



ALUMNI

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER



## August 2023

Kia ora everyone,

Welcome to our mid-year (ish!) alumni newsletter 2023. In this issue, you can read about alumni successes in sporting, academic and other endeavours, alumni in the news, and Westlake events.

This newsletter is considerably bigger than usual because it has been quite some time since the last one. I hope you enjoy reading all the wonderful success stories and news.

Cathy Roughan, Alumni Co-Ordinator

### In this Issue

#### Events & School News

- **Our Community**

- Westlake High School Founders Reunion
- Head Prefect Wins Coveted Speech Award
- Pacific Island Leaders of Tomorrow Conference
- Super-Season of School Productions

#### Alumni Updates

- **Arts**

- Māori Sculpture Artwork
- Album Release
- AIMEs Win for Dance Tuition

- **Environment**

- AIMEs Emerging Talent Award

- **Sport**

- Motorsport Driver
- Canoe Racer
- Commonwealth Games Alumnae Athletes
- National Water Polo Team 2023

- **Culinary**

- MasterChef NZ Contestant
- **World of Finance**
  - The Meteoric Rise of Simran Kaur
- **Alumnae in Local Government**
  - Three Westlakers in Politics
- **International Scholarships**
  - Woolf Fisher Scholarship to UK
  - Golf Scholarship to USA
  - Basketball Scholarship to USA

### **Our Supporters**

#### **Connect with Us**

- Facebook (including all Alumni Year groups)
- LinkedIn
- Contact Details

## **Events & School News**

### **Our Community**

#### **Westlake High School Founders Reunion**



Around fifty former students from the co-ed Westlake High School (1957 – 1961) met in June 2023 to catch up and share memories at a luncheon at The Bays Club, Browns Bay. Staff from both Westlake High Schools also attended.

Thanks to alumni Robin Reid and Jan Franklin for organising the event and assisting on the day.



The original green blazer, hat, gloves, and school tie were on display at the luncheon.

## Championing Racial Harmony



The Race Unity Speech Awards began in 2001 as a way for secondary school students nationwide to share their vision of race unity.

Congratulations to Isabella Drummond Y13, whose speech titled 'You're Never Too Young to Make Change' was the winner, beating contestants from all over Aotearoa.

On Tuesday, 25 July, Eric Neal (Auckland Regional Coordinator of the Race Unity Speech) and two representatives from NZ Police visited WGHS to present an award to Isabella and another to the school during a special assembly.

Mr Neal said that those participating in the awards grow spiritually and become very successful. He emphasised the importance of celebrating the diversity of race and culture in society.

Isabella urged her peers to join Race Unity, saying it was a wonderful experience for her and generated many opportunities.

This is the first time a Westlake Girls student has won this honour. We are extremely proud of our Head Prefect.

### **Super Season of School Productions**

Our community was in for a treat at the start of Term Three, with two fabulous productions on offer, 'As You Like It' and 'Into the Woods'.



*'Into the Woods'. The wicked stepmother (Shuyan Liu) and step-daughters (Matilda Faamausili and Abi Mitchell) do some dastardly plotting.*



*'As You Like It'. As Rosalind, Devon Johnson delivers the play's final lines – “My way is to conjure you...”*

### **Inspirational Day for Y12 Pacific Island Students**



On Tuesday, 27 June, five students of Pacific Island heritage attended the annual Year 12 Pacific Island Leaders of Tomorrow (P.I.L.O.T) conference at AUT’s Manukau campus.

P.I.L.O.T is a much-anticipated event, as Pacific Island students from all over Auckland gather to celebrate their heritage and be inspired by high-profile and successful Pacific Island leaders. This year’s year 12 event lived up to expectations.

Keynote speaker Dr Dion Enari gave an energising and inspiring presentation, starting with a Siva (Samoan dance). Dr Enari inspired students to have a purpose, set high goals

## Alumni Updates

### The Arts

#### Māori Sculpture Artwork

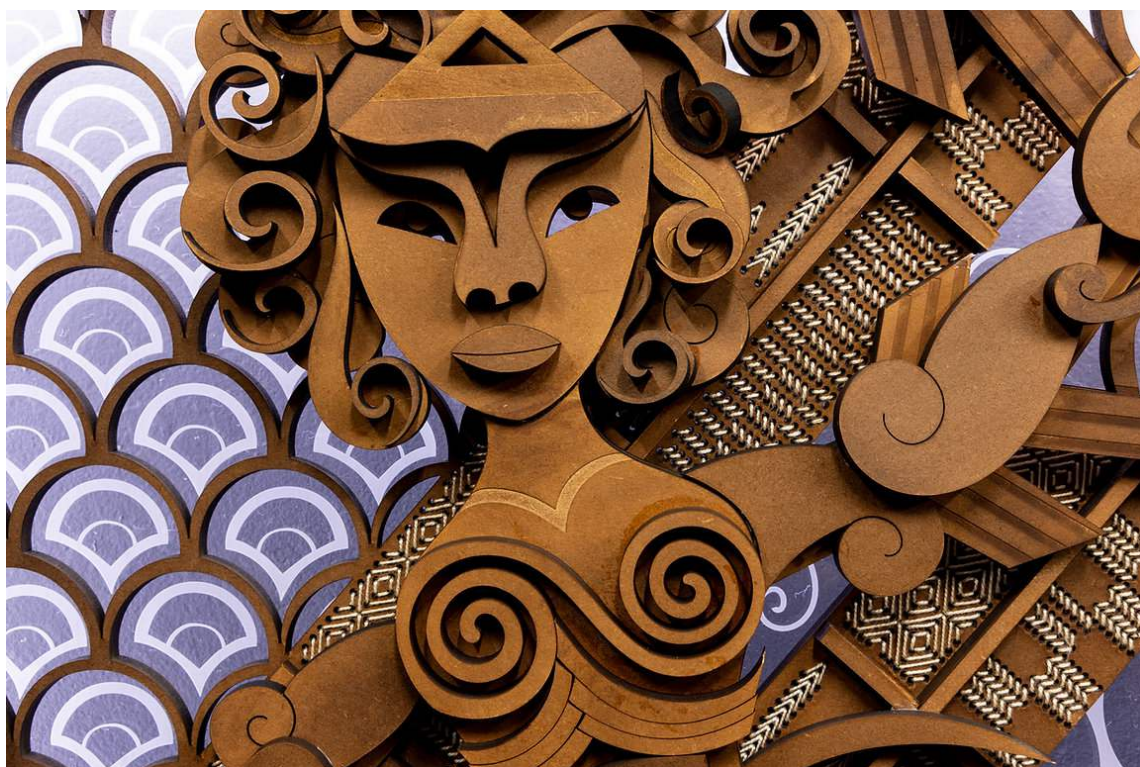


We have two new Māori sculpture artworks on display in reception (Admin Building) and the foyer of the Events Centre.

*Pictured: Emma Jane Ormsby*

The pieces were created by 2019 Alumna Emma Jane Ormsby, along with a group of our talented art students. Informed by Ataria Rangipikitia Sharman's thesis, 'Mana Wahine and Atua Wāhine', the artworks draw inspiration from the school house stories alongside Matariki.

The artworks are prototypes for the planned Whare Wānanga on campus, our Tūrangawawae' or 'special place of learning', which will exemplify 'Te Mana Wāhine' or 'The Empowerment of Women'.



*Mana Wāhine - tahi | Emma Jane Ormsby*

#### Album Release



Two Westlake alumnae musicians, pianist **Somi Kim (Class of 2007)** and soprano **Natasha Te Rupe Wilson (Class of 2011)**, released an album called 'The Earth Child' in early 2023, in memory of Katherine Mansfield. Both former students were in Westlake choral groups, including Key Cygnetures and Choralation choirs. They have gone on to musical careers and studied and performed internationally. This album features world premiere recordings set to some Katherine Mansfield poems.

[The Earth Child Album](#)

[On Facebook - Natasha Te Rupe Wilson](#)

[On Facebook - Somi Kim](#)

### **Dancing towards Success with AIMES**

**Asa Waller (Class of 2021)** received the North Harbour AIMES Award for Arts this year, winning \$15,000, which will go towards her dance tuition.

She is studying at the Dutch National Ballet Academy to become a professional dancer. Asa was involved in instrumental and choral groups at Westlake, including Choralation (the premier combined choir). During the pandemic lockdown of 2020, she turned her focus to full-time dance, training each day and catching up on schoolwork during the weekends.

At the end of 2020, she was offered a place at the NZ School of Dance and left school at the end of Year 12.

Watch



**Asa Waller** (19) | 2023 AIMES ARTS AWARD WINNER

**The Environment**





## **AIMES Emerging Talent Award**

**Anja Filip (Class of 2022)** received a North Harbour Club AIMES Emerging Talent Award, sponsored by Bellingham Wallace, and a cash grant of \$7,500. She is studying for a Bachelor's Degree in Sustainability and Outdoor Education at Ara, the Institute of Canterbury in Christchurch.

At Westlake, Anja founded Westlake Kaitiaki, teaching other students practical conservation skills such as pest trapping, tree planting and water testing. The group adopted nearby Smiths Bush for their environmental work.

Anja is a Forest and Bird Youth Auckland leader and is on national committees. In 2021, she gained a scholarship from the Hyundai Pinnacle leadership programme. In 2022, she was a delegate on the BLAKE Inspire programme.

After completing her degree, Anja plans to tramp the 3,000 km Te Araroa trail, stopping at schools and communities to collaborate with them on starting conservation projects. She then wants to make her Te Araroa/Westlake Kaitiaki initiative a national organisation.

## **Sport**

### **Bree Morris, Motorsport Driver**



**Bree Morris (Class of 2021)** raced in the 2023 Castrol Toyota Formula Regional Oceania Championship in January and February 2023. She is a former karting champion and, in 2022, won the North Island Formula Ford title and was 4th in the national championship. She currently drives for Dayle ITM and participated in her first 3-hour endurance race in May this year.

[On Facebook](#)

[In the Media](#)



*All photo credits: Bruce Jenkins Photography*

## **Tara Vaughan, Canoe Racer**



**Tara Vaughan (Class of 2021)** was part of the Women's K4 canoe racing team that won bronze at the May 2023 Canoe Sprint World Cup in Hungary. Her teammates in the event included Dame Lisa Carrington.

Tara made her international debut in canoe racing just last year as a member of the NZ K4 boat in the World Cup in the Czech Republic. This is an impressive feat, as she only

took up the sport three years ago, after many years as a surf lifesaver.

Tara was involved in netball, orienteering and touch through her Westlake years and was a Tuakana (prefect/mentor). She is studying for a Bachelor of Sport and Recreation at AUT.

### **Commonwealth Games Alumnae Athletes**

Three Westlake alumnae competed in the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham – Moira Koster (Class of 2007), Anona Pak (Class of 2011), and Tiarna Clarke (Class of 2016).



*Moira Koster (de Villiers)*

**Moira Koster** (de Villiers) was awarded a bronze medal in the U78 kg judo event to add to her silver in the 2014 Glasgow Games.

**Anona Pak** competed in the badminton mixed doubles in her Commonwealth Games debut.

**Tiarna Clarke** competed in the 3 X 3 basketball event.



*Anona Pak*



*Tiarna Clarke*

### **National Water Polo Squad 2023**



*Emily Nicholson*



*Bridget Layburn*

There are two Westlakers in the national water polo squad in 2023 – **Emily Nicholson (Class of 2016)** and **Bridget Layburn (Class of 2018)**.

Emily Nicholson was in the 2016 premier Westlake team that won the national title. She debuted in the senior women's national team in 2018 and competed in World Cups in 2018 and 2022. Emily received a scholarship to study at Fresno State University in California and has completed her Bachelor's Degree in Criminology. She currently plays for Tenerife Echeyde, based in the Canary Islands. Emily competed in the World Aquatics Championship in Fukuoka in July 2023.

Bridget Layburn first made the senior team in 2018 and competed in the 2018 World League in 2018 and 2019. She is studying at the University of Hawaii on an athletic and academic scholarship, doing a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. She hopes to pursue a postgrad in Communication Sciences and Disorders.

At Westlake, she was a prefect, Head of Onewa House, played in the premier water polo team, was a student coach of netball and water polo, and received Sporting Excellence awards.

## Culinary

### MasterChef NZ Contestant

**Alice Taylor (Class of 2017)** was one of the contestants on MasterChef NZ. She came third in the competition, earning high praise for her skills and a job offer from one of the judges, Michael Dearth of Baduzzi Restaurant in Auckland. Alice began work there two weeks after filming finished.

In March this year, Alice got a call from another of the competition judges, Vaughan Mabee, and recently accepted a job offer as pastry commis chef at his acclaimed restaurant Amisfield at Lake Hayes, Queenstown.

At Westlake, Alice was interested in Food Technology, coming first in Y13 Food Technology and gaining Level 3 NCEA with Excellence. She headed to Otago University, initially studying a Law/Arts conjoint degree, before deciding to focus on her Arts Degree. Last year she completed a Master's in Politics, specialising in Taiwanese Foreign Policy and Security Studies. Alice handed in her dissertation just two days before she flew to Queenstown to audition for MasterChef.

Alice was the guest speaker at the Year 13 Leavers' Garden Party in November, 2022.



*Alice Taylor, Class of 2017*

## World of Finance

### A Meteoric Rise



*Simran Kaur, Financial Columnist, Podcaster, Author*

**Simran Kaur (Class of 2014)** is the co-founder and co-host of the world's biggest stock market podcast – *Girls That Invest*. She reached this milestone in a remarkably short time. She and long-time friend Sonya Gupthan founded the media platform in 2020, aiming to help women, particularly millennials and Gen Z, navigate the world of investing. They now have followers in over 60 countries and have helped thousands of women towards financial literacy. In 2016, Simran also founded the international platform, 'The Indian Feminist', which has over 300,000 members.

At Westlake, Simran was active as a Prefect and Amnesty Leader and gained academic awards in her science-oriented studies.

Simran studied Optometry at the University of Auckland, graduating with a Bachelor in Optometry (Hons) in 2019. She worked as an optometrist in Hamilton for 2 years. She became interested in finance and completed the Certificate in Financial Markets (Yale) in 2020. This, combined with a dream to buy her first house, inspired her to find a way to make basic information on investing less complicated and more accessible.

Here are some things this impressive Westlake alumna has accomplished - in the last year!

- *Girls That Invest* became the #1 business book at WH Smith in the UK
- Spoke on a panel about Women's Success in Business & Sport alongside Dame Valerie Adams, Emma Twigg & Fiona Mackenzie
- Talked on *The Project* re tough conversations with friends when it comes to money

- Included in *Forbes* [30 Under 30 Honours List](#)
- Shared her views on how to get more women to invest and the impact of *Girls That Invest*
- Spoke at the House of Parliament in the UK for International Women's Day
- Featured on [Create & Cultivate Top 100](#) for those leading the most ambitious brands internationally
- Lunched with the Prime Minister of India to celebrate the work of *Girls That Invest*
- [Girls that Invest](#) - one of the most followed shows of 2022
- Included in *Marie Claire UK's* [Future Shapers List 2023](#).

## International Scholarships

### Woolf Fisher Scholarship

**Florence Layburn (Class of 2017)** has been awarded a Woolf Fisher Scholarship and has begun her PhD studies at the University of Cambridge. She has an academic background in neuroscience and biomedical science and gained a Bachelor of Biomedical Science with First Class Honours at the University of Auckland. Her PhD studies are in the University of Cambridge's Chemistry Department, studying the role of alpha-synuclein protein aggregation in Parkinson's disease to support the development of new diagnostics and treatments for this devastating neurodegenerative disorder.

Florence was involved in science through her schooling at Westlake, including the Science Fair, Rotary National Science Forum and the Hands-On programme at the University of Otago. She was a Prefect, a keen sportswoman, and involved in coaching and tutoring junior students. Florence rowed at school from Year 10 and now enjoys rowing at Cambridge.

Reflecting on her time at Westlake, Florence says, "Westlake provided a challenging academic environment that made me feel prepared to tackle first-year university. I am grateful to have had such excellent STEM teachers during my time at Westlake, all of whom worked enthusiastically to cultivate an atmosphere of fun and curiosity in the classroom. The values I learned regarding collaboration and an open-minded approach to problem-solving provided the foundation for growth during my time at UoA, and ultimately having the great privilege of being awarded the Woolf Fisher Scholarship."



*Florence Layburn (Class of 2017) at Cambridge University*

### **US Golf Scholarship**



*Naomi Yacyshen (left) with Dance teacher Ms Giz Visser-Hebdon*



**Naomi Yacyshen (Class of 2021)** has received a four-year scholarship to study in the USA. She is attending Mount St. Mary University, Maryland, USA, and is part of their Division One golf team and studying towards a Degree in Psychology.

In 2021, Naomi was part of the Auckland Junior Girls Development Squad, and this year has competed in U19 North Island and South Island golf tournaments representing the Futures Waikato Golf Club.

At Westlake, Naomi was a member of the Senior Golf team, which competed in the North Harbour Secondary School Golf League. Other interests included Dance, Stage Challenge, and Gymsports. She also achieved Level 3 NCEA with Excellence.



### **US Basketball Scholarship**

**Makenzee Boucher (Class of 2021)** has been awarded a four-year scholarship to Midwestern State University, Texas, USA.

Makenzee was in the top basketball teams throughout her time at Westlake. She was captain in her final year and the leading scorer. Makenzee won a place at the Steven Adams High School Invitational Camp for the top twenty NZ players in 2020 and 2021. She is studying for a degree in Kinesiology / Exercise Physiology.

### **Alumnae in Local Government**

#### **Three Westlakers in Politics**

Three Westlakers were elected to councils or boards in the October 2022 Local Government elections: Julia Parfitt, Hibiscus and Bays Local Board, Janet Tupou, Kaipātiki Local Board, and Amanda Clinton-Gohdes, New Plymouth District Council.



*Julie Parfitt, Local Body Board Member*

**Julia Parfitt (Class of 1970)** was re-elected to the Hibiscus and Bays Local Board. She is a lifelong Shore resident with extensive experience advocating for numerous community groups and projects on Auckland's North Shore.

Julia was at Westlake in the late 60s and completed her final year at Rangitoto College. She subsequently trained as a primary teacher and taught and was then a board member at Northcross Intermediate.

Her impressive career in local government started with North Shore City, where she was a Councillor and Deputy Mayor. She is a long-serving Hibiscus and Bays Board member and the current Deputy Chair.

Reflecting on Westlake, Julia says, "At Westlake Girls, I had Helen Ryburn as my fifth-form History teacher. She was an inspirational, no-nonsense teacher, and the next year she went on to become our principal. We later became good friends serving on the East Coast Bays Community Board and North Shore City Council together.

I was privileged to give a eulogy at her funeral on behalf of her former students. She possibly inspired me to put my name forward to serve on the Student Council in my 6th form year. She certainly encouraged us to think about the importance of politics and the effects, both adverse and positive it could have on people's lives.

Since leaving Westlake Girls, I have continued to have a good relationship with the school. I was extremely pleased to be invited to a number of functions and in particular, to the inaugural function for the new principal Jane Stanley."



**Dr Janet Tupou (Class of 2005)** has been elected to the Kaipātiki Local Board. She gained her PhD in Communication Studies at AUT, where she now lectures. She is also the Director of the Wellbeing, Inclusion and Diversity Board of the Communication School. Janet has been involved in many projects and initiatives where her research and evaluation skills and community involvement are invaluable. Janet is also a Board Member of the Fale Pasifika Women's Refuge.

Janet was Deputy Head Girl at Westlake in 2005. Janet says, 'I'm always a swan girl at heart, and am keen to support any events and activities that Westlake holds for the community. A key part of my plans is ensuring that young people have a voice through the local board and supporting their dreams and aspirations.'

**Amanda Clinton-Gohdes (Class of 2004)** was re-elected to the New Plymouth District Council for her second term as Councillor. Her Council roles have included Chair of the Climate Change, member of the Zero Waste and Sustainability Committee and member of Finance and Strategic Projects committees. In her first term, she chaired the Community Funding Investment Committee and will be chairing the Finance Audit and Risk Committee this term. Amanda has a BSc and Honours degree in Law and a Level 4 Certificate in Te Reo Māori.



She has experience in research, tertiary student support, equity advice, property and commercial law, and governance in the community sector. She is a Trustee of Wild for Taranaki and a member of the Institute of Directors. Amanda has held many volunteer roles, including serving on the Board of 'Dress for Success New Plymouth'.

Reflecting on her time at Westlake, Amanda says, "Westlake gave me a really solid academic foundation and a passion for learning, as well as a belief that women can run the world. So many of my classmates are doing amazing things at home and all over the world, and Westlake is a big part of that."

## Our Wonderful Supporters

Thank you so much to the following organisations for your amazing support in enabling academic, creative and sporting achievements.

**V O L V O**

**archibald&shorter**  
NORTH SHORE



## Connect With Us

### Facebook

Please 'LIKE' our [Westlake Girls Alumni and Friends](#) Facebook page.

We'll keep you informed of Westlake events you may be interested in, any alumni reunions, and alumni news. There are private Facebook groups for all of our alumni years and some musical and instrumental groups. The links are on the alumni page of our school [website](#).

### LinkedIn

Our [LinkedIn](#) group has 3,500 alumni and has a helpful tool for finding Westlake alumni in particular fields or locations.

### Email Us

The contact address for any queries about Westlake or alumni is [alumni@westlakegirls.school.nz](mailto:alumni@westlakegirls.school.nz)



## Westlake Girls High School

2 Wairau Road, Takapuna, 0627, Auckland

This email was sent to {{contact.EMAIL}}  
You've received it because you've subscribed to our newsletter.

[Unsubscribe](#)

