

Tracey Howie and Family (Guringai Tribal Link Aboriginal Corporation)

Excerpt from

ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONNECTION REPORT Part 2: Family history and contemporary connection
evidence AWABAKAL AND GURINGAI PEOPLE NC2013/002

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Sophy: connection and descent through the records

According to her death certificate, Charlotte Ashby was the daughter of John Smith, a shingle splitter and Sophia (surname not known).⁵¹ The name Smith is also recorded as Charlotte's maiden name in Sarah Ashby's 1862 birth certificate.⁵² The occupation nominated for Charlotte's father is fitting with the occupations pursued by the early white settlers of Brisbane Water where Charlotte is said to have been born. It has been suggested that Sophy's name appears in the 1835 Brisbane Water blanket return as a member of the Brisbane Water tribe associated with the Brisbane Water, Wyong and Tuggerah Beach district. There appears to be two extant versions of this return, both dated 5 May and containing similar, yet not identical, details (see blanket returns in Appendix). Given the major difference seems to be in distinguishing those persons present from those absent, it may be possible that one was an original and the other copied and modified before being formally forwarded to the Colonial Secretary.

At a push, the second woman's name on the less refined document, could be interpreted as Sophy. Her Aboriginal name is given as Bouranger. On the version which is held at State Archives (4/10799.3), however, the name is unmistakably Sally. In this document it is additionally recorded that Sally was the gin of Jack Jones, an Aboriginal man. Smith has noted that the woman he records as Sophy a.k.a Bouranger appeared in the Sydney returns of 1827 and 1831, again as a member of the Brisbane Water group, and that on the latter occasion she had two young children in her company, a circumstance which would be fitting with the birth of Charlotte in 1830 (Keith Smith pers.comm to NK, 22.10.15). I have not been able to locate these lists.

A record for the birth of an Aboriginal girl named Charlotte in 1830,⁵³ in which neither the district or the names of the parents are shown, is not particularly helpful, but it does accord with the year of birth appearing on Charlotte's 1845 baptismal record.⁵⁴ The register fails to record her parents' names, simply noting that she was an Aboriginal. Neither the surname nor the month of birth is recorded. Charlotte's death certificate shows that she was born in Sydney, however, other recorded alternatives are Hawkesbury River, on her son Walter Ashby's birth certificate and Brisbane Water on that of daughter, Sophy (note the spelling).⁵⁵

There seems to be no evidence to substantiate claims made that Sophy was the daughter of Bungaree, nor any account of how this came to be known. Nevertheless, the early and ongoing connections of Charlotte with the Brisbane Water area and her association with the name Webb may well indicate a traditional association with the area with which Bungaree and his family were linked. Bungaree connections with the Broken Bay area are well attested and there is good evidence

⁵¹ NSW BDM DC 1913/

⁵² NSW BDM BC 1862/6243

⁵³ NSW BDM BC 1830/2470 30A

⁵⁴ Baptism register Parish of Gosford 1845, p.16.

⁵⁵ <https://ninglunbooks.wordpress.com/early-last-century/family-stories-4-a-guringai-family-story-warren-whitfield/>

connecting his son Long Dick with the Brisbane Water area (Mann 1842 unpublished manuscript, Mitchell Library; Gosford Times and Wyong District Advocate 29.10.1936:9).

The mention of Sydney as Charlotte's birth place could accord with the presence of Bungaree's family at Sydney, however, the earlier records, informed by Charlotte herself are likely more reliable. The reference to the Hawkesbury has a fairly broad range of possible connotation. On the 1834 Brisbane Water blanket return, Long Dick's tribal affiliation is given as Mangrove. If, as reported, Sarah Wallace was connected to Bungaree's group as well, there may have been some interaction with the people in occupation of Marramarra Creek, as well.

At the time of her baptism, Charlotte's place of abode was Newport, a location in this context relating to the Dora Creek/Eraring area on the southwest side of Lake Macquarie⁵⁶. As noted, Charlotte's baptism was apparently organised to regularise her marriage. On the same day, 2 April, 1845, she wedded Joseph Ashby, a convict farm hand.⁵⁷ On her wedding certificate Charlotte is recorded as Charlotte Webb. There are few details on the marriage certificate but on their formal application to marry Charlotte, aged 22, is recorded as the daughter of an Aborigine by an Englishman. Charlotte's age may have been raised to make it more respectable; if the birth date recorded on her baptismal record is to be relied upon, Charlotte was only about 15 when she married. Her husband Joseph Ashby was then aged 32.

The recording of the name Webb is significant and suggests a connection with James Webb who was reputedly the first white settler in the Brisbane Water area, settling at Booker Bay in 1923. Charlotte Webb is understood by family members to have been the product of a rape upon young Sophie by old Webb. There is no evidence by which to determine whether that was true, however, there is information to say that Webb was closely associated with the local Aboriginal people,

James Webb at Booker Bay on the Central Coast, has a working knowledge of Aboriginal languages. He helps to negotiate with Koories at the Rip and at Booker Bay to clear the forest. Koori men are good at working with the saw, women help with feeding animals and working around the farm (cited Swancott 1955).⁵⁸

Webb had a history of violence toward Aboriginal people having been involved in two incidents on the Hawkesbury River in which Aboriginal men had been shot and killed, and in contrast to the co-operative picture suggested by the previous citation, Swancott separately records that Webb had taken a very aggressive stance towards local Aboriginal people at Brisbane Water, who were seen as a threat to his crops,

Traps and spring guns were set to protect his crops, and there was an incident when his foreman's son was seized by an Aboriginal although he was not harmed in any way (Swancott 1953:10).

The partner of the woman Sally who appears in the blanket returns, Jack Jones, was one of those Aboriginal men who were outlawed by the local magistrate, Warner (Clouten 1967:76). Jack was

⁵⁶ NSW BDM DC Charlotte Ashby 1913/3598

⁵⁷ NSW BDM MC 1845/550 30B

⁵⁸ <http://www.historyofaboriginalsydney.edu.au/north-coastal/1820s>

subsequently shot in the neck, during an ambush at Duralong, near Wyong, in 1835 and taken into custody (The Gosford Times and Wyong District Advocate 30.8.1934 p.5). Although the positing of this man's wife as Charlotte's mother may be mistaken, the fact that Charlotte was affiliated with the surname Webb is suggestive - within the context of Charlotte's historical placement in and about the Gosford area - of some type of association with James Webb. It was common, of course, for Aboriginal people to assume the surnames of white settlers with whom they or their families were involved, without any implication of a blood relationship. Webb had no recorded children and certainly did not include Charlotte as a beneficiary of his will.⁵⁹

Charlotte's husband, Joseph Ashby was employed on Donnison's property⁶⁰ at Erina and the birth record of James Ashby reflecting their residence there in 1847.⁶¹ Charlotte and Joseph's elder daughter Hannah was born in 1845. In 1856, the journal of Rev. Glennie, of the Gosford Parish, reports his visit to Charlotte Ashby at Erina who was confined in bed, having just lost her baby daughter (Glennie 1855-1860:9). John Ashby was born at Wye in 1847, linking Charlotte once more with the south-western side of Lake Macquarie.⁶² Eliza Jane was born in Hexham in 1853. Joseph Ashby died in 1864 at Wyong and was buried at Blue Gum Flat in the Ourimbah area.⁶³ His birth certificate indicates that he was the father to Hannah, James, John and Eliza Jane.

A sketch genealogy taken by the Rev. Renwick, apparently in the 1920s, shows that Charlotte's daughter Amelia b. 1859, was fathered by William Spears (Renwick 1924-1926, appendix, Gosford library). Amelia's birth certificate indicates she was born at Mooney Mooney Creek.⁶⁴ Baptismal records give account of four other 'illegitimate children' of Charlotte, Sarah b. 1862, Eva b.1865, Walter b. 1868 and apparently named after her mother, Sophie b. 1871.⁶⁵ At the time of Sarah's birth, Charlotte was living at East Gosford and employed as a needlewoman.⁶⁶ The youngest children, Walter and Sophie, were born at Blue Gum Flat.⁶⁷

As well as William Spears, Charlotte was later associated with a man named William Smith, the likely father of some of her younger children. The relationship was clearly fraught. In 1869, William Smith accused Charlotte of stealing money from him at the Blue Gum Flat Tavern. According to an account written by a descendant of John Ashby, Warren Whitfield, it was reported that,

Charlotte was due to appear in court in Sydney 100 kilometres south on Thursday 2nd September 1869. She walked through the prickly heath country of the sandstone

⁵⁹ <https://ninglunbooks.wordpress.com/early-last-century/family-stories-4-a-guringai-family-story-warren-whitfield/>

⁶⁰ <https://ninglunbooks.wordpress.com/early-last-century/family-stories-4-a-guringai-family-story-warren-whitfield/>

⁶¹ NSW BDM BC 1847/111 32A

⁶² NSW BDM Baptism 1949/3096?

⁶³ NSW BDM DC Joseph Ashby 1864/3316.

⁶⁴ NSW BDM BC 1859/7287-271

⁶⁵ Baptismal registers Parish of Gosford

⁶⁶ NSW BDM BC 1862/6243-80; Baptismal registers Parish of Gosford

⁶⁷ NSW BDM BC 1871/8296/68; Baptismal registers Parish of Gosford

escarpment 100 kilometres to Sydney to appear in court and 100 kilometres back when found not guilty.⁶⁸

This family history also notes that on the basis of Smith's pleadings that she was an unfit mother, Charlotte's two younger children were taken away by the Benevolent Society, although they are said to have been later returned. A photocopied record from the Bench Book III, possibly of the Gosford Court, suggests that two of Charlotte's children had also been conveyed to the Asylum in 1863, following a charge of disorderly conduct.

The private existence of Charlotte and her family remains invisible in the written record but, given her difficult circumstances, it may be expected that they had resort to the local resources to sustain a living. In 1901 Charlotte Ashby was recorded in the census as living at Wyoming in the Gosford area. She died in Gosford in 1913, aged 84, and was buried at North Gosford.⁶⁹ By this time some of her children had settled in Sydney.

Opinion: The listing of Charlotte's mother's name on her death certificate as Sophia and the naming of her youngest daughter as Sophy, seem to concur, however, the purported inclusion of the name Sophy on the 1835 Brisbane Water return represents an error. This woman is definitely named Sally. Keith Vincent Smith's record that the name Sophy appears on a number of different returns has not been able to be confirmed or otherwise. This information is not referenced in enough detail to relocate the records. There is no evidence at hand to link Sally with Charlotte and nothing to affirm that Charlotte was conceived as the result of a rape.

There is no contemporaneous record of Charlotte's birthplace. Subsequent attestations to it being Hawkesbury River, Brisbane Water or Sydney. The congruence of her father's occupation as shingle splitter, the association with the Webb surname, at least one birthplace record for Brisbane Water and Charlotte's subsequent long history of residence in and about the Gosford area, lead me to believe that Charlotte was likely born in, or traditionally associated with, the area. Given the history, during that era, of a considerable presence of Broken Bay people at Sydney, Charlotte's birth there would not be out of keeping with a Broken Bay tribal affiliation. The Hawkesbury reference is non-specific, and not entirely out of accord with a reference to Brisbane Water.

There is some trace in the historical record, particularly in terms of Charlotte's movements at the time of her marriage, and at the birth of at least one of her elder children, to show that she resided at and/or frequented the lower Lake Macquarie district. One record places her further north at Hexham. It might be contended that her presence at Mooney Mooney Creek for the birth of Amelia - a child who it seems was conceived as a result of an outside liaison during her marriage - could have been signal of ties with the Lewis family, some of whom resided about Mooney Mooney Creek around that time. For the greater part of her life, Charlotte seems to have gravitated about the Erina, Gosford and Ourimbah areas.

⁶⁸ <https://ninglunbooks.wordpress.com/early-last-century/family-stories-4-a-guringai-family-story-warren-whitfield/>

⁶⁹ NSW BDM DC 1913/6598

3.2 Ongoing connection evidence: descendants of Sophy.

According to Warren Whitfield's published account,⁸⁹

Although all of Charlotte's children were born in the Gosford to Wyong area most of them eventually moved to Sydney and further afield to pursue their chosen careers. I can only speak for my great grandfather John Ashby whose children Hanna Matilda, James, Bertha, Charlotte, Henry, Joseph, Margaret, William and Mary all traversed frequently between the Central Coast of New South Wales and Balmain, where they lived until they married. Charlotte's children James and Eliza Jane also lived in the same street in Balmain intermittently with their spouses and children during the course of their lives.

Claimants actively involved in the present claim are also descended from John Ashby and their oral and documentary history lie in accord. Following this line of descent, Hannah Matilda Ashby was born to John Ashby and Matilda Lees in 1882 at Balmain,⁹⁰ but she later worked as a domestic at the Hargraves house at Norah Head continuing a long tradition of connections between that family and Aboriginal people of the central coast (see Kerrie Brauer family history). According to Tracey Howie, it was at the Hargraves home that Hannah met Henry Stamford Boyd (Tracey Howie pers.comm to NK, 16.8.15).

Hannah and Henry Boyd married in Balmain in 1900⁹¹ and, in the same year, their first daughter, Matilda Ellen Boyd, was born, her birth being recorded at their home address in Short Street, North Balmain. Henry Boyd was from a prestigious family. He was a foundation member of Balmain Hospital and worked on the railways (Tracey Howie pers. comm to NK, 16.8.15). Reta Smith, who's mother was the sister of Matilda Boyd, says that he worked with Ben Chifley at Lithgow but, she says, 'my grandfather died very young and she (Hannah Boyd) was left with eleven children' (Reta Smith pers.comm to NK, 1.6.15). Reta believes this may be the reason that her Aboriginality was kept quiet, 'that's probably why she didn't declare it. I think she knew'.

While some branches of the family say their Aboriginality was a known fact to them, the Smiths say that it was not something they were aware of but that on reflection there were certain incidents which seem telling. Reta Smith says that her father did not like his mother-in-law and would not permit her in the house. Reta remembers an incident in which her grandmother came to visit, when Merle [presumably her sister] and Reta were little. She remembers a conflict in which her mother got angry and lashed out, saying of her mother, 'she's only a black bitch anyway.' They also remember being warned not to say anything disparaging about others, 'you don't say anything about other people because you may not know your own heritage'.

Although their Aboriginality was not an important component of their identity they nevertheless maintained a significantly kin focused life and maintained contact with the extended family. They

⁸⁹ Although efforts were made to locate Mr Whitfield they proved unfruitful.

⁹⁰ NSW BDM BC 4379/1882

⁹¹ NSW BDM MC 3293/1900

were regular visitors to their mother's sister's home and kept that up even after the early death of their mother.

Trudy Smith recalls that her father used to call in to say hello to the Sales' family at Tacoma. The Sales' it was noted, did not originally come from the area. Cheryl, Reta's daughter-in-law, a non-indigenous Central Coast woman says of the Sales,

They were always in Wyong. Always messy. They were all related and really black. When they originally came here they lived in Warnervale (Cheryl Dudley pers.comm to NK, 1.6.15).

Tacoma is remembered as the main fishing village. Boats would come across the Entrance. They fished in the Lakes, in the Wyong River and at Ourimbah.

Although many of the families moved away descendants of Charlotte Webb continued to maintain connections to kin and to country through visiting, the maintenance of holiday homes and perennial camping trips. Kevin Robinson, whose family stayed in the area, living at Tacoma, recounts how other family members, 'used to come and visit. They often always used to come and stay' (Kevin Robertson pers.comm to NK, 23.10.15).

Matilda Ellen (Nell) Boyd known to Tracey Howie as Big Nana, had a holiday house at Chittaway Bay (Tracey Howie pers.comm to NK, 16.8.15). 'The Cottage' was located by Ourimbah Creek, not far removed from the area once known as Blue Gum Flat where Charlotte was known to have lived for many years. This house served as an important gathering place for all the family who would congregate there at holiday time. Originally the journey was made in the old steam trains from Central Station. After her parents had died, Tracey's grandmother, Maree Wyllie, took over the house. Close and more distant relatives would come to stay. Sisters, Reta Smith and Lyn Robely, related to Maree through their grandmother recollect going camping at Chittaway Bay with Fred and Maree (Reta Smith, Lyn Robely, Trudy Smith pers.comm to NK, 1.6.15).

Tracey Howie believes her Nan was conscious about keeping the extended family connections intact,

I think that's because my Nan kept that connection going...There were times when there was an absolute shitload of us...They'd stay there for like a month (Tracey Howie pers.comm to NK, 17.10.15).

While there both children and adults spent much of their time swimming and fishing. Tracey says that her Nan had been a phenomenal swimmer. Fishing was both a recreational and a practical pastime,

It's on the river so we swam, we fished, we did all those sorts of things. Main fish, flathead and bream, whiting. Me brother's a bit of a gun for getting the crabs out of there (Tracey Howie pers.comm to NK, 17.10.15).

Another place which has very important personal and familial significance for the Robinson's is Patonga Beach. 'Try telling mum not to go back to Patonga,' says Tracey; 'we feel that connection. The coast itself. We...seem to gravitate back (Tracey Howie pers.comm to NK, 16.8.15),

yeah we've come here for holidays and family get-to-togethers and that as long as I can remember since I was a baby, and I know that you know, mum did before that with her

family as well and yeah, its just where we come to, you know, get back to basics and get away from all the modern stuff (Tracey Howie pers.comm to NK, 17.10.15).

At Patonga, the adults and children engaged in prawning and fishing. Tracey tells how white friends would be astounded at the licence that children in her family enjoyed and their capability in fishing and prawning. In regard to their fishing practice, Kyle Howie speaks of the ethic of not overtaxing the resources of the country,

the way that we were taught to fish from a young age is that you catch what you need to eat and you can't get anything more because it's a waste, so you only take what you need and live off that. So sometimes I don't like seeing other people fishing because I think other people are greedy, when it comes to that, but other times, there's some people that do the right thing, they go about it the right way and that's fine by me (Kyle Howie pers.comm to NK, 17.10.15).

Mindfulness of sustaining the resources extends to certain restrictions which serve to protect the breeding stock. While visiting Patonga Kyle explained,

into the river systems up there, there's a corner, as you go up that stream there's a corner, as you go up that stream there's a distinct corner that turns right and around that area, it's usually like a flathead breeding ground. So I can't remember what time of year it is, but there's a couple of months of the year where it's just really good fishing. But you have to be wary when you're fishing there, you have to check all the flathead because, if they get over 70cm long, you have to throw them back because of [government?]. Because they turn into females after they get to a certain length...they're hermaphrodites from a young age, so they could be male or female...When they turn into females when they're larger, that's when they're ready to breed again so you generally try to leave them so they can restock the population and keep it going, so yeah leave all the bigger ones alone when they get to that age (Kyle Howie pers.comm to NK, 17.10.15).

Although for many years Tracey and her family used to maintain their connections through visiting, they never felt particularly at home in Sydney,

We were always still coming up, every moment that we had.

Tracey grew up in Sydney first in southern suburbs of Sydney then western Sydney but as a teenager she took herself back to the central coast staying with family on her father's side, 'I took off at fourteen and came back myself' (Tracey Howie pers.comm to NK, 17.10.15). Not long after the whole family moved back to the Central Coast.

Tracey says that she would describe herself as a saltwater person with an innate connection to the water. She describes the feeling of connection to country as something that no non-Aboriginal person cannot share,

I sort of like, I don't know why, I suppose that you feel that connection with it that, it's like a um, it's, I don't know, an uninhibited love, an unconditional love... And I suppose the point that I'm trying to make ... is sort of like I'm sitting somewhere and feeling connection, I sort of look around and it makes, I get a real warm comforting feeling with the thought that I

know that others don't get that. And I look at them it's like .. I don't know, I could say everyone else is looking through rose-coloured glasses and they don't feel what I feel and I like that. It makes me feel not just at home. It's a comforting... and you know and just the feeling of protection. It's really hard to put into words (Tracey Howie pers.comm to NK, 17.10.15).

It's like, I often do look other people, non-aboriginal people and think like, you poor things, you haven't got what I've got, and God, this is good, mm. Yeah, I don't know..

As well as positive feelings of belonging and being in the right place, Tracey Howie and her son Kyle, explain that they also experience in the body, strong sensations which warn them when they are in a place which is not right for them. Tracey together with Kyle Howie, tells how during a site survey, she had experienced a very dramatic feeling which warned her that she was heading somewhere where she should not go. Kyle recounts,

We were just trying to sense our way up there we got half way up the hill. As far as we could see and mum started to feel rather sick and didn't really want to go any further.

Tracey continues,

No, I had lead in my boots, I couldn't move my boots, my feet were like stuck, and I couldn't breathe, I saw you just yellow, I didn't see anything but yellow..

Tracey was forced to retreat to the car, while Kyle says he was drawn upward. They explain that there was a men's site on the top of the hill.

Bad energy is said to be able to effect the home. Tracey and Kyle tell how a Darug man conducted a smoking ceremony in their home, smoking the house with the smouldering leaves of a yellowblood to cleanse it.

While Tracey is now very actively involved in site and heritage protection work, and has fought many battles to protect the land and sites from damage by developers, she says that her Aboriginality is something that she and the family had always kept close to themselves,

and I know that we have got family members of our family that they don't deny... but they don't ..and it's funny the language that you use and you've got to sort of choose your language carefully what you use because .. a lot of people say they don't identify but they do identify, they will say yeah I am Aboriginal, I do have Aboriginal blood but they don't, you know, like they're like they don't get involved in like land council and things like that... they just have a personal their own personal kind of connection thing and that's ok ...[not political] and hey I can understand ...like for me, I'm really glad that Uncle Warren did start the corporation and do what he did but there's still a side of me that is begrudging that because I feel like I've lost a little bit of personal ownership of, you know what I mean, because before it was all mine and now I feel like I'm exposed and open for ridicule and that sort of thing and I don't feel I should be subject to that, that anyone has the right to do that...

Like, I suppose it's like... a religion, you know what I mean, like you can be catholic but you don't have to be go to church every Sunday to prove to the world that you're Catholic. It's the same thing with Aboriginality you know. Like our family has always been so connected with our country and done all of these things and lived these particular lifestyles and felt that innate connection to the area and that sort of thing but we're not about to go running down the street and flying an Aboriginal flag and that sort of thing, because it's ours.

Its... and I don't know with all the things that you lose, that you've lost over time, it's.. like you've got to have something that somebody can't take away from you, you know what I mean, you feel like you've been stripped of so much just with the impact that occurred here, you know like a lot of people describe it as 'this is where the bomb went off' and they tried to take away all of our dance and all of our language and all of that and it was sort of like, you know, I suppose like our family can look back now and see that, at the time they did what they had to do to survive the moment that they were in, but you look back now and its sort of like, they weren't only surviving for the predicament they were in, but they were also preserving it, because they kept it tight, you know what I mean, and we kept it tight... and that's what's sort of enabled us now to ... we've been empowered by that, by them, you know like my grandmother and my great grandmother by them sort of like keeping us tight and that, I feel that is what has empowered me to be able to do what I'm doing now (Tracey Howie pers.comm to NK, 17.10.15).

The younger generation is less self-conscious about their Aboriginality, although says Kyle, there are still those who hide it,

Maybe not within our family itself...I can think of a couple of cases of when I was at school and because, you know, being a whiter skinned aboriginal, other of the...just the white kids were just like, 'so you're actually aboriginal?' And I was like, 'well yeah'. And then a few of them quietly would be like, 'well, yeah, I'm actually Aboriginal as well'. And I'd say, 'why don't you say anything?' And it's, 'mum and dad don't say anything'. Some people, I don't know, just haven't really got with the times I guess...I know that earlier on, before my time it was all kept in secret , a few people still stay in secrecy (Kyle Howie, pers.comm to NK,

Kyle says that he actively speaks up for the rights of his family, as descendants of the original inhabitants, to have the sole privilege of speaking for country. He explained an argument he had over a Darkinung dance teacher giving a welcome to country on the Central Coast. After the speech had been given he told the boys in the dance troop,

I was talking to them and telling them that's wrong. They said, 'he's an elder, you've got to respect him. That just made my blood boil even more' (Kyle Howie, pers.comm to NK, 17.10.15).

Kevin Robinson, Tracey's cousin, grew up at Tacoma,

I lived in Tacoma. It's pretty much where Wyong River meets the lake.⁹² I grew up there. Always fishing. I grew up on the river. It was full of fisherman,

⁹² The site to which Mann travelled with the Brisbane Water people for an intertribal gathering in 1842.

Aboriginal families including the Sales and Byles lived there and operated fishing businesses, although they were not originally from the area.

'Uncle' Kevin Byles had been on the river a long time, his father was there a fisherman before that. I know the indigenous side went through his mother. 'Uncle' Kevin had been there longer than us but he used to tell me he was from outside.

Kevin recalls that the Aboriginal fishermen, all worked for themselves. 'I remember them rowing up the creek.' One of the Sales brothers, Carl Sales is still going, but the fishing at Tacoma is just about finished. The Sales and the Byles, Kevin observes, would often catch more fish than the non-Aboriginal fishermen 'they were just more in-tuned'. (Kevin Robinson pers.comm to NK, 17.10.15).

Kevin's father was incapacitated and so Kevin used to spend a lot of time in company with Uncle Kevin. Much of his time he spent fishing and prawning. Kevin says that from his bed,

...at night you could hear the mullet jumping. I was that into it I could tell the different types. the first one had an even sound, the second one used to flick its tail, it's called a fan-tail. You could hear the flicking of the tail as it went through the air (Kevin Robinson to NK, 21.10.15).

He also gives account of the different habits of the prawns which run at night and those that move in the day. Kevin says, 'I'd always get something to bring home, mullet, bream, prawns.' Kevin says that when you're not doing commercial fishing, you wouldn't take too much, you'd only take as much as you could eat in a day. You had to be respectful to the place. When Kevin used to come home from fishing, he says his father would question him if he had 'done the right thing',

I remember being told not to waste food. My father, when I went fishing, he'd tell me, 'you do the right thing'. He'd want to know if I did the right thing before I/he? ate it

Kevin tells me that he was told never to take or eat stingray,

I've always been brought up on that's who we are. We don't catch them, we don't hurt them. When we catch them we say we're sorry and we put them back. Even if someone else has cooked it we won't eat it. I remember my father drumming that in ...

Like others, Kevin feels the need to be by the water. When he took on a one year contract with Aboriginal Health in Moree, he says, 'I couldn't wait to get out of there. I knew I was far from the coast. I was really far from the coast' (Kevin Robinson pers.comm to NK, 21.10.15). When he introduces himself to people outside his own country, Kevin says that he tells them,

I'm Guringai mob, saltwater fella, stingray people.