

Let food be thy medicine and thy medicine be thy food

Although first uttered in Classical Greece, ancient physician Hippocrates' whakataukī was to prove consistently on point as human civilisation continues to evolve and struggle to meet ever-complex challenges.

Fast forward to 2017 and we see Healthy Families Far North embarking on a whole-of-community approach in one of its key communities. The purpose? To engage in a preventative approach to chronic disease prevention by re-designing the food system in the heart of Ngāpuhi – the Kaikohe township.

Kitchen Table Talk is an initiative borne of exactly that – a conversation over a shared meal with Healthy Families Far North kaiwhakahaere Shirleyanne Brown, Change and Innovation Agency director Rebecca Davis, Innovate Change co-designer Kelly Ann Cunningham and Borderless chief executive Qiuqing Wong.

It is a framework loosely based around the sharing of good kai and wai. In practical terms, it will see Healthy Families Far North employ the social innovation process of co-designing solutions to food system issues in partnership with Innovate Change, the Kāhui Taupā (Prevention Partnership Group), key stakeholder informants and members of the Kaikohe community.

Healthy Families NZ is challenging communities to think differently about the underlying causes of poor health and one way we are doing this is improving nutrition where people live, learn, work and play. The process Healthy Families Far North will be using with Kitchen Table Talk is a tried-and-true method of social innovation that starts with questioning and understanding the issues, moves on to designing and testing potential solutions, and ends with reviewing and sustaining the lessons learned.

The Kaikohe Kāhui Taupā – comprised of Te Hau Ora o Ngāpuhi, Countdown, Northland District Health Board, Sport Northland, Oranga Kai, Te Tai Tokerau/Mania PHO and Kāinga Ora (Place-based Initiative) – gathered for the first time in early June. After a rapid fire introductory session, the group collectively described what the current food system looks like and identified the key influences within that system.

A wonderful outcome of the first meeting was when four members of the group immediately volunteered to co-host a Kitchen Table session, which will be designed to gather community insights from various settings.

The team is also in the process of embarking on key informant interviews with some of the movers and shakers within the food system, from food market co-ordinators to pig hunters and large retailers to church-goers.

As Kitchen Table Talk progresses, the Healthy Families Far North Team is coordinating the vision, energies and rich resources available within the community to guide the creation of meaningful, sustainable solutions by Kaikohe, for Kaikohe.

Hippocrates laid down the wero some 2,500 years ago. Healthy Families Far North gladly accepts!