

WAI _ PUKA/FYFFE HISTORIC AREA
Transmitting the Spirit of Place

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Abstract. Wai _ Puka/Fyffe Historic Area in Kaik_ura, New Zealand, has had over eight centuries of human habitation. Its powerful landscape and unique marine environment have enabled the establishment of a succession of settlements by enterprising and innovative people. With the objective of ascertaining how spirit is transmitted, consultation and an analysis of visitor surveys identify differing levels of response to both place and transmission tools. Structural and archaeological remains, printed and electronic material, guides and oral histories all tell stories. These especially revolve around notable M_ori settlement phases and later European whaling and farming. Recently a contemporary pole carving was erected, emphasising both the place's W_hi Tapu status and the guardianship role that local M_ori, Ng_ti Kuri, have in actively managing the cultural landscape. It is concluded that the environmental and cultural landscape is an integral part of the spirit of this place and its communities safeguard and revitalize that spirit.

The purpose of this study is to identify those aspects of Wai _ Puka/Fyffe Historic Area that contribute to Spirit of Place and investigate reasons and methods for transmitting the layers of spirit to

current and future generations. A number of different approaches were taken.

The M_ori *hap_* (sub-tribe) Ng_tī Kuri holds a special *kaitiakitanga* (guardianship) role for the area. A key component of the investigation has been to look at how they interpret the concept of Spirit of Place and see its transmission occurring.

In addition, observations made by curator-guides at Fyffe House have been examined. Such guides provide personalised visitor interaction and report anecdotally the interests, experiences and comments by visitors. Data from regular visitor surveys carried out at Fyffe House over three years has also been considered to identify methods visitors thought best in transmitting messages about the place.

The authors too have had the opportunity to observe community and visitor behaviour and reactions to identify both new and old ways of transmission.

From a variety of sources the authors are able to draw some conclusions about the transmittal of Spirit of Place that stretch well beyond the defined site of Fyffe Historic Area alone.

Identifying Spirit of Place

The ICOMOS New Zealand Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value (1993) recognises that New Zealand retains a unique assemblage of places of cultural heritage value relating to its indigenous (M_ori) and its more recent peoples.

Loh (2007) suggests that Spirit of Place in historic sites encompasses the meanings of the place accrued through time and through its past and present uses, and that these intangible values are expressed through tangible built heritage. However, if only *built* heritage is considered as a conduit for giving character to intangible values, it excludes heritage sites where *natural* heritage embodies the intangibles. The geography and location of New Zealand with its awesome natural landscapes is a strong part of the cultural identity of the nation.

In particular, M_ori do not distinguish built heritage from the natural environment as places of cultural heritage significance. This is because the natural landscape equates to cultural landscape which in turn relates to *t_puna* or ancestral landscape. Physical place is an expression of *whakapapa* (genealogy). It includes indigenous perspectives about the relationships between people and the environment and is also the story of the individual elements of that

environment. This concept of the indivisible nature of M_ori culture with the environment, and culturally appropriate ways to interpret this, is increasingly being explored (Keelan 1993). The Tongariro National Park, a series of three volcanoes in New Zealand's central North Island, is noted as being the first place inscribed on the World Heritage List for its associative cultural values linked to the natural environment, the mountains being ancestral entities to M_ori of that region (Fraser 2007).

The interweaving of cultural, archaeological, built and natural heritage is integral to Wai _ Puka/Fyffe Historic Area. Set on the Kaik_ura peninsula looking out to both the sea and nearby mountains, the area represents a microcosm of the history of New Zealand. It contains an inter-related group of historic places that provide evidence of successive occupation and use of the area since the earliest times of settlement in what is the youngest country in the world to have been discovered and occupied by humans. The sea beside Kaik_ura is astonishingly deep, with an ocean trench reaching depths of 870 metres only a kilometre offshore, and more than 1600 metres in canyons further out. The trench is a source of rich nutrients and home to a wide variety of sea life, including whales.

Ng_tī Kuri see this area as an integral part of a much larger cultural landscape that is part of their cultural identity:

The origin of Te Wai _ Puka lies within the history of how the canoe of Aoraki was wrecked upon a reef in the ocean waters. The eastern or lower side of the canoe was splintered and scattered. Tu te Raki Whanoa sent his son Marokura to re-assemble the fragments in order to make that side of the canoe welcoming to humans (the new creation of Tane).

Marokura gathered the broken thwarts and decorations of the canoe and arranged them in such a way that they became the home for sea life and which also caught the warmth of the sun which would in turn enhance the growth of plants.

The eastern side of the South Island has many peninsulas which trace their origin to the work of Marokura. One of the major peninsulas is Kaik_ura. The shaping task of Marokura is remembered in the name Te Tai o Marokura, which is applied to the sea along the Kaik_ura coastline.

The coming of Maui is also recalled in this area through the story of his discovery of the North Island from the viewpoint of the peninsula hills. The spirit of his discovery is embedded in the story of how he stood in his canoe, braced his foot against the thwart and with the

great weight of the sacred fish on his line, broke out the timber thwart. Henceforth the name for the Kaik_ura peninsula became Te Taumanu o te Waka a Maui (the thwart of the canoe of Maui). The baiting of the hook which he used to catch the fish is remembered in the nearby Marae – Te Whaka Takahanga a Maui.

Each successive ancestral canoe is remembered in the place names which surround Wai _ Puka/Fyffe Historic Area.

The sheltering range of mountains is known as the ‘standing food stores of Rakihouia’, the cliffs of the peninsula as the ‘food store of Rakihouia’.

Kaik_ura itself, as a town and district, receives its name from the visit of Tama ki te Rangi, who fished the crayfish (k_ura) resources of the rocky coast. Te Ahi Kai K_ura a Tama ki te Rangi being the correct form of the common, modern name of Kaik_ura.

Beyond the coastal waters of Te Tai o Marokura is the vast ocean, the dwelling of Tangaroa. Ng_tī Kuri have direct whakapapa links with Tangaroa and have accepted the Kaitiakitanga of the seashore and open waters complete with its myriad of living creatures. This acceptance and whakapapa relationship has been asserted by the erection of the carved post ‘Tangaroa’ in the early years of this century.

These creation and ancestral stories have been passed on from generation to generation with meticulous attention to detail. M_ori were without the written word until the arrival of Europeans in New Zealand from the late 18th century, and today oral history continues to be an important way of passing on knowledge.

The earliest occupants of Wai _ Puka/Fyffe Historic Area were hunter-gatherer M_ori who camped some 800-900 years ago at what was then a sandy bay on the peninsula (Trotter & McCulloch 1989). Archaeological investigation shows that, from this site, early M_ori hunted large flightless birds known as moa, now extinct, and other native birds, and they caught fish and seals (ibid). The place was also used for burial, as evidenced by an accidental discovery in 1857 of a grave from the moa-hunter period. Widely documented at the time of discovery in the mid 19th century, this significant grave contained the crouching skeleton of a male holding a deliberately perforated moa egg along with one or more adze heads (Trotter & McCulloch 1993).

Archaeology and oral histories record that the area was later visited by descendants of these earliest people from time to time. Later, about 300-400 years ago, the site was used by M_ori for cultivation and

other activities such as fowling and fishing (Trotter & McCulloch 1989).

From about AD 1500, a number of p_ (fortified settlement areas) were built in the wider area of the Kaik_ura Peninsula (Jones 2007). Takahanga itself was a p_ and is now the site of Ng_t_i Kuri's modern *marae* (main meeting place) of the same name.

The first European settlement in the area was in 1842 with the establishment of Robert Fyfe's shore whaling station, the Wai _ Puka Fishery. By 1849 with the decline in the number of whales from over-hunting, Fyfe had turned to farming, making him the first pastoralist in the Kaik_ura region. Graves and material relating to both whaling and sheep farming activities has been found in the area (Harris 1994).

Fyffe House is a significant survivor from this period of early European settlement. The eastern wing comprises the whaling station's cooper's cottage from the mid 1840s, built on whale bone vertebrae foundations. It was later added to by Robert Fyfe's cousin George Fyffe, who had managed the whaling station after Robert died in 1854.¹ Today Fyffe House appears much the same as it was by 1863.

Other 19th century European activity in the area included a hotel, customs, fishing, wharfage businesses and the use of Kaik_ura as a port. Not all of these activities lasted but tangible evidence of them remains in the area. Structural remains include whale bone fence posts, foundations of buildings, remains of the old sea wall, a stone fireplace from a bonded warehouse, part of the old wharf itself, and historic fence lines.

In 1981 Fyffe House was gifted to the New Zealand Historic Places Trust Pouhere Taonga ('the Trust') and since then it has been open to the public, serving as both a house museum and a place for interpreting the layers of history and surrounding environment. It is registered by the Trust as a Category I historic place in recognition of its outstanding significance, and is encompassed within the Trust registered Fyffe Historic Area which includes not only the house but a wider range of structural and archaeological features, both M_ori and European. In 2007, the general area was also registered by the Trust as a W_hi Tapu in recognition of the sacredness of the site to M_ori, especially Ng_t_i Kuri, who acknowledge both the past occupation and uses of the site by their ancestors such as Rapuwai, Waitaha and Ng_t_i Mamoe.

¹ Although first cousins, Robert Fyfe and George Fyffe spelt their surname differently.

Transmitting Spirit of Place

A key method of transmission of Spirit of Place is through interpretation. This occurs at a range of levels.

Visitors to Fyffe House are hosted by the guide who is able to provide a personalised introduction and answer questions about the house and historic area, including aspects of human endeavour associated with the area. Guides also provide an explanation of the region, its natural elements, values, points of interest and economic activities. Displays and documentation throughout the house, grounds and general area provide further self-guided interpretation, including records of conservation and restoration programmes.

The guides have adapted to a changing world of interactive, inquisitive, authenticity seeking, knowledgeable visitors with a desire to learn in such a way that they now provide more information of a contextual and conceptual nature to put the Spirit of Place in a wider context. For example, Wai _ Puka/Fyffe Historic Area can tell the story of whaling as part of the history of the place – and visitors can smell whale oil, touch and smell blubber and handle baleen and whalebone - but it can also be an opportunity to consider why New Zealand now opposes whaling. This sort of engagement of visitors' minds and emotions through interpretation and facilitation may be considered 'meaning making' (Ham 2002) and an opportunity to 'ask questions that lead to new insights' (Dural and Dural 2007).

Visitor surveys asking both national and international visitors what they enjoyed most about their visit to Fyffe House consistently show that 'History/Authenticity' of the place together with 'Staff/Guides' provide the highest level of enjoyment (75-90%) whereas 'Displays and other information' have tended to rate lower (around 35%) (Khatap-Bardsley & McIntosh 2005-2008).

The concept of authenticity is essential to conveying the Spirit of Place. McKercher and du Cros (2002) write that 'intangible heritage management principles suggest that the integrity of the cultural place plays an important role in presenting an authentic experience'. There is an increasing awareness that house museums, such as Fyffe House, have a responsibility to ensure that 'authentic' stories are told, including those of tangible and intangible heritage of indigenous communities. It is recognised that Ng_tī Kuri have the right to determine how their own stories are told and increasingly in recent times they have been involved in broadening the range of transmission tools used at Wai _ Puka/Fyffe Historic Area.

A special transmission tool that has revitalised the way Spirit of Place is conveyed is the recent erection of a contemporary *pou* (carved pole) within Wai _ Puka/Fyffe Historic Area. Representing *Tangaroa* and carved in a modern style by Kaik_ura carver Makarini Solomon, the *pou* represents the area's dual heritage. The bottom carving of a whale is significant for three reasons. Firstly, it links to Ng_tī Kuri *whakapapa* from *Paikea* who came to New Zealand on the back of a whale. Secondly, the area is associated with whaling and, thirdly, the fortunes of the town in the present and future are tied with eco-tourism and whale watching. Above the whale is the moa egg for this is the site where a significant early grave was found with the world's largest known moa egg. Above the egg is a stylised moa, from which the egg came, and which also was the prey of the earliest people of Kaik_ura. Carved above the moa is a human form but without a head for two reasons. His head contained the knowledge and this has been lost over time. Also, when the early burial was found, his head was reburied separate from his body. On either side of the body are a *taiaha* (M_ori spear) and a whaling harpoon, representing the separate and combined history of the site. Above the body are scrolls of *kowhaiwahi*, the symbol of life where the past, present and future are all intertwined. The head of the carving is that of *Tangaroa* who stares out to *Te Tai o Marokura* (the sea in front of Kaik_ura). The sea and its gifts have been an integral part of the lives of the local people for centuries. *Tangaroa* guards and protects this heritage.

Since the *Tangaroa pou* was completed in 2002, two other *pou* (representing *Maui*) have been installed at the entrance to a well used and interpreted walking track on the peninsula, and it is likely that others will be added in the future. All these *pou* are akin to markers as described by Leiper (1995) which act, in conjunction with the existing built and natural heritage, to provide a link between visitors and place. As well as contributing to interpretation, the *pou* reinforce the status and the guardianship role that Ng_tī Kuri have in actively managing the cultural landscape.

Te Poha o Tohu Raumati is Te R_nanga o Kaik_ura's environmental resource management plan that documents Ng_tī Kuri's approach to environmental and cultural resources. It identifies the significance of *taonga* (treasure) species of the land, sky and sea. For Ng_tī Kuri, the concept of Spirit of Place is based on the *whakapapa* of all things existing there and linked to the place, including birds, plants and sea creatures, rocks and streams, the earth beneath and the air above. They are elements of the Spirit of Place.

Knowledge of the environment and appropriate use for sustainability is seen not only by M_ori as a treasure passed on by the ancestors to the present generations but also something which all New Zealanders are increasingly trying to grasp. Therefore resource management methods such as ecological restoration, including *rahui* (a community initiative for a restrictive take in the coastal waters), have a role to play in safeguarding Spirit of Place.

Spirit of Place comes alive in the ways an area is used and valued by communities (Loh 2007) and serving the needs of the local community is usually a valuable and sustainable goal for historic sites (Vogt 2007). While Fyffe House itself is a visitor attraction, the house and general area is also special to the Kaik_ura community. Locals are able to visit Fyffe House without charge, and the grounds are used for community events such as 'Jazz on the Lawn', Sea Week and Conservation Week events, and celebrating the launch of the *rahui*.

For the Kaik_ura community, there are varied needs and desires. However, in recent times there is an increased appreciation of the cultural and historic significance of Wai _ Puka/Fyffe Historic Area, and of M_ori culture generally, of the peninsula and its environs and of its relevance to present and future generations.

These days the modern town of Kaik_ura has a population of around 3,200 residents and it attracts around one million short-stay visitors each year, the majority of whom are drawn to the environment and its eco-tourism attractions especially those revolving around marine mammal watching. Whale Watch Kaik_ura is a tribally owned, managed and executed tourism venture that, by its huge commercial success, has helped take local M_ori values and visibility to new levels. It has helped raised the status of M_ori people and M_ori values and, in conjunction with Takahanga *marae*, has contributed to attitudinal changes in the community.

Today the Kaik_ura District Council consults with, and is guided by, Te R_nanga o Kaik_ura before determining whether to grant resource consents. Very recently established is *Te Korowai o Te Tai o Marokura*, a committee which draws together all user groups and stakeholders interested in coastal and land environmental issues in the area.

Weaving the Layers

The Spirit of Wai _ Puka/Fyffe Historic Area includes the layers of genealogy that acknowledge not only all those that have gone before

but the whole of the environment. Most of the layers relate to M_ori history, the later layers being M_ori and European history interwoven.

Fyffe House, itself a rare and significant building, provides a pivotal on-site point for exploring the history of the site. However, as well as the usual techniques of interpretation through guiding, documentation, static and interactive displays, additional transmission tools are effective with respect to Wai _ Puka/Fyffe Historic Area.

Simply *being there* in this place allows people to experience the awe and wonder of this distinct powerful landscape and marine environment and understand at least something of why people have been drawn to the area over many centuries.

Ng_tī Kuri, as the traditional people and *kaitiaki*, determine how their stories are transmitted. This includes conveying history through people, the recognition and use of traditional place names and protocols as well as new approaches such the *Tangaroa pou* contemporary carving. The successful whale watching eco-tourism business is incredibly powerful in terms of Ng_tī Kuri storytelling and transmitting Spirit of Place to others. Such transmission has contributed to positive effects on improving community relationships and cultural and environmental awareness.

Resource management tools for sustainability such as heritage place protection and conservation, retention of landmarks, land and marine resource management and protection, and ecological restoration all help safeguard the wider Spirit of Place. Community involvement in Wai _ Puka/Fyffe Historic Area and the general environment revitalizes the spirit and encourages community engagement and an appreciation of the adaptive use of this place and its physical, spiritual and cultural values.

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