

The culture lives on

"Ko Tarawhai te tupuna, ko Tarawhai te whare, ko Ngati Tarawhai te iwi."

Ngati Tarawhai had much to be proud of when they officially opened their only marae complex in the Wai Kohatu area, Roititi, at the end of last month.

And to share their achievement, tribes were represented throughout the country to witness the historic event.

The whare nui, whare kai and flag staff were unveiled by Maori Affairs Minister, Mr Ben Couch. All of these buildings were named after their tupuna, Tarawhai, his wife, and a descendant of Tarawhai.

However, despite being in the midst of Maoridom and tourism, the people of Tarawhai will be using the marae as a cultural base.

"We'll be teaching waiata, waiata-aringa, tukutuku, mahi whariki, and every Maori cultural aspect," says Mr Joe Malcolm, the backbone of the whole project.

And the people of Tarawhai recognise the importance of reviving their culture.

Mr Mita Mohi, one involved with the opening, agrees that this will be an excellent opportunity for the descendants of Tarawhai.

"This is great cultural promotion. Now we have a more solid base to teach the kids their own kawa, on their own

ground."

The opening of the complex attracted 1000 people, including Mr Peter Tap-sell, MP for Western Maori, and Mr Ian McLean, MP for Tarawera. But the most popular figures were the elders from Te Arawa, Tuwharetoa, Te Wai Pounamu and all other tribes.

But although the day was dominated by the elders, the younger generation was not forgotten. Following impromptu performances, was a "bop" dance demonstration, given by Patrick Mohi and Herbert Rihari. Two older spectators decided to try out this new dance, but could not outdo the expertise of the younger boys.

The dance demonstration opened up a whole new outlook for elders, who agreed that this marae was made for

the generations to come.

But while the Tarawhai people are proud of their work in the construction of the complex, more hard work is lined up for them.

The weekend after the opening, Ngati Tarawhai hosted the International Farm Youth Exchange convention, which is only the beginning of their busy agenda. They will also be hosting some of the staff from the Department of Social Welfare, Rotorua, who are interested in learning the kawa of the marae.

But the most important work, already in the pipeline, is the construction of two more hydroponic green houses that Ngati Tarawhai have used as their financial source.

They have been using this means of funding since September last year. It involves growing a market crop in a nutrient solution, and it also means a lot of attention needed for the crop.

They started off growing capsicums, but these were sabotaged before harvesting. However, they have recovered well by growing a strawberry crop. These fruit were sold in local markets, but most of the profit came from selling them on the roadside.

In this way, Ngati Tarawhai are able to provide employment and cover their finances.

