

## Keith Hunter (New Zealand)

Theme: Sport, in Tokyo and Oita.

Kia Ora everyone, my name is Keith Hunter and I was lucky to be one of two students chosen to represent Victoria University of Wellington on the Sports stream of the JENESYS 2018 program. Our objective during the trip was to learn and report back about Japan's preparations to host the 2019 Rugby World Cup and the 2020 Olympics.

Broken down into three distinct stages, we got to stay in Minato Ward in Tokyo from where we visited the Tokyo Organizing Committee for the Olympics and Paralympics. In our free time we got to do a lot of sightseeing, my personal highlight was seeing a giant Gundam Mobile Suit outside Diver City in Odaiba. From there we flew to Oita where we met local Government officials overseeing preparations to host games for the 2019 Rugby World Cup from the new Oita Stadium. The Oita stage of the trip was by far the most life changing and moving experience for me because I got the chance to experience traditional rural Japanese life through homestay in Usuki Shi. My host family effortlessly made me and two of my fellow students feel like part of the family and as they had little English language, I was placed in a position to flex my Japanese language study where I impressed myself with my ability to effectively communicate, even if only at a basic level. While in Oita we got to visit the Beppu Hot Springs and Fugen Ji while also exploring the city at night. The final stage of the trip returned us to Tokyo where we got to view the construction of the Olympic village for athletes, essentially so large that you could fit Wellington city comfortably inside it.

Some of my most memorable experiences include exploring the streets of Ikebukuro and Shinjuku at night, doing Karaoke with my friends, forcing myself to try most every Seafood presented to me, carving our own chopsticks, exploring Beppu with the help of some street kids turned impromptu tour guides, indulging our homestay Obaachan in dressing up in traditional Samurai clothing, infusing a little of my Maori heritage into my speech during the reporting sessions at the end of the trip, and most importantly, discovering the miracle that is heated Boss Coffee from vending machines. I am beyond grateful for the opportunity that I was given to finally travel to Japan after two years of studying the language at University. It was a dream come true and a truly life changing experience that confirmed for me that moving to Japan was the right move for my future teaching career.





