

# Dion Westrupp

Rongowhakaata

Completed UniBound, 2016

2nd year Bachelor of Arts (BA), Māori Studies



I came to the University of Auckland from Gisborne, a town that has about the same population as the number of students enrolled here.

What attracted me to the University wasn't the ranking, the faculties or the scholarships. It was how I saw Māori students connect through Whaia Te Pae Tawhiti. The programme shows Year 13 Māori students from outside of Auckland all that the University has to offer. It was one of the best weeks of my life and gave me lifelong friendships. The University offers so much support to Māori students, including from staff in the Equity Office and Schools Partnership Office; members of Ngā Tauira Māori (Māori Student Association); UniBound, an academic preparation programme for Māori and Pacific school leavers; and the Tuākana programme, which provides academic and pastoral support. UniBound was particularly valuable in preparing me for University life and learning.

Before I came to Auckland my Aunty Glennis sat me down and told me that from this point on, I am carrying my father, as well as my koro - his father - and all of my tipuna, on my shoulders, making them proud. These words have stuck with me and I hold them close to my heart. They remind me that I am not just here to get a piece of paper with my name on it, but to make my whānau proud.