

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **“Native Nations – Tracing Indigenous Footsteps” Wins New Zealand Tourism Award for Industry Collaboration & Alignment!!**

*Small family-owned indigenous tourism business on the outskirts of Murupara is recognized for Global Regenerative Tourism Project “Native Nations - Tracing Indigenous Footsteps” and expands in to more international Cross-Cultural Exchanges next year.*

New Zealand based Kohutapu Lodge & Tribal Tours, a small indigenous business dedicated to promoting cross-cultural understanding and sustainable tourism, is thrilled to announce that it has been honoured with the prestigious NZ Tourism Award for Industry Collaboration & Alignment. This recognition highlights Kohutapu Lodge's commitment to fostering positive change in people, communities and environments through its groundbreaking project, "Native Nations - Tracing Indigenous Footsteps."

The NZ Tourism Award for Industry Collaboration acknowledges Kohutapu Lodge's exceptional efforts in building partnerships and collaborating with local and international indigenous communities. The project's objective is to uplift youth and their communities, promote cross-cultural exchange, and create a network of regenerative and indigenous tourism trails for international visitors to follow.

“The concept came about from a couple of indigenous people from Australia and New Zealand connecting at the World Indigenous Tourism Summit in Perth earlier this year.” Says Kaleb Comollatti, (Wulli Wulli, Yiman/Iman, Goreng Goreng, Wakka Wakka Man from Central Queensland and Co-Founder, Native Nations – Tracing Indigenous Footsteps). “We decided we could be the leaders in this space, to guide and give our next generation a voice, a chance to heal and a chance to speak – to open up and start connecting back with their cultures, while sharing in each other’s cultures.” He adds.

"Native Nations - Tracing Indigenous Footsteps" takes indigenous youth on a transformative journey through indigenous communities worldwide, then brings them back to New Zealand to connect with the rich cultural heritage of the Maori people in New Zealand, and understanding the strong synergies Maori have with other indigenous cultures. The project was launched in August this year, with a tremendously successful inaugural exchange in to VIC Australia and back in to the Bay of Plenty in New Zealand for both Aboriginal and Maori youth from remote indigenous communities.

“This whole programme has been able to completely reignite my passion for culture and for tourism.” Says Braydon Saunders (Guditjmara Man, VIC Australia). “I never expected tourism to be at this level – reaching in to communities that live in other nations. I never expected tourism to do this much – and Native Nations has shown that we can make positive change, and bring communities together from completely different walks of life.” He finishes.

By taking groups of indigenous youth overseas and immersing them in other indigenous practises, participants gain an opportunity to reconnect with their own culture, to heal, and to use their voice; while gaining a deep understanding of traditions, history, and sustainable practices while forging lifelong connections with other indigenous nations.

The success of "Native Nations - Tracing Indigenous Footsteps" has prompted Kohutapu Lodge to expand its cross-cultural exchanges to include two additional destinations in the coming year. In partnership with indigenous communities in Queensland, Australia, and British Columbia, Canada, "Native Nations – Tracing Indigenous Footsteps" will continue to facilitate meaningful exchanges that foster mutual respect, cultural appreciation, and positive change. These upcoming exchanges will offer participants the opportunity to become young indigenous leaders, to connect with diverse indigenous cultures, learn from local traditions, and contribute to the preservation of indigenous heritage and environments.

"This is the stuff that fills our cup. We have always known that Regenerative Tourism IS Indigenous Tourism. We have done it our whole lives, it's in our DNA - that is why it comes so naturally." Says Nadine ToeToe (Owner/Director Kohutapu Lodge & Co-Founder Native Nations – Tracing Indigenous Footsteps). "To be able to harness tourism to inspire youth, to give back to, and uplift our communities while building a global network of truthful, meaningful indigenous and regenerative tourism trails for our visitors to follow.... is a no-brainer." She adds. "We have simply shifted our parochial view of our own small community on to a global platform. There is strength in unity, and together – we can do so much more for our people." She continues. "Winning the NZ Tourism Award for Industry Collaboration & Alignment is a huge honour and testament to the power and beauty of this project. But we don't do this mahi for the awards. We win when our youth and our indigenous communities win, and we are able to inspire positive change to ensure a better future for all of our people, globally." She ends.

This project has so far been supported by a power house of tourism industry partners and suppliers across Australia and New Zealand, who not only offered sponsorship, but will go on to promote and sell the thematic indigenous and regenerative tourism trails to international travellers worldwide, ensuring longevity of this campaign, and the continual opportunity for visitors to give back as they travel through these indigenous communities while on holiday.

Kohutapu Lodge's dedication to collaboration, cultural preservation, and sustainable tourism has not only been recognized by the NZ Tourism Award but also celebrated by indigenous communities and travellers alike. By providing an authentic and transformative experience, Kohutapu Lodge aims to promote intercultural understanding, empower local communities, and create positive change and lasting impacts in the tourism industry.

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For more information about Kohutapu Lodge and its award-winning project "Native Nations - Tracing Indigenous Footsteps," please visit "Native Nations – Tracing Indigenous Footsteps" Facebook page, or contact Nadine ToeToe, Owner/Director, Kohutapu Lodge & Tribal Tours.

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Tourism New Zealand  
 Industry Collaboration and  
 Alignment Award



# WINNER

INDUSTRY PARTNERS	MAORI OPERATORS	ABORIGINAL OPERATORS
Qantas (Australia)	Te Puia	Narana Indigenous Cultural Centre
ANZCRO (Australia)	Wai Ariki Spa	Lake Condah Mission
Intrepid Travel & Haka Tours (Australia & New Zealand)	Te Pa Tu	Budj Bim
Flight Centre (Australia & New Zealand)	Sudima Hotel Chain	Tae Rak Aquaculture Centre
Worn Gundidj (Australia)	Kaitiaki Adventures/Mt	Worn Gundidj - Native Nursery - Tower Hill - Bush Tucker
AAT Kings (Australia)	Tarawera	Dardi Munwuro
NZ Māori Tourism (New Zealand)	Kohutapu Lodge & Tribal Tours Ltd	Winda Marra

Poutama Trust (New Zealand)	Whirinaki Forest Footsteps	
Tourism Bay of Plenty (New Zealand)	Omataroa	
Ngāti Manawa Charitable Trust (New Zealand)	Ohiwa Oyster Farm	
Stray & Kirra Tours (New Zealand)	Travel Ed	
East Bay REAP (New Zealand)	Muir's Tours	
Tourism New Zealand (New Zealand)	Mauao Adventures	
Tapoi Travel (New Zealand)	Aqua 360	
Sudima Hotel (New Zealand)	Izakai	