



UniNews



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Oncologist's cancer diagnosis sharpens his research focus

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Creative alumni lead the way as finalists at prestigious awards

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Therese Lautua explores the challenges for Pacific women

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IN THE NEWS

A selection of University staff and students who provided expert commentary in the media recently. Let us know! Email: uninews@auckland.ac.nz.



Jaxon Ingold

WHAT LIES BENEATH

Masters student Jaxon Ingold (Faculty of Science) told *The Guardian* that researchers walk a fine line when mapping Auckland's lava caves and looking for new ones. Jaxon is creating a cave database so any future development can happen safely and without damaging the caves.

Link: tinyurl.com/guardian-jaxon-ingold



Haukapuanui Vercoe

BIG RISK FOR MARAE

Engineering PhD student Haukapuanui Vercoe discussed the critical risks to marae around the country on *Te Ao Māori News*. His analysis of 869 marae nationwide reveals stark vulnerabilities, and he urges swift action to address climate change challenges.

Link: tinyurl.com/haukapuanui-vercoe



Sir Collin Tukuitonga

CHILDHOOD OBESITY SPIKES

Associate Dean Pacific Associate Professor Sir Collin Tukuitonga told RNZ high obesity rates in the Pacific are not new, but an increase in childhood obesity is concerning. A study on worldwide trends showed the highest rates of obesity for women were in Tonga and American Samoa, and Nauru and American Samoa for men.

Link: tinyurl.com/rnz-tukuitonga



Maurice Curtis

RUGBY'S HARDEST KNOCKS

Scientists spoke about NZ rugby union player, Billy Guyton, who died aged 33 with chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE). Professor Maurice Curtis from the Centre for Brain Research told *The Guardian*, "The diagnosis of a young person with CTE is significant as it indicates how early in life the brain has been affected by head knocks."

Link: tinyurl.com/guardian-maurice-curtis



Wayne Cutfield

DEBUNKING THE HYPE

The concept of a hormone diet – metabolic renewal to help you lose weight – sounds cool, Professor Wayne Cutfield (Liggins Institute) told RNZ's Healthy Or Hoax podcast. But he's sceptical saying that the components are largely based on that tried-and-true solution: sensible lifestyle choices.

Link: tinyurl.com/rnz-wayne-cutfield



Janet Fanslow

ECONOMIC ABUSE COMMON

New research shows that an often overlooked form of intimate relationship violence, financial abuse, affects one in seven women in New Zealand, Professor Janet Fanslow (Medical and Health Sciences) told RNZ *Nights*. It is particularly significant as it makes it difficult for a woman to leave an abusive relationship.

Link: tinyurl.com/rnz-janet-fanslow

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Cover photo: Chris Loufte

Editors: Denise Montgomery/Hussein Moses

Photography: Billy Wong, Chris Loufte, William Chea

Design: Mariyam Poonawala

Production: University of Auckland

Volume 54 – Issue 2 – April 2024

Published by: Waipapa Taumata Rau, University of Auckland

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Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142

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Something to share? The next UniNews is May 2024, copy due 12 April.

Email: uninews@auckland.ac.nz

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GRADUATE'S TRIUMPH

After finding his calling in teaching, Izac Anderson is ready to make a difference.

An early aversion to “guts and gore” turned graduate Izac Anderson away from dreams of being a paramedic.

Instead, he found a different way of helping people – teaching. Izac graduated with a Bachelor of Education (Teaching) from the Tai Tokerau Campus and joined 26 others celebrating at Forum North in Whangārei on Monday 18 March.

Izac says because he mucked around a bit in Year 13, he didn't end up getting university entrance, which he felt “a bit bummed about”. His partner had just started her teaching degree, and he'd decided that was his way forward as well.

“Teaching felt like a profession that helped people. I'd decided against being a paramedic, but ended up having to do a year-long foundation course at Tai Tokerau to get into teaching.”

Within the first couple of weeks he was “pretty happy” when he realised how good the course was and its main lecturer, Mirko Wojnowski.

“Mirko was awesome. He was such a positive influence, which I really needed at the time. He kept me motivated to keep going and was the big reason I wanted to strive in that class.”

To his surprise, he finished top of his class, won



*Izac Anderson at his graduation in March.
Photo: Craig Berry*

two scholarships and was admitted into the three-year Bachelor of Education programme at Tai Tokerau the following year, during which time his final placement was at his old school, Whangārei Intermediate.

“They had a job going which I applied for and here I am. I can see my old school, Whangārei High, across the field. I already know some of the Year 7 kids from last year and some of my friends' nephews and nieces come here, so that's cool.”

In terms of specialising, he says it's a bit early to say what interests him most, although he enjoys teaching health. He is also planning to learn more te reo Māori.

“Around 25 to 30 percent of my students are Māori. I'd like to implement it wherever I can in the classroom, but also to do it for myself.”

After a few weeks in the classroom in sole charge, he says one challenge has been the diversity of his students' learning needs.

“There's such a massive range; students with ADHD, autism, anxiety. It's important to have

empathy for their perspective and for their age as well. They're only 11 and 12.”

He only has a teacher aide for a couple of hours a week. “So that can be a bit of a struggle.”

On placements, he got used to teaching in a collaborative classroom, alongside another teacher, but says there are differences now.

“You have to understand what you're going to teach, be snappy and not spend too long up at the whiteboard, which I'm a bit guilty of.”

In common with all first-year teachers, he has a mentor with 25 years of teaching experience whom he spends time with in and outside of the classroom, receiving advice and guidance. “I've had awesome support ... I'm really grateful to her.”

Izac led the procession to Forum North, proudly holding the University of Auckland banner alongside 16 other Bachelor of Education (Teaching) graduates.

■ Julianne Evans

More graduation stories: auckland.ac.nz/grad-stories

MAHI INSPIRES RESEARCH

Merophy Brown graduated from Te Tai Tokerau on 18 March with a Master of Nursing and a vision for health services where Māori whānau feel safe.

Merophy's masters thesis was born out of her mahi as associate clinical nurse manager at Whangārei Hospital's neonatal unit.

“I sometimes get feedback from whānau that can be quite hard to hear. I thought, ‘How can I take this information and do something positive with it? As a nursing manager I'm in a position where I can influence change,’” Merophy says.

Her hope is to improve the way things are done in the neonatal unit and more widely, so Māori whānau have positive experiences and keep returning for healthcare in the future.

For her dissertation, Merophy interviewed eight whānau, talking about their experience in the hospital and ending with the all-important shared kai. Using thematic analysis, developed by Professor Virginia Braun (Faculty of Science),

Merophy identified themes in the families' feedback.

When they arrived, with a premature or sick newborn, the families talked about a need for ‘whakawhanaungatanga’, making them feel welcome through connections around family and values. Next was whakawhitiwhiti kōrero, “communicate with us”, which relates to how hospital staff talk to families. Then, whakanuia te whānau, celebrating and respecting whānau.

“People come into the hospital with knowledge and whānau, at times, felt that their knowledge wasn't seen to be important.”

The next was about ngā whaingā a whānau, which is about wants and needs of the whānau.

“Often when people have to be here, they are outside of what's normal for them. If they are from Kaitiāia, it's asking ‘where are they staying’ and ‘what are they eating while their baby is here?’”

The last one was kotahitanga mea manaakitanga, “together is better”, which is collaboration.

“That's about how as health professionals we show we care and how we create space for families to feel respected.”



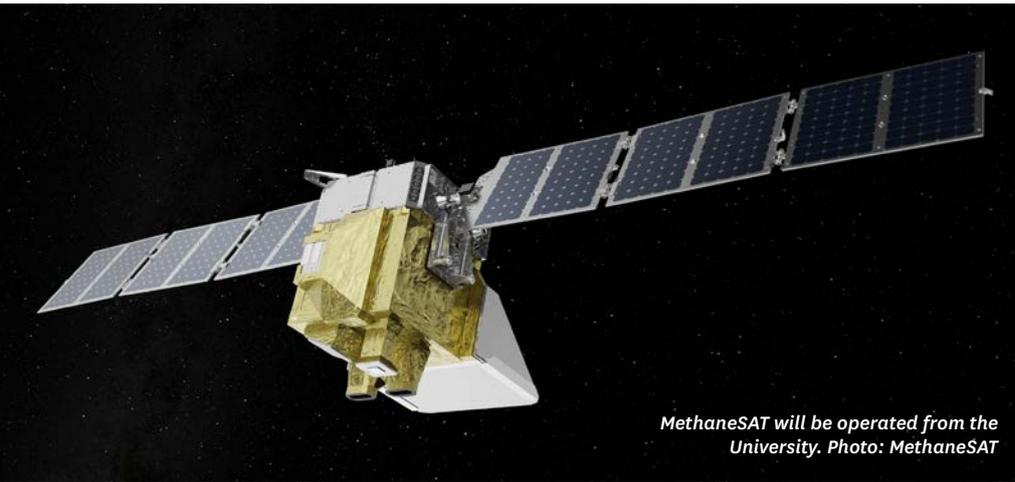
Master of Nursing graduate Merophy Brown with, L-R, dad Murray, son Maru, husband Maru, son Riley and mum Sal. Photo: Craig Berry

Ultimately it will impact how likely people are to return to health services in future. It's known we remember the negative experiences far more than positive ones.

“It's about changing that narrative so that, despite being in the unit, all whānau have positive experiences,” Merophy says.

Merophy has submitted a paper for publication and thoughts are turning to a place she thought they never would – a PhD.

■ Jodi Yeats



MethaneSAT will be operated from the University. Photo: MethaneSAT

first university in Aotearoa to operate a satellite, which gives students a great opportunity to kick-start their career in New Zealand's growing space industry.

"Over the past few years, we've worked closely with partners within the space industry and research both in New Zealand and abroad to build the operations infrastructure, knowledge and experience required to operate spacecraft like MethaneSAT.

"We're excited to move to the next phase of operating the spacecraft and to get students involved in the operations, so they are able to take their experience into the local space sector."

■ Hussein Moses

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/methanesat

SPACE MISSION BLASTS OFF

Te Pūnaha Ātea Space Institute's new mission control centre will provide hands-on experience to a new generation of space engineers and scientists.

In the next 12 months, Te Pūnaha Ātea will take over mission control operations of the global methane tracking satellite, MethaneSAT, which launched on 5 March.

Designed to help combat climate change,

the satellite uses state-of-the-art technology to detect methane emissions from oil, gas, agriculture and landfill.

The University team will be responsible for the routine operations of the spacecraft, including payload operations, spacecraft health and safety, and collision avoidance.

Mission Operations Centre Lead, Chris Jackson, says the University of Auckland is the



The new mission control centre.

SEA OF BLUE AT ROUND THE BAYS



Some of the 507 University participants in the Round the Bays event. Photo: Lynda Clements

There was a record turn-out of staff at the 2024 Round the Bays in March.

More than 500 from Waipapa Taumata Rau joined the 27,000 who took part in the 8.4km charity fundraiser in which participants can either walk, jog, run or wheelchair. It started at Quay Street and ended at Vellenoweth Green in St Heliers and raised \$230,000 for 94 charities.

Lynda Clements, who has organised the University's entry for a number of years, says staff participation has grown. Despite the logistics involved leading up to the event, along

with a bit of pesky rain, she doesn't mind that Round the Bays has evolved to be part of her job.

"Everyone came back with really wonderful feedback. It's a great social event: you get a chance to talk to people at the start and along the way, and it's excellent for team building. I really enjoy hearing people's stories and capturing the moment."

It was also an opportunity to showcase the University, with participants sporting supplied University of Auckland T-shirts.

Toby Batchelor, the University's High



The rain held off until the event ended. Lynda Clements and Dave Henricks came prepared.

Performance Sport team leader, took part in the elite run section, finishing in 26 minutes 37 seconds to come fifth overall.

"I was happy with that," he says. "The good thing about this event is that it's a super achievable and inclusive event for University staff.

"It's a great way to kick off the year socially, and a little motivation to achieve some personal health goals after the silly season. Plus, entry fees go towards some awesome charities."

RIDING THE WAVES OF SUCCESS

The annual Waipapa Taumata Rau waka ama race took place on 16 March. A long-time participant, who was a coach this year, talks about his passion for the sport.

Waka ama racing isn't just a sport for Nona Taute; it's a cherished family affair that has been part of his life for more than 25 years.

Raised in Rotorua, Nona (Te Arawa, Tainui) first got involved with the sport at the age of five when his school, Te Kura Kaupapa Maori o Ruamata, established a waka ama club. Alongside his father and older brother, who are both racing enthusiasts, Nona has paddled countless kilometres, sharing victories and forging bonds on the water.

His passion for the sport has led to both personal success and a coaching role for teams from the Faculty of Arts and Auckland Law School that took part in The Great Waka Ama Race on 16 March.

The annual event sees faculty and student-association teams race against each other at Okahu Bay for a chance to win the ultimate prize: a trip to Hawaii in late August to represent the University at the prestigious Queen Lili'uokalani Canoe Race, a 30-kilometre six-person competition that's the largest outrigger canoe race in the world.

This year, Engineering Eagles from the Faculty of Engineering took home first-place honours. Arts Alligators, one of the teams Nona coaches, came a close second. Ngā Tauira Māori placed third.

As well as the technical aspects of paddling, tikanga and te ao Māori are fundamental elements of the team training, which also includes the history of the sport and activities that build a connection to the moana.

Nona is no stranger to championship racing, having won gold multiple times at both the Queen Lili'uokalani Canoe Race with several University teams and the ICF Canoe Sprint World Championships with the NZ Elite team.

He will step in as coach for the Engineering Eagles when they head to Hawaii in August, as his cousin Georgia Naera, who coached the team to victory, is expecting a baby. He'll also be racing in the Sprint World Championships that take place a week prior.



Students racing at Okahu Bay in 2024. Middle right: Nona Taute preparing for the 2023 race. Photos: Chris Loufte



"I love coaching and competing. The sport is a way of life. As much as it is a competitive sport, it's also a way to connect to Tangaroa (God of the sea). I always feel like it's quite healing for me."

Yet, there is much more to his story beyond the water's edge. Nona is a lecturer in Civil and Environmental Engineering and is on the verge of finishing his PhD in geothermal engineering.

"I'm pretty big into protecting the environment," he says.

His work tackles the complex intersection of incorporating Indigenous knowledge into decision-making processes.

"Not only do Māori concepts, values and principles misalign with those of engineers, but there's a lot of mistrust between Māori and developers, as well as an inherent misalignment of ways of thinking that makes it super hard to integrate the two knowledge systems.

"Māori values are intangible; they have to do

with history or spiritual beliefs or sacred sites. In engineering, we have little knowledge on how to practically implement those kinds of values."

Nona didn't expect his studies to lead him on a path to academia but says teaching has many benefits, including the chance to enjoy more quality time with his one-year-old son.

"I slowly started seeing all the different pathways and all the benefits of it. After a couple of years doing my PhD, I got asked to teach and started teaching full time. It's the perfect job if you're a parent because the hours are super flexible. I get to spend a lot of time with my son."

Given Nona's deep connection to waka ama racing and his appreciation for family time, does he envision involving his son in his family's waka ama tradition?

He smiles. "Oh, of course."

■ Hussein Moses

GOOD TO KNOW



COLLABORATING ON DEMENTIA

A partnership between Te Hau Ora o Ngāpuhi and the Centre for Brain Research (CBR) aims to reshape mate wareware or dementia care within Māori communities.

The groundbreaking initiative weaves in

tikanga Māori to address the pressing need for culturally appropriate dementia care that recognises the tapu nature of the head, among other aspects important in te ao Māori.

On 27 February, CBR director Distinguished Professor Sir Richard Faull (Te Āti Awa, Ngāti Rāhiri) and clinical neuropsychologist Dr Makarena Dudley (Te Rarawa), along with others, including kaiārahi from the University, launched the programme in Ahipara, Northland.

The partnership with Māori is imperative to explore avenues for enhancing mate wareware care for kaumātua and their whānau, says Makarena. Te Hau Ora o Ngāpuhi dementia team will collaborate with experts in CBR and the School of Psychology for the comprehensive six-month programme.

Around 83,000 New Zealanders live with mate wareware and this is expected to rise to 170,000 by 2050.

“Māori are overrepresented in dementia statistics and our research shows that by 2026, up to 4,500 Māori in Aotearoa will live with mate wareware. Māori have worse odds for developing mate wareware than non-Māori.”

She says this partnership is a transformational approach to community-based care.

“It acknowledges Mātauranga Māori and draws on knowledge from both world views to create pathways around brain health that work and are effective.”

■ Te Rina Triponel

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/dementia-partnership



This tropical Diadema is becoming more common in the gulf. Photo: Nick Shears

MARINE HEATWAVES NOT COOL

A thermometer dipped in a bucket of sea water on New Year's Day in 1967 began a unique record which shows the dramatic intensification of warming in the Hauraki Gulf.

Sea-surface readings at the Leigh Marine Laboratory, north of Auckland, since that time indicate the “unprecedented nature of recent marine heatwaves,” says Dr Nick Shears.

The laboratory is located at the much-loved snorkelling and diving destination of Goat Island (Te Hāwera-a-Maki). Dr Bill Ballantine, known as the father of New Zealand's marine reserves, started the practice of taking a temperature reading on the rocky shore at Leigh at 9am each day.

The number of marine heatwave days and their cumulative intensity has increased sharply since 2012, says Shears. Sponges ‘melting,’ becoming detached from rocks and dying, along with seaweed and kelp die-offs, are among temperature effects. “Obviously we need to cut emissions to slow warming, and that’s a global issue, but locally we can try to make ecosystems more resilient,” says Nick. “There are stressors we can manage, like fishing, or do our best to mitigate, like sediment runoff from the land.”

The findings were published in the *New Zealand Journal of Marine and Freshwater Research*.

■ Paul Panckhurst

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/marine-heatwaves

INSPIRING IDEAS

Māori taura (students) from all faculties will explore the entrepreneurial landscape with the launch of a one-of-a-kind programme.

Kurutao, run by the Business School's Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CIE), is the brainchild of engineering student Hiraia Haami-Wells. Its name describes the arrowhead formation of a kapa haka group. Hiraia says a lack of awareness and visibility among Māori regarding entrepreneurship is behind the idea.

The programme's goal is to inspire taura and to raise awareness of entrepreneurial opportunities within their cultural context.

“The resources that come with having some sort of ecosystem are valuable, as you don't know what you don't know. The biggest barrier is obviously money, but if Māori know the avenues for getting funding and how to use the resources out there, it would be a whole different story.”

Applications for Kurutao close on Wednesday 17 April.

Read the full story: auckland.ac.nz/kurutao



Hiraia Haami-Wells (left) is working with CIE coordinator Maru Maxwell on the programme.

DEIDRE BROWN'S HISTORIC WIN

It has been a busy couple of months for Professor Deidre Brown (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Kahu) capped off by an historic award.

In March, Deidre won the New Zealand Institute of Architects' 2023 Gold Medal, making history as the first Māori woman and first academic to receive such recognition. The award is the Institute's highest honour.

Deidre acknowledged that her contribution to architecture has not been through the usual route of professional practice.

"My role in academia has been to educate the next generation of practitioners and support professional practice through research and service," she says. "My success is not mine alone. It is the success of many."

In 2019, Deidre's appointment as head of Te Pare School of Architecture and Planning at the University made her the first Indigenous woman in the world to hold such a position.

It also marked 30 years since she began studying architecture at the school, where she was told to "leave Māori architecture on the marae where it belonged". Her response was to do the opposite.

"Being part of a group, which I would argue is now a movement of Māori architects and architectural designers, demonstrates how far we have come," says Deidre.

Now Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Creative Arts and Industries, she continues to make a notable contribution to architecture in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Deidre specialises in the fields of Māori and Pacific architectural and art history, Māori and Pacific housing and Indigenous design. She has written several books, including *Introducing Māori Art* and *Māori Art of the Gods* (both released in 2005), and co-wrote *Art of Oceania* (2012).

Her influential book, *Māori Architecture* (2009), traced an architectural evolution from pre-European to contemporary times, telling the story of an ever-changing people and the development of Aotearoa's unique identity.

Another book is on the way this year. *Toi te Mana: A History of Indigenous Art from Aotearoa New Zealand* is written with Associate Professor Ngarino Ellis from the Faculty of Arts and will be published by Auckland University Press.

Deidre says her focus within her discipline is working with people to enhance their hauora (well-being), while creating culturally responsive and responsible architecture.

In 2022, she established MĀPIHI Māori and Pacific Housing Research Centre. The centre, which she co-directs with Dr Karamia Müller, is



Professor Deidre Brown made history by being the first Māori woman and first academic to win the New Zealand Institute of Architects' Gold Medal. Photo: Adrian Malloch for NZIA

aimed at supporting Māori and Pacific whānau to live in healthy, affordable and sustainable homes.

"Housing is consistently raised as the most important issue by Māori communities; particularly quality, affordability, cultural-responsiveness and location relative to services, schools, work and community infrastructure such as marae. It's important that we broaden the diversity of housing stock to include homes for multigenerational and intergenerational living, to enable Māori and other communities with extended family lifeways to thrive."

Another personal win came recently after she tracked down eight treasured whakairo rākau (traditional Māori wood carvings) in museums around the world that had been missing for 200 years.

"These taonga are important because they express a Ngāpuhi spirituality and world view that was recorded in detail when they were collected," she says. "They are a window into a world before Christianity and colonisation had made an impact."

Locating them required determined investigative skills. She outlines the process

in *Waka Kuaka The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, describing how she uncovered a mid-19th-century catalogue that played a crucial role in the rediscovery.

"The breakthrough came with the identification of three pieces in a catalogue from the Musée des missions évangéliques 1867, which was made available online in 2013."

Further investigation led to the pieces in Paris, and others in Switzerland and Germany. Deidre is still working on the research, including questions over the provenance of the carvings.

In awarding Deidre the gold medal, Judith Taylor, president of Te Kāhui Whaihanga Institute of Architects, said: "The breadth of her work is impressive, encompassing architecture and art, history and housing, culture and craft.

"Through teaching, research, writing, art curation, leadership and mentoring, Deidre has touched the lives of many. Her sphere of influence is so far-reaching that it's impossible to define."

■ Hussein Moses

Full carvings story: auckland.ac.nz/deidre-brown-gold-medal

GEORGE LAKING: A LIFETIME OF REVELATIONS

When a cancer specialist develops a rare form of cancer and considers it a learning experience, that's dedication to research. George Laking says his time in hospital also proved his point.

Cancer specialist Dr George Laking's interest in medicine took root in his teenage years, sparked by his mother's nursing career which ranged from theatre nursing to hospice care.

Little did he know that his Māori heritage, initially hidden in the folds of family history, would also later emerge as a powerful guiding force. That was because George's iwi affiliation, Te Whakatōhea, was revealed in adulthood, through genealogical research conducted by his mother's cousins.

"When that information reached us in adult life, we had to process it, but it all started to make sense."

George attended Karori Normal and Wellington Boys, but it was in the first three years of his medical degree at Otago, that he'd first felt he was missing something.

"It was such technical training. There wasn't the mind-extending content I thought I'd find at university. I needed some philosophy."

He approached the dean and asked if he could step out of the medical programme to enrol in a few arts papers and return to medicine later.

"He told me not to leave, but to do a medical science degree and include a philosophy paper. I did philosophy of mind with ethicist Grant Gillett, including a project on criminal responsibility and how that's legally understood. We also covered sanity in medicine, psychosis and the likes."

After that, George thought he would end up in neurology or psychiatry. He finished his medical degree at Wellington School of Medicine and his first house officer job was in oncology.

"I knew a bit about the challenges in that field as Mum had been working in the hospice. That's what I ended up specialising in. I don't regret it."

By the time George had received the revelation about his whakapapa, his career in healthcare was well under way, setting the stage for the integration of his personal and professional identities.

George now incorporates tikanga Māori in all of his work. He follows Māori health protocols considering the wairua (spiritual), hinengaro (psychological), tinana (physical) and whānau (extended family) dimensions.

He acknowledges the scholarship that's gone before in this area.

"Sir Mason Durie has been a leading light since the 1980s with his paper about the

"Ultimately, there could be better outcomes for patients' recovery if they could get the rest they need in a more holistic environment."

– Associate Professor of Oncology, Dr George Laking

'Te Whare Tapa Whā', the four corners of well-being and the Māori model of health. He said the World Health Organisation's biopsychosocial model of health wasn't working for Māori because it didn't have a spiritual dimension to it. That taha wairua aspect has been a real journey of understanding for me.

"Spiritual elements of health are also strongly developed in the Western tradition through the work, for example, of Dame Cicely Saunders, founder of the modern hospice movement.

"In tikanga Māori, wairua explains so much about what it means to live here, so that is one of the motivating reasons why the health culture we develop has to have recognisable continuity with tikanga Māori."

George undertook his postgraduate work overseas, between 2000 and 2007, completing an MD on tumour perfusion and PhD on the economics of diagnosis.

"One of my focuses now is the pursuit of equity. I'm very glad to see increasing talk about it because it wasn't really part of the health economic training I had in the UK 20 years ago."

When George returned to Aotearoa, he applied for a job at Pharmac, on its Pharmacology and Therapeutics Advisory Committee.

"Central government was becoming a lot more interested in ethnicity, so when I applied they said, 'Do you whakapapa Māori?' It was the first time I've been confronted with a box to tick like that and I thought, 'What do I do? I suppose, yes'. So I ticked it and they said, 'We've got a job for you in Māori health.' I didn't look back."

Now as well as his hospital role, George is an associate professor of medical oncology at Waipapa Taumata Rau and clinical director Māori in the Centre for Cancer Research, Te Aka Mātauranga Matepukupuku.

He is also the co-medical director of the Cancer Society of New Zealand, the first Māori in the position. His specialty is sarcoma, tumours that grow in the connective tissue. But also Māori health, lung cancer, smoking cessation and health economics.

It was his involvement with Te Ohu Rata o Aotearoa (Te Ora), the Māori Medical Practitioners' Association, that led to him finding a bridge to connect the world of medicine with Māori culture. The annual Reo Wānanga organised by Te Ora offered further opportunities to explore his heritage.

"I already spoke some te reo Māori before we went overseas, but I had to learn pretty rapidly at Te Ora.

"I try to fit language exercises into the 15-minute ferry ride coming across the harbour to work from Devonport."

He'd like to be as fluent in te reo as he is in German, which he learnt in his 20s encouraged by his German wife.

"I feel very relaxed with conversational German, and I just wish I would get to the same point with te reo," he says.

"My fluency is nowhere near where I want to be. I feel okay about mihimihi but conversationally, I'm a long way short of what I want."

In his dealings with cancer patients, George has come to believe that physical spaces in the New Zealand health system are not conducive to healing, a point that became all too apparent recently when he himself was a cancer patient.

In 2023, George was diagnosed with a metastatic basal cell skin carcinoma on his neck for which he underwent surgery, skin grafts and radiotherapy. He has now been given a clean bill of health.

"It's a rare kind of cancer and I guess as an associate professor of oncology, it became all part of the research, for me to get a rare one."

It's a cancer caused by exposure to UV rays, and since George had another cancer on the top of his head some years ago, he has been very careful – despite his love of outdoor activities including cycling, hiking, trail running and kayaking. These had to be put on hold during his cancer treatment but he's now had the clearance to return to his bike and kayak.

"I found my personal pathway to healing has come from doing."



Cancer specialist Dr George Laking is grateful to be able to exercise again after his cancer treatment.

Photo: Chris Loufte

“The health culture we develop has to have recognisable continuity with tikanga Māori.”

— Associate Professor of Oncology, Dr George Laking

George’s experience in hospital brought home concerns he has had about the hospital environment for some time.

“The staff were great and nice people, but the environment, ironically, is not a healing one. There are fluorescent lights, the constant beep of monitors, alarms, processed air and the smell of disinfectant. It’s actually stressful and hard to sleep at a time when you need it most,” he says.

George points to architectural research being conducted overseas to design better hospitals.

“I went to a big exhibition of architecture when I was in Munich, Germany, that presented the best ways in which a hospital can be designed to be a healing environment.

“Every time we rebuild, we have an opportunity to include these architectural ideas. Ultimately, there could be better outcomes for

patients’ recovery if they can get the rest they need in a more holistic environment.”

George also has a practical way to improve communication between hospital patients and medical professionals.

“All staff should have a proper name badge the patients can see. Lanyards often face the wrong way or are hidden from view. Patients then have to describe information that’s been conveyed to them by ‘the tall guy with frizzy hair and glasses’. It’s such a simple thing.”

His Health Research Council-funded research through Māori health advocacy group Hāpai Te Hauora and Hei Āhuru Mōwai, cancer specialists’ network, aims to reimagine healthcare and create healthcare services that extend beyond hospital walls, connecting with communities and fostering trust.

In his clinical work, George has seen the devastating effects of delayed cancer diagnoses.

He believes community connections are vital to reforming New Zealand’s health system.

The usual pattern is that patients attend appointments at clinics and hospitals that can be some distance from their home environs.

“Although operations and some scans still have to happen in the hospital, these days a lot of the knowledge work can be discussed anywhere. So it’s possible that you can have

a meeting with a specialist closer to your own place and there’ll be advantages to that. Being on your own turf, you’ll feel stronger.”

“Also, with cancer, many people suffer, the whānau as well as the person with cancer,” says George.

“But if we’re there as experts helping them in the community that’s so much better. There’s also Whānau Ora which pre-exists in the community. So these services need to talk to each other... that’s what Hāpai Te Hauora is looking at.”

By embracing cultural traditions like tikanga Māori, he envisions a healthcare system that not only heals bodies but also strengthens the fabric of society.

“It can be simple things like improving communications to ensure people arrive at the right place and the right time for their treatments. There’s strong evidence about this hypothesis that shows it will lead to better outcomes.

“Māori have all sorts of reasons to mistrust health services, but more generally, we’ve seen erosion of trust in social institutions. So if you can make one social institution work well – health – that’s nation building.”

■ Denise Montgomery



A bygone era.
Photo: NZME



Matthew Galloway

Tuesday (2024) by Matthew Galloway is a 1975 Mk III Ford Cortina windshield featuring a carless days government-issued sticker.

MEMORIES OF A FUEL CRISIS

An artwork that's part of an exhibition at the Gus Fisher Gallery takes inspiration from an attempt in the late 1970s to curb petrol consumption and reduce car use.

The petrol demand reduction scheme, known as 'carless days', was implemented by the Muldoon-led National government during the 1979 oil crisis triggered by the Iranian Revolution. With petrol prices soaring, the initiative required vehicle owners to designate a day of the week when they refrained from driving and affix a government-issued sticker to their windshield.

For his thought-provoking artwork, Elam School of Fine Arts doctoral student Matthew Galloway tracked down old car windshields, ephemera and other archival material to offer a captivating glimpse into the bygone era, while inviting viewers to contemplate the relevance of

past events in shaping our present reality.

"I'm interested in how this moment of fuel shortage echoes into the present, perhaps acting as a premonition," he says.

The work is from *Eight thousand layers of moments*, a group exhibition exploring the idea of 'luck' that features doctoral students and alumni from Elam School of Fine Arts and the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki.

"There is a bigger theme at play in this work around the luck of global markets and geopolitical moments such as the Iranian Revolution that might have seemed very removed from New Zealand but compounded to create a certain effect here – a fuel shortage and need for drastic action from the government.

"Some might see that compounding of circumstance as bad luck. I like the idea that

luck is so subjective that we choose what we feel is lucky or not, even when nearly everything can be explained by a set of consecutive moments leading toward an outcome."

Carless days ran from July 1979 to May 1980 and led to an estimated 3.5 percent drop in petrol consumption during that time.

Those in certain professions or who needed to use their vehicles on carless days could apply for a temporary exemption sticker. But imitation stickers produced on the black market weakened the effectiveness of the scheme.

For the exhibit, Matthew worked with car wreckers and classic car restorers to locate windshields from the 1970s that had traces of old stickers from the carless days.

"I ended up finding some beautiful old windshields from models like the Ford Cortina and Toyota Corona, all covered in moss. I love the way this speaks to the passage of time and the obsolete nature of the windshields, as well as the political thought and mandates of the time."

Elam doctoral student Louise Menzies' work in the exhibition explores how forces like machine learning have shaped our lives in the digital age.

Her work includes a collection of scarves infused with references to AI-generated text and photos from her camera roll, reflecting the scarf and smartphone as portable items that exist in proximity to the body.

"The works are both scarves someone might wear and framed images to observe," Louise says.

Other students exhibiting are Katrina Beekhuis, Yukari Kaihori and Roma Anderson, alongside Elam alumni Paul Cullen and Sean Kerr, associate professor at Elam. The exhibition runs until 11 May at the Gus Fisher Gallery.

■ Hussein Moses

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/carless-art

DAME ANNE SALMOND TO BE HONOURED AT WRITERS FESTIVAL

The Auckland Writers Festival runs from 14 to 19 May with Distinguished Professor Dame Anne Salmond the 2024 Honoured Writer.

One of the events, on 17 May, features the Pro Vice-Chancellor Māori, Associate Professor Te Kawehau Hoskins, in conversation with Dame Anne, particularly focusing on her most recent book *Knowledge Is a Blessing on Your Mind: Selected Writings, 1980-2020* (AUP, 2023).

Other University staff participating include Professors Michael Witbrock and Geoff Willmott, and Hineatua Parkinson (Science), Professor

Elizabeth Broadbent and Dr Emma Espiner (FMHS), Professor Selina Tusitala Marsh, Associate Professor Paula Morris and Dr Lisa Uperesa (Arts), history alumnus Ryan Bodman, former associate professor Peter Simpson and five Master of Creative Writing alumni.

The full programme features more than 200 writers including US novelist and non-fiction writer Ann Patchett, global history professor Peter Frankopan (UK), New Zealand rugby great Dan Carter, renowned novelist and short story writer Patricia Grace and award-winning poet and author Tusiata Avia.



Dame Anne Salmond is the 2024 Honoured Writer.

The University of Auckland's Faculty of Arts is one of the festival sponsors.

Distinguished Professor Dame Anne Salmond is in conversation with Associate Professor Te Kawehau Hoskins, Pro Vice-Chancellor Māori, at the Kiri Te Kanawa Centre, Aotea Centre, Friday 17 May at 11.30am. Free event.

Full programme at: writersfestival.co.nz

WAKA BIOGRAPHY
AMONG THE BEST
AT OCKHAMS

A book by a University of Auckland Master of Creative Writing (MCW) alumnus has been shortlisted in the non-fiction section of the 2024 Ockham New Zealand Book Awards.

Jeff Evans' book is the story of a legendary waka connected to the craft that brought Polynesian navigator Kupe to Aotearoa.

Jeff worked on the book while doing his masters at the University of Auckland and it's the first time a graduate of the programme has featured in the Ockhams' highly competitive non-fiction category.

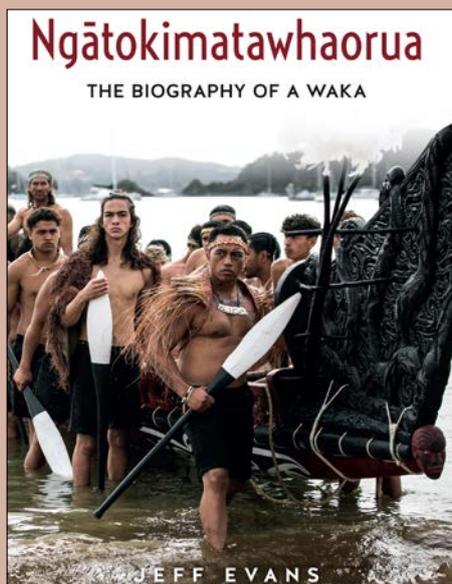
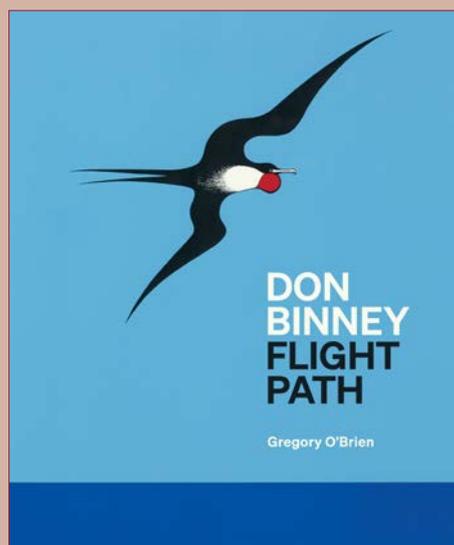
Ngātokimatawahaorua, the Biography of a Waka (Massey University Press, 2023) tells the story of the impressive waka's changing fortunes and the many people associated with them.

Jeff's masters' examiner, art historian Associate Professor Ngarino Ellis, says the book is "important and compelling", noting that it draws on archival research, published material and interviews with a wide range of people involved in the renaissance of waka and carving in Northland over the past 40 years.

"Written in some ways as an autobiography, Jeff ties his prose to his own experiences of learning about the waka and the men who have spent their lives rejuvenating mana waka."

Jeff is thankful to have had the opportunity to write about such an important cultural icon, which now sits in the Treaty Grounds at Waitangi.

"*Ngātokimatawahaorua* has a phenomenal presence that just draws you in. I recommend all New Zealanders visit Waitangi to spend time with it at least once, preferably on a Waitangi Day so they can see it out on the water."



He says being shortlisted is an honour. "Especially this year when you consider the quality of authors I'm rubbing shoulders with. But I see this as recognition primarily for those individuals who sat down with me and shared their memories and experiences of the waka. Without them there is no book; I just happened to be the one that wrote down their stories."

There are a number of other University of Auckland-connected finalists in different categories. MCW alumna Emily Perkins is a finalist in the fiction section for *Lioness* (Bloomsbury) while alumnus Gregory O'Brien's *Don Binney: Flight Path* (AUP) is a finalist in the illustrated non-fiction section.

Masters History alumnus Ryan Bodman is also an illustrated non-fiction finalist for his *Rugby League in New Zealand: A People's History* (BWB). He told *Ingenio* last year that he couldn't have written the book without his time at the University.

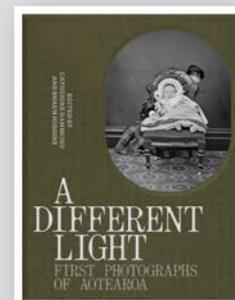
"The postgraduate seminars with people like Dr Deborah Montgomerie and Professor Caroline Daley helped refine my thinking around national identity. All that groundwork was laid at the University of Auckland."

In the general non-fiction section, alumnus and former Pro Vice-Chancellor Pacific, Damon Salesa, is a finalist for his collection of essays, *An Indigenous Ocean: Pacific Essays* (BWB). In the same section is Dr Emma Wehipeihana (Espiner), medical alum, for her *There's a Cure for This: A Memoir* (Penguin Random House).

In the poetry section, science alumnus Bill Nelson, who also studied creative writing at Victoria, is a finalist for his *Root Leaf Flower Fruit: a Verse Novel*.

Read the full Jeff Evans story: auckland.ac.nz/jeff-evans-ockhams

■ The 2024 Ockham NZ Book Awards' winners are announced on 15 May during the Auckland Writers Festival.

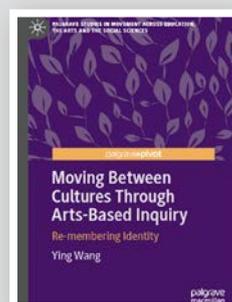


A Different Light: First Photographs of Aotearoa

This book brings together the extensive photographic collections of three major research libraries – Auckland War

Memorial Museum, Alexander Turnbull Library, and the Hocken Collections – to coincide with a touring exhibition of some of the earliest known photographs of Aotearoa. Co-editor Shaun Higgins is an MA and PgDip from the University of Auckland and works at Auckland Museum, while art history alumna Catherine Hammond is the Hocken Librarian.

Edited by Catherine Hammond and Shaun Higgins, Auckland University Press, \$65



Moving Between Cultures Through Arts-Based Inquiry

Ying Wang, a research fellow and creative arts therapist in the Centre for Art and Social Transformation, explores the

concept of 'in-betweenness', as it occurs in the process of moving between her root culture and adopted culture.

Ying Wang, Palgrave Macmillan, \$129



Unsettling Theologies: Memory, Identity and Place

Part of the series *Postcolonialism and Religion*, this book explores how Christian theology has been enmeshed in processes of

colonisation. Co-editor Michael Mawson is the Maclaurin Goodfellow Associate Professor of Theological and Religious Studies and his chapter is 'Unsettling Jesus Christ: Indigenous and Settler Christology in the Aftermath of Colonisation'. It outlines the rich ways Indigenous theologians in Australia and New Zealand have been rethinking Christ in pursuit of political justice and rights.

Edited by Michael Mawson and Brian Fiu Kolia, Palgrave McMillan
Full story: auckland.ac.nz/michael-mawson-book

PACIFIC WOMEN: PONDERING GOD

In a secular society, it's not often that academics get a chance to talk about the impact of religion or deities, but my research explores how Pacific women's relationship with God can affect their mental well-being.

How we name, visualise and describe God is most often directly correlated to our relationships with attachment figures such as a caregiver or parent. The way we talk about God and how we perceive God is also influenced by our upbringing, religious involvement and commitment, religious artwork in churches, museums and on social media. Pacific peoples see religion and spirituality as important for well-being, alongside relationships with the physical environment, family and culture. In New Zealand around 68 percent of Pacific peoples identified as Christian in the most recent Census data.

Yet there is much we don't know about religious belief in the Pacific. The disciplines of Christian theology, Indigenous studies, psychology and sociology are yet to adequately investigate specific religious practices, their theological basis, and how this affects the mental well-being of Pacific peoples.

For my doctoral thesis in theology, completed in 2021, I had the chance to speak with and learn from 64 young Pacific women in Tāmaki Makaurau about how their images of God and cultural identity affected their mental well-being.

I met young māmā who were working and studying at the same time, women who were deeply immersed in their language and cultural reclamation journey, women who had been clinically diagnosed with a mental illness, women who were angry at the church, yet also those who were wholeheartedly serving in the church.

I met women who, when faced with a physical illness equally sought traditional Pacific healing methods, Western medicine, and prayer. In our talanoa (free discussion), we laughed, cried, untangled our family and village connections, and talked about how church communities in Aotearoa might better engage with Pacific congregations to talk about and support mental well-being.

What struck me is how much Pacific women carry – emotionally, socially and psychologically. They need to navigate how to express their cultural identity in a Western, secular context. If they aren't fluent in their native tongue, they could be mocked by their wider extended family, unable to understand conversations and so feel inadequate.

“What struck me is how much Pacific women carry – emotionally, socially and psychologically.”

– Dr Therese Lautua, Theological and Religious Studies

They must also fulfil their families' expectations of what it means to be a Pasifika woman, whereas their male family members may have more social freedom. They may be responsible for caring for family members, as well as having to study and work.

And they feel obliged to succeed because that's what our older generations moved to Aotearoa for – educational opportunity, greater employment options and a different future. These young women were also grappling with what their Christian faith meant to them in light of being able to learn more about our cultures before colonisation and the harm churches caused in their compliance with racist colonial regimes.

The power each of these women had in weaving together the aspects of their identity, holding themselves with grace while serving their families and communities, is a privilege I was able to witness.

The women had a range of images of God, which had changed over time. A positive image of God, for example, a loving and compassionate one, is one that is more likely to be beneficial for an individual's mental well-being. God either compensates for the lack of relationship with parents or authority figures, or consolidates it and reflects positive relationships with parents or authority figures.

In other words, for a Pacific person, if the parental relationship with a child is not open and loving, this may also be reflected in how that child perceives God – and therefore negatively affects their mental well-being.

God was commonly described and perceived as 'Father', 'Love', 'Creator', through nature-based metaphors, and as ubiquitous. 'Feminism' in the Pacific is not the same as Western feminism, and women spoke more often about understanding the hierarchies within their own cultures so were generally happy about calling God by a male pronoun, though those raised by single mothers refused to call God 'Father'.

Fifty-seven of the 64 women said their image

of God helped them maintain a positive state of mental well-being. Though sometimes during negative life events, such as having an argument with a friend, women did not pray to God, God remained a constant anchor especially when they faced more significant mental distress such as the death of a family member, or stress from balancing everything in their lives.

For many of the women, God was the love that binds all the relationships within their families, which were so important in each of their lives, and propelled them forward to serve them and their communities with vigour. They're not alone in that. I, myself, feel responsible for contributing to developing resources for my own faith community, that is, Catholic parishes and schools.

My doctorate came out of seeing too many young Pacific women struggling with mental health, without knowing what their faith communities believed and taught about the issue. What I hope can ultimately happen is that there will be more denomination-specific mental well-being resources that youth can access, connected to culturally specific Pacific professional services.

While I am moving overseas in June for one to two years at Harvard, this issue isn't, and won't be, far from my mind. From my postdoctoral research I have ideas to create pilot workshops on mental well-being, faith and cultural identity. It's important in a secular society like New Zealand to allow all women to feel comfortable talking about their religious beliefs. It's for everyone's good.

■ Dr Therese Lautua is a research fellow in Theological and Religious Studies. She heads to Harvard in June for a teaching position as a College Fellow in Indigenous Religion at Harvard University.

This article is adapted from a piece that first ran on Newsroom. The views are personal opinion and not necessarily those of the University of Auckland.



Photo: William Chea