



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Ōmauri, 28 January 2025**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Native Sports Performance: Te Hiku taitamariki chasing down their dreams from home**

Native Sports Performance is charging full steam ahead into 2025 at the helm of a health reforms initiative that saw over 200 taitamariki across Te Hiku engage and thrive in everything from pig hunting to waka ama last year.

The fledgling organisation is one of 13 providers and collaborations supported by Te Whatu Ora through the Taikorihī Locality - a prototype set up under the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022 to influence and inform the future of public health investment in the area extending from Hokianga to Te Rerenga Wairua.

Natives Director Rawinia Everitt contemplates what was a full-on year in 2024 for the organisation, whose aim is to support the aspirations and development of young people in the Far North across numerous sporting codes from their powerbase - home.

"Last year, we took 60 kids overseas. That's huge!" she says.

Rawinia is a passionate advocate of building taitamariki up from the environmental, social, and cultural support systems that they are used to in their home environments.

Herself a former NZ rugby and netball representative, she says her own cultural identity journey impacts on what drives her and her crew to deliver programmes founded in mātauranga Māori from rural locations.

"When I moved away, I was involved in a system that didn't really see me as Māori. Times have changed and I do see improvements; imagine if I had stayed home and made it from home. Imagine if I had all those things that helped me be me around me, if I knew my identity, my whakapapa." she says.

Rawinia says Natives has been working with young people across Te Tai Tokerau for several years, relying heavily on its voluntary base and collaborations. Support through the Taikorihī Locality has enabled her to further develop the organisation's kaupapa, including environmental education, tikanga Māori and sustainability for successive generations.

"I heard about the needs and wants of whānau and their aspirations and different needs in communities across Te Hiku and it allowed me to go further than just the health space. We've been



trying different things across the graphics creating hubs in Hokinga and Kaitāia, trying to at least fill the gaps,” she says.

An important focus of Natives is to reconnect rangatahi with life skills handed down from previous generations, and to embed preventative healthcare into upcoming generations, such as food gathering, processing and preparation, she says.

She adds that it is this combination of sports development, tikanga Māori and life skills that give Natives its innovative and fresh edge, which has proven appealing to taitamariki so far.

“They’re our future. They’re going to be making decisions on behalf of who we leave behind. I think we have a duty to help shape and get something right for them, so that they can lead in multiple spaces. If we don’t have an inclusive environment where our rangatahi feel like they have a voice and a sense of belonging right now, then how do we expect them to lead in the future?” she asks.

As the Taikorihī Locality winds up mid-2025, the challenge of securing funding for Natives’ ongoing activities is not lost on Rawinia as she looks to strengthen existing collaborations with other organisations, such as Healthy Families Far North, and establish new ones.

She says Natives and Healthy Families Far North collaborated on the He Manuao subsidy fund – a pool of funding designed by rangatahi that was made available through the Taikorihī Locality to help support taitamariki remove financial barriers to participating in sports.

Almost 60 individuals applied last year to the fund, which can assist Te Hiku taitamariki to meet the costs of participating in sports, like subsidies, uniforms, transport, and equipment, says Healthy Families Far North Kaiwhakataki Māori Riri Motu.

Riri adds that working with Natives to help distribute the fund by delivering specific activities ensures that rangatahi have access to physical and cultural activities that are most meaningful for them, not just formal sports events.

“The He Manuao fund demonstrates what different can look like when it comes to funding by taking a for rangatahi, by rangatahi approach,” she says.

Rawinia says collaborating with partners like Healthy Families Far North is important. “We have to work together, not necessarily to recreate this brand-new model. It’s about all these entities that have been set up working collectively, so that our kids see themselves and their succession in there as well,” she says.

Some of those entities include the 12 other initiatives supported by the Taikorihī Locality. Programme Manager JJ Ripikoi says data and insights from all initiatives are currently being drafted into a set of recommendations for the future of health investment in Te Hiku.

“We are preparing a social impact report that will voice to Crown our learnings over the three years of the Taikorihī Locality from inception. Although it would be great for providers to be able to access sustainable pūtea, we are good at just getting on with it in Te Hiku and we are determined to work for the improvement of hauora whānau,” he says.



For more information on the Taikorihī Locality, visit [www.taikorihī.co.nz](http://www.taikorihī.co.nz).

**ENDS**

### **CAPTION**

The Natives U18 Boys team practice their haka, drawing on the ihi, wehi and wana of their tūpuna, at the Pacific Youth Cup Festival held in Brisbane, Australia during October 2024.

### **MEDIA CONTACT**

Erena Hodgkinson - Taikorihī Kaitui Kōrero

[ereha.hodgkinson@taikorihī.co.nz](mailto:ereha.hodgkinson@taikorihī.co.nz)

021 475 327

### **About the Taikorihī Locality:**

The Taikorihī Locality is the vehicle for change in Te Hiku ō Te Ika, set up under the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022 health reforms.

Taikorihī is a population health initiative that aims to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for all Te Hiku ō Te Ika whānau, focusing on Māori, Pacific peoples and people who experience disability.

The Taikorihī Locality area extends from north Hokianga over to Mangonui, north to Te Rerenga Wairua and includes approximately 25,000 people living in its borders.

Taikorihī is supported by Te Whatu Ora under the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022.

For more information on Taikorihī and the Pae Ora health reforms taking place in Te Hiku, visit [www.taikorihī.co.nz](http://www.taikorihī.co.nz).

The Taikorihī Innovation Fund initiatives for 2024 are:

- **Kia Taurima:** A.N.T. (Aupōuri, Ngāti Kahu, Te Rarawa) Trust delivers a programme focusing on Māmā and pēpi health and wellbeing, including whānau engagement, advocacy, and support, quarterly wānanga, and service provider / sector co-ordination.
- **Te Niho:** A drop-in dental clinic coordinated by Te Hiku Hauora to reset oral health and prevent non-communicable diseases in Te Hiku.
- **Wāhine Hauora:** Uplifting women's health in Te Hiku with a hauora and wellbeing programme based on Te Whare Tapa Whā model and mātauranga Māori, delivered by a collaboration led by StrongHer.
- **Te Hiku Rongoā Māori Collective:** Addressing health equity for rongoā Māori and increasing access to and availability of traditional medicine across a hub headed by Tuia Maara.
- **Rangatahi Sports and Wellbeing Programme:** Increasing the participation rates of young people in sports throughout Te Hiku through a programme designed and delivered by Native Sports.



- **He Whare Āhuru: Te Hiku Housing Forum:** A fully comprehensive initiative led by North Studios to build the platform for a shared housing strategy across Te Hiku through provider collaboration, while connecting Te Hiku whānau with providers via a bespoke, online digital hub.
- **He Taura:** Building up Te Hiku taitamariki to step confidently into their future worlds, providing opportunities for networking, leadership development and mentorship with The Moko Foundation.
- **Rākau Ora:** Providing after-hours access to spaces for Te Hiku adults and rangatahi needing immediate mental health support.
- **Tāngata Whai Kaha:** Te Houtaewa Māori Charitable Trust offering innovative support systems based in Rongoā Māori that nurture quality of life for whānau experiencing disability in Te Hiku.
- **Te Papa o Tāne:** A fitness and wellbeing kaupapa aimed at empowering tāne, delivered by a collaboration led by Mauri Services, that brings forward a realisation and consciousness around Mana Tāne for men in Te Hiku.
- **Teen Parenting Programme:** Specialising in awhi and parenting education for young parents and their whānau living in Te Hiku, led by Te Rarawa Anga Mua.
- **Muriwhenua Wellbeing Festivals:** One-stop-shop health and wellbeing events to celebrate hauora in Te Hiku and strengthen direct connections between health and wellbeing providers and whānau, delivered by Te Hiku Hauora.
- **iMoko:** Ensuring tamariki are empowered with sovereignty over their oranga and choices by providing health education and peer supports across kura kaupapa Māori and mainstream kura in Te Hiku with Navilluso Medical.