

A lighthouse for the nation's young

The Moko Foundation Story

[The Moko Foundation](#) is on a mission to make the world a better place, starting with young Māori in the Far North town of Kaitiaki.

“Some people might sigh when we say we want to change the world but we are really serious about it,” says Trevor Beatson who recently returned to his tribal homeland in the Far North to take up the position of general manager at the foundation, after working many years as a police officer in Rotorua.

The Moko Foundation is fairly new on the youth development scene having been established in 2013 but already it is making its mark and growing a following among vulnerable Māori youth throughout the country.



The foundation is the brainchild of Dr Lance O'Sullivan (Ngāpuhi).

The former New Zealander of the Year was inspired to set up the organisation because of the opportunities that he himself had experienced in life that allowed him to grow and develop into a well-educated, well-rounded family man and community leader.

“Our founder is extremely passionate about addressing the health and education inequalities in our country, so we're fortunate to have his leadership and knowledge guide us,” says Trevor.

Connecting young people to opportunities and propagating leaders are the two approaches used by the foundation to achieve their mission to change the world.



“We know that when vulnerable youth are given opportunities, and they embrace them, that has the power to transform them, lift them and help them create a better life for themselves and everyone around them,” says Trevor.

“We also know that change can only happen with good leadership so a lot of our work is also about propagating leaders, starting with iwi.

Just some of the foundation’s achievements last year across the multiple initiatives and projects its runs, included:

- **Creating leadership opportunities for 1103 youth** through the foundation’s Hawea Vercoe Leadership Programme and innovation and technology project
- **Supporting 1443 whānau members to access urgent health care**
- Reducing the spread of the super-bug, Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) bacteria among 395 children and their family members in Kaitaia and parts of South Auckland
- **Creating educational opportunities for 839 youth through facilitating health science wānanga** that saw 15 youth finalists in an Australasian neuroscience competition called Brain Bee; running a mobile innovation hub which has seen 300 youth take part in weekly sessions covering numeracy, literacy, coding, filming, drone-usage and digital gaming
- Setting up a health research partnership with Maurice Wilkinson Centre to tackle some of the **country’s most serious health issues including obesity, rheumatic fever and type 2 diabetes**

One of the most recent opportunities the foundation created for youth this year was a trip for 12 youth to go to a United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York - all expenses covered through generous donations and funding. The youth accompanied Dr O'Sullivan who spoke at the forum about digital health models for indigenous peoples.



“The focus for the foundation going forward is sustainability. We know our projects are getting cut through, that they are working so we want to be able to continue them,” says Trevor.

“Once we have sorted sustainability then we can work on growing our work, so we can create more opportunities for youth beyond the north.”



The J R McKenzie Trust is proud to have supported The Moko Foundation in its important mahi.

