

Tuhoe open third tribal building

Karla Akuhata
Staff reporter

TUHOE has opened a new building at Ruatahuna and is now looking to develop two housing projects in the village.

The building, officially opened last weekend, includes a 24-hour fuel stop, café, and laundry as well as tribal offices.

Tamati Kruger, who chairs the Tuhoe post settlement organisation, Te Uru Taumatua, said the building cost \$12 million and the aim was to reinvigorate Ruatahuna.

"There was nothing there for nearly two decades. That sort of community for Ruatahuna was unacceptable, where health services was a fortnightly visit at Murupara. That had been the only medical service for all of the people in Ruatahuna for many years.

"There was no reason to stop at Ruatahuna, no public facilities, there was no gas station, there was no shop. That had an effect on the community and the economy – really it said: no opportunities here, no service here. "So, all of the tribals of Te Uru Taumatua made Ruatahuna top priority and they all stepped back with their plans and agree that we focus on Ruatahuna."

Mr Kruger said re-establishing communal living was at the centre of considerations when they were planning the development.

"Our people are being lured away with a dangerous characteristic, which is the individual spirit. People no longer see the benefit of belonging to a whanau because those structures don't provide them with a livelihood.

"We are Maori as individuals, but we are not Maori as hapu or iwi, so we are trying to re-establish the communal and community aspect of being together as a hapu."

Mr Kruger said, however, there were plenty of benefits to living communally, like hapu, or sub-tribes, had in the past.

"The idea is not just about buildings, homes and businesses but it is also around re-establishing a lifestyle around a village structure.

"We are interested in where kai is grown, where the shared amenities are. We could all have our own individual laundries, or we could have one that everyone can use.

"If we are going to talk about alternative power sources at the pā then why not have it for the village."

Mr Kruger said now they had opened the new building, tribal members would look to develop two new housing projects to be located the sites of historical villages in the Ruatahuna area.

He said there were plenty of com-

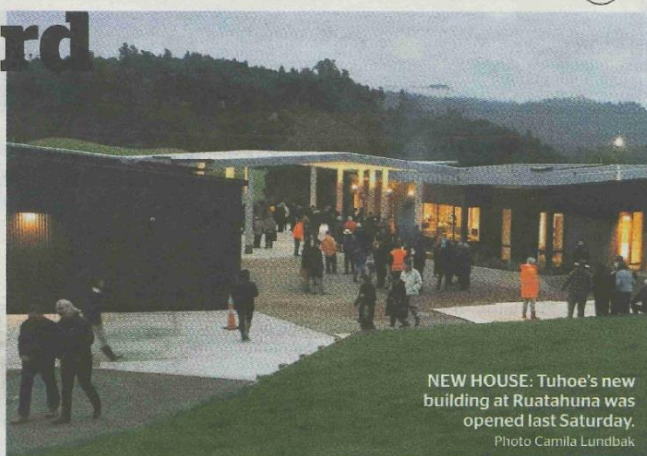
mercial opportunities, but it was about thinking with vision.

During the building project, Te Uru Taumatua teamed up with Optus Research to trial a natural resin, made from a pine trees, to bind gravel roads.

Mr Kruger said the resin was working well and he was looking forward to being able to use it in other projects.

"Working with the people Ruatahuna, where do we start from – what are the commercial opportunities for people there?"

"The easy answer is tourism."



NEW HOUSE: Tuhoe's new building at Ruatahuna was opened last Saturday.

Photo Camilla Lundbak

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OPENING DAY: Tuhoe children cut the ribbon, unveiling the new building at Ruatahuna.



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