

Tuhoe sends forwarded condolences to France

Karla Alkuhata
Staff reporter

AFTER cementing Tuhoe's relationship with France at an Armistice Day celebration at Ruatoki, Hemana Waaka's heart went out to his new European friends when he heard about the deadly Paris bombings.

Mr Waaka invited Olivier Schille, the general representative of Le Souvenir Francais for New Zealand, to the event at Te Rewarewa Marae to present a replica Croix de Guerre, or French Cross to the family of Puia Tamehana.

Mr Tamehana had won the medal for bravery shown in the battle of Flanders's Field during World War I and Mr Schille was at the event to represent the French government.

But just two days later, on Friday the 13th, a series of co-ordinated terrorist attacks – comprising mass shootings, suicide bombings, and hostage-taking – occurred in Paris.

The attacks killed 132 people and 352 were admitted to hospital with injuries, including 80 described as being critically injured.

Mr Waaka said Tuhoe people felt for

those in France affected by the acts of terrorism.

"[We] extend our sorrow and grief to the French people through the French representative of the Souvenir Francais, Olivier Schille, by sending his office a message of condolence and poroporoaki (farewell) for the needless loss of innocent lives in Paris."

"To the families of the victims, we send our aroha (love) to you and know that courage will surface and your French spirit will not allow your lives and dignity to suffer [from] this terrible plight."

- Hemana Waaka

He said the bond between France and New Zealand, and particularly Tuhoe, had been strengthened after commemorating the 100th anniversary of World War I.

"History has revealed that our nation went to fight for the freedom of the French and Belgium during World War I and when the bells started to toll across Europe to signify the end of the

Great War, peace would reign and that normality would return to these countries.

"However, it was not long when the guns of war were again sounded to echo in the peaceful valleys of Europe as Britain declared war against Germany in 1939.

"And now a different type of war has emerged, creating terrific and horrible loss of life to a civilian population throughout the Middle East and surrounding regions [and] which has now extended to super power countries, who are battling to suppress the rise of an Islamic State in a battle of the unseen enemy, arising out of Syria and its borders.

"And so it is with terrible loss of innocent lives in Paris – how can we not forget our tipuna (ancestors) fought for their freedom only to be taken away from a group of an evil cult arising from a religion that has rebelled against their own beliefs and condemned by the very faith they were supposed to respect.

"To the families of the victims, we send our aroha (love) to you and know that courage will surface and your French spirit will not allow your lives and dignity to suffer [from] this terrible plight."