



Media Release
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ISOLATED EAST COAST GETS IRB BOOST FROM BP

Ngāti Porou Surf Life Saving Club which patrols the remote Onepoto Beach in Hicks Bay, will be presented with a much-needed inflatable rescue boat (IRB) by BP New Zealand Managing Director Debi Boffa on Tuesday 16 April.

According to Ngāti Porou tradition, Paikea the whale rider was arguably the first original surf lifeguard to arrive on the East Coast, living on through the work Ngāti Porou Surf Life Saving does with the remote community and its connection to the ocean. Now, thousands of years after Paikea, a life-saving IRB will christen the shores of Wharekahika (Hicks Bay) thanks to BP New Zealand.

The delivery of the IRB is part of BP's ongoing commitment to Surf Life Saving New Zealand (SLSNZ) which it has supported since 1968. In the last 51 years, more than 55,000 lives have been saved by SLSNZ with more than 22,000 rescues supported by IRBs.

"Each year BP donates a new inflatable rescue boat to one Surf Life Saving club as part of our annual contribution to Surf Life Saving New Zealand," says Debi Boffa.

"This donation to Ngāti Porou SLSC is in addition to our annual support. We know how vital IRBs are to any surf club's operations, and when we realised the Club had been operating for a number of years without an IRB we wanted to change that. Ngāti Porou SLSC provides an amazing service, fully supported by the community, and it made our decision to donate this IRB an easy one. We know it will further allow the Ngāti Porou SLSC to focus on what they do best – keeping us all safe at the beach."

The small rural community is supported on the water by the 25-person strong Ngāti Porou SLSC, with members aged 14 years to 66-year-old "Papa Tom", collectively patrolling nearly 200km of East Coast/Tairāwhiti coastline with their neighbouring Surf Life Saving NZ colleagues in Gisborne and Tolaga Bay.

Young and older residents, including teachers, will be manning the new IRB throughout winter and into summer, thanks to training by Ngāti Porou SLSC and strong support from principal Campbell Dewes of Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Kawakawa mai Tawhiti (Years 1-15) who has a personal investment in water safety after a near drowning at a local river.

Ngāti Porou SLSC works closely with the Kaupapa to ensure depth and breadth of lifeguarding talent. It is currently training three teachers (including the Head of PE) to become trainers themselves and young students to become lifeguards with skills being incorporated into their school curriculum.

"Despite fewer people in the water over winter, it is the key time for surf life saving clubs to train as the surf is rougher and more challenging, truly testing the new and current lifeguards – and in Ngāti Porou's case, their IRB," says Club Coordinator Peter Boyd.

"We hugely appreciate BP providing us with such a vital tool. Ultimately it is for the community, not just the club, and it will make a huge difference. Over winter for example



the district runs IRB training and now we'll be able to take part in that which is fantastic. We'll also be able to do our own training with it and support other community groups and events as needed."

Last summer, Peter and his nephews pulled four people who were in town for Rhythm and Vines out of the rip at Wainui Beach while another saved a person from drowning with the help of a surfboard.

The IRB will be presented to Ngāti Porou SLSC in a special ceremony at Waikanae Surf Life Saving Club, 280E Grey Street in Gisborne at 10am on Tuesday 16 April. The ceremony will include speeches and a Karakia before the IRB is taken out on the water. Present will be BP Managing Director Debi Boffa (who will officially gift the new IRB to Ngāti Porou), Courtney Ireland BP GM Marketing Supply, Peter Boyd, Ngāti Porou SLSC Club Coordinator, Renee Wikaire, SLSNZ Club Development Officer for the Tairāwhiti region, and 16 young lifeguards who will complete their training this weekend.

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BP Background:

BP and Surf Life Saving New Zealand have what is believed to be one of the longest unbroken corporate partnerships in New Zealand. In addition to an annual donation to Surf Life Saving New Zealand BP also recognises the skills of surf lifeguards with BP gift cards for clubs in the BP Rescue of the Month and BP Rescue of the Year awards. BP also supports a BP Leaders for Life programme which provides lifeguards with a variety of important skills including conflict resolution and leadership skills that can be taken back and applied to their communities and clubs.

Ngāti Porou Surf Life Saving Club Background:

The club was formed after a revival of waka ama in the 1980s and a subsequent 160km waka ama paddle from Onepoto (Hicks Bay) to Gisborne in 1999 with a group of Hicks Bay/Te Araroa locals. The journey retraced the ancestral water highways of the tupuna (ancestors) and it was during that historic trip that the seed was planted to start a Surf Life Saving Club in Onepoto to provide safer beaches and water safety education to rural communities along the East Coast/ Tairāwhiti. The club has since won several awards:

- 2015 Gisborne Awards of Excellence - Innovation of the Year (community-based surf lifesaving practices, including roving patrol)
- 2015 SLSNZ London Trophy for the Club with the highest number of Surf Lifeguard Awards gained as a ratio of membership
- 2016 Gisborne Awards of Excellence - Patrol Club of the Year.

The Ngāti Porou Surf Life Saving Club logo:

According to Ngāti Porou tradition, the eponymous ancestor Paikea came to Aotearoa on the back of the whale. Paikea the whale rider was arguably the first original surf lifeguard to come to the East Coast. This connection is shown in the Ngāti Porou Surf Life Saving logo. Also pictured are the Waiapu River, Mountain Hikurangi and Tairāwhiti, which emphasises





the genealogical links of people along the Tairāwhiti and Hicks Bay (Te Wharekahika) – image provided below.

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