

HENARE KING

Toi Tu Te Whenua

The book “The Tail of the Fish” was published in 1968 and written by a Te Aupouri kuia, Matire Kereama (nee: Hoeft) of the far north of Aotearoa, New Zealand. I grew up with this book as my grandmother would read the stories to me at bedtime. Although my comprehension of each story was very vague and unrelatable to my life at that time, today, I find myself totally absorbed by the historical content and knowledge encapsulated in each chapter.

I completed a Masters of Applied Indigenous Knowledge at Te Wananga o Aotearoa in 2017, entitled; Tales of the singing fish: He tangi wairua. I composed twelve waiata (Maori songs) of which ten of the waiata was information extracted from ten chapters of the book. The other two waiata were composed specifically for my people of the Te Rarawa tribe, namely, Ahipara.

The Yugoslavian people or Tarara as they were commonly known in the far north immigrated to the area to work in the gumfields however, now that the free and easy life on the gumfields was over, Te Aupouri returned to resettle on their ancestral lands at Whangapē. On reaching home, they separated into two groups. Those who had relatives living around old Makora pa went there; the rest moved further up the valley to settle beside the Nague stream at Pawarenga. The bush at Pawarenga was full of good things to eat, the streams teeming with eels. Everybody helped to unpack and nikau houses were erected and made comfortable. The children were bathed in the stream fed and put to bed. Meanwhile, the women had prepared the hangi (English?) which they left ready while the men went out to shoot wood pigeons, called kukupā in the north and kererū in the south.

When the hunters returned, they were treated to a true home-coming party. Karaka trees loaded with yellow berries grew beside the stream. The trees were chopped down and the berries poured into large baskets made by the women. As time

advanced each person was asked to point out the area which he would like to claim for himself while acknowledging the river to be the general boundary for the entire block. A knoll of big tree was selected at the boundary mark for an individual claim. Once the limits had been defined it was decided that the boundary lines should be cut the next day. At the sitting of the Native land court all went to file their claims and so became titled owners of their chosen parcel of land. Many left their lands later on in life to seek a better lifestyle in the cities.

Toi tu hē kainga
Toi tu te whenua
Whatungarongaro hē tangata
Toi tu te whenua
Mā te aroha
Me te wairua
Kia whakakōtahi
I a tātou te iwi
Toi tu te whenua

Aue manākitanga e
Te pono me te tika
To manawa
Kia mau tonu ki te tikanga
Ā ō tūpuna e