

WAIKŌAU – LYELL CREEK

NGĀI TAHU CULTURAL ASSOCIATION WITH THE WAIKŌAU / LYELL CREEK



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Prepared by Takerei Norton on behalf of Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura

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Whakaahua Taupoki – *Cover Photograph*

The photograph is of the Waikōau (Lyell Creek) with Mount Fyffe located in the background. St Pauls Presbyterian Church is located on the far left of the illustration overlooking the Waikōau.

Te Whakarāpopotanga - Executive Summary

Waikōau is the Māori name for the Lyell Creek. The transliteration of Waikōau is straightforward; 'wai' is the Māori word for water, and 'kōau' is one of the Māori names for the shag. Te Wai o Matamata is a former lagoon located at the mouth of the Waikōau named after a taniwha that used to dwell there.

A famous battle between Ngāti Mamoe and Ngāti Kuri known as Ōpōkihi occurred on the banks of the Waikōau (Lyell Creek). The Ngāti Kurī rangatira Marukaitātea and Te Rākaitauheke led the defeat of Ngāti Mamoe at this location, which resulted in Ngāti Mamoe retreating south from the Peketā pā on the southern bank of the Kahutara River to Ōmihi.

As part of the 1859 Kaikōura Deed of Purchase the Crown purchased the land stretching from the Hurunui River to Te Parinui o Whiti (White Bluffs) and inland to the Main Divide from Ngāti Kurī. As part of the Kaikōura Deed of Purchase the Crown established 14 small native reserves situated along the Kaikōura coastline, including the Ōpōkihi D Native Reserve located on the Waikōau River, which is no longer in Māori ownership.

As part of the construction of the main state highway and railway line along the east coast of the South Island, several public work camps were established to house workers and their families. One of these public work camps was located on Beach Road near the Waikōau (Lyell Creek), where several Māori families lived.

Although the lower stretches of the Waikōau were heavily polluted, the middle stretches of the river were much cleaner and this is where Māori families from the works camp used to go swimming. Watercress and eels were gathered from the middle stretches of the Lyell Creek. Large stands of harakeke and raupō were situated on the banks of the Waikōau all the way down to the river mouth were used for cultural purposes. The council took out these stands of harakeke and raupō to build a big bank, and nowadays the grassy riverbank is totally different to when it was covered by harakeke and raupō.

The Lyell Creek is considered by Ngāti Kurī as one of the dirtiest rivers in Kaikōura. The lower section of the Lyell Creek was the main area where the Kaikōura town centre and Kaikōura hospital discharged their sewerage. Situated behind Harnetts Butchery in the town centre was where animals were processed for the butchery, with the remains being dispatched into the river. The water at the mouth of the Lyell was a bloody-red colour where large rats would walk along the bottom of the river. When the weather was rough the sewerage would sometimes blow across the sea from the Lyell Creek river mouth to the rocks situated behind the Garden of Memories. As a consequence local Māori never gathered food from the river mouth or the immediate surrounding area because it was so heavily polluted, and instead gather foods from other nearby places.

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1.0 HE KUPU WHAKATAKI - INTRODUCTION

1.1. Tāhuhu Korero – Background

This report is a summary of the Ngāti Kurī traditional and contemporary history associated with the Waikōau (Lyell Creek). Following the success of our recent research project on Piri-tūtae-putaputa (Conway River), Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura has decided to embark on a project systematically researching the Ngāti Kurī history and values for all waterways located in the takiwā of Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura.

Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura has selected the Waikōau (Lyell Creek) because the Rūnanga considers that historically the Waikōau (Lyell Creek) is one of the most polluted rivers in Kaikōura that has been largely ignored by local authorities. Takerei Norton was then approached by Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura to prepare this report based on the same methodology used for Piri-tūtae-putaputa (Conway River).

This report will assist Ngāti Kurī's kaitiakitanga (guardianship) responsibilities in advocating the protection and restoration of the cultural values associated with the Waikōau (Lyell Creek) to local authorities, Government agencies and local landowners through the appropriate channels. Just as important though is that the oral histories component of the research methodology will ensure that this contemporary knowledge will be protected for future generations.

1.2. Te Take o Te Mahere – Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to outline the Ngāi Tahu/Ngāti Kurī historical, cultural and traditional association with the Waikōau (Lyell Creek) so these values can be incorporated into the future management of the Waikōau.

1.3. He aha kai roto i tēnei mahere – What this Report Includes

This report includes the following information:

- Description of Ngāi Tahu Whānui, Ngāti Kurī, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura;
- An overview of the Ngāi Tahu/Ngāti Kurī history and occupation of Kaikōura;
- An explanation of the Māori names associated with the Waikōau (Lyell Creek);
- An overview of the mahinga kai history associated with the Waikōau (Lyell Creek).

1.4. Ngā Tikanga Whakahaere - *Methodology*

The following methodology was undertaken to complete this report:

- Relevant literature regarding the Ngāi Tahu / Ngāti Kurī history and occupation of Te Ahi Kai Kōura a Tama ki te Raki (Kaikōura) was reviewed;
- Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura identified people who were then interviewed;
- The Kaikōura Historical Society District Museum & Archives photo collection was reviewed for photos of the Waikōau (Lyell Creek);
- A draft report was prepared and then circulated to Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura and interviewees for review; and
- Final report completed based on feedback received from Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura and interviewees.

2.0 MANAWHENUA – TRIBAL AUTHORITY

2.1. Ngāi Tahu Whānui

Ngāi Tahu Whānui is the collective of individuals who descend from the primary hapū (sub-tribe) of Kāti Kurī, Kāti Irakehu, Kāti Huirapa, Ngāi Tūāhuriri, and Kāi Te Ruahikihiki and is recognised as the iwi (tribe) with mana whenua (tribal authority) over its takiwā (tribal area) within Te Waipounamu (the South Island).

2.2. Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu

Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu is the mandated iwi authority established by Ngāi Tahu Whānui under Section 6 of the Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu Act 1996 to protect the beneficial interests of all members of Ngāi Tahu Whānui, including the beneficial interests of the Papatipu Rūnanga of those members.

Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu is governed by elected representatives from each of the 18 Papatipu Rūnanga and has an administrative office as well as a number of commercial companies. The takiwā of Ngāi Tahu Whānui is the area described in Section 5 of the Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu Act 1996, being:

all the lands, islands and coasts of Te Waipounamu south of Te Parinui o Whiti (White Bluffs) on the East Coast and Te Rae o Kahurangi (Kahurangi Point) on the West Coast.

2.3. Ngāti Kurī

Ngāti Kurī is a hapū of Ngāi Tahu who hold manawhenua in Kaikōura. Several different iwi, such as Rapuwai, Waitaha and Ngāti Mamoe occupied Kaikōura establishing many settlements before Ngāti Kurī arrived to Kaikōura from the North Island in the seventeenth century. Ngāti Kurī pushed Ngāti Mamoe out of Kaikōura claiming manawhenua over the Kaikōura region. Although Ngāti Kurī is the hapū who holds manawhenua over Kaikōura today, most Ngāti Kurī families can trace their whakapapa (genealogy) back to these ancient iwi.

2.4. Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura

Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura is the administrative and legal body of Ngāti Kurī and is one of 18 Ngāi Tahu Papatipu Rūnanga making up Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu. Papatipu Runanga are regional collective bodies that were established by Ngāi Tahu in the nineteenth century that today act as the administrative councils of traditional Ngāi Tahu hapū and marae-based communities. The 18 Ngāi Tahu Papatipu Rūnanga are spread throughout Te Waipounamu and each is responsible for protecting tribal interests in their respective takiwā.

The Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu Act 1996 defines the takiwā of Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura from Te Parinui o Whiti (White Bluffs) in the north, to the Hurunui River and inland to the Main Divide.

3.0 WAIKŌAU – LYELL CREEK

This section provides an overview of the traditional and contemporary Ngāti Kurī history associated with the Waikōau (Lyell Creek).

3.1. Te Wai o Matamata

Te Wai o Matamata is the name for a former lagoon located at the mouth of the Waikōau.¹

Matamata is a taniwha that used to dwell at a former lagoon located at the mouth of the Waikōau. There are two recorded accounts of the Matamata tradition, which are quite different from each other. The first account was recorded by A.H Carrington from the late Hariata Beaton, a noted and highly respected Ngāti Kurī authority on the Māori history of Kaikōura. The second account recorded by W.J Elvy in his book *‘Kaikoura Coast: The History, Traditions and Maori Place-names of Kaikōura’*, which is highly regarded in terms of Māori placenames throughout Kaikōura.



Figure 1: Illustration of the Waikōau river mouth drawn in the late 19th century (B-139-003, Kaikoura; West End and Lyell Creek, 1883, John Gibb, Alexander Turnbull Library).

Beaton’s account of the Matamata tradition is as follows:

A well-known chief and brave warrior of Ngāti Kurī, Te Rakitauneke, lived at Ō Te Makura (Goose Bay). The taniwha Matamata lived at a lagoon located at Ō Te Makura (Goose Bay) Bay, whose sole duty was to do Te Rakitauneke’s bidding, to get him all his needs and to guard him against harm. Where ever Te Rakitauneke went, so too did Matamata.

¹ Elvy 1949:65

When Te Rakitauneke went to Kaikōura, Matamata lived in the little lagoon at the bottom of the Garden of Memories, and there is a big limestone rock near the deepest part of the lagoon, which marks Matamata's place. No matter where Te Rakitauneke went there was always room alongside him for his Atua.

After Te Rakitauneke died, Matamata moved to Banks Peninsula where he occupied a deep hole near a papa rock opposite Robinson's place at Wairewa.²

Elvy's account is slightly different:

Ngati-Mamoe had a legend of a taniwha that lived in the lagoon at the mouth of Lyell stream. Its name was Mata-mata. I have collected the story of this taniwha of Lyell creek from a descendant of Maru the Ngai-Tahu hero, who figures in the following story. It appears that about 250 years or more ago, when the Ngati-Mamoe and the Ngāi Tahu battled for the possession of the Kaikoura Peninsula, the former tribe had a pet taniwha which they placed at the mouth of the Lyell stream. The spot is (or was) known as Wai te Mata-mata.

In those days the limestone bluffs came right down to the river and one had to walk along a narrow track at the river edge. From the description given me, this taniwha was a 'nasty bit of work'. He had a long neck and scaly body. His job was to keep the Ngai-Tahu from travelling past the river mouth, towards the Peninsula. He did this most effectively by ejecting noxious fluid which stupefied the intruders, who were then devoured by him.

After losing a number of his tribe by the attacks of this monster, the chief, Maru, decided that something must be done about it. He had a strong noose prepared, and when the monster was asleep he and some of his bravest warriors hid themselves in the flax and raupo along the stream near his lair. He then arranged for some fleet-footed youths to entice the monster out. They did this by shouting insults at it; and while it was peering round to discover the offenders, Maru threw the noose over its head, and his companions, hauling on the attached rope, soon had it choking and helpless. Maru then approached the monster and slew it with his magic axe. When they opened up the taniwha they found in its stomach the clothes, ornaments and weapons belonging to the various victims it had devoured. Lineal descendants of Maru are still living in the Kaikoura district.³

3.2. Early Māori Occupation of Kaikōura

The Kaikōura region was favoured by early Māori. Ancient Māori settlement was based around fishing and the hunting of moa, seals, and other birds. Moa-hunting sites have been found at every river-mouth in the region.⁴ Before Ngāi Tahu hapū arrived at Te Waipounamu in the seventeenth century, there were already a number of iwi already occupying the island, such as Waitaha, Kāti Hāwea, Rapuwai, Kāti Wairangi and Ngāti Mamoe.

² Carrington 1934: Appendix - Taniwha

³ Elvy 1949:65

⁴ McAloon 1988:1

In Ngāi Tahu tradition Waitaha are the first peoples to have arrived at Te Waipounamu. They arrived under the leadership of Rākaihautū in the Uruao waka at Whakatū (near Nelson) at about 850AD. From here Rākaihautū led a party inland down the island digging the lakes of Te Waipounamu with his ko (Polynesian digging stick), Tuwhakaroria.

While Rākaihautū was travelling inland down the length of the island, his son Rakihouia led another party in the Uruao waka down the east coast and landed at Kaikōura. Along the cliffs at Kaikōura Rakihouia and his wife Tapuiti had also been busy gathering food. Men were lowered down the cliffs with flax ropes to secure eggs and young birds from the nests there and the precipitous sea-front has since borne the general name of 'Te Whata Kai a Rakihouia' (The Lofty Storehouses of Rakihouia).

Rakihouia eventually reunited with Rākaihautū at Waihao in South Canterbury. Rākaihautū then led the combined travelling party across Kā Pākihi Whakatekateka a Waitaha (the Canterbury Plains) to Horomaka, and finished by creating the lakes Te Waihora (Lake Ellesmere) and Wairewa (Lake Forsyth).

Ngāti Mamoe descends from an ancestor known as both Hotu Mamoe and Whatua Mamoe. These people coalesced into a tribe in the late 15th century, centered on the great pā of Ōtatara near Ahuriri (now Napier). In the late 16th or early 17th century a small group of these people settled with the consent of their Ngāti Ira relations at Te Rimurapa (Sinclair Head) on the Raukawa Moana (Cook Strait) Coast.

According to Ngāi Tahu traditions Ngāti Mamoe received a gift of kai from the Waitaha people living at Wairau across the Strait. Desirous of those people's rich resources they crossed Raukawa Moana and settled at Wairau and came to dominate the Waitaha. In time the mana of Waitaha was subsumed into that of Mamoe.

Over time this 'replenished' Ngāti Mamoe moved from the Wairau and established a major settlement at Waipapa, the mouth of the Waiau-toa (Clarence River). They had smaller settlements at Ka-para-te-hau (Lake Grassmere) and Cape Campbell. A section of Rangitāne crossed the Strait and occupied the Wairau Valley. Small groups of Ngāti Mamoe were beginning to move southwards amongst them but the main concentration of Ngāti Mamoe were still centered north of Kaikōura at Waipapa.

3.3. The Arrival of Ngāti Kurī to Kaikōura

Ngāti Kurī were living at Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington). Pūraho was an old man and the leadership effectively resided with his son Marukaitātea. Marukaitātea was married to the two daughters of Hikaraeroa (also known in the Kaikōura manuscripts as Te Ikaraeroa), who was the ariki (paramount leader) of Ngāti Kahungungu in the northern Wairarapa. Ngāti Kurī and Ngāti Kahungungu were in dispute over these two women and the conflict was in particular with Hikaraeroa's son and his brother-in-law, Tūmapuhia-a-Raki.

A famous battle was fought at Te Whanganui-a-Tara and both the battle and the place were called Pūharakeke. The name comes from the fact that Maru killed Tūmapuhia-a-Raki, but would not allow his Ngāti Kurī people to eat the bodies of the Ngāti Ira dead. Instead he had them heaped in a pā harakeke (or flax plantation). Although they were the victors Ngāti Kurī knew that Ngāti

Kahungungu would seek revenge for Tūmapuhia-a-Raki's death. This led Pūraho and Marukaitātea to continue their migration across Raukawamoana, where they settled at Kura-a-te-au (Tory Channel).

Ngāi Tara were living on Tōtaranui (Queen Charlotte Sound) and Arapaoa Island on the other side of the water and before long they were in conflict with Ngāti Kurī over the bone fishhooks made from the graves which had been interfered with. The conflict escalated and ended in Ngāi Tara killing Pūraho. Ngāti Kurī then set out to destroy Ngāi Tara, which they duly accomplished.

Rangitāne were living at Wairau and had assisted Ngāi Tara in fighting Ngāti Kurī. Consequently, Ngāti Kurī sought revenge against Rangitāne, which was also convenient because they could not continue living within Tory Channel after Pūraho's death there. War was made against Rangitāne at Wairau, where they were defeated.

An important Ngāi Tahu leader, Tūteurutira, captured a wahine rangatira thinking she was Rangitāne. He later discovered that she was actually ariki of the Ngāti Mamoe of Waipapa and that Rangitāne had recently captured her. Tūteurutira then returned her to her Ngāti Mamoe people and married her. He then lived amongst the Ngāti Mamoe at Waipapa. Meantime, Marukaitātea and the rest of Ngāti Kurī lived at Wairau and Rangitāne stayed there as a subject people.

Rangitāne soon became restless and it became necessary to subdue them. The purpose was to avenge their attacks on Ngāti Mamoe and the capture of Hinerongo. Ngāti Kurī combined in alliance with Ngāti Mamoe and the battle was fought on the beach beneath the pā Pukatea (Whites Bay). This time Rangitāne were completely conquered and ever since have been confined to Wairau where they were later to be overrun again by Ngāti Toa in the 19th century.

A nephew of Tūteurutira, Te Āpoka-i-Hawaiki, fell out with Ngāti Mamoe regarding insults concerning food. Te Āpoka-i-Hawaiki sought the aid of the rest of Ngāti Kurī who then migrated towards Waipapa and defeated Ngāti Mamoe driving them southwards towards Kaikōura.

Within that same generation Ngāti Kurī under the leadership of Marukaitātea pushed southwards from Waipapa to Kaikōura and Ngāti Mamoe edged southwards before them to Peketā Pā, located on the south side of the Kahutara River. There was no fighting between the two tribes at Kaikōura itself because Ngāti Mamoe ceded the land to Marukaitātea with the Pōhā, Tohu Raumatī, on the marae of Takahanga.

3.4. The Battle of Ōpōkihi

Maru and a strong party of warriors went out at night and hid themselves between the Kahutara River and the Makamate, which is the first creek north of the Kahutara. Te Rākaitauheke warned them not to sit up or stir as the Ngāti Mamoe on the hill would see them and not come out. They were to lie very quiet. Te Rākaitauheke himself, clad in a pōkeka (rough cloak), crept down the beach at the mouth of the Kahutara, where he lay in the surf, rolling over and over, intimidating the movements of a stranded seal.

At daybreak Ngāti Mamoe saw the form in the sea. Some of them sort it was a seal while some others were more cautious and said that it looked more like a man. In the end a party of young warriors came down from the Peketā Pā onto the beach. Te Rākaitauheke let them get close before

he jumped up and raced off along the beach. The Ngāti Mamoe warriors soon chased Te Rākaitauheke up the beach. The others in the ambush party also jumped to their feet and ran off with Te Rākaitauheke.

All this had been watched from Peketā and the flight of the Ngāi Tahu warriors led Ngāti Mamoe believe that they might be able to cut them off from the pā at Takahanga and score a victory. A majority of the men from Peketā joined in on the pursuit. While Ngāti Mamoe were thinking they had trapped their enemies, the Ngāti Kurī chiefs, as they ran, were disputing how far they should lead their victims, for they had no doubts as to their ability to turn and destroy their pursuers at any time they wished.

They had passed Takahanga and were crossing the Waikōau (Lyell Creek) when Maru said to Te Rākaitauheke that he had ran far enough, but Te Rākaitauheke wanted to take them to Te Purupuru where there was more wood for cooking purposes for after the fight. Maru, however, was determined to stop saying, 'It is the same bird in the morning as the evening'. He then turned and faced the advancing Ngāti Mamoe.

Maru started fighting the Ngāti Mamoe warriors. For the moment Maru was practically alone amongst the Ngāti Mamoe warriors, and Ngāti Mamoe recognised this and immediately attacked Maru hoping to remove such a formidable force for Ngāti Kurī. Spears were thrust at him from all over. Ngāti Mamoe pressed around Maru in attempt to finish him off, when at the critical moment Maru's brothers, Makō and Kahupupuni, rushed up and rescued him.

From this moment the battle was never in doubt, and Ngāti Mamoe were soon defeated again. The battle was known as Ōpōkihi and resulted in another period of peace between Ngāti Kurī and Ngāti Mamoe, with Ngāti Mamoe, abandoning Peketā and continued moving south adopting Ōmihi as their principal pā.

3.5. Ōpōkihi D Native Reserve

From 1848 to 1868 the New Zealand Government purchased the majority of Te Waipounamu from Ngāi Tahu in ten separate land purchases. In 1858 James Mackay was appointed as the Acting Land Purchase Commissioner who was responsible for purchasing the lands of Kaikōura from Ngāti Kurī. During the negotiations Ngāti Kurī requested the payment of £10,000 and to retain 50,000 hectares of land between the Piri-tūtāe-putaputa (Conway River) and the Kahutara River. Mackay refused these requests and threatened Ngāti Kurī to quickly sell the land as he had previously purchased the land from Ngāti Toa.

As part of the 1859 Kaikōura Deed of Purchase the Crown purchased 1,000,000 hectares of land from Ngāti Kurī stretching from the Hurunui River to Te Parinui o Whiti and inland to the Main Divide. As part of the Kaikōura Deed of Purchase the Crown established 14 small native reserves totalising 5,556 acres in size located along the Kaikōura coastline from Mangamaunu to Mikonui.

One of these native reserves was the Ōpōkihi D Native Reserve located on the Waikōau River (see Figure 2). The Ōpōkihi Native Reserve was leased by Billy Harnett who had sheep and cattle grazing the land. The Ōpōkihi Native Reserve is no longer in Māori ownership.

Figure 2: Map of the Ōpōkihi D Native Reserve on the banks of the Waikōau (Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu).



3.6. Ngā Wāhi Ikoa ki Waikōau – Māori Placenames Associated with the Lyell Creek

The following information summarises the Māori placenames associated with the Lyell Creek:

Ōpōkihi is a place located on the Waikōau which was the site of a major battle between Ngāi Tahu and Ngāti Kurī.

Ohaapu is a landing place located at the mouth of the Waikōau. This name was recorded by W.A Taylor from Hariata Beaton.⁵

Te Wai o Matamata is the Māori name for the former lagoon located at the mouth of the Waikōau.

Waikōau is the Māori name for the Lyell Creek. The transliteration of Waikōau is straightforward; ‘wai’ is the Māori word for water, and ‘kōau’ is one of the Māori names for the shag. Kōau is recorded as the Māori name for the black, pied and little shag (*Phalacrocorax carbo*, *P. varius varius*, *P. melanoleucos brevirostris*).⁶ Kawau is also used interchangeably for kōau.

3.7. Swimming and Gathering Kai in the Waikōau (Lyell Creek)

As part of the construction of the main state highway and railway line along the east coast of the South Island several public work camps were established to house workers and their families. One of these public work camps was located on Beach Road near the Waikōau (Lyell Creek).

In 1942 Darcia Solomon (nee Mason) was about 5 years old when she moved with her family to the Beach Road Public Works Camp from the public works camp at Aniseed. Darcia and her siblings Martin Mason (commonly known as Louny), Hotu Mason (commonly known as William or Bill Mason) and Romi Taylor (nee Mason) were brought up at the Beach Road Public Works Camp by their father Kumeroa Mason and paternal grandmother Jane Smith (who was of Ngāi Tahu and Ngāti Mamoe descent). Darcia lived at the Beach Road Public Works Camp until it was closed in the early 1950s and then moved south to Oaro.

Darcia can recall about 200 people living at the Beach Road public works camp including many Māori families, such as the Poharama whānau, the Matangi whānau (from Picton), MacDonald whānau, the Mason whānau, and the Jacobs whānau.

“For us the Lyell Creek was our swimming hole.”

(Darcia Solomon, personal communication, 9 December 2011)

⁵ Taylor 1930:2

⁶ Schedule 97 of the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998

Although the lower stretches of the Waikōau were heavily polluted, the middle stretches of the river were much cleaner, and Darcia can fondly remember swimming in the middle reaches of the Waikōau with her siblings. There were deep swimming holes located throughout the river, and there was a broken willow tree that hung over the river which Darcia and her siblings would jump off into the river.

The Matangi family is the only other Māori family that Darcia can recall who swam in the Waikōau. Darcia is not sure where the other Māori families from the Beach Road Public Works Camp went swimming.

“There used to be big white swans and they were there as long as I can remember.”

(Darcia Solomon, personal communication, 9 December 2011)

Darcia and her siblings were not allowed to swim in the ocean behind the public works camp because it was too rough and the beach steeply dropped off into the ocean. Darcia’s grandmother did not want her grandchildren swimming in the river because she was worried they would drown. Instead Darcia and her siblings went behind their grandmothers back and swam in the river anyway. They would swim in the river wearing all their clothes and then lie in the long grass on the banks of the river until their clothes were dry before returning home so their grandmother wouldn’t know that they’ve been swimming in the river.

A playground was located behind the Public Works Camp of which the Māori children played on. As Darcia explained, in those times Pākehā children were not allowed to play in the playground because they were not allowed to play with the Māori children. The playground in the Public Works Camp belonged to the Māori children and the Waikōau was their swimming pool.

Darcia recalls gathering watercress from the middle stretches of the Lyell Creek. Darcia’s grandmother would take the grandchildren to look at the watercress, which she would mark, and then it was usually Darcia’s brother Louny (Martin Mason) who would return later to cut the watercress and bring it back home. Watercress was nearly always cooked in a ‘boil up’ along with the neck and breast of mutton, or sometimes chops or sausages. Pork bones were not used until later on. When Darcia’s grandmother cooked boil ups it was always usually with puha or watercress, or every now and again cabbage.

“It had beautiful watercress and lots of eels. That was our river. It was the only river we knew because we did not live next to any other rivers”

(Darcia Solomon, personal communication, 9 December 2011)



Figure 3: Photograph of white swans on the Waikōau (Kaikōura Historical Society District Museum and Archives, A1998-25/5, date unknown).

Darcia explained that whenever they went eeling in the Lyell they always returned home with a feed of eels. The two main methods of eeling that Darcia can remember in the Lyell was using hinaki that Darcia's grandmother made out of flax, which Darcia's brothers would use. The other method was getting big fat worms from the mud and then hooking the worm onto the end of a piece of string as bait, which would then be lowered into the river. Darcia's granny would usually either cook eels by boiling them with onions or frying the eels.

"It is totally different today. There is no harakeke or raupō on it. It is just plain grass."

(Darcia Solomon, personal communication, 9 December 2011)

Beautiful large stands of harakeke and raupō were situated on the banks of the Waikōau all the way down to the river mouth. Darcia's granny was an excellent weaver who used to make piupiu and baskets out of flax that she sold in town. She also made poi from raupō. The council took out these stands of harakeke and raupō to build a big bank. Nowadays the grassy riverbank is totally different to when it was covered by harakeke and raupō.



Figure 4: This photograph looks down the Waikōau/Lyell Creek towards St Pauls Presbyterian Church. The large stands of harakeke and raupō that were gathered by Māori can be seen on the banks of the river (Kaikōura Historical Society District Museum and Archives, A1989-59, 1905-14).

3.8. The Polluted Lower Section of the Waikōau (Lyell Creek)

The Lyell Creek is considered by Ngāti Kurī as one of the dirtiest rivers in Kaikōura. The lower section of the Lyell Creek was the main area where the Kaikōura town centre and Kaikōura hospital discharged their sewerage. Situated behind Harnetts Butchery in the town centre was where animals were processed for the butchery, with the remains being dispatched into the river. As Darcia explained it was only when abattoirs were introduced that this all changed, but prior to abattoirs everything was dispatched into the river.

“We would stand on the side of the river and see all the rats walking on the bottom of the river, and the water was all bloody”

(Darcia Solomon, personal communication, 9 December 2011)

The Māori children from the Beach Road Public Works Camp walked along the Lyell Creek from the works camp to primary school. When they walked past the river mouth they saw that the water was a bloody-red colour where large rats would walk along the bottom of the river. Darcia can recall that the rats were quite fat and were about 30cm long. There used to be a lawn where the Kaikōura Information Centre now stands, and children would stand on the lawn throwing bread into the river mouth watching the rats eat the bread. Darcia can remember her granny telling her off for feeding these rats.

Darcia explained that when growing up in Kaikōura local Māori never gathered food from the river mouth or the area immediately surrounding the river mouth because it was so heavily polluted. There was some brown trout but not many other fish, which probably couldn't survive the pollution in the river.



Figure 5: Photograph of the mouth of the Waikōau (Kaikōura Historical Society District Museum and Archives, 2002/038/07, 1975).

When the weather was rough the sewerage would sometimes blow across the sea from the Lyell Creek river mouth to the rocks situated behind the Garden of Memories. Again this is why local Māori never gathered pāua from here but would instead go to places such as South Bay to gather pāua, including Darcia's brother, Louny. Darcia remembers that they would get crayfish down the beach behind the public works camp where they would use a line to catch the crayfish, and Louny would get cray bodies from the fisheries where he worked. Blind eels were also caught at the beach behind the public works camp, which Darcia would have to clean.

4.0 TOHUTORO – SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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