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# **Award recipient is challenging traditions and changing lives**

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All medical practitioners must ask what they are doing to address racism and inequity, says 2020 Dr Mārire Goodall Award recipient Diana Kopua

“I absolutely congratulate Diana, she is a champion in her own right”

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Diana Kopua is a champion who is helping Māori apply their own cultural identity and paradigms to daily life, says Te Kōhaho Health director Lady Tureiti Moxon.

Dr Kopua was announced today by Te Ohu Rata ō Aotearoa (Te ORA Māori medical practitioners association) as the 22nd recipient of the Dr Mārire Goodall Award, which was established in 1997 to support and celebrate the work of high-flying Māori health practitioners. As well as the award, she receives an unconditional \$10,000 grant.

A psychiatrist, Dr Kopua developed Mahi a Atua, a programme using Māori creation stories as a therapeutic tool for people dealing with mental health and addiction issues. It is also used as a training tool for health practitioners and as a safe space for discussions about personal experiences with racism by using the stories of Māori gods to create opportunities for learning, self-identification, and feedback through metaphor and allegory.

## **Transforming lives**

Lady Moxon's Te Kōhao Health is one of four Waikato-based, kaupapa Māori providers that united as the whānau pai collaborative to offer the Mahi a Atua programme.

She says the programme has been transformational: "It enables Māori to think through our own paradigms, so it's about reclaiming and understanding who we are today while using those paradigms as a normal part of day-to-day life and as tools for interacting with whānau.

"We've had western paradigms forced onto us for too long and they are not meaningful, not just for Māori, but for everybody living in this country. We need to move away from thinking that western ways of doing things are the only ways, Māori have very strong paradigms of our own.

"So, I absolutely congratulate Diana, she is a champion in her own right. She and her husband [Mark Kopua] have created something we all, especially in my organisation, are really keen to participate in and ensure others can as well."

Fifteen Te Kōhao Health staff members attended a five-day Mahi a Atua course in July with another 20 to follow on 30 November.

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Dr Kopua could not be contacted today, but speaking to *New Zealand Doctor/Rata Aotearoa* in August she said Mahi a Atua empowers participants to indigenise their spaces through thought and action.

“If we really want to address racism in health,” she said, “we need to address the practitioners, and I don’t care if they are doctors, nurses or health improvement practitioners, everyone needs to ask themselves what they are doing to bring about change and address inequity, and how they help perpetuate racism and that inequity on a daily basis.”

The award is named after Dr Goodall, a man with wide interests who retired from his position as professor of cancer research at Chicago Medical School in 1986. He was the longest-serving member of the WHO expert advisory panel on cancer before becoming the first permanent judicial officer of the Waitangi Tribunal and director and editor of Aoraki Press Ltd. He died on 10 June 2015.

## **Tribute**

In the media release announcing the award, Te ORA Maori Medical Practitioners Association chair David Tipene-Leach refers to Dr Kopua as “**a great example** of the ‘doctor-scientist and social justice champion’ that Mārire Goodall embodied”.

“Di pursued this journey in order to create a space for Mahi a Atua to exist in the clinical world,” he says.

“Challenging the status quo does not always find favour, challenging medical traditions does not make new friends in the world. Di Kopua has taken all this on and has pursued the embedding of this mātauranga Māori format into the engagement and retention of distressed whānau into an empowering and dynamic clinical relationship. We at Te ORA are proud to have her as our Mārire Goodall winner for 2020,”

Last year’s recipient of the award was GP and National Hauora Coalition clinical director Rawiri Jansen.