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Annual award for Māori represents nursing values at Waitematā DHB

Registered nurse Stella Williams wears the korowai with pride as the latest winner of Waitematā DHB's Te Kauae Raro Māori Nursing and Midwifery Award.

The korowai, a traditional hand-made Māori cloak, is passed from winner to winner each year and is highly symbolic of the DHB's organisational values.

"Each feather represents a value of nursing – aroha (love), tika (faith), pono (honesty), whanaungatanga (relationships) and many more," Stella says.

"It will be an honour for me to wear this korowai at special occasions."

Stella, who is of Te Rarawa, Te Aupouri and Nga Puhi descent, graduated from Unitec in 2017 and works at the DHB's Whītiki Maurea - Māori Mental Health and Addiction Services in Henderson, West Auckland.

The award recognises the bi-cultural advisory work she is doing with new-graduate nurses, occupational therapists and social workers.

Stella is now completing her post-graduate diploma in nursing and will begin her Masters studies in 2020.

She says her work has a clinical and cultural focus that ensures tangata whaiora (service-users) receive the best possible care.

"I have a strong desire to help increase the Māori workforce and develop improved healthcare for Māori and our community," she says.

The use of the korowai dates back to ancient times when it was first worn as a mantle of prestige and honour.

Waitematā DHB introduced the concept in 2018 as one of multiple initiatives designed to highlight the work being done by Māori within its nursing ranks.

CEO Dr Dale Bramley, who is of Ngāpuhi descent, says the DHB is committed to boosting and supporting the Māori workforce.

The DHB ensures all Māori job applicants who meet the standards outlined in position descriptions are interviewed and specifically targets Māori for recruitment into its Health Care Assistant Programme, which is often seen as a gateway to other careers within the health sector.

It is also hiring a Māori Recruitment Consultant and provides additional support for Māori nursing students and new graduates - including mentorship from a bi-cultural supervision group that promotes a clinical and cultural approach to everyday working practice.

The number of Maori clinical staff at Waitematā DHB increased by 96% between June 2015 and March 2019 while the total number of Maori personnel rose by 81% during that same period.

Waitematā is also the lead DHB for Kia Ora Hauora (KOH), a Māori health careers programme that works hard to encourage Māori recruitment nationwide.

“Having a health workforce that better reflects the community we serve plays a key role in improving health outcomes for Māori,” Dr Bramley says. “People are more likely to engage with a health service when they know they will encounter a sense of the familiar.

“We are committed to eliminating inequities wherever they exist, particularly in relation to Māori. Our efforts have already contributed to Māori gaining twice as many years in life-expectancy compared with the non-Māori/non-Pacific population since 2008.”

- Interested in a nursing career at Waitemata DHB? Go to www.wdhbcareers.co.nz

Caption: Registered Nurse Stella Williams and the korowai presented as part of this year’s Waitematā DHB Te Kauae Raro Māori Nursing and Midwifery Award.

Ends.

For further information, contact:

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About Waitematā DHB

Waitematā DHB serves the largest population of any district health board in New Zealand, currently standing at more than 630,000 people. We have a workforce of more than 7,500 staff spread across more than 80 sites, including North Shore Hospital and Waitakere Hospital. We are also the Northern Region provider of forensic psychiatry and child disability services, plus the metro Auckland provider of child community dental services and community alcohol and drug services.