



# Cadetships - Construction Siteworks

Learning on the job is the trick

In total Te Puni Kōkiri has supported 1767 cadets throughout the Cadetship Programme, which was implemented in 2009. The Cadetship programme came about following the Māori Economic Summit and the Prime Minister's Job Summit.

It was a specific response to the Global Financial Crisis and provides opportunities for Māori (especially young Māori) to upskill and progress their career and development pathways, and supports employers to recruit, retain and develop Māori staff.

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The biggest Tūhoe civil contractor is helping his people to be the technician, to be the electrician, to be the engineer. Pera Te Amo (Tūhoe, Ngāti Porou) has only just come on board the Cadetship programme but we catch up to discuss the work that is bringing pride to him and his whānau.

Pera Te Amo (Tūhoe, Ngāti Porou) has been, as he says, “digging dirt now for 20 years, obviously starting in Wellington with another construction company but I’ve worked on a number of major projects such as hospitals, stadiums – everything. Then I decided it was time to head home to Whakatāne to settle down but that didn’t last long,” he laughs.

Te Amo is the owner of Complete Siteworks Ltd a multi-million dollar company specialising in civil construction. He proudly hails from Ruātoki where his dad come from, and his company is very much a family affair.

“I’ve had lots of family involvement at different stages especially my younger brothers, my youngest one and second eldest both of them together have been

here for 19 years. The youngest one runs the whole show – he has day-to-day operation,” he says proudly.

Pera comes from a large family of 14, made up of 11 boys and three girls. The whānau lost their mother to cancer when she was just 38. Honouring his mother and her memory has been the driving force for Pera, always striving to get ahead and do well.

“It was pretty tough. That’s probably what inspired me. I never wanted my kids to struggle, and to be fair even though there were 14 of us, we still had a car. Even though it was of us jammed into one Holden,” he says with a grin.

“I got a super-lucky break, the person who employed me loaned me the money to buy my first truck, and it just grew and grew from there,”



Pera says. "I love the industry and I love watching projects grow, from just a bit of dirt to putting the whole infrastructure together."



### Employing Māori

"We're involved from the beginning," says Te Amo. "We work on multi-million dollar projects, it's pretty big stuff. We're involved in all aspects of the jobs but we're not just the guy who sweeps the road or turns the sign."

The Company are advocates of employing Māori especially young Tūhoe men and women who are wanting to learn more and be better, or sometimes are just wanting another chance.

"Sometimes the transition from being home [rural Tūhoe] to being in the city works and sometimes it doesn't," says Pera reflecting on his experiences so far. "We buy a house in West Auckland, and we accommodate them, feed them, make sure there is a cleaner in the house and we make sure they are making some commitment to want to be in a job," he says.

"We teach our guys a set of skills straight away. If you do the basic things right, do the practical stuff first and then look at the theory, they get it, but if you do it the other way around it doesn't work."

"My first cadet is in his first year, looking after a multi million dollar project – learning on the job is the trick, you've got to teach on the job," he says.

Pera and his whānau work hard to make sure the employees are well looked after in all aspects, financially, socially, culturally and spiritually. More recently one of his more troubled employees just purchased a brand new flash \$50,000 vehicle and that he says, "Is better than winning the Lotto."



### Mobile Classroom

Te Amo has invested \$1 million dollars of his own money into building a mobile classroom which is a 100-foot super-liner that has been custom built for the purposes of visiting mostly low decile schools in order to educate and excite children about career choices and decisions.

"Education is the key, without it, it's hopeless," he says. "If we can't capture the kid by ages 7 – 11 then trying to change old habits is too hard. That's why partnering with the Warriors – whether they win or lose – is important to excite the kids. They see this huge truck and we pop out, and we run our programme, and hopefully make an impact, we mentor the kid, and encourage healthy wellbeing," he says.

A Trust is set-up to organise school visits, it is also about to employ a full-time teacher and with a second mobile school unit on the cards, this without a cent from central government.

He retells the story of some kids that he took to the last Warriors league game in New Zealand. He sent his boys down to Ruātoki to collect 20 primary-school ages children to bring them to the Warriors game, the last for the season, the only thing that was asked of them was to do a haka for the Warriors.

"They had never been there before, one of the kids said, "Can I bring my dad?" I said, "All good." "He's a patched up member," the kid said. A bit more apprehensive Pera says, "Yip, that's alright." And when the kids turned up to the match, just seeing his face, that's awesome," he says.

