



Tribe: Let us run social services

Schools, healthcare, welfare, housing in Tuhoe's sights

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One of New Zealand's most famous Maori tribes, Tuhoe, is negotiating to take over social services for its people in an ambitious bid to end welfare dependency.

The iwi wants to take over welfare payments, schools, healthcare and housing within its Urewera tribal area from Whakatane south to Lake Waikaremoana.

Tuhoe chief executive Kirsti Luke said a majority of Tuhoe people in that area were on benefits, and tribal leader Tamati Kruger said the iwi aimed to change that.

"We are declaring war on dependency," Mr Kruger said. "Our motivation is that if we want to be a vibrant people, to be a productive people who live up to their beliefs and to their faith as to what life is all about, and the honour that has to be part of humanity, then this is clearly what we have to overcome – because being a beneficiary is a type of servitude."

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Leader Tamati Kruger says Tuhoe is "declaring war on dependency".
Picture: Alan Osborne



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Tuhoe: Let us run schools, healthcare, welfare, housing

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Mr Kruger said Tuhoe had put a proposition to the Government to make better use of the \$85 million a year that taxpayers spend on welfare benefits for 4934 Maori beneficiaries around the Tuhoe tribal area. At the last Census, the tribe had 35,000 members.

"We believe that we can design a system where there is a transition from benefits to wages and salaries," he said.

Consultants have told the Government that Maori who received benefits in Tuhoe's area in 2012-13 would cost it \$735.4 million in their lifetimes under current policies.

The tribe employs 36 of the 40 Conservation Department staff who formerly worked in the old Urewera National Park. The park was disestablished by a 2013 Treaty settlement and is now a separate legal entity called Te Urewera run by a board chaired by Mr Kruger with equal numbers of Crown and Tuhoe appointees.

Tuhoe managers have been appointed to replace the two former DoC managers, who the department says are now "supporting the transition and implementation of Te Urewera work". Two other DoC staff declined to transfer to the new entity.

The iwi has set up its own doctors' clinic in Taneatua, without state funding. More than 500 of its 884 enrolled patients were not previously enrolled at any clinic in the Bay of Plenty.

Tuhoe is now negotiating with the Education Ministry to share control of the 15 schools in its area and use them as hubs to develop health services, skills training and jobs.

A spokeswoman for Treaty Negotiations Minister Chris Finlayson said officials were "working with Tuhoe representatives on the practical implementation of these aspirations ... Research has been undertaken to assist in the development of potential initiatives."

Social Development Ministry principal adviser Neil Martin said consultants were working on "how an education initiative could be approached" and "how we could build on education through a strategic development plan that will incorporate cross-sector outcome improvement".

Tuhoe takes its own path
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Tuhoe

takes its own path

Nikapuru Takuta, a former gang member and now a drug and alcohol counsellor, in front of a new mural in Taneatua. Picture / Alan Gibson

Special report

Tuhoe people are blazing a new trail both for other iwi and for society by seeking power to run their own social services in their home district, writes

Simon Collins

Welfare, says Tuhoe leader Tamati Kruger, is a "disease" that has sapped the motivation of his people.

"Being a beneficiary is a type of servitude," he says. "It doesn't nurture self-realisation or honour or self-respect. It destroys all of that, and the disease spreads from the individual to the family to the neighbourhood to the community."

More than half of about 5000 Tuhoe people who live within its rohe (tribal area) inland from Whakatane are on benefits – and they're not happy about it.

"Tuhoe people largely dislike their situations of being beneficiaries," Mr Kruger says.

"We sense that Tuhoe people will voluntarily participate in this project that will transition them from being beneficiaries to being productive members of Tuhoe."

The iwi tribal entities will not be the employers of Tuhoe people, but we will create the atmosphere for growth and development which then enables other Tuhoe employers to create the jobs."

This project dovetails with a wider Government goal, which aligns with a Productivity Commission report in August, of devolving social support to integrated agencies that can empower people to achieve better lives – not just provide standardised separate services such as health, education and welfare.

Dr Graham Scott, a former Secretary to the Treasury who is both a Productivity Commissioner and a consultant in the Tuhoe talks, says Tuhoe could be one of several new agencies that enrol people needing cross-agency wrap-around support.

The starting point

Maori are at the bottom of the heap on most measures of wellbeing in this country, and Tuhoe fare even worse. Dr Scott's Sapere Research Group

says that in the 2013 census, when the NZ unemployment rate was 7 per cent, the rate for all Maori was 16 per cent. The rate for Tuhoe people, including all 35,000 Tuhoe nationally not just the 5000 in the rohe, was 21 per cent.

Just 10 per cent of New Zealanders were on benefits, but that included 24 per cent of all Maori and 29 per cent of Tuhoe.

On the other hand, Tuhoe people have held strongly to their culture: 37 per cent of them, compared with 21 per cent of all Maori, can speak te reo; and 71 per cent, compared with 56 per cent of all Maori, have visited their ancestral marae in the past year.

Step 1: Conservation

At the heart of Tuhoe land and culture is what used to be the Urewera National Park, established in 1954. Getting it back was a central goal in the tribe's negotiations for compensation under the Treaty of Waitangi. Although Prime Minister John Key said in 2010 that it would never happen, in 2013 he approved a settlement that replaced the park with a new entity, Te Urewera, run jointly by the Crown and Tuhoe.

In August this year, 36 of the 40 Conservation Department staff in the former park transferred to the new entity. Public Service Association organiser Chris Ollington says they are still employed by the department at least for the first year, but are "managed by Tuhoe".

The tribe has built a stunning new \$15 million headquarters in Taneatua for both the iwi and Te Urewera, including a cafe and audiovisual displays for passing tourists on State Highway 2.

It plans two more buildings, costing \$5 million to \$10 million each, at Ruatahuna and Lake Waikaremoana. The buildings aim to lift the people's aspirations, to show what is possible.

"We are building confidence first,"

From gang life to a

As a young man, Nikapurū Takuta didn't feel he was Tuhoe. His iwi was the Mongrel Mob.

Now 55, he grew up in Wairoa where his father was a freezing worker.

"When I went to school, my parents didn't really keep an eye on me. They just let the Pakeha bring me up," he says.

"My parents just worked and worked and worked. They had the attitude that the future was in the Pakeha hands so we had to follow their thing. So as [neighbourhood] kids we banded together and created our street gangs as our hapu."

He reached adulthood in the 1980s, a time of high unemployment. He lost

his last job as a forestry worker in 1983.

The Mongrel Mob dominated Wairoa and Mr Takuta joined it. He was jailed repeatedly for drugs and firearms offences. He was shot twice, throwing him on to an invalid's benefit for 20 years.

But, by stages, he began to change. In 1993, about the time his first child was born, he and his partner moved to Waikaremoana where his Tuhoe parents had attended marae functions in his childhood.

"My mum had told me to go back there before she died," he says.

He let his gang links weaken. Waikaremoana was a Black Power area and many of the gangsters were

says tribal chief executive Kirsti Luke.

But they also create jobs. Both new buildings will have cafes, petrol, public toilets and other visitor and community facilities as well as offices.

"In Tuhoe country, which is maybe 1 million acres [400,000ha], there is one petrol station, there are two dairies and one public toilet," says Ms Luke.

Tuhoe aims to protect the land better.

"What do the 'experts' know about Te Urewera?" Mr Kruger asks. "After 50 years of the Urewera National Park, with all of those 'experts' available, that hasn't saved a lot of species."

But he also aims to open up more jobs by removing restrictions on tourist activities such as horse-trekking and mountainbiking.

Step 2: Health

Tuhoe has made the most of a health system which is already relatively decentralised. The Tuhoe Hauora

employs 32 people on contracts for drug and alcohol counselling, mental health, youth work, elderly support, parenting programmes and school social work.

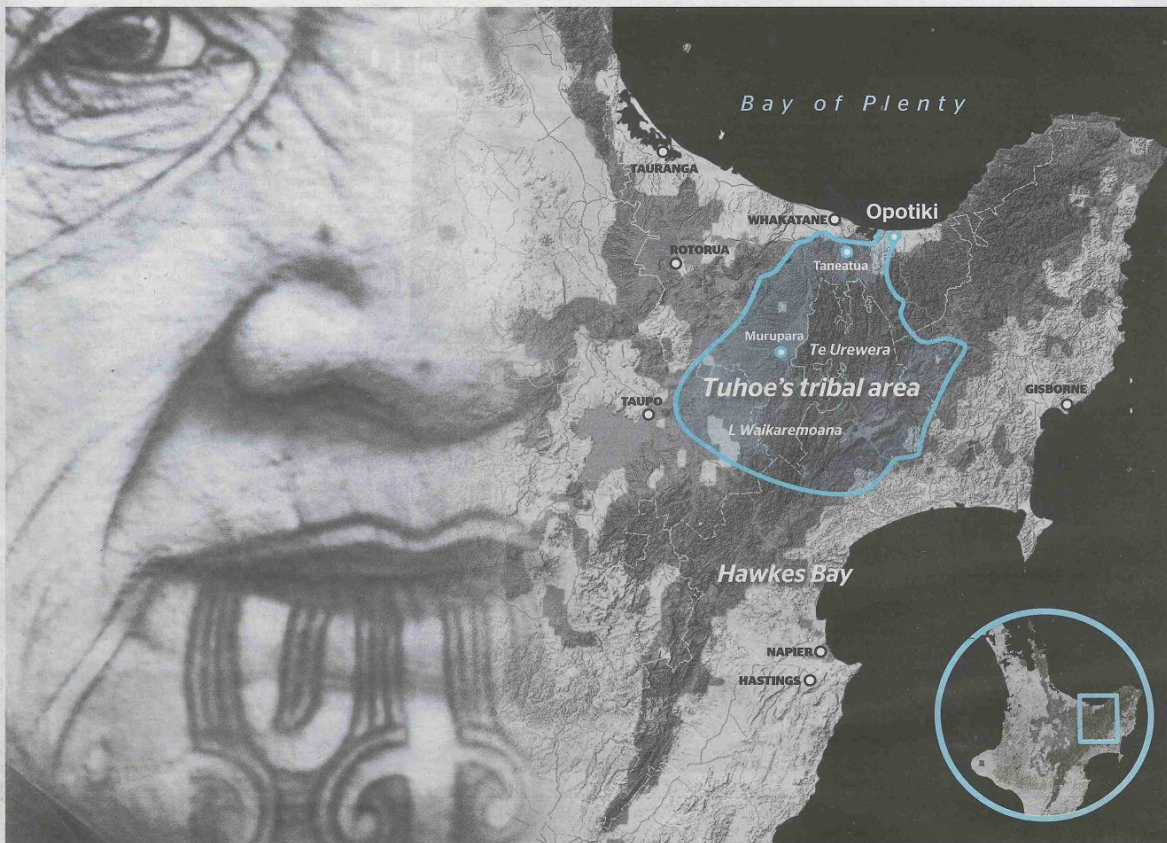
Since 2010 police have referred young Maori who get into trouble anywhere in the Whakatane District to the hauora. Counsellors work with each youth's family to help everyone achieve their goals.

Since last year the hauora has run a similar scheme with Whakatane High School for youngsters at risk of being expelled, again working with the whole family.

"I rarely come across a parent who doesn't want their young person to stay at school," says general manager Pania Hetet.

"It's about, 'Johnny is actually watching the adults. This is not normal. Everyone in this household has to make some changes.'"

Police regional youth manager Sergeant Tom Brooks says 49 per cent



life helping others

his cousins. He built a house for his family, but still had no lawful work. "I was still a criminal, but just to myself now," he says. "There were two maraes there, and I ended up the cook at both maraes, sweeping the floor."

In 1998 two Tuhoe groups led by Tame Iti occupied land near the Waikaremoana motor camp to protest against a Crown lease of the lakebed and other grievances. Mr Takuta joined them.

A decade later, when Mr Iti was working as a drug and alcohol counselor for the Tuhoe Hauora, he offered Mr Takuta a job in the same team in Taneatua. Today he works with other "guys like myself" — men who drink and take drugs just to make

life tolerable. "Drugs and alcohol is on the surface, but underneath there is something else," he says.

"It's usually peer pressure, the lack of education, the lack of work, and couples just a bit young and having children."

Men are picked up driving into town without warrants or licences. He can't work miracles, but he offers them Tuhoe culture, a tikanga course run at local marae.

"They are wanting to learn about themselves," he says. "What we are trying to do [is] find a connection, have that understanding about where you come from. Most of the guys we work with are out there, and we start to bring them back." — Simon Collins

of families in the scheme never come to police attention again. "So from our point of view this has worked really, really well."

The hauora does not have a medical clinic. But a year ago the Tuhoe tribal entity built their own clinic in Taneatua which now has a doctor, two nurses and 884 enrolled patients, including more than 500 who were not enrolled with a doctor before.

The clinic was opposed by the Health Ministry and has had no state funding to date.

But it is expanding with a new mobile medical service in the Waimana valley and also plans clinics at Ruatahuna and Lake Waikaremoana. It is now seeking a partnership with the Bay of Plenty District Health Board.

"Now the DHB sees us as knowing more than they do about the health needs of our own people," Mr Kruger says.

"So that sets the tone of the new

We continue to see the erosion of our language, the erosion of our culture, the erosion of our beliefs and our way of life.

Tamati Kruger (right), Tuhoe leader

type of relationship — co-investor, co-funder, rather than contractor. It will be our intention that it will be our own system and we will be in charge."

Step 3: Education
Tuhoe's next target is the 15 schools within its rohe.

"We continue to see the erosion of our language, the erosion of our culture, the erosion of our beliefs and our way of life," Mr Kruger says.

"How is it possible that that is happening when you have these sites of education scattered throughout our territory and we continue to have this problem? Are those school properties private to the Crown? Is the Crown interested in contemplating another education system in play?"

"We have asked. We have given them the next month to respond."

Education Ministry deputy secretary Rawiri Brel says the ministry has

suggested setting up a "Community of Learning" where about 10 schools work together with a fulltime principal heading the group and specialists supporting classroom teachers.

Taneatua School principal Gary Climo says some local schools are already talking about creating such a community and it would be naturally Tuhoe. Although he is a "Tuhoe Pakeha" who has taught in the area since 1969, all his teachers and most students are Tuhoe.

"We are 100 per cent Maori and our tikanga is Tuhoe," he says.

Step 4: Welfare
The ultimate step of taking over welfare will be the hardest. Dr Scott says all New Zealanders have a legal right to benefits if they need them and the Government can't opt out by giving Tuhoe a contract with some built-in incentive to help its people off benefits.

"What would you do if there was another global financial crisis and unemployment went up generally? Tuhoe wouldn't have the balance sheet to ... weather the penalty from the performance contract," he says.

Nevertheless, his Sapere Group has set a framework for negotiation by calculating the cost of paying benefits to Maori people in and around the Tuhoe rohe in their lifetimes.

allowing for the likely time each person may spend on welfare.

The figure, \$735 million, is clearly an over-estimate because it is based on about 10,000 Maori out of about 28,000 people living in postcode areas that lie in or overlap the Tuhoe rohe. That includes areas where most Maori are non-Tuhoe such as Otago, Murupara, Kawerau, part of Rotorua District and inland Gisborne.

Within this wide area, 4934 Maori received main or supplementary benefits totalling \$35 million in the year to June 2013. In theory, the calculation means taxpayers should be willing to pay Tuhoe up to \$735 million to offload the lifetime welfare costs of these people.

That won't happen. Instead, a Social Development Ministry plan that formed part of Tuhoe's treaty settlement states the tribe's priority "to transform its current state of dependency to be self-governing over a 40-year or two-generational timeframe". Mr Kruger plans to help people off welfare a few at a time, by their own choice.

"We are working through how that would work — what the risks are, what our options are, do we start with a big chunk or a small chunk of people?" he says.

"But we are committed to doing it. If we want to build the Tuhoe community and reconnect Tuhoe people, then there is really no backing away from this element of that ... because this is the very thing that is eroding the sense of Tuhoe identity and their faith and commitment in themselves."

"We could start elsewhere. But I think welfare, education, health, they are the core areas that we have to start with. In our view, this is where most of the destruction to Tuhoe-ness comes from, and that destruction is that dependency — where Tuhoe will forgo being Tuhoe because somebody else is their benefactor, not their iwi. So we couldn't have picked a harder place to start."



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