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### **STOPtober – resetting smokefree generations**

As STOPtober came to an end this week, those who took on and completed the challenge have joined the ranks of hundreds of non-smokers for whom an auahi kore lifestyle is normal.

STOPtober is a social initiative that challenges smokers to set a goal to stop smoking for the month of October, supported by its online community and local providers specialising in cessation services.

Inspired by similar campaigns, STOPtober sees some of Northland's 20,000 smokers stop smoking collectively for the month – many for good.

Kaitaia kohanga reo kaiako Pauline Namana stopped smoking with her husband Alan during the 2014 STOPtober challenge. Since then, she describes whanau life as moving from strength to strength, although she admits that she replaced one addiction with another in the form of 5am walks and crossfit workouts.

However, the power of her choice has manifest in a complete reformation of whanau dynamics. "My kids love how I am fit and healthy. And they say that I'm a living, breathing inspiration," she says.

Thirty-four percent of Maori self-identified as regular smokers in Te Tai Tokerau for the Census 2013 results. However, Healthy Families Far North manager Shirleyanne Brown points out the public health publicity is tipped in favour of negative statistics, when the stories of the remaining 66% who never smoked regularly or were ex-smokers remain largely untold.

"We are in the position of being able to tell our own stories. We have the permission to celebrate the absolute normality of Maori being auahi kore, those that are the response to the typically brutal statistics we hear of Northland Maori who smoke," she says.

International performer Lee Morunga is a fourth-generation non-smoker who says an awareness uprising is taking place: "Growing up in a smokefree whare was and is normal for me; I grew up that way, I don't know any different," she says.



Not that she didn't try initially: "Smoking never appealed to me. I tried it, and hated the smell right off the bat. Took a wiff, first and last time. I don't intend to invalidate smokers. My message is in my life and how I live it."

Shirleyanne reiterates that the 'ha', or breath, is a fundamental concept in a Maori worldview and, as such, its pure essence is still very much a valued taonga in contemporary society.

"As Maori, we reference our whakapapa right back to the story of Tane and the creation of Hineahuone through the passing of his breathe into her form to create life. The state of auahi kore is a completely natural gift that has been passed down to us through the generations," she says.