

11 May 2022

Women in Film & Television (WIFT) NZ and the Wairoa Māori Film Festival Inc. are delighted to announce that the 2022 WIFT NZ Mana Wāhine Award recipient is Desray Armstrong (Te-Aitanga-a-Hauiti, Ngāti Porou)

The Award will be presented at the Mana Wāhine High Tea at Kahungunu Marae, Nuhaka on Sunday 5 June.

Women in Film and Television (WIFT) and the Wairoa Māori Film Festival Inc are proud to announce that the 2022 WIFT Mana Wāhine Award will be presented to producer Desray Armstrong (Te-Aitanga-a-Hauiti, Ngāti Porou) at Wairoa on Queen's Birthday Weekend.

Desray is a well-known stalwart of the Māori screen industry, in which she has been active since 2004, initially as a production manager and coordinator as well as a producer of short films such as *Meathead* (2012), *Ellen is Leaving* (2013) and *Snowmen* (2014).

From 2007 – 2011 she partnered with producer/director Chelsea Winstanley in their production company StanStrong focussed on content with a Māori worldview such as the music documentary series *Haumanu* (2012).

More recently under her Sandy Lane banner she has produced a slate of acclaimed feature films, *Stray* (2018), *Coming Home in The Dark*, *Juniper* (2021), and *Millie Lies Low* (2022) as well as two seasons of Mike Minogue's comedy web series *The Watercooler* (2016, 2018). In this time, she also line produced Alison McLean's *The Rehearsal* (2016), tv series *Wellington Paranormal* (2018-19) and Jake Mahaffy's *Reunion* (2020).

Desray has previously worked on a range of international productions filming in New Zealand such as *'Slow West'*, *'Mortal Engines'*, *'A Wrinkle in Time'*, *'The Light Between Oceans'*, and *'Z for Zachariah'* as well as on uniquely Māori and Kiwi stories like *'Tangiwai – a love story'*, *'Hunt for the Wilderpeople'*, and *'What We Do in the Shadows'*.

In 2021 Desray won the New Zealand Film Commission's prestigious Te Aupounamu Māori Screen Excellence Award. Previous career recognition includes the Te Kai Ngakahi Melissa Wikare Award (2019), the SPADA Independent Producer of the Year Award (2018) and being named WIFT Woman to Watch (2016).

Desray has served on the Boards of WIFTNZ and Ngā Aho Whakaari; recognised for her integrity, she is active in creating pathways for more women and Māori to step into key roles in feature film.

Jonathan Brough, director of *Snowmen*, captured her essence when he noted she is much beloved in the industry, "not just because she cares deeply for everyone who works on her projects, but because she so obviously loves what she does" (NZOnScreen).



Desray Armstrong

The WIFT Mana Wāhine Award recognises and supports the achievements of Māori Women in film and television who work tirelessly, diligently and with vision to support and promote Māori culture, Te Reo Māori, Tikanga Māori and the welfare and stories of wāhine. The Award was first initiated in 2011 by Wairoa Māori Film Festival director Leo Koziol and his mother Huia Koziol.

Tickets (\$50 each) for the Mana Wāhine High Tea and Film Festival can be booked at:

[Wairoa WIFT Mana Wahine High Tea Celebration – Tickets at Eventfinda](#)

ABOUT THE FESTIVAL

The 17th Wairoa Māori Film Festival has over 50 short films and 10 feature films, all screening at the Gaiety Theatre and Kahungunu Marae over five days, from June 2nd to 6th 2022. The theme this year is “Taiao.” The programme overview is available at <https://www.kiaora.tv>

Festival Passes are available on request at maorimovies@gmail.com (\$150 per person, limited availability, includes marae stay).

Screening passes are \$100: [Available on Eventfinda](#).

For media enquiries please contact Leo Koziol, Festival Director, Wairoa Māori Film Festival, on maorimovies@gmail.com or mob: 021 434 123.