torea could see into the future and was at this very moment experiencing the pain and suffering that lay ahead for his people. Tapu sensed the moment had now come when the chiefs would make their final decision. Torea, the main spokesman at The Gathering, was on his feet. The meeting was into its third day of intense debate and all who wanted to, had spoken. The young men led by Koche were strongly in favour of resistance, but throughout, the chiefs had spoken of patience and peace. Now it was up to Torea to present the elder’s decision to the throng of expectant men.

Torea began by reciting the ancient karakii to the old gods and karapuna. He reminded the people that the place they were gathered upon was the t’chap or hallowed ground of Te Awapatiki – the Path of the Flounder - into which their founding rapuna, Rongomaiwhenua, had planted the very first pou to mark the beginning of ‘ko hokorong’ tiring’ - the time of the first “hearing of the ears” in this new land. Thus, establishing for all time Rongomaiwhenua and his descendants as ‘no ro whenua ake’ or those who had first “sprung forth from the land.” He told of the waka that had come from Hawaiki carrying Rongomaiwhenua and his younger brother Rongomaitere. That

after setting up the first altars to the gods on the island they named Rekohua, Rongomaitere had continued on his journey westwards. It was known from the stories passed down about the great navigator, Kupe back in Hawaiki, that another much larger land, 'Aotearoa', lay to the west. The land from whence the invaders had recently come. From Rongomaitere other navigators in Aotearoa - including Kahu who captained the 'Tane' waka, - had learnt of the Islands of Rekohu and Rangihau that lay to the south and east of Aotearoa. These later waka had brought people and plants with them, such as the kopi trees. Some of the people had stayed and married into nga uri o Rongomaiwhenua – the descendants of Rongomaiwhenua – but others, like Kahu, had stayed only a short while and finding the climate not to his liking had returned to Hawaiki.

He told of the arrival of the Rangimata and Rangihoua waka from Aotearoa followed later by Moe on the Oropuke at which point manslaying and cannibalism on Rekohu commenced. It was here in the narrative that Torea paused and looked around the large gathering of men. Focusing his attention especially on the young men with fire in their eyes and courage in their hearts. If he were a young man again Torea wondered if he might not also desire to stand among their ranks with the same burning fervour over the injustices done to his people by these invaders. But now he was older and wiser. Wasn't he? Did this situation call for wisdom such as that passed down by the ancient ones or did it call for action? Urgent and immediate action? Torea had been struggling with this internal dilemma for three days now but had finally, after much soul searching and debate, come to a resolution as had the other tribal elders.

From his hiding place, Tapu could feel the tension in the air as Torea's words echoed through the forest groves. Torea had stopped his korero and was looking around at the young men. Tapu felt as though Torea was looking directly at him even though he knew he couldn't possibly see him in his well concealed position in the bushes.

"This was a terrible time for our people", continued Torea, "The laws that had been handed down to us from Rongomaiwhenua, Mu, Weke and Pakehau to live in peace and to share what we had were discarded. Tribe fought tribe, hapu fought hapu and death and destruction were like a plague upon the land. The ultimate abomination and violation of t'chap, the eating of human flesh, was begun then. A terrible time," repeated Torea. There were murmurs of assent from the older men at The Gathering, who remembered the stories they heard growing up as told to them by their own fathers and elders gathered around their village fires late into the night.

"The violence and killing continued for three Matariki cycles until one day, our great tohuk' Nunuku Whenua, sickened by all the fighting and death came among the people and cried out 'ko ro patu ko re kei tangata me tapu toake', - "cease your fighting, lay down your weapons and from this day forward forget the taste of human flesh. Are you fish who eat their own young?" Torea recited the ancient covenant of Nunuku: "You may continue to fight with wooden staffs the thickness of my two thumbs but upon first blood being drawn fighting must cease". He decreed that from that day forward the people were to live in peace and share the bounty the land and seas had to offer. There was enough for all on these islands and it was only man's greed and hunger for utu that had caused the troubles among the people. Nunuku spoke his curse – "the day you disobey, may your bowels rot." Palsied with fear from the sudden spirit like apparition

among them of the old tohuk, and mesmerised by his words, the warring factions obeyed his injunction. From that day forward - many notches back in the hokopapa rakau- the people lived in peace and observed Nunuku's laws.

Torea explained to The Gathering that from that time onwards the power of life and death had been removed from the hand of man and placed into the hands of their gods. The old weapons were placed on the tuahu or altars and were only removed for ceremonial purposes. As part of the tohinga or baptism for a young boy, the father would take the child to the tuahu and remove the stone okewa once used for making a killing blow to the head, and place this in the hands of the boy. He would then explain Nunuku's laws to the child, recite the karakii, and the ceremony was completed by the child replacing the old weapon back onto the tuahu. In this way the knowledge of the covenant was passed from father to son; from one generation to the next.

As Torea spoke, Tapu was recalling his own tohinga ceremony with his father and the great sense of calmness and peace he had felt afterwards, even at that relatively young age. It had left a strong impression on his young mind and also a sense of responsibility. It was not *just* Nunuku's laws but the laws of their *gods* that they must now obey. Did not their gods have the final say over who lived and who died and not men? Tapu could feel the heavy emotions swirling within his breast at the thought of breaking with these laws and the spiritual consequences this might bring for his people if they angered the gods. But what of the living? – would they not continue to suffer from the hardships imposed upon them by the strangers if they did not resist?

Torea continued his address – “These laws passed down to us through the generations are not a strategy for survival - they are a moral imperative. Our mana as a people is at stake. If we pick up the weapons of war and resume killing one another we are no better than the strangers; our gods will be displeased. No, we must honour our covenant with the gods and resume our efforts for a peaceful solution with the New Zealanders. Let us return each to their own kainga and resume our lives and renew our efforts for a peaceful outcome. The decisions we have made here today will be for future generations to judge us on.”

With these words, Tapu had heard all he needed to know. Although feeling terrified by the potential consequences of this decision for his people, the final words spoken by Torea had struck a chord within him. He resolved within himself that no matter what happened from here on, he would do all in his power to survive. He would survive so that he, Tapu, could tell his mokopu and they in turn would tell their mokopu the stories of the courageous decisions made by his people at The Great Gathering – how in the face of the greatest provocation his people had ever faced they had the strength to hold fast to their mana and to honour the ancient covenant with their gods.

[Short Story insert ends]

The Crown's response to the 1862 petition for restoration of land rights and manumission from slavery was a statement in 1863 that slavery was no longer to be permitted on the Chathams although many instances of it continued after that date. They established a Native Land Court (NLC) on Rekohu in June 1870 and proceeded to award 97.3 of the land to the invaders who had returned to their home in northern

Taranaki by that date. Crown agents actively encouraged Ngati Mutunga to return to the Chathams because they didn't want them adding to the unrest in Taranaki in the mid 1860's. They promised them land back on Rekohu if they returned. The same Native Land Court judge, John Rogan, who had sat in Taranaki courts in 1866-67 also sat on the same court on Rekohu in 1870. It was a foregone conclusion that the land would be awarded to Ngati Mutunga even before the Court opened its doors on the Island. The Crown saw an opportunity to solve a problem and Moriori were to be the sacrificial lamb. Soon after receiving these large land awards, Ngati Mutunga sold or leased the bulk of it to European farmers and settlers living on the Islands at that time. Europeans who were leasing land from Maori were keen to have those leases confirmed and to buy as much land as they could. So, they were also very supportive of title being confirmed in Maori ownership. As observed by the Waitangi Tribunal in its 2001 Rekohu Report: *"the Government [in 1870] clearly expected that Rekohu, or at least a reasonable share, would pass to Maori hands."* (WTR, page 105).

On the issue on whose custom the NLC should have applied, Moriori or Maori, the Tribunal concluded that:

"On Rekohu, in 1840, Maori had none of the elements to achieve an ancestral right, by incorporation, by intermarriage, or by maintaining control and burying their dead on the land over some generations. At 1870, they had dead on the land, but then the living had largely left. We consider that, both at 1840 and 1870, as a matter of custom, Maori had no right unless they could prove that they were away on business and intended to return..... This shows the inadequacy of conquest as the sole determiner of rights for the uncustomary task of determining ownership at English Law. "(WTR, page 145)

At page 174 of its Report the Tribunal found that:

"On a common-sense view, the Maori had taken possession of the land. But it was not their ancestral land. It was really Moriori land, and Moriori people, that the Maori controlled and possessed. The invasion itself was recent, and a result of European influences that, according to the preamble of the Treaty, the Crown was anxious to suppress. The Treaty had envisaged just outcomes for the future. Moreover, Moriori had remained upon the land, most Maori had been absent for the last 20 or so years, and many had no intention of returning at all.

In the light of all these factors, it ought to have been obvious that an award of a mere 3 per cent of the land to Moriori was indefensible and was insufficient for their future survival and development. The Treaty obliged the Crown actively to protect the interests of the Moriori people. Indeed, in article 3 the Queen extended the 'Natives of New Zealand' her royal protection. We are of the opinion that, to give that protection in this case, the

Treaty obliged the Crown to intervene on behalf of the Moriori people; and that, in breach of that obligation, the Crown failed to do so. The approach we have taken is not new. It is substantially the approach proposed by Hirawanu Tapu, a visionary Moriori leader, though still young at the time in question. He put the matter simply and profoundly to the government of the day. He sought that Rekohu land question should be decided, not upon any narrow construction of law, be it Maori or other law, but according to the higher principles of justice. Assuming that that might be found in the new regime that the Treaty ushered in, he made his appeal to the Queen's law. He then asked that the land be shared."

Accordingly, the Tribunal found that Moriori were entitled to, at the very least, a half share of the land on the main Island, on Pitt Island and in the case of the outlying Islands such as Motuhara or the Forty Fours, our people were entitled to the entire Island.

By 1870, the Moriori population had plummeted from about 1600 in 1835 to a mere 101 individuals left on Rekohu and about another 30 or 40 on mainland New Zealand. That is a decrease in population of some 93% in less than one generation. In modern day terms that would be classified as genocide. But despite these low numbers, Moriori by 1870 again out-numbered Maori who had returned to Taranaki. After being left virtually landless many Moriori families were forced to leave the Islands never to return.

The Crown proclaimed sovereignty over the Chatham Islands on 1 November 1842 so for a period of 21 years they had stood by and watched these tragic events unfold. They knew what was happening on the Islands and the harsh conditions that Moriori were subjected to from reports from visiting missionaries and the Crown magistrate based on the Islands. In 1848, Bishop Selwyn visited the islands and recorded, in an account published the following year, that Moriori *'have been reduced to the condition of serfs and are obliged to obey the orders of every little child of the invading race'*. He concluded that a *'long residence on the island would be necessary to do away entirely with this evil'*.¹ Bishop Selwyn further discussed the situation on the Chatham Islands with Governor Grey in 1849.² But the Crown failed to do anything to stop the brutality and consequential deaths.

I can recall as a young man of 23 years endeavouring to understand what had happened to my ancestors and, after suffering such a horrifying fate, why had they been vilified and misunderstood for so long? As the newly appointed Chair of the Tommy Solomon Trust Foundation, (a position I still hold today), and knowing almost nothing about my own history, I spent many long hours researching in the Turnbull Library and National Archives in Wellington during 1984-85 while doing my professional law papers and

¹ G. A. Selwyn, *A Journal of the Bishop's Visitation Tour through his Diocese, Including a Visit to the Chatham Islands in the Year 1848*, London, 1849, p. 96, cited in 'Historical Evidence of Ashley Gould', Wai 64, F3, p. 54; Waitangi Tribunal, *Rekohu*, p. 66.

² Waitangi Tribunal, *Rekohu*, p. 68, citing Grant Phillipson, 'Report to the Waitangi Tribunal on matters of Relevance to the Chatham Islands Claims Wai 64, Including the Intervention of the Government in the Affairs of the Maori Land Court', 1994, Wai 64, A16, pp. 5-7.

working as a law clerk. What I read both appalled and saddened me but also gave me strength and determination. I learned that Moriori had once been a war-like people but had made a conscious decision to set aside warfare, killing and cannibalism and learned to live in peace for over 500 years. They had evolved a system for resolving conflict that stopped short of killing one another. And they developed a sophisticated system of sharing the precious resources of the land and the sea. This enabled them to sustain a population five times greater than the present-day population of Rekohu. Rather than a weak and inferior people I came to see that my ancestors had evolved a higher level of consciousness of how to live peacefully together and had shown great moral courage to hold fast to their peaceful beliefs in the face of the greatest provocation they would ever face.

Why then had NZ social history portray Moriori in such a poor light? I was soon to learn why. When the story of the erection of a memorial statue of Tommy Solomon became public in early 1984, a Maori correspondent writing to the New Zealand Herald claimed that the statue project should not be allowed to proceed as it was a “fraud on all Maori”. In his opinion the statue should be blown up! This man claimed that it was a conspiracy by Pakeha to keep Maori on the back foot. Pakeha correspondents replied that as Moriori were the first settlers in NZ, Maori should not have any claims under the Treaty as Moriori were here first. And around and around it went. These arguments can still be heard today on radio talk-back shows. Moriori had become a political football for protagonists from both camps to kick around whenever it suited their purposes to do so. Neither side were in the least interested in who and what the Moriori people were and the fact that we had been declared “extinct” in 1933 when Tommy Solomon died, was all the more convenient to the perpetuation of this myth. Afterall, it’s hard to fight back from beyond the grave. To add to the confusion, these prejudices were being actively fed to generations of NZ school children.

Today as the result of the collective will, determination and passion from many Moriori and non-Moriori people alike, we have emerged from the dark shadows of history and back into the ‘misty’ sunlight of Rekohu. Our guiding lights have been the values that have been left to us by our karapuna. The values of peace, of sharing, manawareka (kindness and caring for others) and of inclusivity. Our sense of humour and fun – Moriori are a fun-loving people – has also enabled us to cope with the ‘slings and arrows of outrageous fortune’. But we are also a determined and at times, stubborn, people. For a small Imi (tribe) we have more than our fair share of conflicts. But as I’m fond of telling our people who, understandably get hoha at times with the squabbling, peace is aspirational and might not always be practiced but it is worth striving to achieve. Peace, it seems, can only come at a price. Such is the human condition.

A major challenge Moriori face today on Rekohu is the settlement of our Treaty claims. The claim to the Crown was first filed in 1862 by thirty-three Moriori elders so it has taken only 156 years to get to this point! What should have been a very straight-forward claim to settle given the overwhelming findings of the Waitangi Tribunal in favour of Moriori in its ‘Rekohu’ report in 2001 (which include the specific finding that “*by far the*

greater compensation is due to the Moriori people”). But it has proven not to be as straight-forward as we had hoped due to various strict Crown policies that govern how settlements are negotiated. For example, the Crown has consistently refused to view the unique Moriori claim as being different from Maori claims that has come before it on the mainland. So, we have had to negotiate our settlement within a framework completely unsuited to our unique historical circumstances. That’s like playing an away game with a predisposed referee in charge! Nor is the Crown bound by the findings of the Waitangi Tribunal and can re-interpret or ignore them as they wish. This negotiation (that began in 2004 and had an enforced (on the part of the Crown) hiatus of several years), has been an exceedingly long, frustrating and at times, very stressful process for our negotiators and people. It has taken great patience and perseverance and also a willingness to compromise (at least on our part) and look for pragmatic solutions. As a leader of a major tribe in New Zealand who has settled recently told me, ‘treaty settlements have nothing to do with justice but raw politics and the Crown settling for the very minimum they can get away with’. However, it is important that this tragic chapter in our history can be closed so we can move on. We expect to sign a deed of settlement with the Crown in mid-2019 – subject to negotiating our way through a few last twists and turns including overlapping claims/challenges from Ngati Mutunga o Wharekauri (NMOW) who are also settling with the Crown – although what their claims are remain somewhat of a mystery.

NMOW negotiators have adopted a bellicose attitude towards Moriori throughout the negotiations process. They completely refute the findings of the Waitangi Tribunal (which heard claims from both Moriori and Ngati Mutunga in the mid 1990’s) and maintain that they have exclusive mana whenua (loosely interpreted as ‘authority over land’) over Rekohu and that consequently, Moriori have none because, they claim, “we conquered Moriori”. How you ‘conquer’ a people who refused to fight because it was contrary to their own law, has not yet been explained. They look to the findings of the of the Native Land Court (NLC) in 1870 to justify their position – despite the Waitangi Tribunal finding that the Native Land Court got it completely wrong and effectively acted contrary to what the Treaty required. Consequently, they (Ngati Mutunga negotiators) argue that the Crown cannot vest Crown land in Moriori without either their consent or unless the Crown offer the land to both parties. In most cases NMOW do not want the land for themselves (much of it is in reserves); they just don’t want Moriori to have it. This is viewed by Moriori as mean spirited given that NMOW were awarded all the land on Rekohu and Rangihau (Pitt Island) by the NLC in 1870 and then immediately on-sold or leased 60% of it to Pakeha pastoralists.

NMOW have also recently filed a proceeding on the High Court in Wellington to stop the Department of Conservation vesting a block of culturally and spiritually significant land known as ‘Taia’ back into Moriori ownership on the grounds that they have “exclusive mana-whenua” over it – notwithstanding that as soon as the land was awarded to them in 1870 they immediately on-sold it to a Pakeha settler farmer, Walter Hood. They are arguing in this case that their human rights under the NZ Bill of Rights Act 1990 will be violated if the vesting goes ahead. What about Moriori human rights I hear you ask?

NMOW lost the case in the High Court in August this year but have appealed the decision of Honourable Justice Collins to the Court of Appeal. This appeal will be heard in early 2019 and likely end up in the Supreme Court. Not a great blueprint for future harmony between Moriori and NMOW.

Understandably, given the large amount of intermarriage that has occurred on Rekohu/Wharekauri over the past 50 or so years between Moriori and Ngati Mutunga families, many people feel divided or are made to feel divided in their loyalties. I especially feel for the younger generation who are caught up in the ongoing conflicts. It had been our hope that we may have been able to achieve a degree of healing and reconciliation as part of this settlement process and to leave the past in the past. But it would be fair to say that this aspiration is looking distant at the present time. But as I have previously stated in this paper, peace and reconciliation is an aspirational ideal and might not be achievable in the short term but is still a worthy objective to strive towards in the future. However, in order for there to be lasting peace on Rekohu/Wharekauri/Chatham Islands there must also be a sense of justice having been done and, just as importantly, an acceptance, rather than denial, of the past.

Me rongo,
Maui Solomon
9 November 2018

This lecture is available on the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship site,
<http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/apf/resource.htm>