

Ngawai Matthews

Ngawai Matthews has been a member of the Stratford Youth Council in Taranaki since 2005. She talks with us about being a youth councillor. Ngawai wants to encourage other young people to take up the opportunity to join their local youth councils in 2010.



“It can be very overwhelming, but with a great team behind me, it is very rewarding.”

Why did you join?

I was at a Stratford District Youth Council (SDYC) forum and liked some of the stuff the youth council did. I always wanted to do something for the community. My grandfather, who hugely inspires me, has a pretty high respected status in Stratford and I wanted to follow his footsteps. So I got a form to apply, created a CV and the rest is memorable history.

What have you got from it?

A lot of life experiences, a lot of fun, a lot of achievements and goals met, close relationships with lifetime friends and over the years, developed a life passion for everything that involves youth.

What have been some of the highs and lows of being part of the youth council?

Challenge is what makes the youth council tick. Without them, I don't think we would have the same success we do now, locally and nationally.

The SDYC has had many highs. Some of mine is meeting the different youth councils from around the country and realising that overall we all share the same passion. That's an awesome feeling.

We were announced as one of the top three youth councils in the country by the previous Minister of Youth Affairs. That was a high. We still rave on about it.

Another high would be the closeness some of us share, not only with each other but with the senior council and the community. Our support and closeness with the senior council is overwhelming. We are hugely lucky to have their support because other youth councils out there don't, which is really sad.

The ultimate low is definitely the loss of our Mayor, John Edwards, while he was in office. That was really hard for all of us. He was a great influence and support. He was amazing.

What impact has your involvement had on your life and for the future?

Youth council work has, for the past four terms, played a huge role in my life. In other words, I eat, breathe and even sleep youth council work. It can be very overwhelming, but with a great team behind me, it is very rewarding. The impact youth council has had on my life has been a rewarding and inspiring factor in my life. It's made me who I am.

Where to now for you?

This is my last term in youth council I really don't want to leave, but sometimes you have to move on and let others step up. I have just graduated from my Certificate in social work level 4 and Wellcare National Certificate for older person caring and just picked up papers for child psychology. In the future, I am hoping to do child counselling or senior citizen mental health/counselling. Maybe I could do both... who knows?

“The SDYC has had many highs. Some of mine is meeting the different youth councils from around the country and realising that overall we all share the same passion. That's an awesome feeling.”