

career CHANGE FOR THE better



Waimarie

Waimarie Onekawa

NGĀTI KAHUNGUNU

I'm a lead maternity carer in South Auckland and I've been working as a self-employed midwife since May 2017. Before that I was an executive assistant to a major corporate CEO; a sales and lending specialist in a major bank; and a nanny here and overseas. I've always been drawn to children and family focused careers, I just never had the time or the means to do it at earlier stages of my life.

Adult learner

Going back to study as an adult at AUT was interesting. I've studied at university before but when I was much younger. At first I was intimidated because people around me were much younger, but my life experiences played a huge part in my success. I was more focussed and I had my priorities in order.

Kia Ora Hauora

I went through the process of applying for various scholarships and Kia Ora Hauora came up. They were really helpful, not only with financial support but with contacts for others who could support me academically. It was nice to know others were going through the same journey – and I wasn't alone.

Toughing it out

AUT's midwifery degree isn't for the faint of heart. It can be challenging trying to balance mahi at work and at uni. Māori and Pacific students have commitments to their whānau, church, sports and whatever else is going. You just have to find the right support networks.

Talking openly and honestly with my family and friends about the struggles I was facing was great. My family would cook dinners and sometimes I'd ask them to throw on a load of washing. All those little things help make your journey a success.

Leading the way

I graduated this year and am a lead maternity carer. We hold clinical responsibility for women who're registered to us. We take their case loads and work independently in the community, like a contractor to the government. We look after all their maternity needs until after baby is born. I'm looking at postgraduate study soon. As a midwife you can specialise as a lactation consultant, be a hospital midwife, work as a community midwife or be self-employed like I am.

Being a good midwife

You need to be passionate about women and their health to be a good midwife. You need to be a great listener and have an open mind and not be judgmental. And be patient with people, let them guide their own journey and empower them through that journey. You're not there to make decisions for them, you're there to help guide them so that they can make informed decisions.

My big 'why'

Everything about the job is amazing. Bringing a new life into the world is just such an honour and every baby is a blessing. Watching mums and dads become parents for the first time or the fifth time, it doesn't matter, it's such a beautiful journey for anybody to go through. But we need more Māori midwives. Sometimes Māori māmā are too shy to ask questions or talk about their health. If we had more Māori health professionals they'd open up because we understand their struggles.