



**TOP SCHOLAR:** Kahu Kutia's award-winning scholarship photography board depicting Tuhoe's relationship with Te Urewera ends with an image of herself, and the painted profiles of her brother Te Huia Kutia (pink) and her friend Monika Maxwell (yellow), with the dips and rises of their faces representing the dips and rises of mountains.

Photos supplied

## Tuhoe inspires top student photographer

**Neryda McNabb**  
Education reporter

IN looking for a subject for her award-winning photography board, Kahu Kutia turned to her heritage.

Kahu, last year's head girl and dux at Trident High School, received an outstanding scholarship and the 2014 New Zealand Top Subject Scholarship Award for photography.

It was an honour that left the teenager shocked, but came as no surprise to her teacher, Christina Galley, who predicted her success and described her work as "exceptional".

For the scholarship Kahu submitted the photo board that also earned her excellence in NCEA level 3 photography, along with a 10-page portfolio.

"Luckily my subject matter presented a lot of ideas that I could work with," she said.

Kahu's board was about Tuhoe – the

tribe's relationship with Te Urewera and the new generation.

"I started it off with photos from the opening of the new Tuhoe building out at Taneatua and I found myself focusing on the kids there," she said.

"It was sort of a documentary photography assignment at the time and I turned that idea of a new generation of Tuhoe and this whole new building and

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**TUHOE COLOUR:** This edited image representing the inclusion of modern colour into Tuhoe lands is one of Kahu Kutia's favourites, although it did not make her final board. The other - one of her smoke shots - was inspired by the coloured smoke let off at the opening of the Tuhoe building Te Kura Whare at Taneatua.

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## Bright colours face of Tuhoe for artist

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this whole new legacy continuing on, and sort of explored how that assimilates with the land.”

“I was using bright colours to represent the regeneration and communicating how Tuhoe views the land and how they use it and consider themselves a part of it.”

She said the series of black and white documentary images taken at the opening of the Tuhoe building were inspired by the work of New Zealand photographer Ans Westra.

The board ends with two faces, painted yellow and pink, that represent how Tuhoe and Te Urewera are one and the same, and how the modern generation fits into that ideology.

“The dips and rises of the face are supposed to remind you of the dips and rises of mountains, presenting a powerful side profile.”

She enlisted the help of her friend Monika Maxwell for the yellow image, and bribed her brother Te Huia Kutia to paint his face pink.

Fittingly, the final photo on the board is one of herself, taken using a tripod, self-timer and lots of patience.

“The reason I wanted to end the board with myself is because I am Tuhoe,” she said.

“I spent 13 of my most formative years living on a farm in Matahi so I grew up surrounded by Te Urewera, and by Tuhoe culture and heritage.

“So while the board is an exploration of the modern Tuhoe relationship with their homeland, it is also me, personally offering how I view the land and where I come from.”

Kahu moves to Wellington this weekend to begin a bachelor of arts in media studies at Victoria University.