
CANTERBURY EARTHQUAKE MEMORIAL: TE PUNA MAUMAHARA

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Kia atawhai ki te iwi – Care for the people
Pita Te Hori, Upoko – Ngāi Tūāhuriri Rūnanga, 1861





Ko taku ture i ahu mai i toku tupuna i a Ahuriri nana i mea, ‘Kia atawhai ki te Pākehā’,
muri iho, ka pera ano hoki te kupu a Tū-rākau-tahi. Nō reira tonu ano kahore he kino i
roto i o mātou, ngakau kua noho marie tātou.

My laws commenced with Ahuriri he said, Be kind to men. After him Tū-rākau-tahi said
the same. So from thence to the present time we have had no evil in our hearts

Te Hori, 1861

INTRODUCTION

This report provides an overview of Ngāi Tūāhuriri traditions and values associated with commemorating those who have passed in order to inform and inspire exploratory thinking on the nature, scope and design of the Canterbury Earthquake Memorial (the Memorial). These traditions and values will, we hope, serve as a guide to assist those charged with the challenge and burden of creating a widely embraced and utilised space for remembering those who passed in the Canterbury earthquakes and also those who demonstrated bravery in rescue and recovery efforts.

While Ngāi Tūāhuriri wish to ensure that the design and ethos of the Memorial reflects, embodies and expresses Ngāi Tūāhuriri narratives, histories and aspirations, there is also a desire to ensure that the Memorial speaks to and for all – that it is a place of sanctuary and healing for all peoples, wherein our collective sense of loss and tragedy might somehow be lifted within a place of healing and reflection.

The key aspirations of Ngāi Tūāhuriri for the Memorial are that it will be:

- a living memorial – rather than a stark and cold edifice, the Memorial should be a place of life, contemplation, vegetation and growth, a symbol of rebirth and renewal
- a space and design that reflects the natural elements and landscape specific to Waitaha/ Canterbury and specific particularly to 22 February 2011. In this respect, stars such as Aotahi (Canopus) are relevant, as is Te Hau Kai Takata (the infamous nor’ west wind);
- a place of lament and memory, but also a place of healing, peace and renewal, a place where “tragedy is avenged by tears” (Mā ngā roimata ka ea te mamae – our pain will be eased by our tears)
- a haven in the city centre
- symbolically and functionally, a southwest gateway into the city Core – a welcoming and inviting point of entry and transcendence.

Ngāi Tūāhuriri have identified several key concepts, themes, values or traditions as having particular import and relevance to the Memorial. This report echoes the sentiments of the Grand Narrative in regard to the need to design the Square as a sacred space for the people of Christchurch. So too Ngāi Tūāhuriri feel that the Memorial should be designed as a sacred, hallowed space – a space imbued with not only meaning due to its role in preserving a collective memory of our shared loss and tragedy, but also a meaning and narrative that reflects the deep connections held by Ngāi Tahu, and indeed all Cantabrians, with the land and surrounding natural elements. Ngāi Tūāhuriri wishes to see designers draw on and be inspired by the natural landscape, to create a place of sanctuary, healing, meditation and peace.

THE ANCESTRAL HOUSE – WHARE TUPUNA

In Ngāi Tahu and Māori traditional society, the most iconic form in remembering those who have passed is the whare tupuna – the ancestral house or the meeting house for the tribe. The whare tupuna is a powerful metaphor and institution in Māoridom. These houses, whilst performing key social and cultural functions for the collective, are a visual representation and living memorial to ancestors who have paved the way for their people and who now, through the whare, continue to shelter and nurture the people.

The ridge pole of the whare is likened to the spine, the backbone of an ancestor, while the supporting beams coming down to the walls represent the ribs of the ancestor, which in turn connect to the upright poles along the sides of the whare, each often representing a specific ancestor. The upright poles within the whare that support the backbone are also often seen to depict, via carvings, key ancestors. Looking at the face of the whare from outside on the ātea (ceremonial courtyard), the traditional carved meeting house has a carved depiction of an eponymous ancestor on the apex of the whare, known as the tekoteko.

Thus, in Māori traditions, the whare tupuna operates as a living memorial to those who have passed on, a place to learn and recall the achievements of ancestors, and to affirm collective identity and memory through whakapapa (genealogy), oratory and waiata (song). Within the whare tupuna, there is a sense of warmth, shelter and at times solitude; more often, there is an all-pervasive sense of whanaungatanga (relationships and connections). The walls of most whare tupuna are adorned with images and photos of ancestors and the hapū’s deceased – an ongoing reminder of past generations that fuels our collective memory and our shared identity.

The concept of a ‘living’ whare tupuna may serve as some inspiration to the Memorial’s designers, at least in a metaphorical or symbolic fashion. Such a whare (house) might have native trees for the poutokomanawa (centre pole) and poupou (upright poles), with the constellations as a purapurawhetū (finely latticed ceiling), a ngutu (gateway or portal), while the river Ōtākaro/Avon River might serve as a tahuhu (backbone) of sorts for Memorial.

TE ORANGA HOU – NEW LIFE

Traditionally, Ngāi Tūāhuriri have often commemorated the passing of a loved one with the planting of a tree. Some of those trees were given the names of those for whom they were planted. At one level, the tree grows into an ongoing living memorial to the deceased. At a more esoteric and philosophical level, the tree in time serves to provide new life, shelter and sustenance to those around it. In this respect the tree marks the ongoing life force of those who have passed, a living monument that triggers both memory and a sense of renewal.

At Tuahiwi marae in times of old, on the passing of a member of the tribe, a tree was planted near the marae. This tradition continues in some respect at places such as the wetland reserve at Ōtukaikino,¹ wherein native New Zealand trees are planted to commemorate loved ones who have passed away – thus creating a living memorial within a beautiful environment to which they may return, to reflect, to remember, to gather their strength.

At Ōtukaikino, specific trees are not dedicated to any one person; rather, a tree is merely added to the growing corpus of vegetation that pays tribute to the collective of those who have passed.

1. www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-visit/canterbury/christchurch-and-banks-peninsula/otukaikino



Ōtukaikino Wetland Reserve

This concept of a living memorial is apt also for the Memorial, and aligns with the proposed site for the Memorial within Te Papa Ōtākaro/Avon River Precinct, with its emphasis on reconnecting and engaging the community with the natural environment.

MŌTEATEA – SONGS OF LAMENT

Ngāi Tūāhuriri are no strangers to tragedy, loss and grief. As noted in the Grand Narrative, the fall of Kaiapoi Pā marked a turning point in Ngāi Tūāhuriri and Ngāi Tahu history and generated a deep and enduring collective pain that has echoed through the generations. Yet Ngāi Tūāhuriri survived and in time prospered again. The tribal values at the heart of Ngāi Tūāhuriri identity such as manaaki, atawhai and rangatiratanga were no doubt critical in moving the collective past the grief of the losses incurred at Kaiapoi. But also influential was the traditional process of grieving, the process of commemorating those who were lost.

One of the traditions that continue to this day is the composition and passing down of mōteatea – songs of lament for loved ones who have passed. Mōteatea are an ancient form of waiata (song or chant) that play a critical role in keeping oral traditions alive and in remembering those who have passed away.

An example of a mōteatea is ‘E Kimi Ana’, a famous dirge among Ngāi Tahu that questions the causes and source of death, and explores the process of grieving by those left behind. Matiaha Tiramorehu composed this mōteatea for his wife after she had taken her own life.

E kimi ana i te mate o te motu
I ngā waniwani a mua a Weka
Nana i whakapiki ka reo o te tini
o te iwi o te ao o o o
Waiho kia mate ana te tangata
tuarua tia nei e koe te mamae ki au
E tira ka huri kino koe
i au u u u
Haere rā whatu karokaro i te Tahu
e karo tonu atu koe i au
Haere rā e hine i te ara whānui e rori
Ka tika ia Hinetitama i a Tahu Kumea i a Tahu Whakairo
ka tika tea ra ki te mate
Huaparaunoa e Tāne ki te whai
Nō hea e mou mai koi ana i tapoko atu ai
ki roto o te tatau o te whare o Pohutukawa
Ko pou tere Rangi e oti tonu atu koe te tahu e e e
Hoki kau mai nei e Tāne ki te ao
Ko miro kino ai tena kakau penei me aue
Mo motu kino nei
Taku manawa ki a koe e te Tahu e
Whakapiki te haere a Tahu ki te Rangi i a Rehua i runga
Whakapiki te haere a Tahu ki te Rangi i a Tama-i-waho
Whakapiki titahi te haere a Tama ki te rangi i a Te-Rangi
Whakaupoko i runga ka tuturu ano te Kāhui Ariki
Kei te mutuka heke



Entrance to Ōtukaikino Wetland Reserve.



Image Credit: Paul Shackleton

ihō nei a e Tāne ki te whenua
ka tipu e tangata e i noho I e Ao Marama e i i i

ROIMATA – TEARS OF LAMENT AND HEALING

There is great healing power within tears– roimata. Roimata are a manifestation of the process, the emotions and pain of longing and grief, of lament for a loved one, or in anguish and times of tragedy generally. The expression of sorrow and remembering through tears is a metaphor evident in the earliest of Māori traditions and, in the traditions of many iwi, appears with the story of the separation of Rakinui (the Sky Father) and Papatūānuku. For eons, these lovers and primordial parents had been locked in a loving and all-encompassing embrace. Their children resided in the darkness and cramped conditions between Rakinui and Papatūānuku. After unsuccessful attempts by his brothers, it was Tāne – God of the Forest – who eventually was able to separate Rakinui and Papatūānuku, thus opening up the world to light and understanding – Te Ao Marama.

In Ngāi Tūāhuriri and other tribal traditions, the rain is in fact the tears of grief falling from Rakinui, who remains bereft at being separated from his lover. In turn, the dew of the morning represents the tears of Papatūānuku – who gazes upwards to her husband with longing and despair.

Through the centuries, tears – the process of crying – has become a natural part of the process of grieving in most cultures, and continues to be evident on marae across the country at takiaue (funerals) where kuia (elderly women) in particular express raw emotions and grief through wailing and through emotional bursts of crying. These kuia will often be seen wearing pare kawakawa – green wreaths upon their heads made from the kawakawa plant (*Piper excelsum*) – and will sit within the mahau (porch) of the wharehau supporting the process of grief and remembering through tears and lament.

This then connects us to the use and image of water – the power of water to cleanse, renew and heal. The proximity of the proposed location of the Memorial alongside the Ōtākaro/Avon River provides an ideal opportunity to link the Memorial – at least symbolically but perhaps also in a tangible design sense – with water and the metaphor of tears.

KARANGA

In a similar vein to mōteatea, the act and process of karanga (a cry, wail or call) continue to be an important means of remembering the dead for Ngāi Tahu and Māori generally. The karanga is usually heard at a traditional Māori welcome (pōwhiri) and is the first cry of welcome on the marae. Karanga is the domain of women, most often the elderly women of the tribe or group. It is the first voice heard at a pōwhiri and is laden with emotion, lament, ihi (energy) and spirituality. In many respects, the karanga is a call to awaken and bring forth the spirits of those who have gone, to bring their guidance and oversight to the proceedings at hand.

When calling out her karanga, the kaikaranga (caller) will usually make reference to those who have passed away, to remind the audience of loved ones no longer present, of the ancestors’ continued influence on our lives. Often those undertaking the karanga will be overcome with tears and emotion, particularly if the occasion is a takiaue (funeral).

For Ngāi Tahu, the process of grieving through tears and through sound – mōteatea and karanga, for example – are important aspects of remembering those who have passed away, and they continue to be a vital part of the process of healing.

NGĀ WHETŪ O TE RANGI – STARS OF THE SOUTHERN SKY

Traditions associated with astronomy and the constellations continue to be of significance to Ngāi Tahu and perhaps offer a further means of connecting the Memorial to the natural world, and to those elements and aspects of cosmology pertinent to Waitaha/Canterbury. For Ngāi Tūāhuriri, the stars were an essential guide to seasonal activities, a map, and a canvas upon which to create and affirm tribal identity and stories. For Ngāi Tūāhuriri the stars, particularly those present in February, provide a tapestry and visual reference point that might be incorporated into the Memorial design.

As noted in the Square Narrative, the traditions associated with Whitireia – the house of Paikea – and its links to Tuahiwi, and the links also to the path of the Sun – ‘te taumata o Te Rā’ – all provide rich material to inform and assist with the development of the Memorial project. As proposed in the Square Narrative, Whitireia has an apt connection to the Square in the heart of the central city. Continuing the celestial theme, for Ngāi Tūāhuriri, the most appropriate celestial body for the Memorial is the star Aotahi – Canopus (Alpha Carinae).

AOTAHI – TE UPOKO O NGĀ WHETŪ

In Ngāi Tahu traditions, Aotahi is the name of the star Canopus. Aotahi is the second brightest star in the night-time sky, second only to Sirius (Takurua or Rehua). The name Aotahi, or its other tribal variations of Autahi or Atutahi, translates approximately as ‘first light’ or ‘single light’, intimating the star’s solitary nature and position in the sky. Aotahi is regarded as a very tapu (sacred) star and always dwells alone. Aotahi is particularly prevalent in the southern sky in the month of February.

Aotahi has several different mythologies attached to it as well. In Ngāi Tūāhuriri traditions, it was the God Tāne who affixed all of the stars, including Aotahi, to his great cloak, which he then cast across the heavens. He then secured the cloak using four great pegs – Pari nuku, Pari-raki, Hira uta and Hira tai.

Like the hands on a clock face, Aotahi and Te Punga (the anchor, the Southern Cross) move around the unmoving heart of the southern skies, the South Celestial Pole. In the dawn sky, Te Punga is buried in the south. In some tribal traditions, Aotahi anchors a great waka to Papatūānuku. In this context, the star is referred to as Te Taki o Aotahi, a towline to Aotahi from the shores of Papatūānuku. As Aotahi moves ever higher in the sky, it tugs at Te Punga. Slowly, the anchor is lifted from its resting place and the great waka begins to move away from the horizon to sail once again across Te Wainui o Te Ranginui (the great ocean of the Skyfather).

Another Māori tradition tells of how Aotahi was left outside of the basket representing the Milky Way when Tāne wove it. Another related myth surrounding the star says that Aotahi was the first-born child of Rangi who refused to enter the Milky Way and so turned it sideways and rose before it.

In some traditions, it is said that Tāne cast the stars across the heavens from his great kete (basket). It is said that Aotahi was the elder sibling amongst all the stars, and was reluctant to leave Tāne’s kete. Aotahi thus clung to its sides. In the Māori worldview, that is why Aotahi now sits, somewhat aloof and in solitude, to the side of the main body of stars that make up Te Ika Roa A Te Rangi – the Great Fish in the Sky (the Milky Way). This aloofness, and desire to differentiate himself, is why, in Ngāi Tūāhuriri traditions Aotahi is referred to as ‘Te Upoko o Ngā Whetū’, the lord of the stars. In other tribal traditions, Aotahi is known as ‘Te Upoko o Te Tau’, the lord of the year.

Aotahi had a special place, along with Rigel (Puaka), because of their intimate association with kūmara cultivation. Their appearance in the eastern sky was the sign for planting to begin. Aotahi and Puaka could also be used to foretell the weather. Prior to European arrival, Aotahi was used to foretell the seasons. According to tradition, if its rays extended toward the south it foretold rain and snow, and an inclement season; if toward the north a mild season followed.

When undertaking the rituals to send the deceased’s spirit on their way beyond the veil to the spirit world, a tohunga (seer/priest) would often locate the brightest star in the night sky, and then – with the appropriate prayer and incantations – send the spirit off towards the star, with the star guiding the path that was to be travelled. Therefore, in the case of those lost in the February earthquake, the spirits of those who have passed would, traditionally, have been sent off towards Aotahi – the brightest beacon in the February night sky, guiding them on the journey towards their final resting place.

This connection between death and the stars is also reflected in a phrase often heard when referring to the deceased (for instance, at a traditional takiaue or tangihanga (funeral)): “Kua whetū rangihia” – they have now become one of the stars in the heavens.

HAPOPO – GOD OF TRAGEDY

In many iwi traditions, Rūaumoko is the god of earthquakes and the youngest child of Rakinui and Papatūānuku. Rūaumoko is often personified as a baby, still nestled deep within the bosom of his mother, Papatūānuku. Whilst, to some extent, Ngāi Tahu traditions reference Rūaumoko, in times of tragedy and collective loss, there is more emphasis placed upon the atua (god) Hapopo.

In his recollections concerning the fall of Kaiapoi Pā and in recounting Ngāi Tahu oral traditions, Natanahira Waruwarutu refers to Hapopo in the context of great tragedy, when there is a collective sense that the gods are against the tribe.

TE HAU KAI TAKATA – THE NOR’WEST WIND

The nor’west wind is another natural element prevalent in the Canterbury landscape in February and should inform the design of the Memorial. Known to Ngāi Tūāhuriri as Te-mauru-e-taki-nei, or more commonly, Te Hau Kai Takata – the wind that devours humankind – the nor’wester is the wind that dominates Canterbury from October through to late autumn.

I. www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-visit/canterbury/christchurch-and-banks-peninsula/otukaikino





CHRISTIANITY

Like other iwi, the ancestors of Ngāi Tūāhuriri embraced Christianity for a range of spiritual, social, economic and political motives, particularly in the wake of the dislocation of intertribal conflict in the 1820s and 1830s. For Ngāi Tūāhuriri, while the Memorial should be inclusive of all cultures and religions, it is important that the Memorial reflects the relationship of Ngāi Tahu and Canterbury's settler communities with the Christian faith. This relationship includes the corpus of Christianity's doctrines and teachings on renewal, hope and resurrection. Such doctrines and teachings were a source of strength for Ngāi Tūāhuriri in the 19th century as the people recovered from the loss of both Kaiapoi Pā and many leaders of the tribe.

Christianity, whether through the Church of England, the Rātana Church or other strands of the religion, has assisted Ngāi Tūāhuriri, as a collective and as individuals, to lift the dark cloud of grief. So too should the traditions and teachings of Christianity be an ongoing source of strength and recovery now in the wake of the earthquakes. The first relationship Ngāi Tūāhuriri had with Christianity was with the Anglican Church. St Stephens's church at Tuahiwi bears testament to the historical relationship between Ngāi Tūāhuriri and the Anglican Church.

The traditional rituals and practices in relation to death and mourning were led by the tohunga of Ngāi Tahu. These rituals were often very complicated and onerous. Like other iwi, Ngāi Tahu looked on Christianity as a means of uplifting themselves and providing a means to leave behind the darkness and grief of the past. Christianity aligned with Ngāi Tahu values and offered a means of renewal, healing and salvation. So too did the Rātana Church, which was subsequently embraced by Ngāi Tūāhuriri after some members of the tribe felt that the Anglican Church had not sufficiently protected or advanced the interests of Ngāi Tahu with the settler communities and government, particularly during the general malaise and widespread poverty and landlessness of the tribe in the late 19th century.

The Rātana Church (and the subsequent political movement) was founded by Tahu Wiremu Pōtiki Rātana in the early 19th century, and has its headquarters at the settlement of Rātana, near Whanganui. Noting the discussion above in terms of the importance of stars for Ngāi Tūāhuriri in the Memorial design, the symbol of the star is also an integral part of the Rātana emblem. The five-pointed star of Rātana along with the crescent moon is often seen on the lapels of mōrehu

(the scattered remnant, Rātana followers) and at prominent points on church buildings. The golden crescent moon (symbolising enlightenment) can face different parts of the coloured star: blue represents Te Matua (the Father), white is Te Tama (the Son), red is Te Wairua Tapu (Holy Spirit) and purple is Ngā Anahera Pono (the loyal angels). Te whetū mārama represents the kingdom of light or Māramatanga, standing firm against the forces of darkness (mākutu).

CONCLUSION

This report is a starting point to inform the design process for the Memorial, to ensure it accords with Ngāi Tūāhuriri values and aspirations. Ngāi Tūāhuriri does not take lightly its role as ‘host’ and mana whenua. It feels compelled to practise and perpetuate the values of atawhai and manaaki to all of those who reside within its ancestral lands. Accordingly, Ngāi Tūāhuriri is committed to providing ongoing assistance and input into the design and build process for the Memorial in the months and years ahead. It is our hope that the Memorial reflects and embodies the traditions and values of Ngāi Tūāhuriri, as well as all Canterbury settlers, and becomes an iconic international testament to both those who were lost in earthquakes and those who remain.

Mō tātou, ā, mō ngā uri am muri ake nei.

For us and for those that will follow.

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