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### **Walking for Healthy Families to connect people to the land**

Healthy Families Far North is lacing up to keep step with Far North kaumātua as they encourage more people to walk the Far North District's tracks and reserves.

Walking for Healthy Families is Healthy Families Far North's new initiative that brings to life the kōrero and memories of local kaumātua who share about the unique, defining landscapes that thrive in the Far North District.

Healthy Families Far North is in the process of collecting stories in partnership with hau kāinga, the Department of Conservation and other iwi organisations to eventually offer narratives back to communities via traditional and social media.

Healthy Families Far North kaiwhakahaere Shirleyanne Brown says the immediate objective of the initiative is to encourage people to get more active by using the resources available at their back door. The beauty of Walking for Healthy Families is leveraging off the knowledge held by kaumātua, whānau that will inspire whānau to invest more in chronic disease prevention and holistic health

"We regard kaumātua as the rightful bastions of knowledge. Walking for Healthy Families Far North enables authentic, local leadership that has the power to affect change and close the generational gap in the transmission of mātauranga Māori," she says.

She adds that younger generations traditionally look to kaumātua to make sense of environmental stimuli; kaumātua hold deeper understanding of the human relationship to ngā taiāo, from the collection and use of rongoā Māori to the use of the maramataka Māori to enhance engagement with the environment.

"In the Far North District, we have 72 Department of Conservation-managed walking tracks alone. This doesn't take into account all the other public green spaces and reserves that are maintained by the Far North District Council and other organisations. The places where people can reconnect with the whenua are everywhere and



available to everyone, whether you are beginning to explore or a seasoned hiker," she says.

So far, Healthy Families Far North has met with kaumātua at the Lake Ngatu Track, Taumarumaru Reserve, Tāne Māhuta Walk, Te Oneroa a Tohe and the Herekino Walkway. Further on, Healthy Families Far North is hoping to explore more remote areas, such as the Warawara Forest and the walks based in the most northern reaches of Ngāti Kuri.

"We are excited about helping to bring forward the stories which sometimes tend to exist in the shadows. As we look to invest in a holistic framework to prevent the onset of chronic disease, we are reminded by the whakataukī. Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua. I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on the past," Shirleyanne says.

## **Ends**

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