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It's a Far North tick for the Healthy Families Far North Pop Up Stall

With temperatures soaring and the sun maintaining a steady glow on the faces of thousands, Healthy Families Far North provided a welcome reprieve in the shade as it successfully tested out its Pop Up Stall concept at the recent Ngāpuhi and Waitangi Day celebrations.

Healthy Families Far North is an initiative that aims to improve the health of all people of Te Taitokerau in the areas where they live, learn, work and play. For the past several months, the team has been working in the Kaikohe community on Kitchen Table Talk, a social design initiative that aims to improve the accessibility and affordability of good kai in the area.

Healthy Families Far North kaiwhakahaere Shirleyanne Brown says enquiry in partnership with the community has confirmed that generational knowledge on the preparation and gathering of good kai is being lost, particularly for people under the age of 60 years old.

In response to this, the team has been trialling prototypes, or small experiments, in a bid to offer solutions that bridge the gap.

"The Pop Up Stall was trialled at the Ngāpuhi and Waitangi Day festivals alongside two of Kaikohe's finest marae kai masters who have made an art for out of maximising seasonal produce to feed their whānau so it doesn't go to waste," Shirleyanne says.

Betty Wihongi and Horace Davis were on hand during both occasions to share their lemon curd and pot luck pickle recipes as well as talk with visitors to the Healthy Families Far North area around what constitutes good, old-fashioned kai.

"With the lemon curd, some of the young ones especially were really inquisitive. Some of them don't know what it is, and we have been watching them dipping their fingers in the samples and then laughing at the look of surprise that comes on their faces. They reckon it's yum!" says Betty.



She adds that using the leftover skins with kawakawa and coconut oil to create skin balm or grating in with baking soda to create natural home cleaners are other ways of ensuring backyard lemons don't go to waste.

Shirleyanne says the feedback from the festival-goers from both festivals was encouraging and provided further rich data for the Healthy Families Far North team to progress forward with launching the concept proper in the Kaikohe community.

"People have told us that they think it is really important to realise that the 'stuff' growing in their backyards are resources for the whānau. People in the community, like Whaea Betty and Whaea Horace, hold the knowledge; we have been told by Kaikohe that they have been caught up in reactionary types of services for so long that they have forgotten what is around us," she says.

Shirleyanne says one visitor to the Ngāpuhi Festival site drew parallels between the type of kai knowledge held by elder members of Far North communities with that which came through loud and clear following the 2011 Christchurch earthquakes which directly threatened food security in the region.

"One woman told us that this is how they survived but we don't have to wait for a natural disaster situation. It's called chronic disease," Shirleyanne says.

Bolstered by the positive feedback generated from the two events, Healthy Families Far North is now moving into a second phase – engaging with local businesses and marae to fuse approaches that support the availability and affordability of good kai.

Ends

CAPTION: Kaikohe's Betty Wihongi stands by her famous lemon curd recipe at the Healthy Families Far North space at the recent Ngāpuhi Festival 2018 in Whangārei.

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