

MIDWIFERY

FOUND ME

Carleen Peterson

NGĀTI TŪWHARETOA

I was born and bred in Turangi and have three children and two grandchildren. I actually wanted to be a police woman when I was young. My grandfather just laughed at me and said I'd have all the bad people living at my house and not in jail because I'd always feel sorry for them. You couldn't get more further away from midwifery than policing.

The road to midwifery

My journey to midwifery started when I worked for Counties Manukau in the operating theatres. I worked in the general specialty area which included gynaecology and obstetrics. I was called the 'Gynaey Queen' because I knew gynaecology inside out. Then one of the consultants said to me, "You need to go do midwifery." And that's how midwifery found me.

Put yourself first

The midwifery degree is demanding and it needs to be demanding – you're in charge of two lives. The hardest part for me was learning to say 'No' to people. Learning to say, "No, I can't jump up and come and help you" because that is actually the ten minutes I need to study or read a chapter. You have to put yourself first as a Māori woman – you and your studies are important because you're bettering your family.

Scholarship

I applied for the Pu Ora Matatini Midwifery Scholarship because it's such a good thing. Having strangers believe in you enough to give you money to complete this journey and be good at what you're going to do is very humbling. It also helps pay your student loan off. I'm fifty and I'm probably going to be paying it off for a few years. I might have even retired before I pay it off, so it does decrease the financial difficulty.



Being a mature student

During the first year and a half the younger students supported the mature students with things like computer skills. But during the second and third years, we were able to support them when they struggled with what they were seeing out on placement.

Importance of Māori midwives

In South Auckland there are about three Māori Lead Maternity Carers and one of them is about to go on maternity leave. We need more Māori midwives. Being a Māori midwife and delivery to Māori is important because Māori relate to Māori better. We know that the more they relate, the more engaged they'll be and the better their health outcomes will be.

Empowering Māori mothers

It's empowering taking a woman from the point where she believes she can't achieve anything, to when she has her beautiful baby and she says, "I've done it!". It's a feeling of absolute joy. I also love the support you get in the hospital. Even as a student, I can sit at a table with the registrars and consultants and be part of their conversation. I'm valued, I'm supported and the cultural dynamic with the mothers is just amazing.