



DATE: Rākau Mātohi, April 3 2018

Press Release: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Te Puna Ora Papakāinga – reviving the natural resources of Māori communities

A renaissance of health and wellbeing has quietly begun in Far North marae with an initiative that is empowering whānau to reconnect with their whenua and each other.

Te Puna Ora Papakāinga is a Healthy Families Far North initiative that brings wānanga series to some of the 150-plus marae in the Far North to explore community wellness using nutritional concepts – food thought, food choice or preparation and food source.

The initiative is the brainchild of co-ordinator Lorinda Pereira (Te Rarawa). A daughter of Panguru, she has a background in health and education and was raised steeped in mātauranga Māori alongside her north Hokianga kaumātua and kuia.

The wānanga are based around practical applications of hauora, founded in the principles of Atuatanga and the characteristics of Haumiētiketike, Rongomātāne and Tangaroa.

“For me, Atuatanga is the blueprint expression of whakapapa our tūpuna have left for us to navigate in today’s world. Everything has a whakapapa, including our emotions, and actions come as a result of what space we are operating in. If we move from the concept of Atuatanga meaning ‘demi-gods that Māori worship’ and explore the characteristics of each space, we begin to understand and premeditate health outcomes,” she says.

For example, Haumiētiketike focuses on future pathways and encourages the change of systems by challenging the current status quo. Te Puna Ora Papakāinga explores this concept practically by engaging whānau in vision mapping and forward planning to strengthen their relationship to their natural kai resources and harvesting networks.

Lorinda's motivation is personal. “I witnessed the decline in health and wealth of my community due to the draining of our skilled labourers in the early 90s which left a hole in the natural community systems put in place and run through marae. Seeing marae restored to be the engagement space of the community, teeming with life, vitality, laughter and tikanga across generations is the biggest success for me,” she says.



Healthy Families Far North manager Shirleyanne Brown says one of the key guiding principles for the Healthy Families NZ initiative is equity.

“Health equity is the attainment of the highest level of health for all people. Healthy Families NZ has an explicit focus on improving Māori health and reducing inequalities for groups at increased risk of chronic diseases. Māori participation at all levels of planning and implementation for solutions is crucial and Te Puna Ora Papakāinga is a total exemplar of this principle in action,” she says.

The initiative was launched at Kohewhata Marae in Kaikohe and will be moving throughout the Far North in a bid to affect change at scale. Shirleyanne says as Healthy Families Far North’s lead organisation is Te Rūnanga o Te Rarawa and reports to the Te Taitokerau Iwi CEs Consortium, the opportunities to progress rapidly are promising.

“These are very exciting times and there is an appetite for change. Healthy Families Far North is deeply committed to supporting the return of Māori prevention systems that enable whānau to thrive,” she says.

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