

Social justice spurs Rangatahi Māori representative



Olivia Plimmer-Jones is just finishing her year as our local representative on the Tuia Programme.

Designed to develop the leadership capability of young Māori in communities throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, the programme involves local Mayors selecting rangatahi (meaning youth or young person) from their district to mentor on a one-to-one basis, to encourage and enhance leadership skills. We asked Olivia to tell us a bit more about the programme and what she's learned.

Tell us a little about yourself. I grew up in Queenstown with my family and have just finished five years studying at the University of Otago, from where I hold a Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Arts majoring in Psychology. This led to a graduate position at Anderson Lloyd in Queenstown. I'm involved with QLDC because of my roles as the Rangatahi Māori representative and on the Welcoming Communities advisory board. I'm super passionate about social justice which is why I studied law and also why I joined the programme. I wanted to learn more about how I could better my community for Māori, and for all. In my personal life, I am currently training for the Motatapu Marathon and love spending time enjoying the outdoors.

How did you find out about the Tuia programme and what motivated you to apply? I found out through a mutual friend and someone who'd previously been involved. It seemed a great opportunity for me to continue to reconnect to my Māori background.

What has your role involved? It's been very diverse! I've been involved in mentoring with the former and current mayors, joining them at events including opening this year's Matariki celebrations in Arrowtown. I've been able to discuss issues with the community – including the lack of Māori safe space – and attended wānanga around the country on weekends where I would travel to different marae. I've gained leadership skills that I can implement in my different roles, been given opportunities to continue working with Council, and also represented young people at various events around the country.

What have been the highlights and benefits? Definitely the amazing people I've been able to meet. This includes

the other rangatahi representatives, the speakers we've learned from (my personal favourite being Marcus Akuhata-Brown who is on the strategic leadership team at the Ministry of Justice), and the people at Council especially former Mayor Jim Boulton.

Any challenges you've had to overcome? Feeling out of my depth at times, when I was travelling to different marae. It was super rewarding but also quite daunting to meet people who were a lot more knowledgeable than me. I made sure I got everything I could out of the programme.

How have your future goals been influenced by your participation? I was always passionate about wanting to learn more and contributing to social justice so if anything Tuia has just accelerated these. It made it possible to realise how important recognition of Māori is in any community, including our district.

What would you say to someone considering applying? Just apply! You have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Don't worry if you feel you don't understand a lot around about your Māori background or that you aren't connected – it's never too late.

For more info visit mtfj.co.nz/our-work/tuia-and-mtfj-rangatahi/

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