



MEDIA RELEASE

Tangaroa a Mua, December 23 2024

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Te Hiku Providers celebrate a year of leading out local health reforms in the Far North

Te Hiku providers have numerous causes for celebration this festive season, as they triumphantly see out 2024 with a continued commitment to redress systemic health inequities for whānau in the Far North into 2025 and beyond.

Since 2022, the Taikorihī Locality has been working with Te Whatu Ora under the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act to support providers delivering initiatives that address population health and wellbeing for whānau living in the area from north Hokianga to Te Rerenga Wairua.

The Taikorihī Locality Innovation Fund last year committed \$2.5m towards supporting 13 innovations that address the population health priority areas which Te Hiku whānau had identified after extensive prior consultation.

These include Whare Āhuru / Housing, Whānau / Māmā and Pēpi, Hauora / Health and Wellbeing, and Taitamariki / Youth.

Although the dissolution of Te Aka Whai Ora midway through 2024 was followed by the announcement that the coalition government would also wrap up Taikorihī in mid-2025, many practitioners supported by Taikorihī will continue to work as they always have.

The Te Hiku Rongoā Māori Collective is a group of rongoā Māori that works vigilantly, restoring balance and bringing more accessibility and availability of traditional Māori healthcare to whānau across the hapori.

Tuia Maara's Joanne Murray is familiar with the peaks and troughs that whānau Māori attempt to navigate in a healthcare system that is often inaccessible in the Far North.

She says her roopu has been providing rongoā hauora packs to communities since the first COVID lockdown. Now, with the assistance of Taikorihī innovation funding, Tuia Maara has teamed up with other providers across Hokianga and Te Hiku to create a powerful hub that provides all forms of rongoā, including mirimiri, romiromi, mahi wairua and medicinal preparations.

"It's something that's close to our heart, this mahi that we do. We've been doing it a long time on the smell of an oily rag, and we just keep going.

The struggle is real up here right now. Some people don't even have kai, let alone money to go to the chemist and the doctors," Joanne says.

Māori health provider Te Hiku Hauora CEO Maria Baker says Te Hiku providers will continue to operate in the way that they do best beyond the life span of Taikorihī - via whanaungatanga and a shared vision of uplifting whānau health, particularly for Māori and people with disabilities.

Te Hiku Hauora delivered two very successful initiatives this year - the Muriwhenua Wellbeing Festivals and Te Niho, a dental health initiative.

Maria says both initiatives opened opportunities for whānau to understand what is available for access and support. She adds both initiatives also opened doorways for providers to explore further, sustainable collaborations that maximise existing resources in the hapori.

ANT (Te Aupōuri Ngāti Kahu Ngāi Takoto) Trust will continue to support whānau Māori following a year of significant learnings in the Māmā and Pēpi health space. Kia Taurima is an initiative that supports whānau health by focusing on its central unit - mother and baby - and positive shifts in the Māmā that participated this year were tangible, says ANT Trust Manager Trudy Brown.

She says the multi-faceted initiative was designed to uphold mātauranga Māori, with a particular focus on the needs of Māori mothers.

"If you survey mothers in English, they'll give you one answer. But if you give the same survey to reo-speaking Māmā, they'll give you different answers.

This programme is leaned more towards a cohort of women who don't have a voice in the system - Māmā who grew up in kōhanga reo, kura kaupapa that have got a sense of the Māori world. The health system they want to see looks different to what's currently available," she says.

Re-imagining a futureproof health system was also a key focus for taitamariki group He Taura this year. Under the guidance of The Moko Foundation, He Taura was formed to provide a leadership forum for its members and co-design initiatives that meet the needs of youth in Te Hiku.

The group met each month with several professional mentors expanding their skill set and knowledge base.

Furthermore, He Taura surveyed and engaged with over 100 taitamariki across Te Hiku to arrive at three initiatives which were launched or re-booted in 2024, including a teen parenting programme (Te Rarawa Anga Mua), a sports development and mentorship programme (Native Sports), and an in-schools healthcare programme across kura kaupapa Māori and primary schools (iMoko).

Te Rarawa Anga Mua General Manager Melanie Sweet says the Teen Parenting programme is already being delivered and is making a significant impact by supporting teen parents and their whānau with holistic services that align with Te Rarawa's kaupapa Māori approach.

She says this opportunity has also resulted in strong collaborations with Kaitiāia College and the Ministry of Education to establish a Teen Parenting Unit here in Te Hiku.

"The ongoing work is proving transformational, providing relevant, tailored support that makes a real difference for teen parents in the rohe," she says.

Native Sports director Rawinia Everitt says one of the fledgling organisation's missions is to accentuate the resources available to taitamariki in the Far North that enable them to achieve health, wellbeing, and sporting success.

Native Sports provides several experiences; these include access to its Kaitiāia-based sports hub He Kura, hunting and diving excursions, cabin building workshops and supporting taitamariki to travel and represent a variety of sporting codes, both locally and internationally.

Rawinia says her personal journey influences her drive to support an equitable environment in Te Tai Tokerau that empowers taitamariki to develop their sporting and cultural aspirations.

"We've started two academies - one in Hokianga and one in Kaitiāia - and these are mainly for area schools and kura kaupapa Māori. We focus on bringing opportunities to those little minority kura that connects them up and builds a sense of hauora, connection and belonging," she says.

The iMOKO Programme is a kaupapa Māori initiative designed to deliver prompt, equitable, and culturally aligned healthcare directly within kura (schools) in Kaitiāia.

By addressing common but significant health concerns – such as skin infections, head lice, and sore throats/strep throat – the service ensures tamariki and their whānau receive prompt and effective care, often while reducing barriers often associated with accessing primary healthcare.

Dr Lance O’Sullivan says the strategic importance of partnering with ANT Trust – Te Whare Oranga and connecting with local providers, such as Te Hiku Hauora, strengthens community engagement and ensures targeted support for Māori communities.

He highlights instances where the programme has extended support and guidance to the whānau of tamariki receiving care, emphasising how the programme plays a vital role in easing the burden on Kaitiāia’s overstretched primary healthcare services.

“Māori probably have the poorest health outcomes in the health system and are less likely to complain about services. The great thing is that we can use that index child as a gateway to the extended whānau,” he says.

Also activated to redress Māori health inequities this year with support by the Taikorihī innovation fund are the Wāhine Hauora and Te Papa ō Tāne initiatives. These are two new, collaborative innovations focusing on wāhine and tāne health using mātauranga Māori-based approaches and normalising and integrating Māori health frameworks, including Mason Durie’s Te Whare Tapa Whā model.

Another innovation supported by Taikorihī this year is Rākau Ora, based in the heart of Kaitiāia. Rākau Ora managing director Vanessa Kite says her after-hours mental support and addictions service has sustained the wellbeing of over 300 people, mostly Māori, since the first quarter of 2024. The service operates outside of normal business hours in response to community need and recognition of a current gap in service delivery in Te Hiku.

Vanessa says the service is delivered by a staff of volunteers engaged in studies towards their certifications themselves; she adds this is invaluable to reduce the barriers that whānau face accessing mental health services.

“The lived experience of our team is valuable. It’s gold! Through our mana enhancing approach based on our reality, and that of others, we are able to relate and inspire not only our community that visit our space, but also our whānau. That is the gap we humbly operate from,” she says.

Kotahi – Unity in the Community is also the calling of THMCT, reflecting a long-standing commitment to inclusivity, wellbeing and the integration of traditional and contemporary practices, says THMCT Chair Teresa Hart.

She says the service, located at the main entrance of Kaitiāia Hospital, underwent a recent refurbishment to enhance accessibility for all, including whaikaha whānau / families with disabilities, to ensure that their services are culturally aligned, user-friendly and welcoming.

The Trust was supported this year through Taikorihī to continue to implement its vision for kōtahi and unity for all under a cohesive service that demonstrates commitment to whānau whai kaha.

Also developed with whānau Māori square in its line of sight is the Te Hiku Housing Forum, which received funding to deliver an initiative not traditionally associated with health.

North Studios Director Ezzera Houghton says the Taikorihī prototype identified early on that housing was a critical determinant of public health and warranted investment in the Te Hiku health reforms.

As one response, North Studios designed a website - Tono.nz - a repository of information and conduit between whānau and Te Tai Tokerau-based services in the housing space.

Ezzer says work is being done in the background to pull together a comprehensive report on current investment in the housing sector in Te Hiku. He is working with local providers, Te Hiku Iwi Development Trust and various iwi rūnanga to achieve the final product by the time Taikorihi wraps up mid-2025.

“We’re at the lowest point of home ownership in 17 years. It’s down by about 60 per cent. We’ve got low rates of building consents. We’re currently in a recession. And even then, our providers are still doing the mahi.

My hat’s off to all those housing providers that are making do with what they’ve got under these circumstances. It has not been easy to house the people and to increase the stock for our region,” he says.

Taikorihi Programme Manager JJ Ripikoi says while it is disappointing that the prototype in its current form faces a finite life, the successes of the initiatives that were supported throughout 2024 have reaped rich, valuable learnings moving forward.

He says the Taikorihi experience has proven that initiatives designed on key elements like collaboration, innovation, mātauranga Māori and health equity work for Te Hiku whānau.

“We are currently preparing a social impact report that will voice to Crown our learnings over the three years of the project 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.

The Taikorihi innovation fund contract holders are also excited about the opportunity to collaborate and challenge what has previously been a siloed operating environment for whānau to navigate in Te Hiku.

JJ says the data forthcoming also shows the initiatives make a solid impact on the lives of whānau who participate. He hopes this data will provide a baseline for future projects and ongoing public health investment in Te Hiku.

“We know that there is a lot of mahi to do to improve hauora in Te Hiku ō Te Ika. These initiatives are short-term wins aimed to target some longer-term goals. Taikorihi is determined to action whānau voice, and we will continue to pull together providers to collectively deliver on what those voices have said they need,” he says.

For more information on the Taikorihi Locality, visit www.taikorihi.co.nz.

ENDS

MEDIA CONTACT:

Erena Hodgkinson - Kaitui Kōrero

erena.hodgkinson@taikorihi.co.nz

021 475 327

CAPTIONS:

Rākau Ora: Vanessa Kite leads her team through a weekly round-up of providing after hours mental health care in Te Hiku

Kia Taurima: Māmā and their pēpi who part in the Kia Taurima Māmā pampering day to design the programme delivered during 2024 uplifting whānau ora from its core unit

iMoko: Georgina Peterson checks a child for a sore throat complaint at Awanui Primary School as part of the iMoko programme this year

Muriwhenua Wellbeing Festival: Tama Tū's Pene Tawhara taking visitors through their paces at the inaugural Muriwhenua Wellbeing Festival

Te Hiku Rongoā 1: TinaLee Yates and Jo Body share a light moment creating rongoā at Tuia Maara's weekly clinic supplying rongoā Māori to Te Hiku

Te Hiku Rongoā 2: Atarangi Muru working to deliver mirimiri to one of her clients at Natural Oora's weekly kuia - kaumātua days, supported this year by Taikorihī

NOTE:

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 out 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 Navillus Medical.

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.