

WHĀNAU INSPIRATION

Dr Martin Mikaere

NGĀTI PŪKENGA | NGĀTI MARU

I was born in Thames Hospital with my twin brother Samuel and raised between Coromandel and Manaia. Growing up I wanted to be a doctor but I did so poorly in school, the careers guidance councillor said he'd get me a job at Toyota in Thames. I had loads of attitude and heart, but I was like a boat without a rudder.

A string of failures

Initially we went to Hato Paora College in Fielding during the 3rd and 4th form then Thames High School. I was a horrific student and after failing school badly, I lucked into nursing at Waiariki Institute of Technology (WIT). It was my big chance but I failed the first two semesters and left.

Finding the confidence to learn

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I worked for 18 months and went back to do foundation studies. I thought I'd fail again but tried my hardest and passed all my papers that semester. Unitec let me into their nursing degree and I went for it. Paper after paper I passed. But even better - I found a love for science.

Challenged to upskill

There were limited jobs when I graduated so I went to Aussie with my new wife Anna. We also worked in the USA for five years until we had our son Harry Jr. When my parents visited us, I complained to my dad about an argument I had with a cardiologist. He told me bluntly that if I couldn't do better, I should be quiet and go back to work because I'd just had a kid. With these two options in mind I applied to go to Auckland medical school and a while later, got in.



Going from strength to strength

We travelled back to NZ and stayed with my in-laws during my three years at medical school. The work's not difficult there's just a lot of it, so you have to roll up your sleeves and get on with it. Keep your eye firmly fixed on the prize because it's so worth it. When I graduated it was a huge deal for me and my whānau. That buzz is still with me today almost five years later.

Whānau inspiration

My father set a good standard for us regarding caring for those around you and your wider iwi. The other inspiration was my mother who was a nurse. Through her I got to see what being a health care worker was and what it takes to effect change and help people.

Today my sister Riana who's a nurse is the CEO of Te Korowai Hauora o Hauraki. My twin works for Fonterra in America and my other older sister is a regional manager for Te Wānanga o Aotearoa.

General Practise

I worked for 18 months as an orthopaedic registrar and am now finishing my GP training in an all Maori practice in the Coromandel with a high Māori population. We have approximately 1700 patients, 70% of whom are Maori. It's imperative we have more Māori working in health. Having another brown face helps Māori patients, it allows them to buy into the health partnership you're trying to build.

“...the Thames Toyota Plant, is doing just fine without me.”