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Popping up healthy people in the heart of Ngāpuhi

The heart of Ngāpuhi was beating a steady rhythm as the Kaikohe community came together for a pre-Christmas celebration of healthy people on the weekend (EDITORS: Saturday November 9 2017).

The Do-A-Hui People Festival came alive to further add to the warm tapestry of wairua at Korewhata Marae, which was also the birthplace of the Healthy Families Far North Kitchen Table Talk initiative.

The festival provided the ideal opportunity to test out one of the initiative's prototypes, or quickfire experiments, to look at how to revive Kaikohe's food system so that accessibility to good kai and kai knowledge is accessible and available for its people.

Manning the pop-up stall prototype were community champions Betty Wihongi and Horace Davis, who also catered for the 150-plus community members that gathered in October to hear the feedback from Kitchen Table Talk's preliminary research insights.

"We did lemon meringue pies made from our homemade lemon curd – and they're even better now!" says Betty.

Healthy Families Far North kaiwhakahaere Shirleyanne Brown says pop-up stall concept is about re-educating and connecting people with generational kai knowledge that has been lost while also maximising the use of seasonal fruit and vegetables that would otherwise go to waste.

"The pop-up stall is really a conversation starter that enables people to share in whānau recipes that are often never committed to paper, while also engaging in dialogue about what constitutes good kai and how to use it," she says.

Betty says the day itself was about the marae being a venue for the community to come together and will be the first of more to come. Also, the opportunities for using the pop-up stall to showcase Māori cuisine are vast – takakau, hāngi, picked wildfoods and more.



Festival organiser David Denton said the kaupapa for the day – which also featured mirimiri healers, rongoā, weavers, haircutting and clothing amongst the 10 stalls – was a start and attracted about 100 people for the day.

"It was koha-based so that families could afford to go and didn't have to spend lots of money. Everybody was happy, it was a great atmosphere and the marae is just the bomb," he says.

Meanwhile, Betty and Horace will feature at the Healthy Families Far North pop-up stall at the Ngāpuhi Festival as it makes its first transition to Whangarei's Toll Stadium next January 25 to 28.

They will be preparing two seasonal preserve recipes – one savoury, one sweet – and Shirleyanne says punters will have to drop in for a kōrero and an opportunity to take home a sample made with love.

"We are privileged to have these two very special wāhine with us on the Kitchen Table Talk journey. They are champions in every sense of the word and their humility and willingness to help support Far North communities by empowering themselves with good kai knowledge is nothing short of a blessing," she says.

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