

Cultural and Environmental Impacts on Ngāti Pareraukawa and Ngātokowaru Marae

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Introduction

During the past 70 years local and regional councils in the Horowhenua have made crucial decisions about environmental issues that have had a profound bearing on Ngāti Pareraukawa and the Hōkio community. The mid and late 20th century disposal of sewage into Lake Horowhenua had long term impacts. The Hōkio Stream has remained an environmental disaster for seventy years and the impact on the coastal environment, shellfish, all fish life including tuna, whitebait, water quality and water levels remains. The establishment of the Landfill and the Pot at Hōkio confirmed that Hōkio is the receiving environment for all of Levin's rubbish. The impact of piggeries along the stream for half a century have left their mark. For those who have been located at Hōkio for more than a century there is a despondency about the status of Hōkio in the wider community.

While the Landfill may be seen as a singular issue by some, the land and catchments in the whole land block are inextricably linked. Water flows beneath them, over them and through them carrying whatever communities pour into them. The Landfill is linked to all the land blocks around it and the discharges from the dump sites flow below and over transporting toxic waste towards the dunes and land blocks in the area. They are part of a whole.

This paper is prepared for the Project Management group, the HDC and interested parties. It presents a Ngāti Pareraukawa view and focuses on the cultural impacts endured by local hapū.

Historical background

In the early 19th century our tūpuna lived in the Waikato as Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Huia and Ngāti Toa Rangatira (Ngāti Toa). Ngāti Toa migrated first to a sparsely populated region on the south west coast of Te Ika a Maui and legitimately conquered (take raupatu) the region from the Whangaehu to Whitireia and further south. Te Rauparaha then consolidated the conquest by inviting his Ngāti Raukawa Waikato whānau to settle in the region with him. Eventually Te Rauparaha's sister Waitohi, directed the people to join their relatives in the south and to occupy the territory, thus securing the land already conquered from the Whangaehu to Kukutauaki (a boundary point north of Waikanae). The decision to migrate south was in support of their Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Huia kin, and Te Rauparaha, resulting in large areas of land being allocated to Ngāti Huia and Ngāti Raukawa from Bulls to Kukutauaki.

It was recognised that these iwi had mana whenua over the region from “Waikanae north almost to Wanganui”¹. At that time, Ngāti Huia rangatira were strategically allocated land on which to settle and this continues to be reflected in the location of the eight hapū of Ngāti Huia from the Rangitikei river (Bulls) and Halcombe in the north to the Horowhenua and further to Katihiku south of Ōtaki. The Ngāti Huia clusters traversed the land supporting one another often for months or years at a time. If a building was to be constructed, for example, they moved to support that work returning when it was completed. If flooding occurred at a coastal location, they moved inland to one of the other strongholds until it was time to return. Gathering of kai was also a time to relocate for a season.

By 1828 Ngāti Raukawa occupied the territory from Whangaehu to Kukutauaki and had established mana whenua. Te Whatanui was gifted various land areas in the region; one of the most significant being Otūroa, south of the Manawatu River and the other being Horowhenua. By the 1830s he had significant cultivations around Lake Horowhenua and the Hōkio stream and various houses and settlements throughout the region. It was widely accepted that Te Whatanui had mana whenua in the Horowhenua from the early 1830s and rangatiratanga over the land, and the natural resources. And then in 1840 the Treaty guaranteed “full exclusive and undisturbed possession of their lands and estates, forests, fisheries and other properties...” te tiriti guaranteeing “tino rangatiratanga” and the treaty “all the rights and privileges of British subjects”.²

The settlements at the mouth of the Hōkio Stream, through to the lake and around the lake enabled the growing communities to enjoy the natural resources available. While Te Rauparaha had been intent upon extinguishing the Muaūpoko people out of the area, the few who remained were supported by Te Whatanui who guaranteed them a refuge and safe passage within an area he allocated from Te Uamairangi to Ngā Manu: known as Te Whatanui’s sanctuary³. He was exercising rangatiratanga over the area and persuaded Te Rauparaha to leave the remaining Muaūpoko under his protection. The guarantee by Te Whatanui has been honoured and acknowledged by various Muaūpoko whānau and Ngāti Pareraukawa for more than 180 years. We recognise that Muaūpoko had mana whenua status prior to the arrival of Te Rauparaha and before he exacted revenge on them after the murder of his children. We are also aware that the Horowhenua land became Te Whatanui’s whenua from the ocean to the hills, eventually surveyed as 52,000 acres and including the lake and stream at Hōkio. Te Whatanui espoused and advocated that there was enough land for everyone.

¹ Rod McDonald, Te Hekenga Early days of the Horowhenua, GH Bennett & Co. Palmerston North, p16.

² Treaty of Waitangi and te Tiriti o Waitangi.

³ McDonald, p.17-18

Ngāti Toa Rangatira signed Te Tiriti o Waitangi in Ōtaki and at other locations and were thus guaranteed rangatiratanga over their whenua at 1840.

The Hōkio Stream – a life-giving natural resource from lake to the sea

The Hōkio Stream begins its four-kilometre journey at the western outlet of Lake Horowhenua to Te Moana o Raukawa, breaking between ancient coastal sand dunes that line the west coast of Te Ika a Maui. Today, from the lake, Hōkio straightens a path past the urupā and headstones at Raumatangi (Ngāti Pareraukawa's burial ground) the resting place of tūpuna of Ngāti Pareraukawa on a hillock on the stream's south side. Italian marble statues tower over the concrete headstones and the ubiquitous concrete tomb that is Rerekorari Nicholson's vault. 250 meters further west, the burial site of the early MacDonald settler clan overlooks the Hōkio from her southern side, near the Moutere bridge. The Hōkio meanders on a westward journey to Ngātokowaru marae high up the southern bank, and the area settled by Ngāti Pareraukawa in the early 1830s⁴.

For hundreds of years, Hōkio was a waterway from which people quenched their thirst, in the days when, world-wide, drinking from streams was a natural and health-giving thing to do. It provided fresh water to travellers, for a multiplicity of purposes relieving the thirsty, it cleansed and provided water for baptism, cooking, for healing and hygiene.

The descendants of Te Whatanui and Hitau settled at Hōkio from the 1830s and the marae, Ngātokowaru, is the nucleus of the community that grew and maintained the mauri of the stream for over a century. From the early 20th century and especially since the 1950s local and regional bodies which claimed kawanatanga in the area have enabled Lake Horowhenua and the stream and environs to deteriorate to now being one of the most polluted and toxic water bodies in New Zealand. A report done by Horizons and Niwa in 2012 reported cyanobacteria blooms released toxins which cause skin irritation and other health issues. They could be lethal to dogs and in extreme conditions to small children.⁵

More damage has been done to the land and waters of our tūpuna in the past 70 years than at any time in the past. Some believe the damage is irreversible. Others report that 60% of New Zealand's rivers are not safe to swim in. There are calls for a national response to and effort to find ways to reverse the damage.

In the many interviews conducted with our tūpuna over the past 20 years we have recorded the view that kaitiakitanga is a birthright obligation to the land embodied in Papatūānuku. It is not optional but rather obligatory. This requires tangata whenua to respect the whenua and the waterways is manifested in responsibilities not to pollute, not to over-harvest, rather to maintain balance in all things.

⁴ N. Grove, 'Te Whatanui: Traditional Māori Leader'. MA Thesis, Victoria University, Wellington. 1985.

⁵ M. Gibbs, *Restoration for Lake Horowhenua, Collation of inter-related projects*, Jan 2012

Lake Horowhenua and the Hōkio Stream were seen as a jewel in the crown, from the late 19th century, of the growing Levin and Horowhenua communities. Despite being declared as privately owned by Māori owners, the lake was regarded as a fine place for Levin's population interested in recreational boating, sailing, fishing, and swimming. It was fed from underground springs and waterways. The land was part of a major network of wetlands which covered much of the coastal plain from the Rangitīkei north of Horowhenua to Kapiti to the south. This geography and topography were overlooked by Levin's Pākehā colonists in the 1950s when establishing the town's drainage system, to their sorrow when human waste from the system flooded the town in the 1950s⁶.

The outlet from the Lake, the Hōkio Stream, was rich in food and fish-life and legendary up and down the coast for having the best quality and quantity of eels, respected by the neighbouring hapū and iwi for this and envied by those who valued the tuna as a major source of protein. Almost unbelievably, today the long-finned tuna is an endangered species⁷ and severely depleted in the stream. Patiki (flounder) were also numerous and are depicted on the walls of Ngātōkōwaru, but are now no longer found in the stream due to dredging practices and the weir cutting off their migration in and out of the lake. These are but two species that have been annihilated. There are many others.

Ngāti Pareraukawa have fished in the lake and stream sharing historical unrestricted fishing rights and respecting historical treaties; 'maungārongo' (verbal pacts) made between the tūpuna of Ngāti Pareraukawa and neighbouring iwi, Muaūpoko⁸. And Ngāti Pareraukawa retains those unrestricted fishing rights despite the changes brought in legislation and commissions in the 19th and 20th centuries. Those rights were never removed.

Section 9 of the Horowhenua Block Act says that any Certificate of Title issued for part of Block 11 "shall be subject to the right of the Native owners of Block 9 to fish in such portions of the Hōkio Stream and the Horowhenua Lake respectively as are included in the said certificate".⁹

Section 18(6) of the ROLD Act 1956 says: "Nothing herein contained shall in any way affect the fishing rights granted pursuant to section 9 of the Horowhenua Block Act 1896".¹⁰ The

⁶ Vaughan Wood, Garth Cant, Eileen Barrett-Whitehead, Michael Roche, Terry Hearn, Mark Derby, Bridget Hodgkinson and Greg Pryce. *Environmental and Natural Resource Issues report for the Crown Forestry Rental Trust*. 2017 Wai 2200

⁷ *On the pathway to extinction? An investigation into the status and management of the longfin eel*. Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, April 2013.

⁸ Ran Jacob, Objection to Water Right application 82/52 by the Levin Borough Council made to the Manawatu regional water Board 5/8/1982

⁹ Horowhenua Block Act 1896

¹⁰ Reserves and other Lands Disposal (ROLD) Act 1956

ROLD Act Subsection 6 establishes that section 9 of the Horowhenua Block Act 1896 remains in force.

Both iwi recognise the disruption that colonisation and settlement has exacted upon the land, the lake, the people and the Hōkio Stream, multiplying negatively with each decade that goes by. After the first hundred years following the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, Levin grew as a centre servicing a growing horticultural and farming region. Late in the 1940s, the Levin Borough Council made a decision that was to have a devastating 100 year impact on local hapū and iwi, and later the whole population of the Horowhenua. At the time, the 1950 decision to discharge raw, and later, treated sewage into the lake as a symbol of development and modernisation of the town, was thought to be a positive and pragmatic move. This reflects colonial thinking and consultation with owners and those who relied on the lake and stream for their lives was unheard of. The imposition of local and national government bodies on the country as a whole, regardless of rangatiratanga, sovereignty and survival, was like a bull dozer bearing modernisation gifts, gifts packaged to appear progressive though in hindsight they have had destructive and negative impacts that will take longer to reverse than any Council is willing to admit. Every decade the negative impacts multiply will result in decades of attention to reverse the damage.

On the banks of the Hōkio Stream, Ngāti Pareraukawa lived sustainably and in harmony with the environment for over a century. The community consisted of several dwellings, some close to the banks of the stream, others further south along Hōkio Beach Road, on developing farm blocks. The surrounding land was farmed and provided for the hapū community as a whole. The families lived with the seasons and the rhythms of life known by their grandparents and each generation took responsibility for ensuring that the lessons were well learned by the next.

In 2003 we interviewed Murimanu Winiata (1927-2008 and born at Hōkio) as one of the last men who maintained an eel box on the banks of the stream at Hōkio. He recalled the 'rhythms of life' at the marae in the first half of the 20th century where he lived as a child and young man in a community, the hapū of Ngāti Pareraukawa

When the eels ran, the noise was unforgettable as the tuna splashed their way from lake to sea. The boxes were filled with dozens of tuna in March and the appropriate tikanga and responsibilities were transmitted to the next generation. In an interview in 2003 with Joanna Selby (1920-2011) she described the daily routine as a child going to the stream with her grandfather (Winiata Pataka 1856 – 1928). She referred to him as the 'Keeper of the Eel box'. She related that each day the keeper of the boxes checked them. She and other of his mokopuna living at Ngātokowaru often accompanied him and learned by example what to look for and what action to take. Any tuna that had died she described as belly-up' and had to be removed so as to avoid contamination of the box environment. The children were taught to remove dead eels and not to throw them into the water as this would pollute the stream.

The multiple ways that eels can be stored, dried, prepared and served were passed on to cooks and those preparing the meals. Some were skilled and became experts for which they were admired, whether that be cleaning, gutting, or hanging, others were known to be too impatient or clumsy to perform skills well. They were given other tasks such as gardening or food preparation. Their experiences were written into the land and communities and hands of people who passed on these skills to each succeeding generation. Witnessing thousands of eels noisily thrashing their way to the sea or writhing over sand in the moonlight at the mouth of the stream scenting the ocean were their experiences. The youngest who can describe these experiences are now great-grandparents themselves. Most of us living today have not witnessed this in our lifetimes.

Levin's sewage problems and the impact on people, the lake and stream

In the 1930s the Crown agency, the Board of Health, applied pressure to the Levin Borough Council to deal with the issue of the growing population's human waste. The Council delayed making decisions throughout the 1930s until finally directed by the Board "to provide plans and costings for a sewage disposal system".¹¹ Armstrong reports that the engineering firm Vickerman and Lancaster proposed four options: The Ōhau River, the sea, Lake Horowhenua and the Hōkio Stream¹². Today, as then, none of these is an option for Māori and nor would it be acceptable for most of the community.

A proposal to discharge into the lake was further developed despite the Board of Health and the Council being aware of objections by the Lake's owners and also being aware of the impact on the communities living on the stream and at the mouth of the stream. This decision by the Levin Borough Council and the Board of Health to discharge sewage into the lake and stream from 1952, (and then for thirty years, to discharge treated effluent) is a breach of the Treaty of Waitangi¹³ and has had massive negative impacts on Ngāti Pareraukawa, and the communities and people that depended on these water bodies for their daily living. The effects have been severely felt for 70 years and will go on until the Crown reverses and repairs the damage they have caused. The cultural loss is just as evident. The Crown and its agents failed to protect the lake and stream from pollution through inappropriate use of the water bodies resulting in severe prejudice to Ngāti Pareraukawa as a result. The water and land were poisoned by the Council and the hapū that relied on those water bodies for their existence, were driven to sell and abandon the marae and their homes.

There was an immediate impact on the Ngāti Pareraukawa families living along the stream, from the outlet of the lake past Raumatangi to the marae a further kilometre on. Most of

¹¹ Vaughan Wood et al 'Environmental and Natural Resource Issues report' Wai 2200 March 2017

¹² David Armstrong, *'Lake Horowhenua and the Hōkio Stream, 1905-c1990'* p 59

¹³ David Armstrong, p. 59

the families along the stream were invisible to the Levin citizens now happily ‘flushing and forgetting’ and enjoying the results of the Council decision that was blind to the health and wellbeing of Māori citizens at Hōkio. They accepted that the storm water and sewage from the town would flow into the lake and be forgotten – for a time. The problems that were immediately evident around the lake brought about objections and protest from Māori owners but were ‘solved’ by the Medical Officer of Health when the overflow of raw sewage flowed in the town impacting upon the town’s residents. The Medical Officer then “authorised the Borough Council to construct emergency overflow channels to bypass the overloaded sewerage system and divert the effluent into the lake”.¹⁴ Numerous Crown agencies became involved in the ‘problem’ and the subsequent investigations. Hamer lists the following agencies that became involved: Health Department, Department of Internal Affairs, the Ecology Division of the DSIR, the Nature Conservation Council, the Commissioner for the Environment and the Manawatu Catchment Board. All Crown – Kāwanatanga agents.¹⁵

Interviews in 2003 with Murimanu Winiata (1927-2008) one of the last of Ngāti Pareraukawa to maintain a pā tuna, hīnaki and eel boxes in the stream brought back vivid memories of the 1952-1962 era. When asked if he recalled the beginning of the discharge of effluent into the stream he stated unequivocally that he most certainly did! In an interview he stated, “one thing about tutae is that it hangs together in water”¹⁶. He then described the tutae and the lavatory contents that flowed around the hīnaki when he went to the stream to check his eel boxes, his food storage boxes, containing the kai for the community. He was forced to remove his food storage boxes. He never passed on his knowledge and skills to any of his children. They were redundant at Hōkio, the impact necessitating abandonment of their home.

In 1953 most families abandoned their homes at the marae, leaving them empty and deserted, when moving to Levin and Ōtaki. Those who could sell land to neighbours did so. As the remaining mokopuna of Te Hitau and Waretini died, their children returned to Ngātokowaru for the tangi and then the burial at Raumatangi. The youngest daughter of Ema Hapai and Winiata Pataka, Lucy Jacob (1896-1976) continued to get a taxi or ‘a ride’ out to the marae throughout the 1950 and 1960s to mow the lawns and maintain the gardens. Other whānau would join her there throughout the 1950s and 1960s caring for their marae. She believed that when she departed this life she would be the last of the hapū to have a tangi at the marae because the only way to survive was to move to town. From the 1950s her children and mokopuna were forbidden to go to the stream. It was portrayed as a dangerous dirty place to be avoided. And it was. A generation of children seldom breached

¹⁴ Vaughan Wood et al, *Environmental and Natural Resource Issues report* p 462

¹⁵ Paul Hamer, *‘A Tangled Skein’* Wai2200 #A150 pp216-231

¹⁶ Murimanu Winiata Oral History interview, Ōtaki, 2003

the invisible line at the top of the bank and thus never learned the skills and knowledge of their tūpuna. Their millennial children ask them why they did not listen and learn from their parents. Lucy's eldest daughter Hinetamatea (1912-2000) frequently lamented the sale of the land saying her grandmother Ema Hapai Winiata (1859-1923) always said: 'Never sell the land to the Pākehā. You'll regret it.' Then she would gaze into the distance and wonder how they might have held on to it with the pollution and the assault by the Crown agents on the land, the lake, the stream and the ocean. They had to sell to buy a place in town.

In 1953 the block formerly owned by Ema Hapai and then her mokopuna, on the western boundary of the marae was sold. The whānau wanted to build at the marae but were told they could only build on Hōkio Beach Road, not along a shared right of way. She sold the block to Joe Knight who developed a piggery. He had a small operation, (4 breeding sows) bringing the slops from the town's hotels to feed the pigs each day. His truck came up the dusty driveway with the pig food in 44-gallon drums. For many years this was a small piggery. It was then sold to farmers with much bigger aspirations and by the last decade of the 20th century, 1200 breeding sows delivered several litters apiece every year. It is estimated that the effluent produced by this one pig farm on our boundary exceeded that produced by the town of Levin!

The offensive odour and farming practices further offended the hapū. Without the need for a consent to farm pigs and to limit the operation, the neighbours had carte blanche, an unconditional authority to do as they pleased without any consideration of the neighbours. The Crown again failed to protect Māori: from inappropriate use of an adjoining property; from offensive odour and farming practices; from pollution and damage to land and water; from alienation from tūpuna land; from having to sell land to relocate in town and away from the marae base. When the Resource Management Act finally gave the hapū opportunity to plead a case in the late 20th century the piggery owners suggested we move our marae as they had a business to run next door!

The homestead at the marae built of native timber was dismantled in the 1950s and immediately opposite the marae the block that had been farmed by descendants of Ema Hapai Winiata was sold by the whānau who had inherited it, to build a house and move to Levin. After all, the marae was almost surrounded by waste: the Lake and stream to the east and north, a piggery to the west.

The marae continued as a mainland island encircled by pollution. The remaining elders held on to their childhood memories of a time when the stream was their lifeline, when it provided passage to the lake and to the sea, when the seasons brought the best quality and quantity of tuna in the region, when the whitebait was thick and plentiful, the koura and freshwater mussels providing variety in diet. Joanna Selby in a 2003 interview, when she was 83, described the stream in her youth as being clear with a stony bottom, a playground

for the children¹⁷. She also described the bend on the western side as a favourite swim spot, named George Hau. It had been a safe place to play and explore, to keep the eel boxes and learn from the elders on how to maintain the stream, clean and clear it in the autumn and travel its banks throughout the year over to the lake and to the sea.

Less than 6 years after WWII ended, the families at Hōkio faced the desecration of the stream by the Treaty partner's agents, local Councils and Government agencies responsible for Public health. Within a decade after the war ended the environmental damage was overwhelming. The remaining families farming and dwelling in the area reflected a pessimism and fatalism that pervaded the hapū after the 1950s: they also sold their land lots and moved to town. The Crown's actions drove people away and failed to ensure that adequate land resources including rivers and lakes were available for the cultural survival of the people. (Article 2 of the Treaty). That pessimism pervaded throughout the 1950s-1970s and remained for a further generation after that. It completed the successful colonisation of the mind of many whānau: the marae is a dirty place beside a dirty stream that is a dangerous place beside a toxic lake next to a smelly piggery and across the road from a filthy rubbish dump. Some retain that view today and stay away.

Yet there were also those who were drawn back to the marae as a place where whānau values and traditions were unquestioned. They had a conviction that the marae was a place with a rich heritage that should be managed and respected forever.

In 1973, twenty years after this sewage event, as part of a renaissance and commitment to transmitting cultural knowledge and securing Māori values and practices for the future generations, a small group from the hapū made a decision to halt the decline and to rebuild and revitalise the marae providing a buffer for the next generation against the overwhelming Pākehā way of life. It was a positive and futuristic ideal to work with and some of the 1970s generations embraced it.

The Levin Rubbish Dump arrives at Hōkio and stays for 45 years

At the same time the Levin Borough Council decided to site a rubbish dump south of the marae. A Levin Chronicle article (9/4/1975) reported the Mayor had announced the new tip would be located on Hōkio Beach Road. A previous site on Hōkio Sands Road had been objected to by the Horowhenua County Council¹⁸. In an agreement between the two groups the County Council agreed not to appeal the use of the site subject to certain stringent conditions. (These have not been divulged).

Those affected by the dump would normally have had the opportunity to object, however, the Levin Borough Council claimed the right to use a special provision in the Town and

¹⁷ Joanna Selby, Oral History Interview 2003

¹⁸ Levin Chronicle 9/4/75

Country Planning Act to avoid affected parties being able to appeal. It was specifically used to avoid consultation. (V. Wood 2017). It was also noted the dump site was expected to last for 20 years. Ngāti Pareraukawa had no opportunity to object and thus began 45 years of watching and protesting environmental degradation that continues today, with even greater negative impacts as each month goes by. The tragedy of the landfill as an environmental disaster is presented as a case study by Vaughan Wood et al in their 2017 Report¹⁹ (for the Waitangi Tribunal). The toxic discharge from the Landfill flows directly into the stream today, close to the marae. It is a further example of the Crown failing to protect the land, stream and people from environmental damage. A clean-up will cost millions of dollars and it is now the community and the Crown that must address the issue. The HD Council has begun engagement with the hapū to seek solutions to the clean up and to confirm a date for the closure of the dump that is expected to be within the next 3 years. The hapū remains committed to the responsibility that Kaitiakitanga – to work for a clean up of the site. The hapū draws on cultural values that place on the hapū an obligation to act.

The use of the Town and Country Planning legislation to avoid consultation was a further Treaty breach, one effect being to complete the circling of the marae with a polluted lake and stream, a piggery and the rubbish dump. What was planned as a 20 year dump is now 45 years in the making and has no support for continuing at the current site. It has become one of many dumps urgently requiring a closure date.

Effluent discharge and the ‘Pot’

From the mid-1970s the Marae Committee minutes record on-going concern about the dump and the discharges into the lake and stream. On 26th September 1982 a minute records “Litter in the Hōkio Stream - The secretary was asked to write to the County Council asking whether a sign could be erected at the Moutere Road Bridge discouraging people from dumping rubbish bags in the stream”.²⁰ There are regular updates on the actions taken in relation to the environmental impacts. In June 1980 Ngāti Pareraukawa was encouraged by Deputy Chair, Ran Jacob, to establish a Pareraukawa and Muaūpoko Action Committee to work towards a clean-up of the Lake and stream. While Muaūpoko elders and spokespeople were supportive, they were also pessimistic about any chance of making headway with the Council and declared we were wasting our time. They had protested for twenty years without their concerns being heard or acted upon. Not deterred, Ngāti Pareraukawa joined with the Values Party, the Hōkio Progressive Association and other environmental groups to press for the sewage to be removed from the lake.

¹⁹ Vaughan Wood et al *‘Environmental and Natural Resource Issues report’* Wai 2200 2017 pp.495-510

²⁰ Ngātokowaru Marae Minute Book #3

In the meantime, to the dismay of Ngāti Pareraukawa, 'The Borough Council and the Ministry of Works ...saw discharge into the Hōkio Stream as the best option and the Borough applied for a water right in March 1982'.²¹ Following regular meetings of the Action group at Ngātokowaru, a Hearing commenced in Palmerston North over several days and was attended by Ngāti Pareraukawa. The Action Committee members had prepared a proposal for discharge to land which was not regarded as viable by the Council. The Hearing is reported on in the Marae minutes of 26 September 1982 with the view that the presentation from the hapū had 'made an impression on the Tribunal'. However, it eventually granted the Council a right to discharge into the Hōkio Stream for 26 weeks a year. The Ngātokowaru Marae Committee were cautiously relieved as it was felt that the Council would not be able to meet the conditions. The Action Group proposal to discharge to land was ignored despite having been prepared by two scientists on the Action Committee, one a hydrologist with international expertise. The Council later sought further advice and eventually settled on a discharge to land scheme which was implemented and applauded when it was commissioned in 1987 after a further extension to the right to discharge into the lake. That project is now 30 years old, is located south of the marae and needs a Resource Consent to continue in a revamped form. It is no longer an award-winning example of disposal.

The 'Pot' as it became known has been under the microscope in 2019-2020 with The Council applying for consent to continue to discharge effluent on to the blocks of land it leases. The blocks are not large enough for a growing community, the rapid infiltration system is inadequate and there is evidence of it not being well managed. The hapū has pushed a new potentially reluctant Council to aim high in terms of environmental protection of the land, and the Waiwiri Catchment as there is clear evidence of effluent draining into the catchment south of the Pot.

Implications for the hapū and ongoing cultural impacts

As the last of the children and grandchildren of the original owners of the Marae block were laid to rest, they were convinced that their values and responsibilities were beyond redemption. Some of their children and descendants had, however, made the decision to stand up for the marae, the lake and stream. They wanted to hold on to the values and responsibilities of those who had been born there.

Horowhenua and Raumatangi Land Blocks have been occupied by Ngāti Pareraukawa for nearly 200 years. While the connections to the marae for many whānau, are at best weak, for others they are strong. The two decades from 1953 damaged and broke the connections of a generation of families that, for some, seem irreparable. For others there has, more recently, been a determination to retrieve and transfer knowledge of the mid-twentieth

²¹ Vaughan Wood et al 2017 p. 464

century generation to the new millennial generations. This requires on-going events to achieve this, events that are marae-based, knowledge-based and skills-based.

The tuna do not run in March each year as they did in the past. Mid-twentieth century scientists decided to build a weir at the outlet to the stream in 1956 to control the water level in the lake, altering the natural flushing cycle of the lake, interrupting the life cycle of tuna and fish, and for half a century contributing to an unnatural build-up of sediment on the lake bed.²² To restore the natural and environmentally sound flushing of Lake Horowhenua the weir must be removed. This requires an Act of Parliament (because it was installed under the ROLD Act 1956) and as with such barriers to progress, there is currently little political will to achieve this. It took an Action Group made up of Ngāti Pareraukawa, the 1980s Values Party and the Hōkio Progressive Association a decade of disruption and protest against the Council's discharge of effluent to finally stop effluent discharge into the Lake in the late 1980s. The Council continues to discharge into the lake in what are termed emergencies. With new consents required, they were forced to move to a land-based effluent discharge in the late 1980s siting it on the south side of the marae completing the circle of pollution surrounding the marae. The Council continues to discharge its storm water to the lake through unsightly open drains to the sorrow of local owners and to a growing body of environmentally observant locals.

A further impact on Ngāti Pareraukawa of the weir was the creation of what is now called 'a de-watered area' around the lake. Horowhenua Block 11B included the south and western part of the lake. Raumatangi went all the way to the lake and Ngāti Pareraukawa had kaitiaki responsibilities for those water bodies. The Crown action which resulted in the lowering of the lake resulted in Raumatangi no longer being contiguous with the lake and stream. An area known by many of us as 'no man's land' was created.

NIWA scientist Max Gibbs provided a significant report in 2011²³ which described the lake like many others, as previously having had drinkable water and a "diverse fishery" while it is now "hypertrophic". He attributes the decline in water quality to a range of factors including: removal of forest; stock grazing in the lake; the intensive horticulture and market gardening activities in the region for which Levin is well known; the sewage effluent; and storm water runoff from the town which continues today. The Arawhata Stream with its intensive marketing gardening south of Levin has become the largest source of nutrient and local growers have recently expressed surprise at the amount of top soil and fertiliser they are losing to the stream.

²² Max Gibbs, Restoration Plan for Lake Horowhenua NIWA Client Report January 2012

²³ Gibbs, Max 2011

Gibbs notes that “natural restoration processes are slow and it may take up to 100 years for the Lake to recover without management intervention.”²⁴ Conversely, with sensible intervention and the political will to make a difference this could be achieved much sooner. It requires the Levin and Horowhenua community and Council to stop polluting the lake. While three generations of Ngāti Pareraukawa have said this, we currently have no political voice. Future generations may come to realise that what is good for Māori is also good for the wider community. New Zealand has become complacent, anaesthetised by a wave of publicity that portrays New Zealand as a clean green society. As the indigenous Cree from North America note: “When the last tree has been cut down, the last fish caught, the last river poisoned, only then will we realise that one cannot eat money”²⁵.

In the meantime, the marae is an island paradise, a refuge from the world of urban over-indulgence that is only now awakening to the environmental threats that have been created by our moving too far from a sustainable reality. We do not need to live in the 20th century movie world that shields us from environmental degradation nor deny our children the benefits of new technologies sweeping the globe. Committing to time at our marae provides us with a reality check away from the social pressures of a competitive consuming world. Completing a tertiary education has taught many of us that we don’t know much and that the marae and the values that have been espoused there by our tūpuna do have as much relevance now as they did a century ago. While we came close to losing our language and culture 40 years ago, the marae is unashamedly a place where being Māori is unquestioned, where tikanga and kawa can be absorbed by being present, where learning never stops, where one belongs despite the length of one’s absence, where one’s job and income is irrelevant and that the opportunity to be with like-minded Māori people is refreshing. We can create events so that we build our knowledge and share our experiences with one another. While we are sometimes limited by external pressures, the current homegrown environmental restoration movement has the potential to take us both backwards and forwards and the lessons learned can be transferred the length of the coastline.

Ngāti Pareraukawa has a significant Treaty claim. Our rangatira had mana over the Horowhenua Block at 1840 and over Otūroa and other land and water. Political actions by the Crown have resulted in significant treaty breaches. Land was sold by individuals without the consent of the hapū, in some cases by whānau who no longer lived here maintaining responsibility to the hapū. The pollution of Lake Horowhenua and the Hōkio stream by the local body and with the approval of the Health Officers is a breach of our rights. This continues today.

²⁴ Gibbs page number

²⁵ Cree Indian prophecy

What are the positive outcomes of life without the landfill?

The Hōkio community would no longer live under the cloud of the Hōkio landfill. They have “taken a hit” for all of the Horowhenua for more than three decades. This would end. They would no longer live with the negative effects of the dump, the pollution, the odour problems, the rubbish along the roadside, the negativity of being the waste site for the whole community. That would all be in the past. They would no longer live with the negative attitudes of the wider community towards Hōkio, rather they would be the envy of those who would visit a beautiful coastal environment. There would be a renewed and invigorated coastal paradise with a clean flowing stream, ideal for swimming and recreational activities and a beach with significant well protected dunes enjoyed by residents and visitors.

The people in the community would be kaitiaki, would exercise Kaitiakitanga, caring for the stream, the coastal waters, shellfish, tuna and fresh flowing water all year round. The fish-life would be restored as the waters are restored. Hōkio and Levin would be credited with raising the awareness of the wider community about effective recycling, zero waste projects, 21st century examples of remediation of land blocks in the region, restoration of coastal wetlands, birdlife, stream restoration examples. Restoration of the Hōkio Stream would be achieved.

Conclusion

This report focuses on environmental issues that continue to challenge Ngāti Pareraukawa. The issues have consumed the attention of eight generations of the hapū. They settled the land in 1830 and remain there on a small footprint beside the stream within Block 11B 41A3. The hapū seeks an expeditious closure of the landfill with full remediation of the site, surrounding whenua and wetlands, elimination of odour from the site, restoration of the land block. The wider commitment to protect the Lake, Hōkio Stream and foreshore from pollution remain priorities. All activity that protects the aquifers, wetlands and water bodies in the area would be a commitment to environmental protection. When local hapū can fish and swim in the lakes and streams and admire the beauty of a clear clean lake and stream we will have returned to a place left to us by our tūpuna.

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