



Whānau Voice

EXPERIENCES WITH YOUTH SUPPORT SERVICES

This article has been adapted from an interview.

I am 17 years old, and I go to Waitakere College. I'm in the Services Academy, which is to get me ready for the forces, so if I want to be in the air force or something like that. My uncle was a big role model to me, and ever since he's been in the navy I just wanted to pursue that as well.

My whānau is originally from Ahipara and Paranga and my Nan's homestead is literally just up the road on Sergeant Street. My mum kept coming back and forward to Auckland, so then we eventually moved out here. We currently live in Glen Eden.

I get support from a Māori service [Waipareira], from my *kaimahi* [support worker]. When I first met her I was like, "who is this chick coming over to my house to pick me up?" But then she just used to take us out and talk to us, because my mum's got bipolar, mental illness, and she was just always there to help us and like got us through anything, like if we were struggling or if we felt down about anything, she'd be there. But she used to take us to anywhere, even just for a drive or take us to go get something to eat. She'd take us and just talk to us, which was really cool because we don't really have that in our family.

She started coming around when I just started year nine, and it's been really cool but I'm almost 18 so I'll be gone out of the programme which is kind of dumb.

To me manaakitanga is all about love and respect pretty much, and trust is a big thing, especially for me because I don't trust much people. So, yeah, those are my three main things about manaakitanga.

The way that my kaimahi works with me, that is definitely manaakitanga – not just her, but everyone that I've met. You can just see it, like when I first met them I was a bit shy, but then when I got to know them, like I could feel their *wairua* was getting like heavier and better, which was really cool. And that's really helped me, because like sometimes when I meet people and I sense like "oh they're kind of sketchy", or something like that, yeah I'm just like "oh no, that's not a person I'd want to be talking to or something like that". But then when I met all the Waipareira whānau they were just, they've been really good about it. That's all I can say.

When I was in year nine, I was a little naughty girl, back-chatting, didn't want to go to school but the kaimahi were the ones that helped me come back to school, and got us into the diving programme and stuff like that. The holiday programme and that like drew me back into school, which was really cool.

The diving programme is really good, we got to go to Goat Island and Army Bay up Whangaparoa. We first started off at Westwave in the diving pool, yeah, that was five meters deep, so we all got five meters. In the gears as well, which was really hard, but we all got our own gear as well at the end, which was really cool. Me and my sister we both did it, and we didn't know anyone in the diving programme, which was really good because we got to meet new people out of it. And just meeting new people was really good too because I'm not really a people person.

So I'd just say, just as long as you have trust you'll be fine, because you can trust the kaimahi, which is really cool. That's what I love about Waipareira is trust.