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### **Healthy Families Far North just getting started as 2017 comes to an end**

Healthy Families Far North is getting ready to hit the ground running in 2018 to further support the good health of the people of Te Taitokerau.

For Māori, the maramataka (lunar year) shows that the summer months are traditionally times of high productivity and Healthy Families Far North kaiwhakahaere Shirleyanne Brown says the team intends to weave this ethos into their schedules after their return from the Christmas and New Year period.

"Most people at this time of the year are winding down and getting ready for their holiday. We're just getting started!" she says.

She says this year has seen the Kaitiāia-based team gain a number of wins through a range of actions designed to influence and disrupt the systems that affect population health in the Far North District.

"We have had a bumper year. From moving towards approaches that uphold Māori prevention systems of health – including the use of the maramataka – to working with communities in Kaikohe and Kaitiāia to improve the food system and access to public green spaces, we are making solid traction," she says.

Healthy Families NZ is a nationwide approach that aims to prevent chronic illness at scale across 10 sites, including the Far North District. By focussing on improving nutrition, increasing physical activity, enabling more people to become smoke free and reducing alcohol-related harm, the movement operates at the heart of community life in the places where people live, learn work and play.

Some sites have chosen to focus on settings, such as workplaces and education settings. The Healthy Families Far North team – which touches from Towai through to Cape Reinga – has adopted a 'whole-of-community' approach that draws in a web of influential and impactful community stakeholders and champions on leadership and operational levels to affect change.



“One of the Healthy Families NZ principles of action is collaboration for collective impact, or multiple partners from multiple sectors co-creating knowledge and generating mutually reinforcing initiatives that meet our common goals. We have seen this directly in force with our Kāhui Taupā prevention partners in Kaikohe working collectively to improve the accessibility and affordability of good kai through to our Kaitāia-based partners co-designing the establishment of New Zealand’s first hospital-based community garden,” Shirleyanne says.

She counts another win as the inaugural integration of the Healthy Families NZ principles in the Westpac Northland Business Excellence Awards 2017 and the return of the NgāiTakoto-led Pipiwharauo: Hikoi for Healthy Nature, Healthy People around Lake Ngatu, an annual event that saw its genesis with a collaboration with Healthy Families Far North, the Department of Conservation and iwi Māori in 2016.

But, Shirleyanne reiterates, this is just the start of greater collaborations to come.

She says the team will be kicking off 2018 with Kaikohe-based community partners testing the pop-up stall concept at the Ngāpuhi Festival and the Waitangi Day Festival – an idea borne of the Kitchen Table Talk movement in Kaikohe that is now at the stage of designing prototypes in response to preliminary insight findings about the state of the current food system.

The team will also be launching the Te Puna Ora Papakāinga initiative early in 2018 at Te Tapui Marae, an initiative that looks at mapping the natural and wildfood sources and practices inherent around cluster marae in the Far North. This, as well as continuing to socialise the use of māramataka as a prevention system with stakeholder partnership groups and community champions to overlay the mahi already underway.

“This mahi is invigorating and thrilling; everything we do is to affect mass change at a systems level to reclaim good health as normal across our Far North communities. Our kaupapa is our whakatauki – ka puta noa te mauri Te Taitokerau. A healthy, thriving Far North,” she says.

**Ends**

**CAPTION:** The Healthy Families Far North team celebrating 2017 and looking forward to getting stuck into 2018.



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