

# JENESYS 2022 Group 1A Final Report

Participant: Name: **Joshua Jeffrey**

My experience of the JENESYS 2023 trip was one of simultaneously incredible and awful luck. For example, when travelling on the Shinkansen, we managed to get an incredibly clear view of Mt. Fuji, a moment which left me speechless. Contrastingly (and the elephant in the room in regard to my experience) I did get covid. However, the few days I did get to experience were wonderful.



The most impactful part of the trip for me was the visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. Even when going through the Peace Memorial Park, the mood amongst the group was still fairly light, the experience felt educational, rather than personal (not that that is a bad thing, I learned a lot during the guided tour and deeply enjoyed it. Entering into the museum, however, brought about an incredibly somber mood. I had seen or read about much of what was in the museum online, but being in those rooms, coming face to face with what the bomb did to Hiroshima, was a uniquely moving experience.

Personally, I was brought close to tears by how confronting and devastating much of the imagery was. One moment of note for me was seeing the step where the atomic bomb had evaporated a man instantly, leaving only a shadow behind. This is a piece of history that I was familiar with beforehand, yet seeing it in person impacted me as if it was the first time I had seen it. This was the only picture I took in the museum, that is how much it spoke to me. I'll never forget the silence of the usually loud tour bus, we had all been challenged, moved, and ultimately changed by the museum.

I hope that long after this program has ended that I will be able to convince more and more people to visit Hiroshima and other peace memorial sites. As I have learned, experiencing them online is no substitute for being there in person, and the confrontation that that provides. I wish all the best to everyone that I met on this trip, and I hope that those going on JENESYS 2024 get to enjoy more of it than I could.

Participant: **Kauta Manea Hanah Temu**

### New things I learnt in Japan

Before departing for Japan, I knew very little about the true essence of Japanese culture and their history with peacebuilding. During the JENESYS programme, I feel I was able to form a raw and pure portrait of Japan, its culture, its people and their unwavering desire to welcome cultures around the world to their country. We were introduced to Shintoism and Buddhism when visiting many beautiful temples and shrines, and saw the most beautiful 鳥居 (Torii - Gate) at Itsukushima Shrine in Miyajima.

While being shown around Akiota by local Kake High School students, we learnt of dwindling population numbers in Japan's rural areas, and the desire for more tourism and visitors to these desolate towns. But most of all, we learnt of the beauty and peace that comes with living away from the city lights. And how down to earth and kind the locals were when embracing our presence and hosting us for the two days we were in Akiota. They were so overwhelmingly passionate about Japanese culture and their beautiful small town that I hope one day I can give back to Akiota and all those who ensured our group got the best of what Japan had to offer.



We also learnt about the art of *Kagura* and how to make chopsticks (*Hashi*) at the Akiotacho-Togouchi Forestry General Centre, we witnessed the process of making rice cakes (*Omochi*) at Kake High School, played games like *Fukuwarai* where one must place the correct face features onto a blank face, and learnt how to write beautiful kanji characters with calligraphy.



Personally, one of the most impactful experiences and lessons I learnt during the programme was at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and Museum. Visiting the A-Bomb Dome, the Children's Peace Monument, the Museum, and hearing stories of the terrible consequences endured by victims and their families was heart breaking. I now know why Hiroshima and Japan are such big advocates for peacebuilding, and the importance of fighting for the eradication of nuclear weapons to create a peaceful society where no man, woman or child is victimised by the greed of man. A simple plea I saw many times while in Hiroshima will live with me forever – *'No more Hiroshimas.'*



The following is a memo I wrote after boarding the bus from the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park to Miyajima:

'I'm walking through the museum, oblivious on what is to come. Only to turn the corner and see the devastation of the A-bomb etched in the burns and scars of those who suffered on August 6. Its surreal that an event 80 years ago still impacts the lives of many today as we remember victims like Sadako who folded 1000 cranes, and the young boy whose burnt bicycle we saw in the museum. If countries such as the US and Russia are unwilling to move away from nuclear weapons, I'm afraid of the day when the world may again be subjected to the same fate and suffering felt by those on August 6 in Hiroshima.'

### Challenges I faced in the JENESYS Programme

I personally faced no challenges during this programme, thanks to the unwavering dedication and care given to us by our beautiful coordinators and translators Mai-san, Kimi-san, and Mayumi-san, the staff at JOCA including Eiji-san and Ohara-san, Kapil-sensei and the wonderful coordinators at USP, our wonderful bus drivers including Kami-san, the hotel staff at Ikoinomura, Daiwa Roynet Hiroshima-Ekimae and Tokyo Bay Ariake Washington Hotel, the wonderful cooks who made our ekibens (Bento boxes) and those at the restaurants we frequented, the staff at the Akiotacho-Togouchi Forestry General Centre, The Mayor's Office in Akiota, and of course to the beautiful and kind students and teachers at Kake High School

including our two group leaders Yoshi-kun and Nat-chan. My sincere thanks to you all and everyone else for making this a stress-free and enjoyable trip.



### Promoting Māori culture in Japan

At the welcoming ceremony at Kake High School, my fellow Kiwi friends and I were able to introduce Māori and New Zealand culture to everyone and offer a Māori hymn called Pōkarekare ana, which depicts the last moments of a dying young man in WWII reminiscing and yearning for his beloved back home in Aotearoa (New Zealand). We chose this hymn as a tribute to those who have died in war anywhere around the world, past or present, friend or foe. As a promise that we stand as one with the peacebuilding community in wanting to end the use of nuclear weapons and war.



We also spoke of Māori culture with Kake High School students, and similarities between Māori and Japanese culture such as taking your shoes off when going inside. At the conclusion of our trip, I also gifted traditional Māori gifts to our lovely coordinators as a token of my appreciation for their efforts and care taken when hosting our group in Japan.



## Group 1A

My group consisted of participants from USP in Fiji and six students from New Zealand including myself. We ate together, stayed together, travelled together and bonded together. We were put into smaller groups to participate in Japanese cultural activities, went shopping together, learnt about each other's cultures including Aotearoa (NZ), Fiji, Vanuatu, Tonga, Canada, Solomon Islands, and England, and made lifelong friendships that I will cherish forever. I had no issues with my group members because they were so kind and friendly. I have never met such an easy-going group of people before, it felt like we've known each other for years. I would like to thank each and every one of them for making this such a memorable trip and hope they too had the best time during this programme.



## Favourite Experiences

There are too many favourites to record here but highlights include the delicious bento boxes and food we ate including *Hiroshima Okonomiyaki*, the delicious curry at Ariake Garden, *Momiji Manju* at Miyajima's Itsukushima Shrine, the delicious pastries from the vending machines (they were very delicious for vending machine snacks), the best miso soup ever, and delicious pasta. I absolutely loved visiting Miyajima and seeing the UNESCO Heritage site of Itsukushima Shrine for the first time. I studied many Shinto shrines during my tenure at Massey University including Itsukushima, but seeing it in real life was so surreal and awe-inspiring. Unfortunately, it was low tide so the water was out, but that meant we could walk out to the torii which was amazing. We also visited Sensoji Temple on our last day in Japan,

and luckily enough we were able to witness a wedding procession. I also loved the hotel we stayed at in Akiota called Ikoinomura with its beautiful tatami rooms, onsen, wonderfully kind staff, and on arrival it was snowing as well. The first time I ever saw and felt snow. I will never forget running in the carpark with my new friends and throwing snowballs at each other. I felt like a kid again. Visiting the Mayor in Akiota-Togouchi was also a privilege and honour. He was so kind, very funny, and a beautiful mayor (Inside joke with our group and the mayor). I also acknowledge his sincere dedication to his residents and his plea to visitors such as our group to visit again, and if we desire, to aid in the future development of tourism in the Akiota area. I know I would love to contribute to the future of Akiota at some point to give thanks and show my appreciation to the residents who made me feel at home. I made the best of friends while on this programme and have been invited to their homes if I ever find myself in the Pacific Islands or Japan again. I miss everyone dearly and we have already started talking about possibly having a reunion in the future. I will look back on this experience and think of all the wonderful memories I've made, the things I've learnt, and the amazing new friends I've met.







## Sharing my findings

I have already begun sharing my outlook on the programme and my experiences through SNS channels including Facebook and Instagram, and may at some point create a YouTube video or a website of the JENESYS 2022 G1A trip. My reporting group have also spoken about our short-term goal to create Japanese Clubs at our respective universities in New Zealand to share our findings of the programme with members. I will continue to share my experiences and findings with family and friends as well, and continue to promote peacebuilding and Japanese culture whenever possible. I hope the knowledge and stories I pass on to others will linger and form a curiosity in their minds that urges them to visit beautiful Japan or further research online about the things they have heard.

Once again, my sincere thanks to everyone involved in making the JENESYS2022 programme a success. I am truly grateful for the experiences I have had, and the knowledge I have gained while participating in this programme. I have made unforgettable memories, lifelong friendships, and a seed has started to grow inside me for the love I have for Japan, its culture and people. I hope JENESYS will continue to provide these opportunities for many years to come.