



Ko Roimata te Awa

Tears Are Our River

By students of
Matua Ngaru School

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Ihirangi

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He mihi

Pepeha

Ko Matua Ngaru te tira Waka	Knowledge is our mountain
Ko Mātauranga te Maunga	Tears/memories are our river
Ko roimata te Awa	The children of today are the leaders of tomorrow
Ko ngā Rangatira mō āpopō te Iwi	Sperm whale, Hammerhead Shark, Octopus and Maui Dolphin are our classes (hapū) who come from the four winds (corners of the world)
Ko Parāoa, ko Mangōpare, ko Wheke, ko Popoto ngā rōpū	Kaipara District is our place to stand
Nō ngā Hau e whā ngā Hapū e	Ngāti Whātua is our iwi umbrella
Ko Kaipara te tūrangawaewae	Our waka is Matua Ngaru
Ko Ngāti Whātua te Mana Whenua	We paddle together in unison
Ko Matua Ngaru te tira Waka	We - the children of all ethnicities - sit beneath the shelter of our tupuna (ancestral knowledge) and this provides for our well-being. We must acknowledge the knowledge of the ancestors, us all.
Hī! Hā! Hī! Hā! Hoeā, kia kaha	
Ko Mātauranga te Maunga	
E noho ana mātou i raro	
I te maru o ngā Tupuna (hei oranga)	
Ko Kaipara te tūrangawaewae	
Ko Ngāti Whātua te Mana Whenua	
Ko Matua Ngaru te tira Waka	
Hī! Hā! Hī! Hā! Hoeā, kia kaha	
Ko Mātauranga te Maunga	
E noho ana mātou i raro	
I te maru o ngā Tupuna (hei oranga)	
Ko Matua Ngaru te tira Waka	

Kupu takamua

Foreword

It is always a precious moment to give pen and paper to our tamariki and discover the world through their eyes.

Many of these children have themselves experienced flooding in our community and it was very brave of them to reflect on these times, and those of others in our community, to write and illustrate this book.

The voices of tamariki are often silent during emergencies as adults make decisions on their behalf but not always with them in consideration.

This book is an opportunity for their voices to be heard - their perspectives, their sadness and their joy related to the stories of Kumeū River.

Andie Davies
Co-Pastor Kumeū Baptist Church

Kupu whakataki

Introduction

A Ngāti Whātua pūrākau story says that a girl taniwha and two boy taniwha lived in Kumeū River. The boy taniwha both loved the girl taniwha and fought each other to win her. Their fighting created the curves in the river.

There once was a Ngāti Whātua chief, and his iwi lived next to the river. He saw lots of changes happening to the land so one day he climbed Pukeatua mountain to get some guidance.

He saw a ngaru, a gigantic wave, coming up the river. He took that as a tohu – a sign, went back to his village, and told his iwi that they had to move.

They found a long track that had been cleared, and moved there. That track later became the railway track which goes through Kumeū. Next to the track is the road called Matua Road.

That is why our school is called Matua Ngaru.

We wrote this book so that people in our community will know what to do if the river floods. This will help people to be safe, and we will be happy to know that we have helped so many people.

By Caleb Joseph

Ngāpuhi, Tainui, Ngāti Maniapoto, Te Arawa, Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāti Tuwharetoa, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Raukawa, Muaūpoko, Ngāi Tahu, Rangitāne

Ngā Roimata Hinapōuri

Tears of Sadness

What causes the Kumeū River to flood?

By Emily Pyzhanov and Caitlin Trinder
Illustrated by Felicity Ebenezer

Floods have been recorded in Kumeū in 1928, 1954, 1961, 1962, 1988, 2021, and twice in 2023.

The 1954 flood happened on the day of the Kumeū Show. The New Zealand Governor-General was attending, but the river rose so high that all the shops in Kumeū were flooded. The water was so strong it washed a car off the road at Huapai and into the raging water.

On 31 August 2021, over 200mm of rain fell in 14 hours. That was more rain in one day than usually happens in a month. This was during a COVID lockdown and was also at night which made it even more challenging. Emergency services dealt with 370 calls for assistance.

In 2023 the river flooded five times in four months.

Here are some of the main causes of the floods:

- Rubbish and debris from construction sites and dead trees fall into the river and act like a giant plug.
- Trees that would slow the water's flow have been chopped down and replaced by roads that speed the water up.
- Kumeū township is built on a flood plain.

Climate change is also having an effect

Climate change is also having an effect

Our planet is getting warmer, and that makes both the air and the oceans heat up. When this happens, more water evaporates and rises into the air. That makes the air hotter, and wetter.

Because there's more water in the air, when it rains, it can pour a lot harder than before. All that extra rain can't always soak into the ground, which makes floods more likely.

Also, the weather is changing so it rains more often. If it rains for a long time, the ground gets too full of water, and rivers and streams can overflow, which also causes floods.



Sad stories

By Lydia Butterfield

Illustrated by Emily Pyzhanov

Here are some sad stories from the 2023 floods.

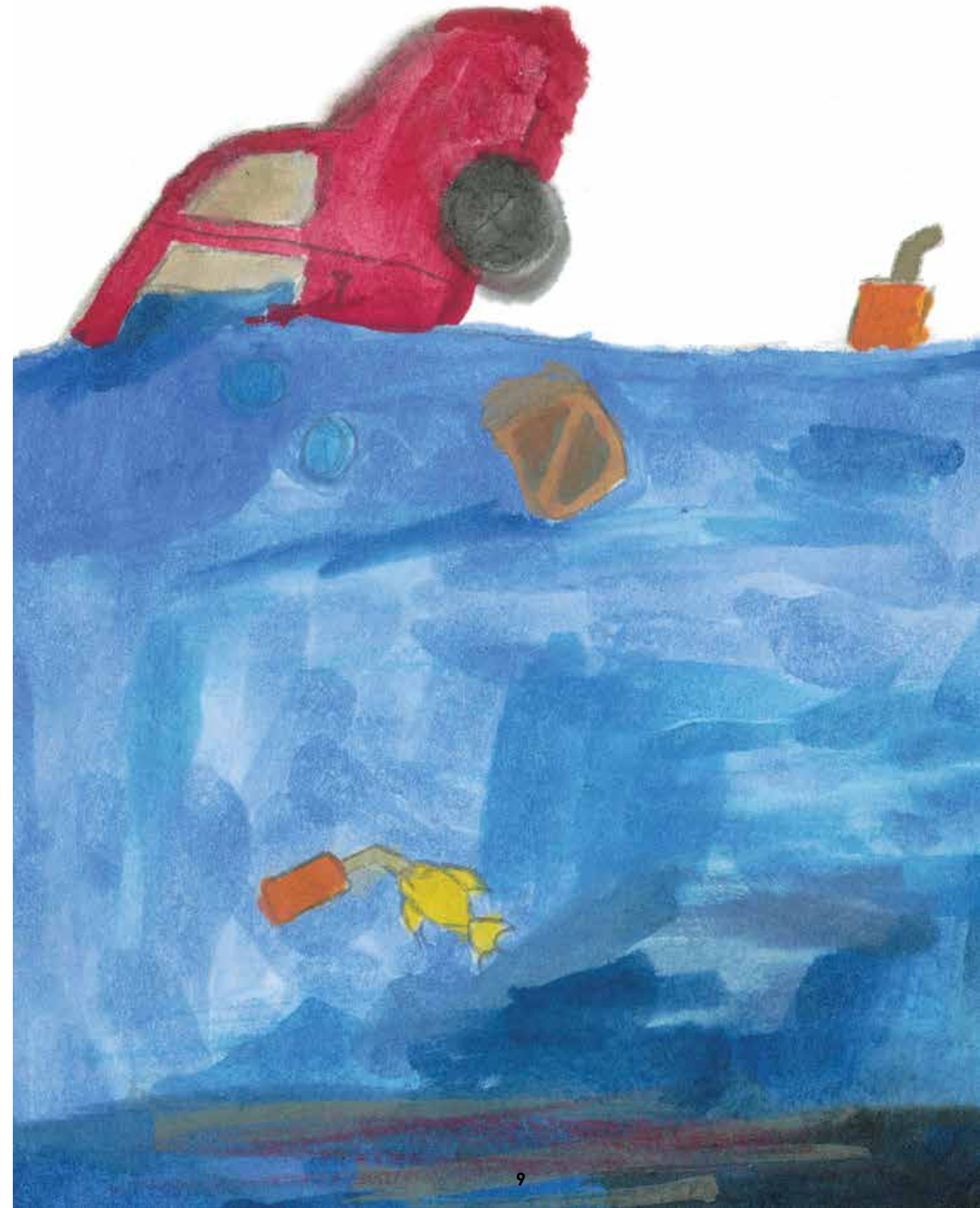
Trushar and his family had just moved into their new home when the floods happened. The waters rose so fast they had to flee and leave all of their belongings. After this they lived in temporary houses and struggled with mental health. They feared the sound of heavy rain, and thunder. Their story reflects the hardship of losing a home, and the emotional toll on the family.

It was raining so hard a lady couldn't see the flood ahead and drove straight into it. Her car was washed to the side and water started pouring in. Luckily she escaped out of the car. She remembers seeing her lunch floating in the water.

One family with a young baby were trapped due to the high water levels and had no way to get to safety. They were rescued by a local resident, Briar Dunn, who used an inflatable boat to get to the family as floodwaters came in their house. Other community members then drove them to safety, illustrating strong local support.

Brendon and his family experienced extreme flooding twice. They escaped using their kayak to row through chest-high, murky floodwaters which was terrifying for everyone, especially the young children.

Some survivors still feel fear caused by these events years later, reflected in anxious reactions to heavy rain and disruptions to social life.



Crossing the Flood

By Brynn and Mila Davies
Illustrated by Mervyn Cooksley

Brynn: It was a Friday and we celebrated by going to our friend's house to hang out. Nobody expected that it would be so hard to get home at the end of it.

Mila: The rain was pouring down and at 6pm we left to drive home.

Brynn: Nobody suspected a thing. But we turned onto Orahá Road and met a huge queue of cars trying to get across the bridge.

Mila: The Kumeū River had flooded!

Brynn: We were in our smaller car so Mum pulled over to think. Mum called Dad and said we might not be home for dinner.

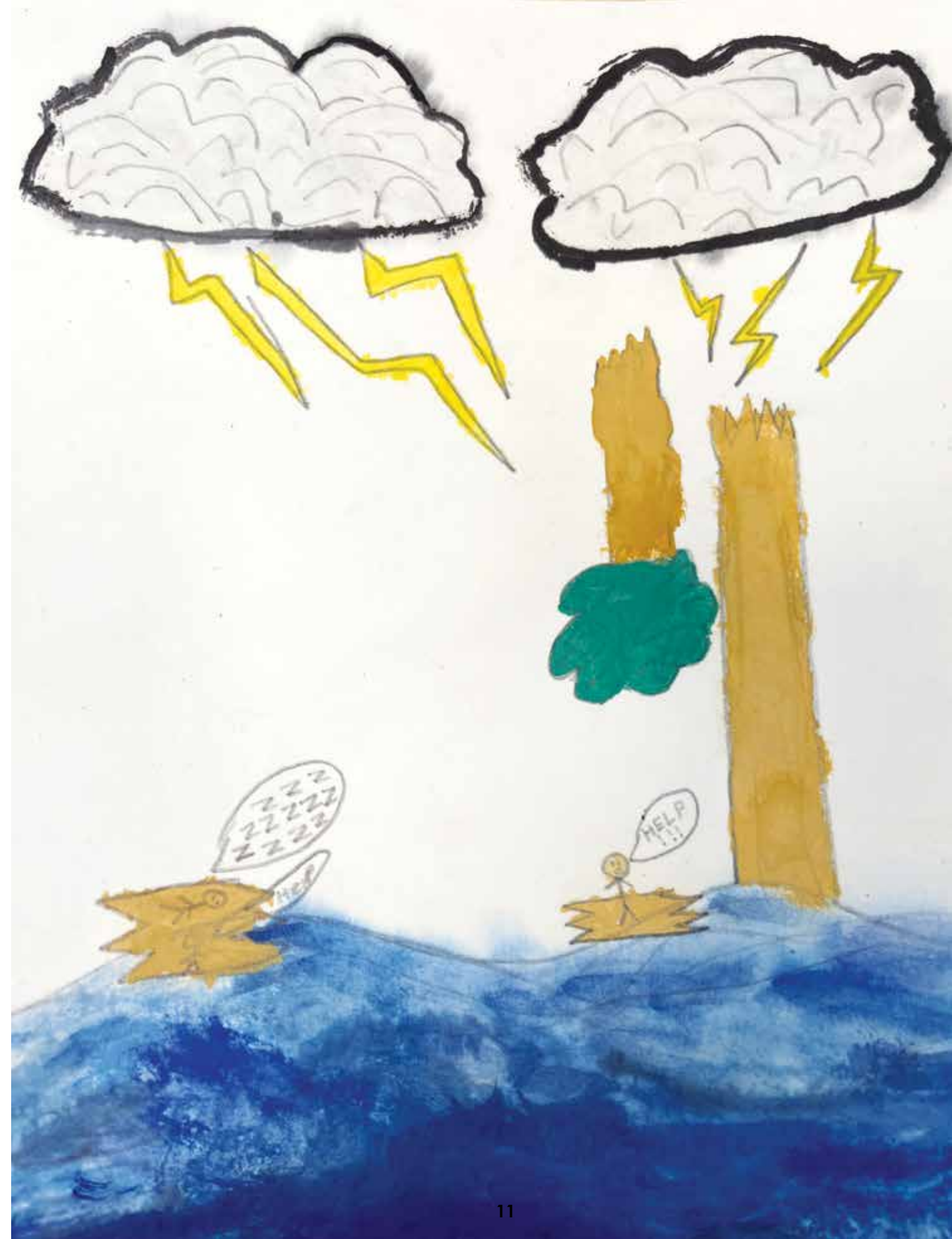
Mila: I didn't know what to feel. I saw other cars cross the bridge safely but they were way taller and our car was very small. I had no idea what we should do.

Brynn: Mum gasped and said she saw a car like ours cross the bridge safely. Apparently, that was a good enough reason for her to try too.

Mila: I thought that we should take the risk to go over the bridge.

Brynn: The water was almost 200mm high but Mum gradually steered the car through the water safely.

Mila: We were so relieved when we made it home.



Different roles in an emergency

By Samrita Singh and Zoe Gates
Illustrated by Josh Henderson

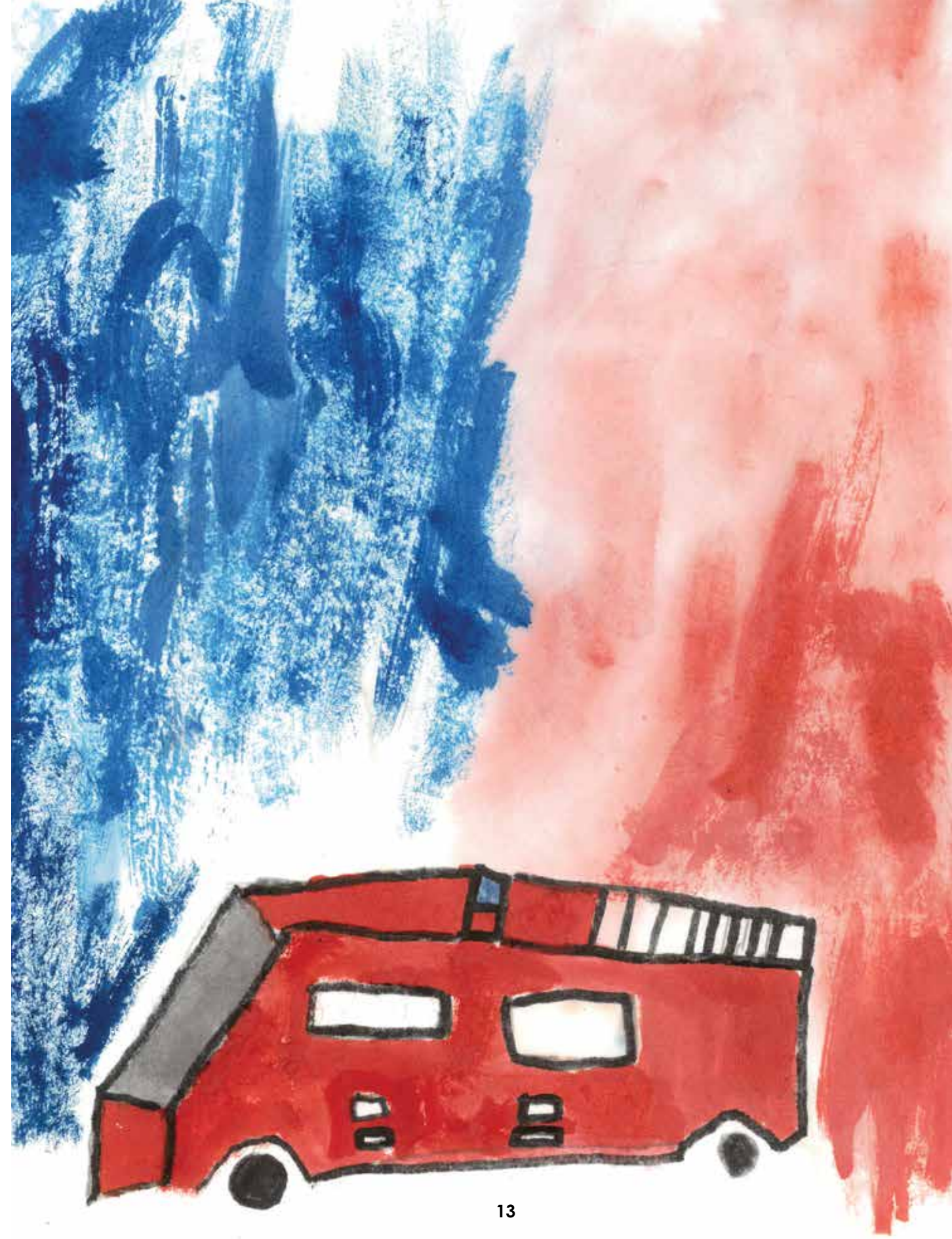
During a flood emergency, different people have important jobs to help keep everyone safe.

People in the community

- Volunteers send out alerts, set up shelters, hand out supplies, give people space to charge their phones and help clean up. Volunteers are awesome people who are often overlooked, but they carry on, and are worth celebrating.
- Local leaders and government workers set up safe places called shelters where people can stay if they have to leave their homes. They also close roads that are dangerous.
- Some people were rescued by surf lifesaving teams.
- Families and neighbours look out for each other. They help move things to safe places and check if anyone needs help.

Paid professionals

- Police officers help people who are at risk, in danger, or stuck.
- Firefighters get people and pets out of dangerous situations using ladders or just pulling them out. They make sure that everyone is okay.
- Paramedics are trained medical professionals and help people who are injured or need medical treatment. They give their attention to the people who need it most.



Memories

By Sophie Lennon

I was at my friend's birthday party when the floods happened in 2023. Mum picked me up early from the party.

"If we don't leave now we might not have access to our street," she said.

"Will Girl Guides still be on?" I asked.

Mum shook her head. "Everything is cancelled because of the flooding."

First we went to the supermarket to get toilet paper, and toothpaste. As we drove into our street I saw people placing sand bags around their homes.

Later that evening my dad took his drone out and flew it around to see what happened.

"There's a car that's 95% under water," he said. When I heard that I got a little bit nervous.

"Don't worry, it's all going to be fine," said Mum.

The power went out during the night because of the wind. The water came up our driveway but thankfully no further. But the road was flooded and so were many of our neighbours' homes and we couldn't leave our homes.

It was really boring. Me and my brother played Hungry Hippos most of the day. The power was out for two whole days. When it finally came back on I was so happy that I could watch whatever I wanted and have cooked food.



Ways people helped each other during Kumeū's floods

By Emily Blackmore and Maddie Page
Illustrated by Maddie Page

Each time a flood emergency has happened, people have come together and used their resources to help each other.

- Some carried people to safety on boats, jet skis and surfboards.
- Many offered their homes as shelter.
- Some did baking and cooking.
- Others donated clothes, food, and other essentials.

Supermarkets like Pak 'n' Save took food to St Chad's Church to feed people who were helping to clean damaged houses.

Some people went out to find animals because animals needed saving too. A pony was rescued from the field by its owner and taken to the second story of their home.

Facebook group chats kept people informed and told them where to reach out for help.

The floods were tragic for our community but they also helped us come together. There were lots of local heroes!



First responder diary – station officer Carl Hamm

Written and illustrated by Emily McClymont

Being the station officer, I was first to get the call about the 2023 floods. As a volunteer, it's my job to keep people safe and improve the situation.

The first people we helped were off the coast of Aroha. There were people wading through water, debris everywhere and the fence was about to break. Seeing how scary the floods were, I thought of my home, wondering if my family and property were safe.

Excitement and pride coursed through my veins, finally being able to help someone. Nervousness bubbled up inside me when we approached the scene.

The first thing we did was make sure all the people were safe before addressing the property. We built trenches to catch the water while my teammates checked the health of the people in the waters.

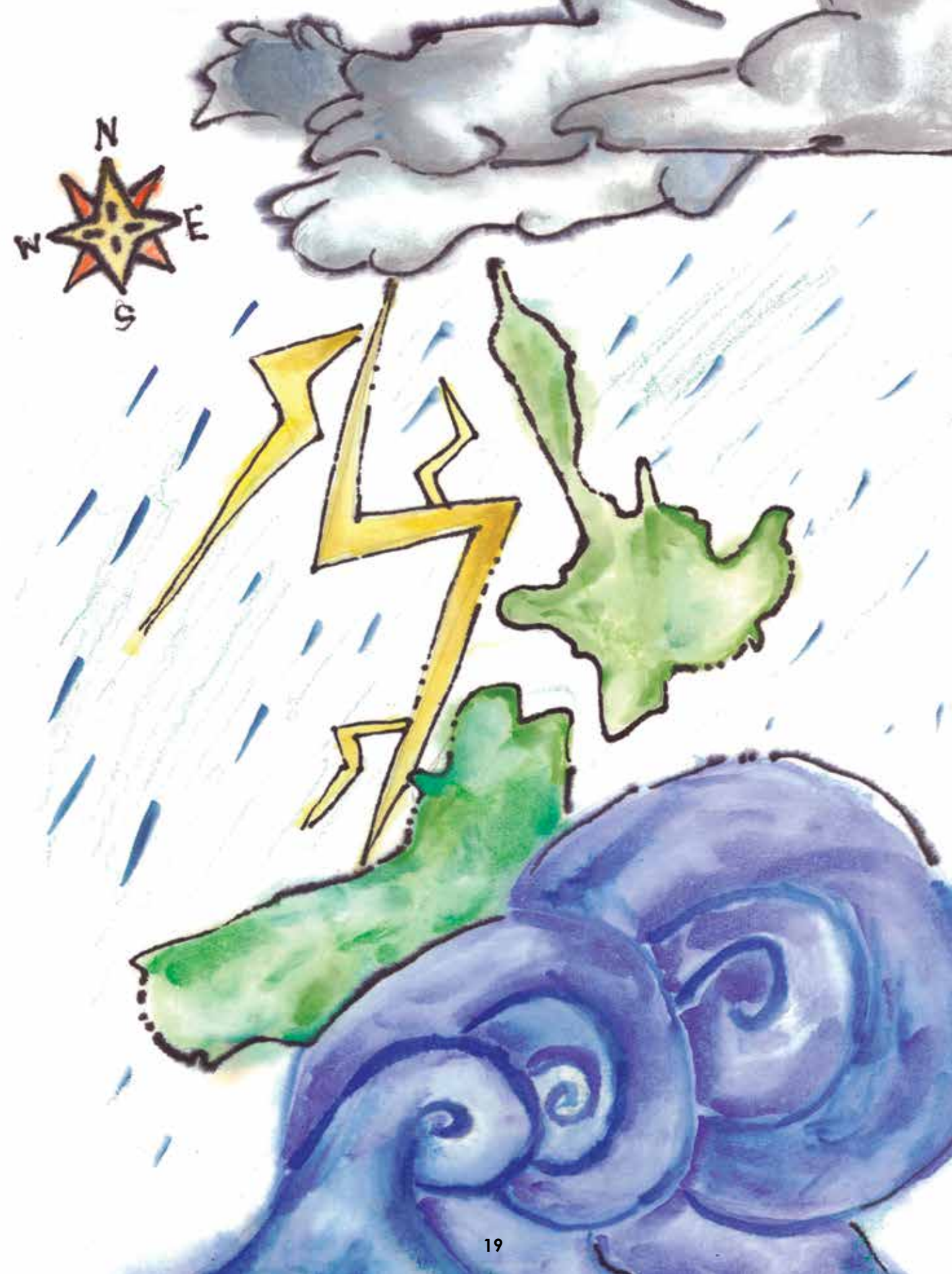
The hardest part of the flood was access. We couldn't get to people, as we would be swept away and do more harm than good. We borrowed boats and other vehicles to help people.

We worked with a lot of people, including the police, surf lifesaving, and community groups like churches. A highlight was safely evacuating so many people.

We worked in many different places, like northwest of Muriwai, and northeast Waitakere. Anyone who said they were fearless would be lying, as it was scary knowing someone might not make it out alive.

It's a very emotionally and physically draining job but the monthly training helped a lot.

The most difficult part was the lives that were lost. I remember vividly, a cold wet night. It was murky and we were helping people from houses on hills. One of the houses slipped down the hill at a very fast speed and we tragically lost two of our recruit firefighters. One of them died on impact and the other a few hours later in a hospital. The death of a friend and co-worker was really hard.



A family's story

By Stephanie Deacon

Illustrated by Samrita Singh

Five years ago last month we woke up in the middle of the night to find our house surrounded by water. I walked around our deck. Downstairs I could see the roofs of our cars surrounded by flood water. I watched as our slide set floated out of the gate and down the road. The water was moving quickly. It was surreal.

The water around our house had risen quickly and we had no idea how high it was going to get so we decided leaving was our best option. A kayak had floated out from under the house and wedged under the stairs so we were able to kayak out. My husband took our then four-year-old first and came back for me and our then one-year-old.

At the time we didn't appreciate the danger of the situation – the flood water was deep, fast moving and it was so dark. We look back now and are so thankful nothing went wrong that night.

We never want to be in that situation again. Every time it rains heavily and the river begins to flood we feel anxious. All of our neighbours have moved away – their houses are gone – because it is not safe to live where we are during a flood.

Inexplicably, we have been left behind. Losing our neighbourhood community has been the hardest part of the whole process. We had all experienced the flooding together and supported each other during the clean up phase. Seeing their empty, overgrown sections is a constant reminder of what we have lost.

We wish that we could have the opportunity to move away from the river too.



Ngā Roimata Harikoa

Tears of Joy

Happy times – an interview with Graham Andrew

By Honor Yavunisautu and Maddie Page
Illustrated by Ethan Edwards

How long have you lived in this area, Graham?

I was 12 when we moved here in 1951. We lived on Tapa Road. I was the only boy in my class at Huapai Primary School with shoes. When I was older I went to Avondale College and had to catch a bus to get there. I married a local girl – her father owned the hotel in Huapai and we had three children. My daughter is a teacher aide at Huapai School and my grandkids go there as well.

What's your favourite memory of Kumeū River?

It was a playground. We fished and caught eels. There were swimming holes too. Sometimes we sat on floating logs and travelled down the river. It wasn't polluted then and the farmers were good at keeping the river clear.

What's your funniest memory of the river?

I used to make canoes out of corrugated iron and take them on the river. We put a tarp on them and cruised along hitting fences. Later my kids had mud fights in the river and would be covered in mud and my wife would hose them down. We had a lot of good memories of the river.

Was there flooding back then too?

One of my earliest memories of the river was canoeing on it during a flood – something that happened nearly every year back then.



Fun on the river

By Joshua Williams

Illustrated by Millie Glennie

There are lots of fun things to do around Kumeū River, from picking strawberries to visiting taverns.

There are many places near the river where you can pick strawberries and eat them. You can even eat an ice cream made from the actual fruit you just picked!

Kumeū has wineries and river taverns that make beautiful food. The Riverhead tavern is New Zealand's oldest riverside tavern. It's over 160 years old!

Woodhill Forest is also nearby and it's fun to go mountain biking and trekking in the forest.



Kumeū River in Winter

By Caitlin Trinder

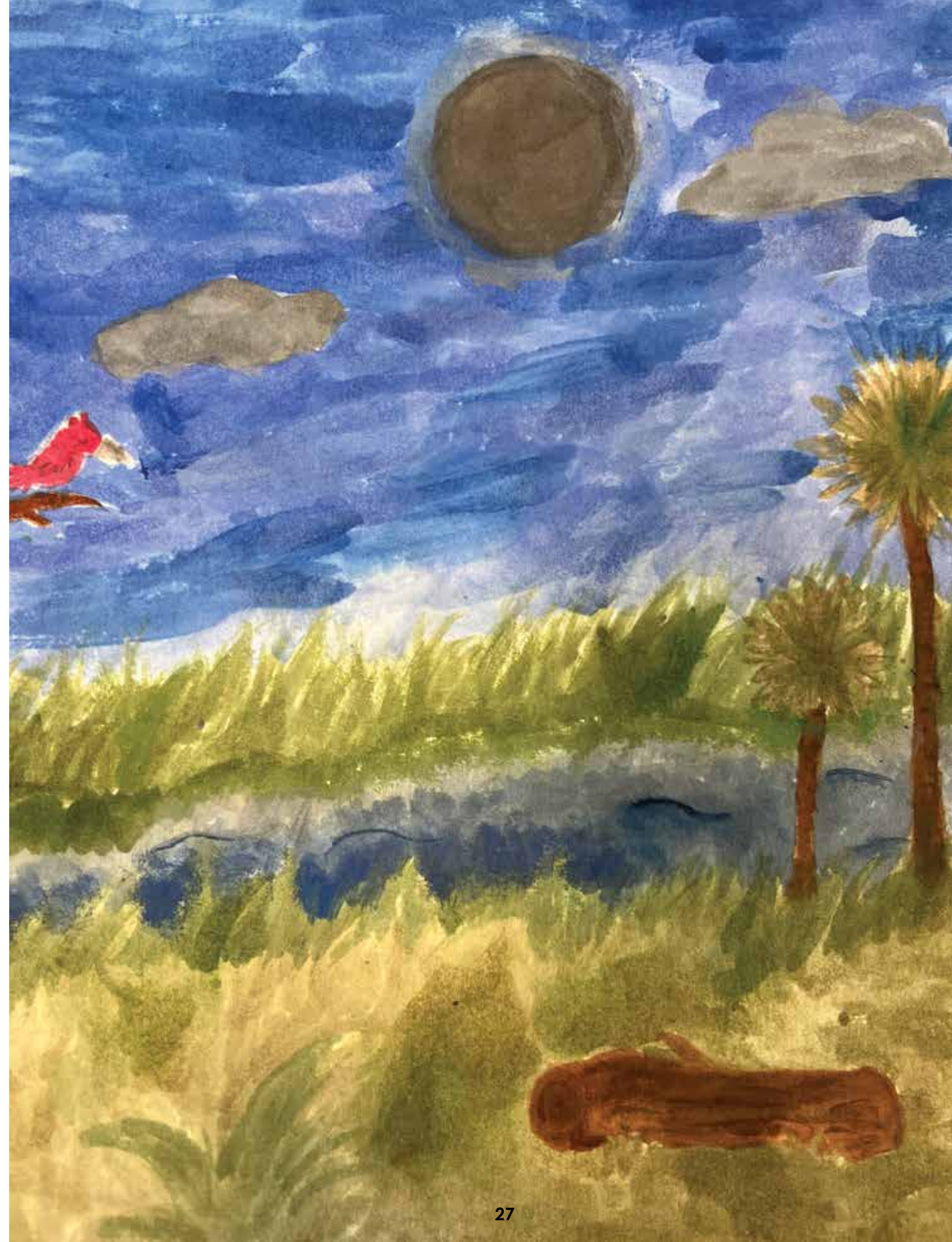
Illustrated by Ethan Edwards

Cabbage trees swaying in the breeze
And layers of land very extrinsic
And debris flowing down the stream
And a concrete bridge tinted green
And mushy soil on the land
And murky water
And long grass
And murky water
And mushy soil on the land
And debris flowing down the stream
And a concrete bridge tinted green
And layers of land very extrinsic
And cabbage trees swaying in the breeze.

Note

This poem is written in a form called anaphora. This is when successive lines begin with the same words. It's one of the world's oldest poetic techniques.

Spot the pattern of the list – repeated lines in reverse order, all beginning with 'And ...' except the first line.



Plant life

By Samrita Singh

Illustrated by Isabelle Wang

If you listen closely, you can hear Kumeū River talking to you.

One sunny morning, I walked to the river in my sparkly gumboots. I took my sketchbook to draw the plants that live there because Mum says they're special and help the river stay happy.

I sat on a rock and listened to the river making swishy sounds as if telling stories to the trees.

Tall, fluffy toetoe waved hello. They looked like golden fireworks stuck on sticks.

Next to them were harakeke - flax plants. Their leaves were long and pointy like swords. People make baskets and rope from them. I tried to make one once but mine looked like a squashed spider.

I saw little green plants called maurea (carex). They're shy and like to hang out where it's wet and muddy. I think they're the river's best friends because they help keep the water clean and stop the dirt from running away.

Behind all that were mānuka and kānuka. They're like cousins with tiny leaves and white flowers that smell like honey. Bees love them. I saw one bee doing a little dance like it was saying, "Yay, breakfast!"

I drew all the plants in my sketchbook and gave them names like Sir Toetoe, Lady Harakeke, and Captain Carex. Then I made up a story about how they protect the river from bad things like rubbish and mean chemicals. They're like superheroes but leafy.

The river looked really happy that day. I think it liked my story. I whispered, "Don't worry, River. I'll tell everyone how your plant friends help you." And then the wind blew my hair and it felt like the river was saying, "Thank you."

If you ever come to Kumeū, bring your gumboots and listen to the river. It has secrets. And if you're lucky, it might tell you one.



Ngā Ika – Fish

By Felicity Ebenezer

Illustrated by Emily Blackmore

There are many types of aquatic life in Kumeū River.

There are lots of crustaceans. They have a hard outer shell that protects them from predators that also live under water.

Longfin eels are usually dark in colour and have a long dorsal (top) fin. Females are larger than the males and grow up to 156 cm and 20 kg, and they can live for 106 years! The males grow up to 75 cm and live only 23 years.

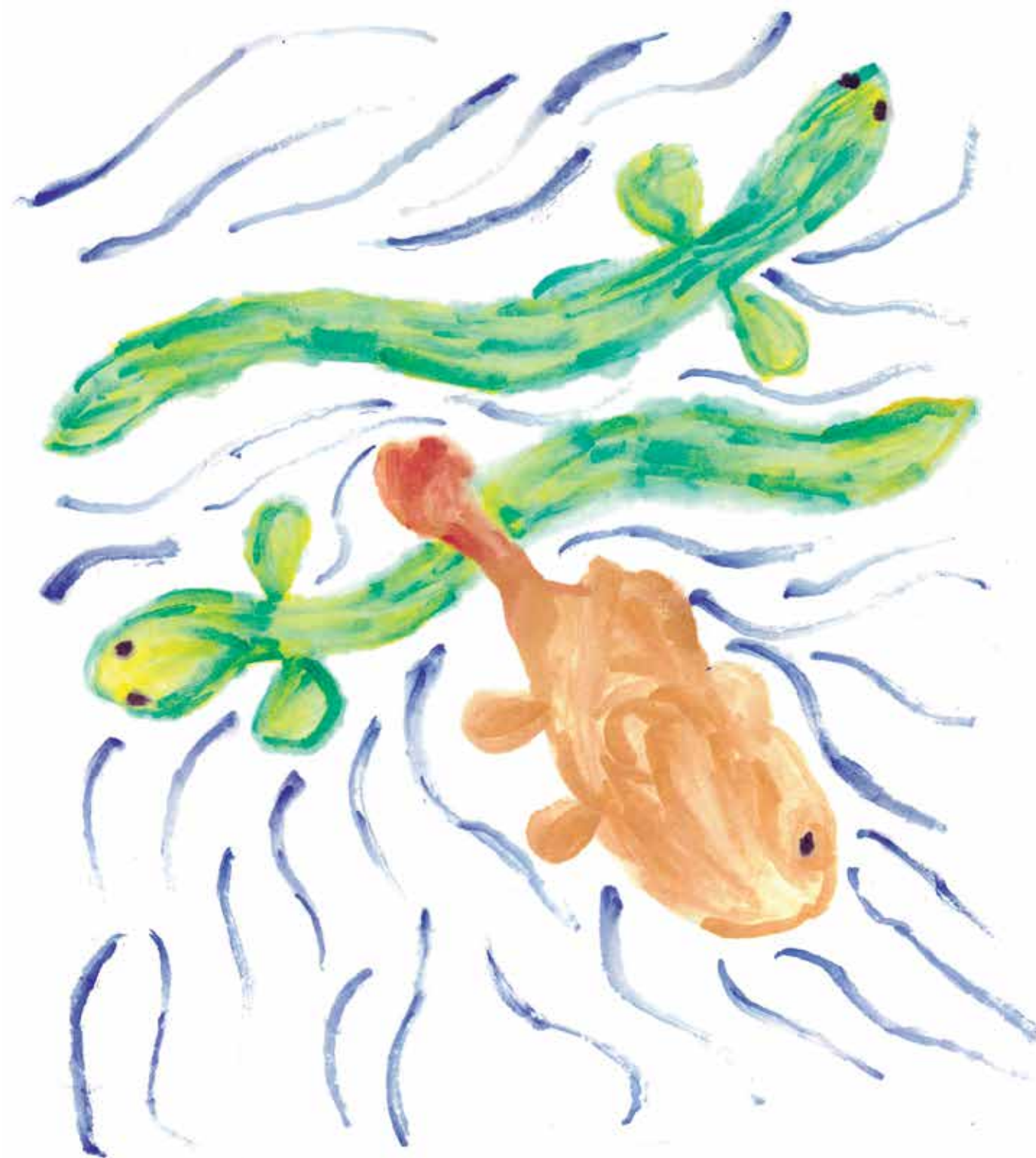
Shortfin eels are similar but their dorsal fin is shorter. They have a silvery belly and are smaller than longfin eels.

Another interesting animal is the kōkopu. Their bodies are dark brown with thin pale bands across the side and back. Kōkopu can grow up to 58cm and can weigh 2.7 kg.

The tiny offspring of kōkopu is known as whitebait (inanga). They are thin with a tiny head, a forked tail and see through fins. They taste delicious in whitebait fritters!

The tīpokopoko or common bully is a fish that is endemic to New Zealand. This means it's only found in Aotearoa.

Panoko (torrentfish) are another freshwater fish endemic to New Zealand. It has a strong, short body. It has a soft, thick upper lip that helps it pick up little bugs and tiny animals from rocks. Its tail fin is small and a little split, which helps it make quick bursts of speed instead of swimming for a long time. Panoko can grow up to 20 cm long.



River poem

By Emily Pyzhanov

Illustrated by Honor Yavunisautu

Beautiful songs sung by kererū
in the afternoon.

Light green moss hugs
a giant looming tree.

Native ferns hiding behind the tall trees
are almost concealed from view.

Broken branches fall into the flowing river
and are pulled away from sight.

Giant logs pile up
blocking the water flow
sweeping up mini twigs.



Ngā Manu – Birds

By Josh Henderson and Felicity Ebenezer

Pūkeko are common around the river. They eat plants, spiders, and earthworms. Pūkekos like running, swimming, and flying. They look awkward when they fly but they're fast and intelligent.

The pāpango, is a small native duck found in many rivers across New Zealand. These ducks swim and dive a lot and live in groups. They make soft whistling sounds, and are fun and interesting ducks to see in New Zealand's rivers. Kumeū River is a good food source for pāpango as they mostly eat insects, worms, and seeds.

Tūī sing all day long at the river. An interesting fact about tūī is they can mimic lots of different sounds such as ringtones and bellbirds.

Summer heat brings kererū to the river. They like to eat from native trees as well as plums and elderberries. Sometimes they get so full of fruit they fall out of the tree! Kererū are slow moving and heavy so in the past Māori could easily catch them.



Kumeū River in Numbers and Rhyme

By Honor Yavunisautu

Illustrated by Samrita Singh

#1

One goose in the river flaps its wings.
Two fantails with beautiful songs to sing.
Three people walk down the path.
Four ducks in the water take a bath.
Five cabbage trees sway in the breeze.
Six frogs jump with ease.
Seven eels swim between reeds.
Eight tadpoles with eyes of beads.
Nine rocks scattered around.
Ten crickets make a chirring sound.

#2

One bright moon in the sky.
Two tūi's fly high.
Three moreporks hoot loud.
Four friends laugh about.
Five crickets silently chirp.
Six frogs at work.
Seven houses with lights on.
Eight dreams I wish upon.
Nine Matariki stars shine bright.
Ten geese fly in a flock at night.



What to do in a flood emergency



Preparedness is key!

By Albert Niga and Emily McClymont

What you shouldn't do

- Never try to walk, play, swim, or drive through floodwaters - 15cm of fast flood water can knock you off your feet, and 30cm of fast flood water can sweep your vehicle away.
- Don't drink tap water until advised by health officials that it's safe to do so.
- Always assume flood water is contaminated and even if you don't come into contact with it, make sure to thoroughly wash your hands, clothes and any property that touches it.

What you should do

Preparedness is key. Be ready!

- Make and practice an emergency plan. Have somewhere safe you can go, like to friends or family who live in other places. Plan different routes in case one is obstructed.
- Activate flood defences like sandbags or barriers around your house.
- Put important items or documents in waterproof bags and take them to a higher level. Make password protected digital copies.
- Prepare a grab bag with essentials in case you need to evacuate. Put copies of important documents in the bag.
- Keep drains and gutters clear.
- Turn off water, electricity and gas and move dangerous items, like electrical equipment and chemicals, to high places.
- Put safety first and rely on your instincts. Don't wait for a formal flood warning if you see rising water.
- If told to evacuate, do so immediately, following designed evacuation routes. If there is risk to life or property, call 111.



After a flood

- Stay informed and follow the advice of Auckland Emergency Management.
- If evacuated, don't return home until emergency services tell you it's safe.
- Clean up carefully and wear appropriate gear e.g. masks, gloves, long-sleeved shirts, pants, and suitable footwear.
- Throw away any food and drinks that have come into contact with flood water.

Ngā whakaaro whakamutunga

Final thoughts

Anna-Kay Spaulding Agbenyegah (Massey University) has studied how communities like Kumeū-Huapai recover from flooding.

Anna-Kay says the most important thing that helps a town or neighbourhood get better after a disaster is community spirit.

"This means knowing your neighbours and their contact information, and getting involved in community groups," she says.

When people help one another, share what they have, and stay close as friends and neighbours, it makes fixing things and feeling happy again much easier.

Everyone cheering each other on and helping out makes the whole community stronger and quicker to recover from problems.

Even young people can help by being kind and helpful to friends and neighbours.

Illustration by Caitlin Trinder



He mihi

Special thanks to the Kumeū Emergency Network and Andie Davies, Co-Pastor of Kumeū Baptist Church, who saw the need for a book like this and found the funding to make it happen!

To the writers for sharing your hearts and your stories.

To the whānau and friends of the writers.

To the staff of Matua Ngaru School especially Principal Stephen Grady.

Special mention to Deputy Principals Ann Marie Dunne and Kirstin Anderson-McGhie who led the project from the school side.

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Graham Andrew

Anna-Kay Spaulding Agbenyegah – Massey University

Carl Hamm

Jago Neal – Kumeū Arts

Thank you Kaiya Irvine and Auckland Council for supporting this project, and providing these young people with a meaningful opportunity to share their writing, and storytelling skills.



Ngā mihi aroha ki a koutou katoa.