

# Tuhoe's \$12m plan for Ruatahuna

Kelly Makiha



Ngai Tuhoe has released details of its latest building project with Crown settlement funds with the announcement of a \$12 million central hub for Ruatahuna.

The project, which aims to inject new life into the village and uplift the community, also has a strong Rotorua connection with local firm Firth providing a revolutionary cement for the foundations, the first manufacturer in the world to get a special sustainable label.

The new project, called Te Tii, is the third major building project by Ngai Tuhoe since their Crown Treaty of Waitangi settlement.

The first was Te Kura Whare in Taneatua, which was recently certified as the first "Living Building" in the world outside the United States. Second was Te Kura Whenua at Waikaremoana, which was opened in late 2016.

Te Tii will invite manuhiri (visitors) to experience a Tuhoe way of life, to spend time in Ruatahuna and be introduced to Te Urewera.

The new facility will accommodate a general store, the tribal office, cafe, petrol station, motel, radio station, laundry, marketplace, playground, community garden and other inviting outdoor spaces.

Tuhoe is continuing its approach to responsible development by treating waste water on site, day-lighting adjacent streams to improve the environment for ika (fish), collecting rainwater for use and generating energy by way of solar panels.

During the past month, Firth has



**THE PLAN:** What the \$12m project will look like when finished.

PHOTO/SUPPLIED

delivered concrete to the site for the foundations. The two-hour trip to Ruatahuna, half by gravel road, took all of Firth's Rotorua trucks out of their usual circulation.

The area was severely hit by Cyclone Debbie, and the main access road to Ruatahuna has been closed to the public for over two months because of slips and washouts.

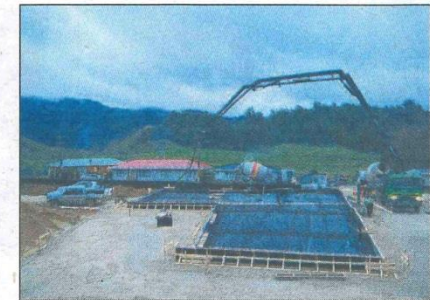
Tuhoe Manawaru Tribal general manager Iharaira (Max) Temara said they were initially set to pour foundations and floors the same week that Debbie hit, so it was a

disappointment to the small community of 300 who had been looking forward to the development progressing.

"The foundation is a big deal for us, it reflects the community's aspirations for change and the change has to begin from the ground up. More importantly, seeing the work commence signals that we are no longer just talking — this is going to happen."

"Local kids came to site to place their handprints in the concrete floor. This will be covered by carpet and the like but will serve as a time-capsule for them. They'll know where

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**UNDER WAY:** The concrete foundations being poured, courtesy of a Rotorua company.

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their print is once it's covered in."

The cement will carry the Declare label, which shows it is a sustainable product.

Declare labels tell where the product comes from, what it's made of and where it goes at the end of its life.

Firth is the first concrete manufacturer in the world to get Declare labels.

Golden Bay Cement, a product Firth use in their concrete mix, is the first cement manufacturer in the world to get Declare labels for its product.

Bernice Cumming from Firth said they used raw materials, such as sand, cement, aggregate and water but sometimes the concrete required additives to help it perform in a certain way. She said Firth used products that exclude formaldehyde and other nasty ingredients.

"We encourage design for durability, not for a 50-year building code — but for longevity to look after our raw material supply. There are buildings from Roman times that are still standing and functioning today... In the sustainability space, all roads lead to Rome but it's what you do on that road, the ripple effect can sometimes bring the biggest changes."