

2018 - 2022

# SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT


rites of passage foundation



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*I dream of creating a vehicle,  
a form, a process for the far-children  
by which they and their generations  
may honour each other.*

*It must be so beautiful  
that they won't be able to resist it.  
It must also be flawed enough  
that they won't be able to keep their hands off it.*

*Don Bowak, 2006*

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## 20 YEARS - STEF JONGKIND, BOARD CHAIR

The rites of passage work in Wainui Bay started over 20 years ago at Tui Community, when a group of concerned parents wanted a programme for their teenage sons to send them on their way to becoming confident and responsible adults. They approached the men, who were gathering every year on community land, the so-called men's gatherings, with their request. And so, initially in 2002 the Tracks (boys') programme started, followed two years later by the Tides (girls') programme. In 2012 both programmes merged into the Rites of Passage Foundation, which has been successfully running transformational rites of passage since.

What amazes me most as I read through the following pages is twofold; the profound impact that these programmes have on our young people, and the massive contribution of voluntary effort that makes this possible.

I feel strongly that this work is a missing link in the development of young people today and that it is important for them to experience a meaningful transition into becoming a young adult and to mark the start of this journey appropriately. My wish is that meaningful rites of passage become an integrated part of today's culture again.

Te piko o te māhuri, tērā te tupu o te rākau

*The way in which the sapling is nurtured, determines how the tree will grow*

### WHAT ARE RITES OF PASSAGE?

Widely practised by indigenous cultures around the world, rites of passage offer an archetypal process to mark the transition from one life stage to the next. Rites of passage offer us a map for the transformation and understanding of oneself, each other and the gifts we have to offer the world. The rite emulates life in some way - encountering the unknown and rising beyond one's fears. It presents an opportunity to experience that it is safe to be seen by one's wider community and that each person has something worthwhile, and necessary, to contribute. The basic stages of a rite are:

- **Separation** from everyday life, time to reflect on the childhood stage and make space for the changes unfolding.
- **Transition/Initiation** involving a challenge. This allows for one to engage with their own skills, limitations and boundaries. From here, new levels of self awareness emerge.
- **Integration & Return** to the wider community, which celebrates the young person's discoveries. From this point they are acknowledged as more adult members of society where roles and relationships can change and grow.

Rites of passage draw on the ancient human technologies of nature connection, storytelling, physical challenges, games, ceremony and creative arts. They may also mark other important life changes and stages, such as birth, marriage, becoming a parent, undergoing a significant change in relationship to oneself or another, or entering elderhood.



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# INTRODUCING THE RITES OF PASSAGE FOUNDATION

For over 20 years the Rites of Passage Foundation (ROPF) has been providing conscious, community-led, nature-based rites of passage programmes, that promote and further the educational, personal and social development of young people in our community. Operating as a Charitable Trust since 2012, our programmes provide young people with a safe environment to mark the transition to adulthood. Without strong mentors and elders who are prepared to live and share their deepest truths, our young people run the risk of building an identity based on guesswork from peers, borrowed images, media stereotypes, and the fantastical heroes of pop culture.

With a dedicated and largely volunteer team, the Tides and Tracks programmes have been refined over the years to respond to the growing challenges faced by young people. At their heart, these 5-day programmes seek to foster connection and positive growth, strengthen family relationships, and offer an intergenerational and community-led approach to youth development that is firmly nature based. Within our rites of passage framework, a integrated young adult:

1. Builds meaningful relationships with their whānau, their peers and the wider community,
2. Feels cared for, respected and valued for their uniqueness and mana, and respects the uniqueness and mana of others,
3. Steps into their independence with the tools and resources to actualise their goals,
4. Cares for, and is an active kaitiaki of, the environment; and,
5. Actively contributes to the wellbeing of their community, through intergenerational connection and collaboration.

Of course, young people were not the only ones who were profoundly impacted by these programmes and our work has since expanded to include further leadership development opportunities and programmes that meet the needs and dynamics of other age groups and life stage transitions. These programmes assist young people, families and our community in their social, creative and community orientated pursuits. This includes our Rising Sons and Rising Tides weekend programmes for pre-teens and their parents, Ebb & Flow and Good Men Make Tracks events for adults, the 4-day Crossroads gathering for young adults who are initiates of the Tides and Tracks programmes, and 7-day Wilderness Solo drawing on the old wisdom of the vision quest.

It seems natural to us that, in a rapidly transforming world, the most powerful questions to life's answers are found in nature, close to the fire that has been burning and tended for millennia, and near to our human and more-than-human community.



# AT A GLANCE: 2018 - 2022

141

new youth participants

87

initiates returned as young leaders

197

nights spent camping in the treefield

1239

participants on events



4655

HOURS THE PENTACLE FIRE WAS BURNING, OR

93,100

HOURS THAT PEOPLE WERE NOT LOOKING AT THEIR DEVICES



125

UNIQUE VOLUNTEERS

18,685

HOURS OF VOLUNTEER AROHA!

93%

of youth participants said the programme made them feel **better connected to themselves**

97%

of youth participants said the programme made them feel **better connected to others**

93%

of youth participants said the programme made them feel **better connected to te taiao / nature**

90%

of youth participants said the programme made them feel **more optimistic about the future**



591

MEALTIMES IN THE OUTDOORS,

PROVIDED FOR

1239

PEOPLE



21

COMMUNITY RETURN CEREMONIES,

ATTENDED BY

217

FAMILY MEMBERS

## AIR / THE LONG VISION

The Rites of Passage Foundation's work started in response to a need for healthy, hearty, conscious rites of passage for local youth in Wainui Bay and the surrounding areas. The signature programmes have since developed into further programmes and events for other life stages.

From 2007 To 2013 We undertook six years of regional development. During this time it became clearer to us that we do not own this work. It is important and powerful for communities to be leading rites of passage activities for their own youth. The message became clear: go home, deepen, grow the home vision, and provide support and inspiration for others.

Since then we have been supporting other communities to lead their own rites and facilitate reconnection to self, others and place. Beyond that and our own programmes, our focus is on nurturing people within our community in their tangential ideas that develop cultural form and frameworks, filling out soulful terrain across a whole lifetime.

## WATER / COMMUNITY

The contributions of many help to nurture our young people, grow our community and evolve our kaupapa. We have a large network of local facilitators and volunteers who play significant roles in our programmes. Our team come from a wide range of backgrounds including education, social work, adventure-based learning and other youth development organisations.

The participants and team range in age from 9 to 70+, creating a unique and powerful intergenerational environment. Within this configuration comes a myriad of life-skills, experience and wisdom. The fullness of life is reflected in the diversity of people present, through their stories and their arrival at various life stages. Elders are integral to our work and are actively involved in holding space. Our largely volunteer team are chosen and trained for their compassionate, authentic and uplifting qualities.



## FIRE / PRACTICES

The practices and activities within our programmes have evolved throughout the years. Someone brings a story, song, concept, practice, poem, or framework to the circle, it resonates, sticks and then is woven into the fabric of our programmes.

We use the ancient and indigenous practice of gathering in a circle to create lightly-facilitated learning environments where participants are equally valued, and may share personal stories or explore themes collectively. The living fire is often central to these circles. We also introduce other practices that promote personal awareness, relational awareness & nature connection. These include whakawhanaungatanga practices, movement, games, team building exercises, creative arts practices, physical challenges, song, ceremony, ritual and solo exercises.



## EARTH / TE WHENUA

He mihi aroha ki ngā manawhenua o Mōhua ko Ngati Tama ko Ngati Rārua ko Te Ātiawa. We make deep acknowledgements to the mana whenua of the land where our programmes take place.

We also make a very special acknowledgement to Tui Community and the Tui Spiritual and Educational Trust, where it all began. Most of our programmes take place at the Tui Treefield, a place that has been well-loved and tended over the years, and houses our fit-for-purpose pentacle structure.

Nature is a loud and active presence on all of our programmes. Our work is based on the understanding that we are part of nature, not separate from it or superior to it. We acknowledge our relationship to the seen and unseen. Clearing away the complexity, confusion and expectations of modern living, in device free environments, allows us to create experiences that are both appropriately challenging and loving. Programmes also venture out into the surrounding areas, including Abel Tasman National Park, Wainui Falls and Canaan Downs.

# TRACKS

"This programme truly helped sculpt the young man I am today"

100%

of youth participants said the programme helped them feel **more valued and listened to**

91%

of youth participants said the programme helped them feel **more positive about who they are**

91%

of youth participants said the programme helped them feel **more connected to their family**

100%

of youth participants said the programme helped them **take more responsibility in their life**

73

**TRACKS INITIATES ON OUR 5-DAY PROGRAMMES FROM 2018 - 2022**



## CASE STUDY: JASPER & ROGER

**JASPER:** "Tracks has been one of the most significant and influential experiences of my life, and has changed me immensely. Prior to my first rites, I was a very shy boy lacking confidence and a voice; I was timid and I hated it. Tracks was that essential first step for me to step out of my shell, and the two times I've been back since have given me the opportunity to further develop my newfound confidence, leadership and emotional intelligence. I felt privileged to be held and heard by such a unique and inspiring group of men, I felt incredibly safe and encouraged, and in this environment I was introduced to someone I am proud to be. I feel more connected and open towards dad now, I

know we can talk about anything and I love the depth and genuineness of our conversations."

**ROGER:** "Jasper and I attended a Tracks rite together in the Autumn of 2021. The effect it has had on Jasper is massive. He really has become quite a different person - confident, opinionated, focused, compassionate, wise - and interested in his dad! I now live with a sense of complete trust that no matter what happens, he will be okay. The shared experience has built safety and trust between us. Our relationship has become much more real."



# TIDES

“It helped me find a place in myself I could always come back to and feel grounded and secure.”

83%

of youth participants said the programme helped them feel **more valued and listened to**

89%

of youth participants said the programme helped them feel **more positive about who they are**

89%

of youth participants said the programme helped them feel **more connected to themselves**

94%

of youth participants said the programme helped them feel **more connected to others**

75

**TIDES INITIATES ON OUR 5-DAY PROGRAMMES FROM 2018 - 2022**



## CASE STUDY: RU & TRACY

RU: “My experience at Tides has immensely impacted my life. Because of this programme, I experience challenges as opportunities for growth and learning. It has allowed me to honour and cherish my childhood and look forward to my adulthood with an open heart. Tides has taught me that my vulnerability and authenticity is a gift. Sharing this journey with my mother has been priceless. The process of beginning to see her as a friend, a person other than just a mother, has led to a deeper connection and understanding between us. My Tides journey is continuous, as I keep returning, stepping into leadership and holding space for others to go through the program. I feel passionate

about being able to share with others the wisdom Tides has given me.”

TRACY: “Going to Tides with both of my daughters enriched our relationships and supported me to make space for the young women they're becoming. Tides gave us a nourishing environment to practise speaking from the heart and our family communications are richer for that. There have been occasions during family transitions or challenges when we've managed to connect deeply and I've thought to myself in those moments, 'thank you TIDES!' ”

# FUTURE PATHWAYS...

59%

of youth participants **return as young leaders**

97%

of youth participants said they **developed their skills and strengths**

90%

of youth participants said the programme helped them feel **more optimistic about the future**

97%

of youth participants would **recommend others** to take part in this programme

Over the years, the original Tides and Tracks programmes have inspired and encouraged our facilitation team to develop further programme offerings that cater to other ages and stages in the youth and community development space.

## RISING TIDES, RISING SONS

Designed for 9-11 year olds, we run two mother & daughter and two father & son weekend programmes annually, focusing on celebrating childhood and strengthening the family bonds, which is achieved through nature based activities, fun and games.



6

**RISING TIDES PROGRAMMES**

7

**RISING SONS PROGRAMMES**

## CROSSROADS

In 2022, alumni of Tides and Tracks co-designed and facilitated a 4-day programme for young adults aged 18-35. It focused on creating meaningful connections with self, others and the environment. This was achieved through whanaungatanga, nature connection, games and creative arts in Wainui Bay.



*"This was an absolute experience of a lifetime. I came back a new person who can benefit the world with positive energy and experience."*

## WILDERNESS SOLO

Since 2019 we've run 7-day immersive wilderness programmes for ages 18+, fostering personal development through a week based in the wilderness. Traditionally, a solo sit marks a new stage of life, a point of transition, teaching you to become part of nature from the smallest bug to the great Mystery.



4

**WILDERNESS SOLO PROGRAMMES**

18

**WILDERNESS SOLO PARTICIPANTS**

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# FUTURE PATHWAYS...

## TIDES & TRACKS INTRODUCTION & TRAINING

Each year we run one women's and one men's weekend programme and have a mixed gender programme in development. These are called Ebb & Flow and Good Men Make Tracks. Each of these offer adults the opportunity to experience a rite of passage and mark a current life stage. These also offer a pathway to becoming a programme facilitator and connect the wider community with our work.



**9**

TRAINING WEEKENDS

**75**

PARTICIPANTS

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT EVENTS

Various programmes, meet-ups and weekend events are offered for our returning young people and crew. These include Tending The Fire and our Winter Team Hui, which focus on, strengthening personal leadership skills and our team capability and capacity. The team and young leaders also gather two days prior to each rite, to prepare for the arrival of the teens and their parents/mentors. These days are valued as intergenerational space for ongoing growth and development.



**5**

LEADERSHIP GATHERINGS

**42**

DAYS OF PRE-RITE GATHERING

## WIDER PROGRAMME AFFILIATIONS

Alongside this work, members of our facilitation team have also started their own youth-focused initiatives. We consider these as associate programmes as they extend the suite of offerings and support for youth under different programme models. These include the Arise programme, Bodhi Seeds and Mother-Daughter Hearth.



*"Rich and potent experience that has offered my life many gifts."*

*"My daughter got a huge amount out of her Rite of Passage event and has returned as a young leader (tuakana) more than once. After initially feeling reticent about going she often expresses her gratitude for the Tides events and the depth of connection it has helped her find with herself and in other relationships." - Parent of participant*

# COMMUNITY

217

family members  
attended a  
programme

840

family members  
attended a  
ceremony at the  
end of the  
programme

88%

of participants said  
the programme  
made them feel  
**more connected to  
their family**

100%

of youth  
participants said  
they **formed new  
friendships**

The community-based nature of our work has resulted in our youth engagement extending beyond the specific events and programmes that we offer. We nurture relationships with a number of local organisations to ensure we are responding to the needs of young people within our community:

- We collaborate with the Golden Bay Work Centre Trust's Youth Habitat to facilitate monthly young women's circles.
- Our team have worked with the Youth Habitat and Golden Bay Rec Park Centre to deliver activities during Youth Week 2022.
- We participate in Mohua Social Services' monthly whānau and community meetings.
- Our team have attended Nelson Tasman Youth Workers Collective trainings to ensure we remain actively engaged with the needs of our community and continue our team's professional development.
- A number of our facilitation team engage in te reo Māori learning pathways to grow bicultural understanding and capacity.

## CASE STUDY: ALI

"When I first got involved in Tracks it was, very memorably, alongside a young man who was very physically challenged. Ten years later my eldest son came through, which was beautiful to witness. I thought I would get a couple of years break before my next son's rite, but a mum I know asked if I'd accompany her son who didn't wish his father to be there - tears come even now to be offered such a gift - and I said "yes, wow, of course!". Some years later I was asked to stand for two others.

Tracks is always very emotional; to see, and to be, fathers and sons in deep process together. This was such a chance to heal and to grow for these young men, to be witnessed and heard amongst men who care. It was such a privilege to help this come about.

Over the years I've had many conversations with young men who've been to Tracks, out of the blue, in depth and from the heart. I believe it's a testament to the trust and depth established there. Beyond all, I've learned to trust in this relationship that flourishes around the fire and in the heart."

## TE TIRITI COMMITMENT

As a non-Māori organisation we move humbly in the bi-cultural context and have a lot to learn in this space. Naturally, our family-centred and nature-based practices, that link with indigenous practices from other parts of the world, are deeply connected to the whenua where our programmes take place. We practise with awareness of and respect for the whakapapa and pūrākau linked to the whenua and incorporate aspects of te ao Māori into our programmes with humility.

In 2021, our Tracks director assisted the design of a kaupapa Māori young men's rite of passage programme at Whakatū Marae. He also supported a rites of passage programme for rangatahi and tāne at Te Āwhina Marae within a tuakana-teina (mentor/mentee) approach. In 2019, ROPF supported a Māori staff member in their journey of connecting to their Māoritanga. This included attending equivalent kaupapa Māori rites of passage programmes, and exploring how our programmes can better support whānau Māori through the respectful and appropriate integration of reo and tikanga.

## GENDER CULTURE

We believe that rites from childhood to adulthood are every child's right. Challenging stereotypes and supporting positive identities were a feature of the early events that were the inspiration for ROPF's founders. In our Tides and Tracks programmes, we actively work towards maintaining an inclusive continuum that encompasses humanity in its infinite diversity and uniqueness. There is a place for everyone and whilst embracing diversity, we also take strength in and celebrate the vast terrain that is all we have in common, the things we each share in this human experience.

ROPF warmly welcomes and supports young people who identify as part of our rainbow community, and works with individuals to determine which programme is best suited to them.

## WORK INTERNATIONALLY

Our programmes are recognised nationally and internationally. We frequently host international adult participants who are involved in, or interested in, creating rites of passage in their home communities and want to learn from our model. We have assisted in creating rites of passages for young people in other parts of Aotearoa, Australia, the UK and the Netherlands. In August 2022, three of our Tides facilitators travelled to Australia to train a group of women who were designing and facilitating their own young women's rite. There has also been an active interest in our programmes from groups in South Africa (Women are Medicine) and Zimbabwe (Kufunda Learning Village).



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# IN HONOUR OF JIM HORTON

16 Jan 1943 - 12 May 2020

There's a special space within this publication, but more so within our hearts, for founder Jim Horton. It was Jim's vision that lit the first rites of passage fire in the Treefield, in Wainui Bay in 2001. With the dedication and support of many people, that vision has grown into the multifaceted work of the Rites of Passage Foundation.

Jim suffered from motor neurone disease, which he found intensely frustrating, and as such he wasn't able to speak much in the last few years of his life. But in the words of his son Jason, "he always had so much to say and was known for his oratory power and skill. Jim loved to speak poetry into moments of depth and transition, ritual spaces, into gatherings of men and boys becoming men."

Now in the realm of Helpful Ancestor, Jim's legacy is cherished and can be seen throughout ROPF programmes. From the bespoke structures and processes he designed, to the cornerstones of our evolving culture, Jim's passion, courage and fierce dedication continue to inspire. His love and wisdom in balancing both the sacred and the profane ensures this work of heart flows freely and with great helpings of realness, laughter and tears.



*'Long enough life, honey in the heart' - Jim*

# INFINITE AROHA TO OUR DEDICATED TEAM



# DEEP GRATITUDE TO OUR GENEROUS FUNDERS



*Thanks also to Riverside Community, The Koha Trust and The Susan Jessie Family Trust*

With the large volume of people attending our programmes, this has an impact on our local environment. We'd like to make a special shout out to our amazing chefs who source predominantly local and organic food for the nourishing and healthy meals throughout the programme! Yum!

## WANT TO SUPPORT THIS WORK?

We are a small organisation that achieves a lot through grants and volunteer support. If you would like to become a one-off or regular donor, your generosity will go a long way. Please contact our Board Chair, Stef Jongkind at [admin@tracks.net.nz](mailto:admin@tracks.net.nz)

This report was prepared with love by Lucy Carver.

Special thanks to our photographers over the years, especially Oliver Weber and Chloe Mason.

### **Organisational Details**

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