

Living building status for Tuhoe

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TUHOE'S headquarters, Te Kura Whare, is now among the 14 buildings in the world to have reached a no impact standard.

The tribe's chief executive, Kirsti Luke received the prestigious Living Building certification at a ceremony in Seattle, United States, on Friday.

Designed by the late Jasmaz architect Ivan Mercep, Te Kura Whare was developed to leave no footprint and instead replenish its environment and community and since its erection, the tribe has been gathering information to support its Living Building accreditation.

Jasmaz managing principal and architect Marko den Breems said the challenge for the designers during the project was how to incorporate Tuhoe's aspiration for manamotuhake, or self-determination, into the fabric of the building.

He said through the process Tuhoe had created a building that was regenerative.

"It is beautiful; purposeful, and since it opened it has proven its green and social credentials over and over. It has deployed New Zealand firsts in its building technology. Te Kura Whare has proven that Aotearoa can and should lead the way worldwide in struc-



NO IMPACT: Te Kura Whare in Tanetua is one of 14 buildings in the world to have reached a no impact standard.

Photo supplied

tures that improve the environment and enhance wellbeing."

The 2000 square metre building at Taneatua includes a great hall that can seat 300 people, a two storey administration office, a café and a library.

Mr den Breems said Te Kura Whare's sustainable fea-

tures performed to a level that restored the surrounding environment including generating all of its own power and collecting and treating its own water for public use.

He said the thermal mass from 5000 earth bricks was used to absorb and hold heat in the building.

"In the meeting hall, the

heat from people warms the room but the building has a 'warm roof' system with insulation sitting above the rafters. This warm roof reduces heat loss within the building and as it's air tight too, so the internal environment is dry and a consistent temperature for occupants."

The building contains around

15 heat pumps, however they are little used.

Mr den Breems said the building was designed to combat natural disasters and had a multipole earthquake shear-resistant system, which was the first time it had ever been used in New Zealand.

Additionally, the building is on a deliberate elevation, on a natural floodplain, to help overcome any flooding issues. In the recent floods, it was untouched.

Ms Luke said the environment had inspired the design and purpose of the building.

"Ngai Tuhoe cleared the land, found the trees to mill, milled the wood and made the building using our own bare hands. We learnt engineering and carpentry along the way. We were also inspired.

"Te Kura Whare is an exemplar of the Tuhoe connection with Te Urewera - nature. The disciplines and standards that emanate from nature to shape our people are brought to life in our Living Building.

The Living Building Challenge is the most stringent of sustainability and environmental standards internationally. It requires a building to not only have no impact on its environment, but to improve its land, place and community.

It requires the building's performance to be confirmed after at least a year of operation through recorded data.