

# Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE USE

---



18<sup>th</sup> August 2009

## Bay high flyer honoured

Bay of Plenty dental therapist Minnie McGibbon has been appointed to the Dental Council of New Zealand.

A letter from Minister of Health Hon. Tony Ryall confirmed the three year appointment and Minnie will begin her induction in early September.

“It means a lot to me,” says Minnie, who has worked in oral health for many years.

The Dental Council has 10 members including dentists, hygienists and technicians and Minnie is the only dental therapist to be appointed.

Minnie is highly respected in the oral health profession. She recently received a life membership award to Te Ao Marama - the national Maori body for oral health professionals, community workers and oral health promoters. As one of the founding members Minnie has always been an advocate for “oranga niho” - healthy teeth for Maori.

“We come together once a year to share ideas and experiences, and of course celebrate success,” says Minnie.

Minnie says that Te Ao Marama is unique because it is one of a few national bodies that welcomes membership to Maori in non-clinical roles.

“We are all working towards strengthening oranga niho, including community workers and health promoters, not just dental therapists, dentists, hygienists and oral specialists,” she says.

Minnie’s story is one of success from the grass roots. She was just 12 when her dream of being a dental nurse began.

“I lived in a remote coastal village in Hawkes Bay called Porangahau. We lived a very organic lifestyle and didn’t have access to sugary things, so our experiences with our dental nurse who visited every six months were wonderful. She was such a nurturing person, I wanted to play that role in people’s lives.”

Minnie says that she couldn’t have achieved so much without the support of her DHB dental therapist colleagues as well as her employer – Te Manu Toroa.

“The DHB has supported the idea of a Kaupapa Maori dental service since 1999,” she says. “If it wasn’t for Te Manu Toroa giving me the support to develop the Kaupapa Maori dental service we wouldn’t have such a comprehensive service today. It’s also about our Maori people in the community, as without their support we wouldn’t have a service. It takes time to build up relationships, we needed our people to bring their children to us and they have.”

Minnie manages the Kaupapa Maori oral health service which looks after the teeth of well over 1000 children in the Western BOP. She still does some clinical work as a dental therapist and has big plans for the next 12 months including doubling the current dental service.

ENDS

---



Dental therapist Minnie McGibbon receives a life membership award from Te Ao Marama. From left to right: Te Ao Marama kaumatua Pihopa Kingi with his wife Kuia Inez Kingi, Minnie McGibbon and Te Ao Marama Patron Professor John Broughton.

---

For more information please contact:  
Rebecca Silvester  
Communications Officer  
Bay of Plenty District Health Board  
Tel: 07 579 8033  
[rebecca.silvester@bopdhb.govt.nz](mailto:rebecca.silvester@bopdhb.govt.nz)