

# BRIGHT SPARKS



FIRST MĀORI LAW PROFESSOR A PROUD FULBRIGHTER / KRISTIAN 'KRIT' SCHMIDT ON HIS LIFE-CHANGING EXCHANGE / DESIGNING THE FUTURE'S CITY STREETS FROM NYC / DISRUPTIVE SHIFTS NEEDED TO EMBRACE AND ADVANCE DIVERSITY / EXPLORING EARTHQUAKE ENGINEERING AT STANFORD

## From the Executive Director

In this issue, we are delighted to bring you in-depth features on Fulbrighters and the difference they are making both in New Zealand and the United States. Echoing their sentiments, the highlight of my role at Fulbright New Zealand has to be the incredible people I am fortunate to meet and hearing how the Fulbright experience changes lives and contributes to making the world a better place.



Some of you may have noticed our new focus on events, bringing eminent Fulbright alumni together to contribute to discussions on important issues in our society. On page 15, please see the piece from alumna Dr Edwina Pio, from AUT University where she is New Zealand's first Professor of Diversity. Dr Pio chaired the Fulbright Forum: Embracing and Advancing Diversity event that we held in Auckland in March. Coming up in July, we are partnering with the Sir Peter Blake Trust who, like us, develop leadership skills and support New Zealanders to fulfill their dreams. The event will take place in Wellington on 6 July and focus on creating enduring leadership. Registrations will open in June via our website. Our events are open to Fulbright alumni, stakeholders and the public.

I hope that you enjoy this in-depth issue of Bright Sparks. We welcome your feedback.



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**Ashiq Hamid** (below) was recently awarded the 2015 New Zealand Law Society Cleary Memorial Prize. Ashiq used his 2014 Fulbright Science and Innovation Award to complete his LLM at Columbia University in New York. He was a panellist at Fulbright Forum: Embracing & Advancing Diversity in March.



Fulbright New Zealand recently came across a beautiful unsigned original artwork in our offices. It is likely by an alumni. If you know who created it, please contact us on [info@fulbright.org.nz](mailto:info@fulbright.org.nz)



**Nina Khouri** (above) won the New Zealand Legal Research Foundation's Sir Ian Barker Award for the best article published by a New Zealand-based author in 2014. The award is for her article "Sorry Seems to Be the Hardest Word: The Case for Apology Legislation in New Zealand", published in the New Zealand Law Review. Nina used her 2006 Fulbright New Zealand General Graduate Award to complete her LLM at New York University. She is a commercial mediator and a senior lecturer at The University of Auckland Faculty of Law.



1993 Fulbright US Graduate Student Award grantee and 2004 Fulbright US Scholar Award grantee **Chadwick Allen** has been appointed Associate Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement at the University of Washington's Office of Minority Affairs & Diversity. He is also Professor of English at the University of Washington, the Editor of 'SAIL: Studies in American Indian Literatures' and the author of the book 'Trans-Indigenous'.

On his 1993 Fulbright Award, Chadwick studied contemporary Māori cultural critique at The University of Auckland because in the US, Māori literary and political texts were difficult to find. In 2005, he was hosted on his Fulbright at the Alexander Turnbull Library that houses New Zealand's national documentary heritage collections, to work on a project called 'An Indigenous 1950s: Self-Representation and the Seeds of Renaissance'.

He became interested in Māori cultural critique when he visited New Zealand as a tourist at the age of 23.



**Dr Jeff Harrison** has been appointed Pharmacy Head of School at The University of Auckland. Dr Harrison used his 2010 Fulbright Scholar Award to research 'Prescription Drug Subsidy: Beyond Paying for Drugs' at Purdue in Indianapolis.



**Professor Harlene Hayne** (above), Vice-Chancellor at the University of Otago, is the new Chairperson of Fulbright New Zealand. Her specialist research interests include memory development, interviews with children in clinical and legal contexts, and adolescent risk-taking. Professor Hayne is a Fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand and of the American Psychological Society. She is the Associate Editor of *Memory*, of the *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, and of the *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*. In 2009 she was awarded the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to scientific and medical research and in 2012 she was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Science from Colorado College. She is a member of the Board of Treasury. Professor Hayne is also the Co-chair of the Office of the Prime Minister's Science Advisory Committee Working Party on Reducing Social and Psychological Morbidity during Adolescence and the Co-Director of the New Zealand Innocence Project. In January 2015 Professor Hayne became Chair of Universities New Zealand. She has published extensively and continues to supervise PhD, Masters and Honours students.

She takes over from **Dr Helen Anderson**, professional director and Fulbright New Zealand alumna, whose wise leadership guided us well during her four year term.

**Victor Rodger** (below), 2006 Fulbright-Creative New Zealand Pacific Writer's Residency grantee, is the first writer of Samoan descent to be awarded the prestigious Robert Burns Fellowship at the University of Otago. Mr Rodger recently premiered a new play he worked on with an upcoming Samoan-Filipino Hawaiian writer, Kiana Rivera. The play, *Puzzy*, was at 2016 Auckland Pride Festival.



**Maris O'Rourke** recently published a new book, 'Lillibutt's Australian Adventure' (left). On her 1979 Fulbright New Zealand Graduate Student Award, she studied developmental psychology at the University of Kansas. Maris was appointed to be the first Secretary for Education in New Zealand in the then-new Ministry of Education in 1989; the first Director of Education for the World Bank; and an international education consultant before reinventing herself as a writer in 2008. She is completing Masters of Creative Writing at AUT University.

# First Māori law Professor a proud Fulbrighter

*Two-time Fulbright Award grantee Jacinta Ruru (Raukawa, Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāti Maniapoto) is New Zealand's first Māori Professor of Law and an inspiration to a new generation of students at the University of Otago.*



Jacinta Ruru works hard to empower future Māori leaders in law. At the University of Otago, she teaches classes including Legal History, Māori Land Law and a class entitled Law and Indigenous Peoples, which she developed from research she undertook on a Fulbright exchange. She is a Co-Director of Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga, and at Otago created and runs the Te Ihaka Project – Building Māori Leaders in Law Programme, is the Māori Law Tutorial Supervisor and Kaiawhina Māori for the Faculty of Law.

## **Love of law**

Her love of law comes from a passion for the puzzle of it, an interest in the analytical and critical thinking aspects of interpreting law and forming legal arguments, and the potential influence lawyers can have in making arguments that can lead to change.

“I come from a family that didn’t go on to university, but my parents had the aspiration that I would. In my undergraduate degree, I chose subjects I couldn’t take at school like politics and sociology. I had enjoyed English at school,” Ms Ruru says, adding that she enjoyed the discipline of studying and found courses that engaged with the Treaty of Waitangi interesting.

“When I started studying law, I began to see the value

in making a potential change. I was hooked.”

As a student, she had two Māori lawyers come into the faculty to teach Māori land but there were no permanent Māori staff on the law faculty. The first Māori law graduates completed their degrees in the late 1960s. She began teaching at the faculty in 1999. Only 3% of Māori graduates between 2001-2011 were from law. Personally she felt she has had a lot of support from fellow Māori academics, lawyers and judges across the country including within the Māori Law Society.

“There are more opportunities now for Māori law students to learn about the Māori experience of law and to be inspired in their studies to excell. It’s exciting to see more of our Māori law students doing well, with more Māori law students achieving great final marks and being accepted into law honours.”

## **Building Māori leaders in law**

The programme Te Ihaka that she runs is named in honour of one of the first Māori law graduates at the University of Otago. It focuses on building Māori leaders in law. The programme includes students outlining what they want to achieve, discussing investing in their learning and being supported

through mentoring. It puts on events throughout the year that bring Māori law students together, with previous graduates speaking.

“Law school is renown as hard for indigenous students. The subject matter is tough because the law was used, and often still is, as a colonial tool to discriminate against Māori and legitimate the taking of our lands and pollution of our waters. Some good research is now being done on how law schools around the world are trying to address the learning of law for Indigenous students. I too am trying to create a unique holistic wrap around programme that makes sense for Māori law students at Otago,” Ms Ruru says.

“It gives Māori law students access to role models related to their university experience and encourages them to look at their study from different angles. We want to double the number of Māori students accepted into the second year law programme and ensure our Māori law students feel welcomed and inspired.”

In 2002 she received a Fulbright New Zealand Travel Award to give presentations on Māori participation in the management of publicly-owned land, at the University of Nevada and to local Native American and environmental groups.

In 2011, she was awarded the Fulbright-Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga Senior Scholar Award, to undertake research into indigenous challenges to Western property law at Lewis & Clark Law College in Portland, Oregon and Sandra Day O’Connor College



of Law at Arizona State University in Phoenix.

### Research benefits

Her research on the Fulbright exchange contributed to her developing the 400-level University of Otago paper Law and Indigenous Peoples. During the exchange, she spent time on reservations, learned about issues and got a feel for the history and struggle for indigenous rights.

“During my time in the USA, I was struck with the expanse of the reservations which is obviously not a feature here in Aotearoa, but also the similarity of the stories. The struggles and fights for recognition of rights and interests as Indigenous peoples is similar. We have similar colonial experiences of being deliberately marginalised within society so as to often occupy the wrong side of statistics for education, health etc,” Ms Ruru says.

“The time I spent in the US gave me an unprecedented opportunity to meet with leading Indigenous property law professors and students where we talked and debated many key issues. I loved the opportunities that came with Fulbright and Fulbright-Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga to travel and build international connections.”



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I grew so much academically, professionally and personally as a direct result of Fulbright

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Kristian ‘Krit’ Schmidt from Porirua used his 2010 Fulbright New Zealand General Graduate Award to complete his Master of Education in Comparative and International Education at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. He specialised in equity initiatives by US universities that target ethnic minorities. His career shifted towards entertainment when he was selected as an MTV host after completing his Fulbright exchange. He now works as a VJ for MTV Australia and New Zealand.

Krit graduated in 2008 with a BA and LLB from The University of Auckland, where he also worked as a Pacific Equity Adviser and was an Executive Member on the University of Auckland Pacific Island Students Association.

**As a young person with Pacific heritage, who were your inspirations or role models for leadership?**

It started at home with me. My family is my greatest source of inspiration starting with my Mum. As with most immigrant families, it’s not easy starting over in a new country but they built a life for themselves and for us that we can all be proud of. My Mum taught my siblings and me love and respect – for others and for ourselves.



# Five years on from Fulbright: Kristian ‘Krit’ Schmidt on his life-changing exchange

## **Looking back, five years later, what have the benefits been to you personally and career-wise from your Fulbright experience?**

Wow! Has it been 5 years already?! I grew so much academically, professionally and personally as a direct result of Fulbright. My experiences in the US and the people I encountered really empowered me and strengthened me in ways I never imagined. I returned to New Zealand ready to take on the world with a solid sense of purpose and people can see it. I’m now working as a presenter for MTV, balancing my love of entertainment with my passion for young people and education. It’s been a great platform to reach a wider audience and it just keeps growing. Fulbright continues to play a huge part in where I am headed too so watch this space!

## **Fulbright opens doors to tomorrow’s leaders and thinkers. What do you believe are the most important qualities a leader can possess?**

Having integrity and being teachable. If you have integrity you can be confident that what you’re doing might not always be right but it’s coming from a good place and only good can come from that. Being teachable is important because there isn’t a single person out there who knows everything! There’s always room for improvement and as a leader you need to be open to change if you are to grow.

## **If you could change one thing about New Zealand to inspire more Pacific young people to become and see themselves as future leaders, what would that be?**

New Zealand leads the world in so many ways but there’s still a lot of room for improvement. I’m going to have to say the education system. It favours a particular type of student and that’s one that has money. If we all had equal access to quality classrooms with great resources, there wouldn’t be any Pacific “success stories” left to be told because it would be the norm.

## **What is coming up next for you in your life and career?**

I see myself continuing to work across both Australia and New Zealand but also establishing a presence in the US. Fulbright allowed me to really flourish in the US in so many ways and I feel it’s time for me to go back. It’s where I belong at this stage of my life for me to reach my full potential and best serve my family and my community.

**Finish the sentence: I believe international education is important because** it allows us to connect with people around the world and the sooner we start to care about more than just ourselves, the sooner we can start to see real change.



# From Hawai'i to Wellington for the birds

*Jason Preble from Kaneohe, Hawai'i researched the effects of habitat and introduced predators on native bird distributions surrounding Zealandia in Wellington on his 2015 Fulbright-ANZA US Graduate Award.*

*Jason graduated with a BA from Occidental College, California in 2014 then completed a Masters of Conservation Biology at Victoria University of Wellington.*

Jason Preble described his primary Fulbright goal as learning as much as possible from New Zealand conservation in order to take those lessons home. His overall aim is to benefit the conservation of endangered Hawaiian species. At the end of his year in Aotearoa, he says talking with so many conservationists (who were both professionals and volunteers) definitely lived up to his hopes.

Mr Preble taped bird calls from the surrounds of Wellington sanctuary Zealandia. He then modified a website with a subsampling and analysis interface so he could identify species from sounds he recorded.

“I hope to use the data I obtained from my recordings to model the current distributions of threatened reintroduced bird species in the “halo” of Zealandia - and the effect of environmental factors including introduced mammalian predators, habitat, distance from the sanctuary, other bird species, season, the urban interface. My results will guide local management and describe the potential and limitations of predator-proof sanctuaries.”

While in New Zealand, he volunteered with the Department of Conservation's biodiversity team in Fiordland - something he really enjoyed. With a labmate, he gave a series of presentations to

Wellington intermediate school students about wildlife monitoring and its importance.

The people in his research lab, who he became friends with, happened to be a very international group with no New Zealanders.

“In my courses were people from all sorts of backgrounds, all interested in conservation. A highlight was working with The Polhill Project, a community conservation group in Wellington,” Mr Preble says.

“Living in New Zealand came with many lifetime firsts for me. Of course there were the obvious firsts related to living in a new country like watching a rugby game or seeing a kiwi bird, but there were also some of standard growing-up firsts like finding and renting a place to live, cooking for yourself 24/7, hiring a rental car, and being in an environment where you know nobody,” Mr Preble says.

“I've learned to cook, honed my social skills, and learned how to manage my life. Being completely independent in a new place with new people and new challenges has been a great opportunity for personal growth.”

# Designing the future's city streets from NYC

*Skye Duncan from Dunedin used her 2006 Fulbright- MORST Graduate Award to complete her Master of Science in Architecture and Urban Design at Columbia University in New York City, after completing her BArch (Hons) at Victoria University of Wellington. A decade on, she is now based in New York as Director of the Global Designing Cities Initiative and the National Association of City Transportation Officials.*



I am currently the Director of the Global Designing Cities Initiative (GDCI) and the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) based in New York City. We have been working for the last year with a network of experts from over 40 countries and 70 cities to produce a Global Street Design Guide, funded as part of the Bloomberg Initiative for Global Road Safety.

The Guide challenges the prevailing models of street design in cities and sets a new global baseline for the design and implementation of quality urban streets. Design guidance for highway standards have been poorly and dangerously applied to urban environments around the world and this new resource provides alternatives that focus on the many roles that streets play in cities. The Guide will highlight the broad-reaching benefits that great street design can have on a city's economy, environment, and social structure. The final publication will be released in fall 2016, and will provide additional tools to help transportation officials, practitioners, leaders, and communities shape future cities that put people first.

Starting this year we are also working with local governments and practitioners in Ethiopia, Brazil and Colombia to apply these principles to specific contexts. The plan is to continue to grow and find ways to help many more cities around the world transform their streets to more efficiently and effectively serve more people.

I get to travel to many interesting places, meet fascinating new people and explore other cultures,

and while it's an insane amount of work and long hours, I feel very lucky to be able to wake up each day and know I'm spending my time helping to make the world a better place.

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When I was graduating from my Masters at Columbia University, the NYC Department of City Planning was creating an Office of the Chief Urban Designer to insert the role of design more strongly into the everyday planning and policy of the city. I was fortunate enough to be able to join this wonderful team— a once in a lifetime opportunity to be involved in shaping this fabulous city. I worked with so many talented people to contribute to affordable housing projects in Queens, to small public plazas in the Bronx, to vision plans for waterfronts in Staten Island, amusement districts in Brooklyn and large sites in Manhattan with multiple skyscrapers.

We spent a lot of time caring about how buildings touched the sky and how they touched the sidewalk, and focusing on how we could make New York a more livable, healthy, sustainable and resilient city.

Having trained and worked in architecture and urban design in New Zealand, I was really looking for a program that focused specifically on urban design,

and at the time, there was actually not too many of them in the US. Columbia presented a perfect fit for me. It had a short and intense 12-month program (perfect for a professional break), an international class and faculty where I could learn from some of the brightest people from around the world. Of course, it didn't hurt that it was in the heart of a city I was extremely excited about living in and being inspired by each day!

We were a class of 39 students from every corner of the world. Most people had a few years of professional experience already, and the average age was probably around 25-26, but a few people were straight out of undergrad. With the intensity of the program and the structured nature of group projects, we developed into a large family very quickly, spending long hours and late nights in the studio together.

The first semester we focused on New York City as a site, the fall concentrated on the regional and systems scale of urban design, and the final semester saw us travelling to Ecuador, where we spent time learning from the informal settlements and large regional infrastructure in Quito and Guayaquil.

The program was incredible in that it was able to deconstruct so many diverse international interpretations of urban design then reconstruct this definition in a way that allowed each student to learn a little bit of all the languages required in the profession of shaping cities; thinking about policy, social and cultural considerations, public health, environmental and economic sustainability.

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When I look back on my exchange, I think the highlight has to be the incredible people I was fortunate enough to meet through Fulbright”

When I was doing my Fulbright exchange, I ended up in Columbia apartments in a three-bedroom apartment on 112th street and Broadway, just a few blocks from campus on the upper West Side (and right next door to the Seinfeld diner). I was sharing with one American student, and another Fulbright student from Ireland who was also in my class — still one of my closest friends today!

When I look back on my exchange, I think the highlight has to be the incredible people I was fortunate enough to meet through Fulbright. Smart, eager and fascinating strangers from each corner of the world became good friends, I learned about professions I never even knew existed, and the program allowed me to experience a diversity of cultures I would otherwise never have been exposed to. Many, many thanks Fulbright New Zealand.

I currently live in Harlem, New York, about 8 blocks north of Central Park, but I have also spent time in the Upper West side and Williamsburg during the last 10 years. For me, New York is one of the most energetic, fascinating, and inspiring cities. The plethora of interesting people, the endless opportunities for new experiences, the world-class

theatre and arts scene, and the diversity of global cultures all at your finger tips make it an addictive city to live in, and certainly hard to leave! What I miss most about home is having easy access to clean bodies of water to jump in, the breathtaking landscape, and of course many friends and family.

Beyond getting the Global Street Design Guide out there in the world, we concentrate on providing technical expertise to apply the principles of the Guide to specific contexts, and in particular Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, Sao Paulo in Brazil, and Bogota in Colombia. We are really excited to start helping cities implement more sustainable street designs, to change local practices, and to assist in transforming their cities to be better places for people.



## **One Day I Wrote Her Name Upon the And**

A poem should be like a print  
in the sand in that you make  
the same one over and over  
and it goes away over and over  
but you keep making them anyway  
in order to move (mountains:  
there is a reason so many Lonely Heart ads say  
“I like long walks on the beach”  
even the cynics write that in their Lonely Heart ads  
looking down their noses at the lines  
“Our love shall live, and later life renew”)  
back to the you though  
the person who’s walking behind  
you will figure out where you were going  
with this (naturally) see how odd  
your gait was from the years of turning  
your feet out because you were born feet first  
or did ballet or walked in reverse or simply liked  
to do impressions they’ll see how fast  
you were slipping see where you stumbled  
and the sea dragged away  
where you used your hands  
and the dune fell in

**-Clare Jones**

*Poet Clare Jones is currently in New Zealand on her 2016 Fulbright US Graduate Student Award, hosted by Victoria University of Wellington and Te Papa Tongarewa. ‘One Day I Wrote Her Name Upon the And’ originally appeared in The Chariton Review.*

*Clare earned an M.F.A. in Poetry from the University of Iowa Writers’ Workshop and a Graduate Certificate in Book Arts from the University of Iowa Center for the Book in May 2014.*

# Disruptive shifts needed to embrace and advance diversity

*Dr Edwina Pio is New Zealand's first Professor of Diversity, at AUT University. She was granted a 2013 Fulbright New Zealand Travel Award. In March, she chaired the event Fulbright Forum: Embracing & Advancing Diversity*

## Opinion piece by Fulbrighter Dr Edwina Pio

New Zealand still has many bridges to cross when it comes to embracing and advancing diversity. Organisations are embedded in the societies in which they operate - because organisations are so powerful, embracing and advancing diversity has to emanate from them.

We often let the government lead on big issues but the people in leadership positions at organisations need to be much more proactive on this. Because we are a tiny country, we have the wherewithal to change. We cannot wait for things to happen automatically.

We need to enhance our cross-cultural competencies and strategies as well as the demography of the people in leadership. Ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability are all factors but in its broadest sense, diversity means difference. It is always politically charged.

People are bewildered, bothered and bewitched by diversity.

15 Giving prescriptions doesn't work - diversity training needs to be customised to the current mind-set of

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New Zealand still has many bridges to cross when it comes to embracing and advancing diversity”



organisations, industries and sectors.

Chief executives, deans and senior executives should consider going through customised training on diversity including what it means, what actions one can take, current and future trends. There should be 100% coverage of senior leadership in New Zealand in diversity programs for praxis-in-action to further embrace and advance it.

A number of organisations still have a mind-set of colonialism. Organisations need to believe and accept the fact that someone who looks different from the majority can be equally competent and compliment the skills that already exist in the team. Organisations have to support diversity, more than just rhetoric and



that needs to filter through the organisation from leadership levels.

Getting institutional support and structural change around diversity can be a problem. It is important for organisations to consider how diversity is conceptualised - is it seen as a goal project or an integrated platform?

We need social intelligence and cross cultural competency, the ability to connect with others in deep and direct ways. That connection encourages discretionary effort and invisible harmony to benefit and support diversity.

Cross-cultural competency is so important because it includes understanding the deeper meaning of what is being expressed and significance of it. People want to have a meritocratic society and want to do good but it is so easy to fall into the trap of miniaturising human beings and looking at people through one lens, irrespective of the fact that people are a kaleidoscope of different identities.

For example, I am an ethnic minority, a mother, a woman, a professor – I have many selves. We have to have disruptive shifts in thinking around diversity in New Zealand in the immediate horizon. We have to be able to have accountability and clear outcomes, to measure what's happening in diversity.

The learning curve around diversity has to be much steeper. Organisations have to be focused and assertive when they say that they value, respect and honour diversity. We need to be more proactive.

Leaders of organisations are in a privileged position and have a responsibility to be edge-walkers, difference-makers and future creators. There is no alternative.

- *Dr Edwina Pio*

*Fulbright Forum: Embracing & Advancing Diversity panellists, L-R:*

**Dr Michelle Dickinson MNZM**, *passionate scientist and engineer also known as Nanogirl;* **Ashiq Hamid**, *2015 Cleary Memorial Prize winner and 2014 Fulbright Science & Innovation Graduate Award grantee;* **Natalie Coates** (*Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Hine, Tūhoe, Te Arawa, Ngāti Tūmoharetoa*) *Kahui Legal solicitor and 2011 Fulbright-Ngā Pae o Te Māramatanga Graduate Award grantee;* **Dr Edwina Pio;** **Ghazaleh Golbakhsh**, *co-founder of Waking Dream Collective dedicated to diversity on screen and 2011 Fulbright New Zealand General Graduate Award grantee;* **Lincoln Tan**, *NZ Herald Diversity, Ethnic Affairs & Immigration Senior Reporter*





# Exploring earthquake engineering at Stanford

*Viranchi Patel from Auckland is currently completing his Master of Science degree in Civil Engineering, specialising in structural and earthquake engineering, at Stanford University of California. Viranchi graduated with a BE (Hons) and BCom from The University of Auckland in 2014.*

With my study being focused on earthquake engineering, I was particularly interested in colleges in California due to its high seismicity. I always knew of Stanford because of its reputation, but it was only after exploring their programme and courses in depth that I learnt Stanford is world-renowned for its knowledge of performance-based earthquake engineering, which is the most modern approach to designing and understanding how structures will behave in earthquakes. Being here, both the

professors and my peers are very supportive and collaborative, and the learning environment is nurturing. Stanford's campus is also the most beautiful I've ever seen.

I did my civil engineering undergrad at The University of Auckland and I felt that I received an education with substantial technical rigour and depth to prepare me for the level of work here in the U.S. Although I didn't take any specialist earthquake

courses in my undergrad, earthquake-engineering principles were an integral part of most of my courses so I was given the perfect foundation to continue my studies here at Stanford. It is different to most colleges in the US (and likely all colleges in New Zealand) in that its academic year consists of three 10-week long quarters as opposed to two longer semesters. The quarter system has been extremely fast paced, but it has allowed me to take a wider variety of courses since I get three sets of courses per academic year. Even though the quarters are only ten weeks, the pace and intensity of grad school means we still delve deep and gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

Stanford is very social and there are always social events being planned by various groups across campus. Our department in the past has organised Halloween parties, ski trips, picnics, and happy hours. I've been to a number of football games at our campus stadium, including the big annual Berkeley vs. Stanford game (which we won!). There are also various groups on campus that organise events throughout the quarter –the activities and fun things to do are limited only by you.

Stanford has an international centre called Bechtel International Centre, and they were really great in the first couple of weeks of orientation, holding events essentially everyday, which really helped me make lots of friends before classes even started. Although I have a group of friends from my structural classes, my international group of friends is still very tight and it's nice to have both! Bechtel organised events like trips up to San Francisco, the Golden

Gate Bridge, and Muir Woods, as well as hosting the Rugby World Cup games. Bechtel and Fulbright also jointly held an event last month where Fulbrighters at Stanford had the opportunity to meet and have a discussion with the Deputy Secretary of State of the US, which was quite a unique experience.

I was surprised by the ubiquity of cash in the US – in New Zealand I was just fine getting around with my card, but over here cash is useful for many things, especially tipping. I miss my family and friends a lot as well as the unique New Zealand scenery, but I mostly miss my mum's cooking! - *Viranchi Patel*





# Understanding lake water quality dead zones

*Jake Vander Zanden is a Fulbright US Scholar from University of Wisconsin-Madison who arrived in New Zealand in February 2016 to research lake water quality at the University of Waikato. He is studying the phenomenon of ‘dead zones’ in lakes, where pollution reduces oxygen making it impossible for parts of lakes to support life.*

I’m looking at the phenomenon of lake ‘dead zones’. Lakes that in the past had a lot of oxygen in the bottom waters can lose that oxygen due to nutrient pollution – often from human activity – then they become an environment that can’t support life. You lose a lot of the value that would come from a lake, such as fisheries, when you have dead zones.

Once you create dead zones they are difficult to turn back. Even if you remove nutrients and improve conditions, the healthy ecosystem never returns.

19 That’s really worrisome because it is so difficult to fix

the problem. Another consideration is that when you create a dead zone, the plant nutrient phosphorus is released from the lake sediments, which further contributes to the pollution problem.

I have found that people in New Zealand are very interested in water quality, but mostly in a very general sense. There is a lot of recognition that there are severe water quality challenges. People seem concerned about the large expansion of dairy farming in the last ten to twenty years and what that has meant for water quality, in terms of both ground

water and surface waters. It's interesting to compare the different perspectives about that from the US and New Zealand. The decisions farmers make on the land is often the driver of water quality.

One great thing about being on sabbatical is finding time to focus. Back home in my normal life I rarely get time to close my door, focus and think for several hours straight. It has been amazing to have some quiet time. Sometimes you have to pull yourself away from your daily routine because it allows you to evaluate where you are and focus on learning new things.

Of course, my day-to-day life back home doesn't go away while I'm here, as I have a lab and graduate students. I spend about one day per week phoning in and dealing with a multitude of things, often budgets, back home that unfortunately don't go away. There is a 17 hour time difference, but it works out. It is good for my lab back home to learn to function without me.

A great part of this experience is the whole of life in another country, and learning about the way things work. I think it's been really exciting for my children too. My wife and I have travelled to other countries, but for our kids this is a really crazy adventure to go somewhere so far away that's so different. I hope it's been a life-altering experience for them. We've gone whale watching and I think it was striking for them, but the day-to-day experience of living here will probably be the most powerful experience.

My son is learning a haka at school, he's excited about



*Above: Jake (right) is accompanied in New Zealand on his exchange by his wife and two children, who will be attending school at Raglan where the family is living.*

that. Getting out and exploring has been enjoyable. I have been surfing down at the beach at Raglan. We've travelled to Lake Taupo, Northland, and the South Island – it has been nice to see the country. For me, studying environmental systems, you have to get out and see the landscape. It is a once in a lifetime opportunity just to be here.

The life, culture and day-to-day existence of a researcher here are not that different from back home. Some details are different but in the big picture, we're all the same. I am struck by how we're all dealing with the same types of issues.

*- Jake Vander Zanden*

# Dispatch from a current grantee: US Fulbrighter in NZ, Eliza Oldach

*Eliza Oldach from Maine is looking at 'A New Lens for Coastal Conservation: Developing and Applying the Habitat Cascade Theory' at the University of Canterbury. This piece, titled 'Scar-dey-Cat', was written when she had been in NZ only a few weeks. It is from her blog. Read more: <https://zeacology.wordpress.com/>*

There's a Mary Oliver poem dear to my heart that describes a memorable encounter with alligators in Florida. A line in the poem goes something like, "and that's how I almost died/of foolishness/ in beautiful Florida". Oliver often speaks to my own observations and experience— but, this time, even more fittingly than usual.

A few weeks ago, I found myself in Queenstown for just one night, an extended layover between the buses that would take me from my meanders through the New Zealand Southlands back towards Christchurch. Queenstown is in a beautiful place, ringed by mountains on the edge of Lake Wakatipu. It's also a resort town, billed as "adrenaline capital of the world", appropriately swarming with 20-somethings that like hooking up and talking about bungee jumping. All fine, in theory, but not what I was looking for— so I bowed out of my hostel just before the pub crawl kicked off, and headed precisely the opposite direction: away from town, towards the mountains. The main streets of town lead straight toward a hilltop popular for the gondola ride you can take to a view at the top, but there's also a track that zigs and zags its way up the other side of the slope.

This is where I headed at 9 pm, my ballet flat-clad

feet beating a hasty escape from the resort town below. When I left, there was still plenty of light to see by, and I figured I'd head uphill as far as I could, then turn and make it back down before long summer twilight deepened into night.

The climb was steep but enjoyable. I popped in my iPod, and met just a few others on the path (all dressed responsibly in proper hiking boots, and all heading downhill. I scoffed at them, internally, as I shimmied past). A few times, I passed through dark stands of pine trees and thought, "Yep, it's getting on the darkish side"— but still carried on until 9:30. Then I turned in my tracks and headed downhill, responsibly.

I wasn't a quarter of the way back before I'd lost decent light to see with— and somehow the track I'd envisioned zipping down much faster than I'd toiled up took, in fact, more care to descend (especially in ballet flats, which, while incredibly stylish, are a bit lacking in the traction department). But it was okay— I figured my eyes would adjust, and anyways I was unlikely to get lost with the gleaming lights of Queenstown below me. All I had to do was just keep going downhill, and do try not to skid off the side

of the mountain— easy enough, even in the dark. I kept listening to music and kept descending, slipping every so often on the steep trail but bopping along just fine.

Until, that is, I saw a dark shape leap into a tree just in front of me.

I stopped, skid a bit on the dusty track, and yanked the headphones out of my ears. I could hear scrabbling coming from the dark shape, now, and could just see a long tail hanging from the tree branch— a feral cat, or....a possum! The long-discussed, bird-mangling, scourge-to-all-kiwis, possum! I'd heard, endlessly, about their massive populations, but hadn't expected to actually see one. I flashed on my iPhone's flashlight, and the possum's eyes shone back at me. Excited, I snapped a picture— then yelped as it began to move back down the tree in my direction. I leapt uphill from the trail, scrambling behind the paltry protection of a tiny sapling, convinced that the possum was coming for me. "Can possums carry rabies?" I wondered. "They're marsupials— so no? Or is it rodents that can't carry rabies?" Clearly a relatively useless train of thought, and much less helpful than grabbing a stick to fend off the possum if it went rogue— but luckily, the creature changed its course and scurried away up another tree.

Cautiously, I left my sapling and continued down the trail. I kept my flashlight on, and every shadow looming from the rocky track became a possum in my head. Every clatter of a rock falling down the hillside became the sound of claws on tree trunk. I

flung myself from the track a few more times in full-on escape mode, coming close to rolling right down the mountainside in the process. It was during this time that I began to reflect, even as I kept my ears pricked for more voracious possums, that perhaps it was a tad stupid to go for a night hike on an unfamiliar mountain at a 45 degree slope without telling anyone or wearing proper shoes. But what can I say, except—that's how I almost died/ Of foolishness / An eighth of a mile away from Queenstown.

*Right: Eliza's iPhone photo of the possum*



But, happily, the conclusion's evident: I didn't really come close to death, and eventually made it down the mountain in one dusty, paranoid piece.

And on reflection, I'm glad to have come face-to-face with the infamous possum. Maybe my level of alarm was not entirely warranted for a 10 pound predator best known for attacking defenseless birds' eggs— but I think it means I'm really starting to identify with the Kiwi (bird or person, I'll let you decide)...and I'm taking that as a good sign.

PS: The brushtail possum was introduced to New Zealand in 1837 for fur-hunting, and subsequently exploded in population thanks to the abundance of easy-pickings eggs from naive native birds. Current population estimates stand somewhere near 70 million, which means they outnumber human New Zealanders about 15-to-1. - *Eliza Oldach*

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