



Old-school: Ruatahuna Primary school teacher Kiwhakiwha Williams, above right, with his class. Above: Children play in the afternoon light in Taneatua – it is hoped the pioneering settlement and conservation of Te Urewera will allow youngsters to stay in the region.

Photos: David White/FairfaxNZ

# Healing our

A historic and unique Treaty settlement with Ngai Tuhoe has laid out the blueprint for the iwi to take self-autonomy of its land and people. As the Bill approaches Parliament, Simon Day explores Tuhoe Nation.

**A**N HOUR down the mostly gravel road that snakes east from Murupara into the mist of Te Urewera's dense bush you reach Ruatahuna. In Maori mythology the North Island is the great fish caught by Maui and, for Ngai Tuhoe, the mountains and

carve a road to prosperity.

The agreement gives the iwi a \$170 million redress for some of the most brutal impacts of colonisation but, more significantly, the settlement gives back more than 200,000ha of Te Urewera, removing a new legal identity and eventually making the iwi governor

ment in the killings of missionary Carl Volkner and Government agent James Fulloon. It was really designed to force them into submission and open land for settlers. Tuhoe withdrew behind the confiscation lines into the heart of Te Urewera, where they hid from government troops searching for escaped guerilla



in the shiny boardroom of Tuhoe's brand new headquarters, a \$15 million "sustainable" building featuring solar panels and timber harvested from Te Urewera. His mandate was to secure whatever financial compensation was possible, but he was not to come back without the return of the land and a path to self-governance.

"There would have been no settlement without it [Te Urewera's return]," Kruger said. "With that view I was not then afraid of saying no. I came to understand that saying no was one of my most by no-one, but progressively returned to Tuhoe. Initially,

stay in the region and draw the others back from Auckland and Australia. "It's not only control over the land and the water, it is control over ourselves, control over our destiny," said Lorna Taylor, a member of the Tuhoe board, chair of Tuhoe Te Mana Motuhake mai Waikaremoana, and part of the settlement negotiation team.

At Lake Waikaremoana, where trampers, kayakers and boaties bustle around the holiday park, the iwi plans to build a cafe and a new visitor centre to replace the old green and yellow-trimmed DOC a tourism venture and it hopes Tuhoe people will become guides

ology the North Island is the great fish caught by Maui and, for Ngai Tahu, the mountains and rainforest of Te Urewera is the heart of the fish – Te Manawa o te Ika a Māui. Ruatahuna is the heart of Tuhoë, the soul of one the country's most remote, most ravaged, but most resilient iwi.

A local sits smoking outside the small shop and motel that mark the entrance to a town of around 300 people. The store's Tip Top boardings whisper of better days but the archaic petrol pumps have not run for decades and the shelves are nearly bare. There are few jobs and most of Ruatahuna's residents rely on benefits. There is no cell phone reception and little reason for the young people to stay.

"When I came home I knew I had to learn the heartbeat of Ruatahuna again. I thought Ruatahuna had died," said Hariata Haumate, 73, who has returned to be the Presbyterian minister after leaving town aged 19.

A historic and unique Treaty settlement due to be passed into legislation in June provides hope for Tuhoë and its remote settlements to once again define their own destiny, to take control of the sacred Te Urewera and to

ing the National Park status, creating a new legal identity and eventually making the iwi governor and guardian of the land.

It also creates a path for mana motuhake, the politically uncomfortable concept of Tuhoë taking self-government over its land and the services its people need. The iwi's 40-year plan will see it take semi-autonomous control of health, education and social services in an attempt to restore wealth and wellbeing to Tuhoë Nation.

**I**N 1896 the Government gave Tuhoë its first chance at self-rule when the Crown passed the Urewera District Native Reserve Act. Te Urewera became the only autonomous tribal district recognised under law and Tuhoë governed the area based on its own culture and customs.

The experiment failed less than 25 years later, creating a lasting distrust between Tuhoë and the Crown that culminated in the infamous police anti-terror raids of 2007.

The conflict began in 1866 when 5700ha of Tuhoë's most fertile land was confiscated by the Crown, supposedly as punishment for Tuhoë's wrongly accused involve-

Urewera but then faced violent invasion by Government troops searching for escaped guerilla rebel Te Kooti, a refugee in the tribe's mountains.

In *Encircled Lands*, a history of Tuhoë's experience of colonisation, the late historian Dame Judith Binney writes of the brutal treatment of Tuhoë by Government troops who burnt homes and crops, causing starvation and death.

Peace came in 1872 and an agreement that Tuhoë would govern its Rohe Potae, the encircled lands of Te Urewera. In 1896 this autonomy was recognised in law by Premier Richard Seddon. Having witnessed the horrific effects of Pakeha settlements on other tribes and the theft of their land and resources, Tuhoë closed access to its land and locked itself in Te Urewera.

Binney believed tribal self-government could have worked but it was never given a chance. Between 1909 and 1921, driven by a fear of native self-government and a wrongly held belief that Te Urewera was mineral-rich, Tuhoë's land was illegally purchased, its autonomy undermined. "Government land purchasing broke the backbone of Tuhoë as it was



**Tame Iri:** 'It was a worthwhile battle. It is a battle, we ought to die for it. Our people have committed to make that change.'

intended to do," wrote Binney.

Until governance of Te Urewera was put on the table (John Key had explicitly ruled out returning the National Park to Tuhoë in 2010), Tuhoë was not prepared to settle with the Crown. With the return of the land, the agreement is seen by Tuhoë as restoration of the mana motuhake stolen from it a century ago.

"This stuff was dreamed up 117 years ago," said Tuhoë lead negotiator and historian, Tamati Kruger. An unlikely looking CEO, Kruger sits barefoot in track pants,

powerful tools."

Now, Te Urewera will be owned by no-one, but progressively returned to Tuhoë. Initially, members of the governance board will have four members appointed by Tuhoë including the chair, and four appointed by the Crown. It will eventually become completely Tuhoë.

"That is historic. Especially when consecutive governments have stated no conservation land will be used in the finalising of a settlement," said Kruger.

The Crown will continue to fund the management of Te Urewera through the Department of Conservation (DOC) and Tuhoë will make a contribution. Tuhoë and DOC will manage the land together as the iwi builds the skills and management to take control.

Te Urewera is Tuhoë's spiritual heartland; the bush is its pantry, its fortress against invasion and its shelter against colonisation. Now it is the first resource on the path to sustainable self-governance.

The iwi is one of New Zealand's largest, estimated at 40,000, but only around 5000 live in the tribal homeland. The tribe hopes the return of Te Urewera will provide the employment opportunities that will convince young people to

building. It wants to develop its kiwi conservation programme into a tourism venture and it hopes Tuhoë people will become guides and guardians of the bush.

For the small Waikaremoana settlement of around 265 that has previously relied on the hydro plants, local farms and the freezing works in Wairoa for work, the prospect of being able to create its own opportunities in its own backyard is powerful. "It was like you have it, it is right there in front of you but it was unattainable. It is exciting that it feels attainable. It is becoming a reality," Taylor said.

**S**OME YOUNG Tuhoë are already convinced by the prospects control of Te Urewera now offers them. At Waimakomarae on the road to Wairoa, the local hapu hosted a three day hui with DOC to exchange ideas and knowledge on the future management of the land. A group of young girls have committed themselves to the conservation of Te Urewera.

"I love [Te Urewera], it is my hapu and iwi and it is me. That is our home, our cupboard. Ko au ko Te Urewera, Ko Te Urewera ko au [I am Te Urewera, Te Urewera is me]," said Maaki Takuta, 20.

Her friend Jasmine Lackner-



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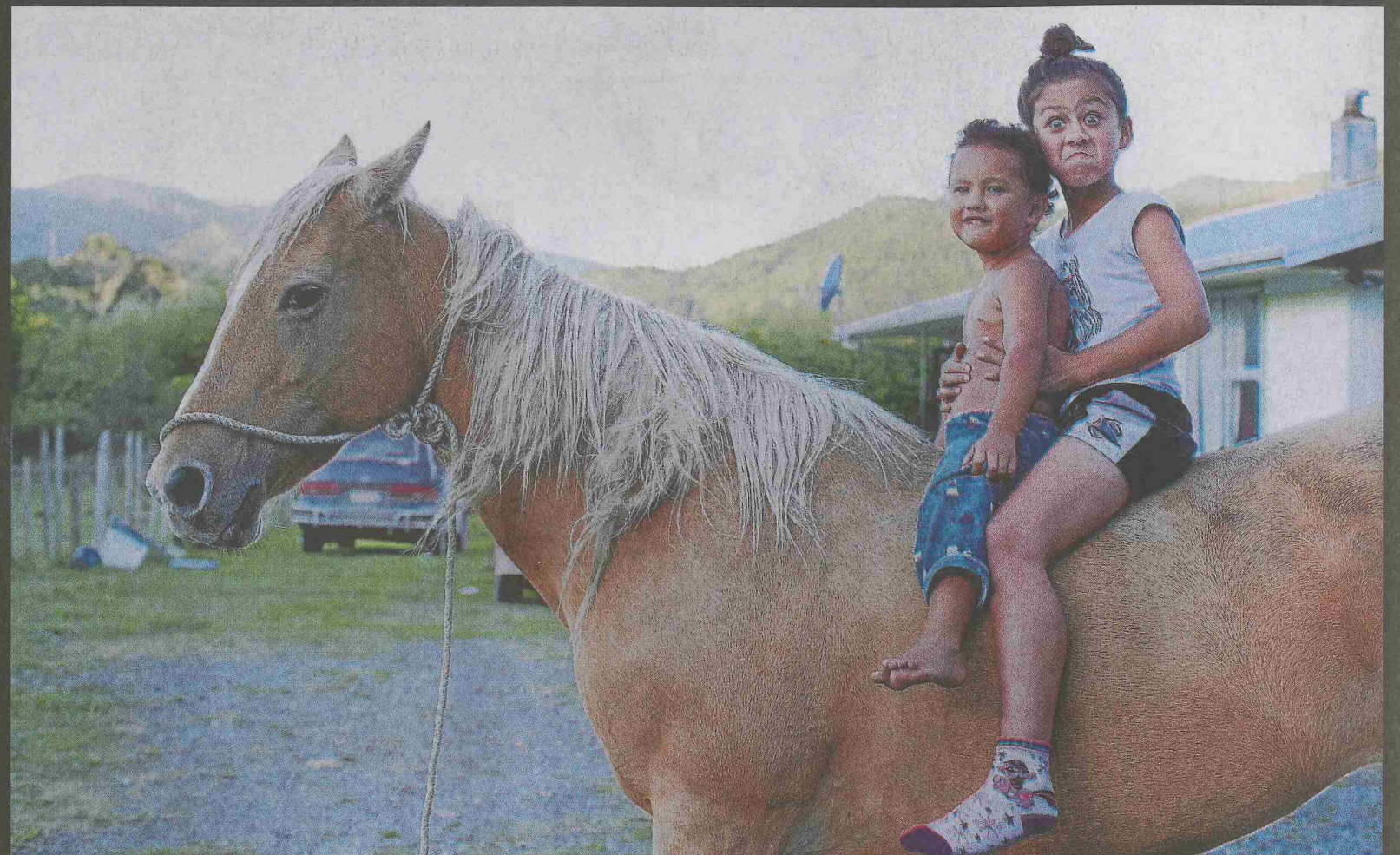
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Struggle street: Taneatua is representative of Te Uruwera where 75 per cent of Tuhoe are on some sort of benefit.



Of the land: Te Ataahia Lambert, 9, and her brother Te Awhiorangi Lambert, 2, on her horse Creamy in the Urewera village of Tuai.

Photos: David White/FairfaxNZ

# dark heart

Wagner, 18, has pulled out of the navy to join the Waikaremoana Hapu Restoration Trust which is working to rejuvenate the brown kiwi population in the area after it declined by almost 90 per cent.

The young women have been a part of the settlement process their whole lives and they understand the significance of the agreement. "I grew up in it, we all did. I've been to parliament heaps of times," said Simone Hira, 18. She is studying a business degree long distance and one day hopes to be one of the iwi's accountants. She understands the sustainable approach to governance of Te Ure-

dirt road that follows the edge of the lake to Ruatahuna, the sustainable management of the bush has already been opened to innovative business opportunities.

Formed in 1987, the Tuhoe Tuawhenua Trust is charged with managing confiscated land returned by the Government. The trust has moved into alternative energy, possum trapping, indigenous logging and beekeeping.

The Manawa Honey company started with 50 hives in 2010. Now, 700 hives produce the country's only mahoe-dominant honey. The aim is 2000 hives and eight beekeepers. And while many of the

He is unwilling to start his own commercial guiding operation taking tourists into the bush to hunt because that would interfere with his dole money. Kutia is typical of many Tuhoe - 75 per cent of whom are on some sort of benefit.

"The dole is not a good thing, giving people money for doing nothing. Especially for the people here. I blame the government for that," said Richard White, of Ruatahuna, who runs a horse trekking and hunting company.

However, under mana motuhake, the iwi plans to take responsibility for the estimated \$9 million of benefit money distributed to

to their understanding of tribal tikanga - culture and customs.

Nikapuru Takuta is an alcohol and drugs counsellor working with Hauora. He is also a former Mongrel Mob member. He found a new life when he moved to his Tuhoe homeland Waikaremoana and met veteran activist, Tame Iti. "I could still be thorn in the Crown's side, but a different type of thorn ... that means something," he said.

Hauora offers parenting programmes, mental health services, youth programmes, and provides four-day cultural courses for offenders and released

don't think we could have done it with any other political party. With the Labour Government we still have a sour taste of what Helen Clark did with the 2007 terror raids," Kruger said.

Tuhoe has respect for Minister for Treaty Negotiations Chris Finlayson and Key. "I have great admiration for what they have done. Without Finlayson and the National Party this would not have happened," he said.

While the reins are being handed to Tuhoe, the Government is not passing the buck and will collaborate with the iwi on the significant social issues facing Maori,



understands the sustainable approach to governance of Te Urewera created by the settlement. "It's not ours, we are just here to take care of it. I see a future for myself [here]," she said.

However, existing tourism providers who operate in the park with DOC concessions are concerned they will be kicked out once Tuhoe takes control. Other National Park users are concerned they will suddenly be excluded from the park or charged a fee. "Right now I don't even know if I am going to be able to operate. I don't know if I am going to get a concession. We've worked really hard. I've given my whole life," said Kerry Simpson, who owns and runs the Lake Waikaremoana water taxi service and Big Bush lodge.

Tuhoe says it not would prevent people from coming to Te Urewera and wouldn't actively discourage tourism and business. There's an appreciation of the value the area offers people other than iwi. "They are stakeholders, they are families who have come to Waikaremoana and have been coming for years. We understand that Waikaremoana has special significance to them," Taylor said.

An hour back up the winding

aim is 2000 hives and eight beekeepers. And while many of the pollinating natives birds have been decimated by predators, the bees are helping rejuvenate the native forest.

"The honey and the bees fit both these criteria of economic development, creating jobs – especially in work that might suit our people – and also contributing to the health and vitality of our forest," said Brenda Tahī, Executive Trustee, Tuhoe Tuawhenua Trust. The business has struggled as the iwi learnt about direct marketing and getting shelf space in retail outlets. But riding the buzz around manuka, Manawa Honey is now in high-end retail outlets and will eventually be exported to China.

"In Ruatahuna people have seen that we can mount a business and it hasn't fallen over," says Tahī. "We will build something that will succeed."

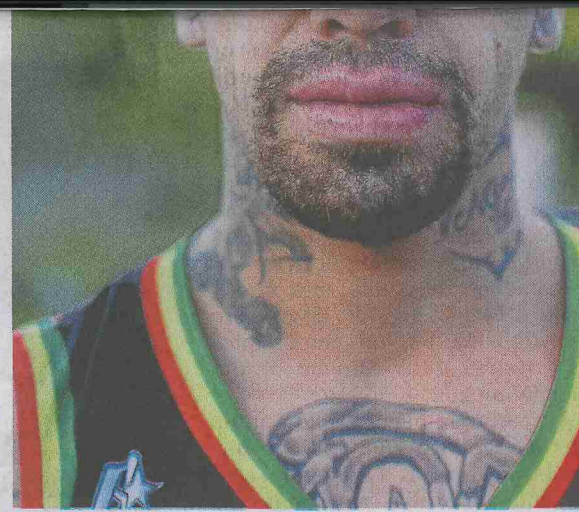
However, older Tuhoe are more skeptical of the change. Tukino Kutia is preparing for winter. He has filled a huge shed full of firewood to warm his uninsulated home when the snow settles. Soon, when the deer start roaring, a bunch of mates will come in from town to go hunting and he is getting his horses ready for the trip.

ability for the estimated \$9 million of benefit money distributed to Tuhoe annually. As part of the 40-year plan, the tribe will take state funding and use it change the dependency culture. Kruger said: "We want to work with the Ministry of Social Development in utilising the \$9 million of benefits to use some of that for job creation, and also changing a mindset in Tuhoe around being beneficiaries of the state."

Where possible the iwi also wants to take back the more than 200 abused children in state care. "We are disappointed in ourselves about that [child abuse]. And we are alarmed at how powerless we have been in our response to that," Kruger said.

The iwi is cut up into different district health boards and regional councils, and services are sporadic and ineffective. So Tuhoe plans to take control of health, education and infrastructure. It wants to upgrade the Ruatahuna store and improve access to the area. It plans to open a charter school run on its own terms.

Currently the Ministry of Health provides a GP visit to Ruatahuna and Waikaremoana once every fortnight. Under Tuhoe control, the tribe would build health



**Tuhoe Lambert:** Many believe outrage at the 2007 raids has led to the settlement with the National Government.

centres in each of the four Tuhoe settlements and by the end of the year wants the equivalent of 2.5 fulltime GPs working throughout Te Urewera, and community nurses offering prenatal services and care for the elderly. Tuhoe has already hired a GP from Alaska where huge progress has been made in providing healthcare to isolated indigenous communities.

It also wants to increase the capabilities Tuhoe Hauora (health) service, a DHB-funded mental health and addiction service, that also connects a person's wellbeing

provides four-day cultural courses for offenders and released prisoners. "Four days together on the marae they are walking away as friends. Four days before they would be shooting at each other. They have an understanding that the guy I hated yesterday is my cousin," Takuta said.

**I**N 2007, Tuhoe was reminded of its colonial persecution when armed police set up barricades on the 1866 confiscation line and stormed homes in Ruatoki and around the North Island.

Citing the Terrorism Suppression Act, police arrested 18 people including Iti, claiming he was involved in running military-style training camps and was planning to establish an independent state on Tuhoe land. Tuhoe says he was teaching the young how to survive in the bush.

All terrorism charges against the group were dropped and eventually just four were convicted of firearms charges. Iti served nine months in prison.

Tuhoe believes the public outrage at how the raids went down helped lead to a settlement with the National Government. "I am surprised that we got this settlement with this Government, [but] I

ate with the iwi on the significant social issues facing Maori, Finlayson said. "I think a lot of these issues are better dealt with at the local level. With the best intentions in the world, Wellington can't always do as well as the folks on the ground. I think there is a realisation that government can't do everything, whereas government working with iwi can achieve a hell of a lot more," he said.

A year after being released from jail, Iti is relaxed. He weaves through grandchildren crawling around the floor of his home, before heading to his marae a short walk down the road. Sitting in front of the whareniui, Iti says he is not angry, nor bitter, but he will not forget what happened in 2007 nor to his ancestors.

But he is not surprised Tuhoe has reached an agreement with "the enemy".

"I always had a feeling for it. If you put your hand around the corner you could feel it... it was nice and warm, it's got sunshine there. It was a worthwhile battle. It is a battle, we ought to die for it. Our people have committed to make that change. If you look down the tunnel you see the lights and they have a whole lot of colours and that is where we want to be."

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