



## **KIA ORA - WELCOME TO TRACKS TRUST'S RITE OF PASSAGE PROGRAMME FOR BOYS.**

This document is to provide more information about;

- ◇ **What a 'Rite of Passage' is?**
- ◇ **How a camp of five days could change your life!**
- ◇ **Why it is important?**
- ◇ **What happens and who will be there?**
- ◇ **When a boy is ready?**
- ◇ **What can be done before and after the event to add to the experience?**
- ◇ **Where 'Tracks' started?**

We expect that this will be one of the defining moments in a boy's life and we sincerely hope that his life and the lives of everyone around him will be significantly enhanced. Please take some time to read this as we hope to support you and your family in getting as much out of this experience as you can. This program could change your lives!

### **'WHAT IS A RITE OF PASSAGE?'**

Many societies around the world, both ancient and modern, recognise the transition from child to adult and hold a ceremony and celebration - an Initiation or 'Rite of Passage'. Tracks Rites of Passage are five-day outdoor camps with a group of about 35 guys.

### **'HOW DOES A CAMP OF JUST FIVE DAYS CHANGE YOUR LIFE?'**

It's not so much the length of time, but the fact that during that time the focus is completely on the process of becoming an adult. This doesn't all happen over the five days, but marking the change symbolically has a significant effect. It can only take a few hours to be born, getting married only takes a few minutes and getting your drivers license can take a very short time but no one ever forgets these times. These important times are the markers that tell us, and those around us, where we are on the path of our life.

### **'WHY IT IS IMPORTANT!'**

When communities create a conscious 'Rite of Passage', adolescents tend to realise more clearly how their strengths and attributes contribute to the well being of their community as well as their own future. This not only helps them and the rest of the community to be happy, stable and more able to lead positive fulfilling lives but the potential for social improvement is enormous. The five-day journey is filled with activities, challenges, support and mentoring designed to assist a boy and his family through his transition to becoming a young man and into the responsibilities of young adulthood.

*"The ceremony for becoming a young man really defines that moment in his life. It could go on for years otherwise, but we know that it's happened; he knows it's happened, and he's heard other men talk about it. It feels really good that he can get on with life."*

Lisa Williams, mother

### **'WHAT HAPPENS ON A CAMP?'**

One way to answer this question is to explain the separate days.

#### **DAY 0 - 'TRAINING DAY'**

The day before any new boys arrive for the team of facilitators, trainees and young leaders to get ready.

#### **DAY 1 - 'SEPERATION'**

This day is about symbolically and physically separating from the outside world and the boys childhood relationship with his mother. As well as the leaving the rest of the family, friends, and other influences like TV and school behind. On this day we meet and greet one another before the boys are taken away by the men of the Tracks community to start their Rite of Passage.

#### **DAY 2 - 'COMING TOGETHER'**

Tracks Rites of Passage are designed to create a feeling of unity and connection so this day is about getting to know and trust each other. Within the whole larger group we spend time in smaller teams called 'home groups' each sleeping in their own Tipi. We play full-on games, listen to stories and have fun together.

#### **DAY 3 - 'TRANSITION'**

This is the big day; we recognise the changes from boy to man and set the task for the major challenge.

#### **DAY 4 – 'CELEBRATION'**

This day is about acknowledging and celebrating the gifts and qualities of the new young men. We also take time to reflect upon the achievements of the previous days.

#### **DAY 5 – 'RETURN'**

Today the new young men return to their family and community. This is formalised with a 'threshold', a line between the outside community waiting to pick up their new young men and the group that has been on the event. Each young man takes his turn to step over the line and be received by his family. This is an opportunity for people from both sides to speak to each other. Following this will be a lunch feast and then it's time for everyone to say their goodbyes and go home.

#### **'WHO WILL BE THERE?'**

A Tracks Rite of Passage is a powerful time for a boy and father or other significant male adult to spend together. This is about the boy having someone to support him in bringing the story and experience of his rite of passage home to his family and community as well as being a big experience for father and son...

There will be a team of men who have been carefully gathered to lead the boys through their Rite of Passage. On this team there will be a highly experienced event director, several elders (senior facilitators in their 50's and 60's who have shown they have the wisdom and knowledge to overview and guide these events), several men in their 20's to 40's who have been trained as facilitators. There will be a group of young men in their teens called Trackers who have been through their Tracks Rites of Passage and are returning as young leaders. Each Tracker is matched up with a new boy and is assigned the role of helping that boy personally throughout the whole event. There will often be several trainee facilitators as well. A lot of important new friendships are founded on these events. All told we will be a team of about 20 men and Trackers who will be welcoming in a group of 9 new boys and their accompanying fathers or mentors.

#### **'WHEN IS A BOY READY?'**

Tracks Trust rites of passage events are available to boys aged over 13 and around 15 years.

At the age of 13 some boys are not yet ready and by 15 some boys are not interested or resistant, it is crucial that boys understand what Tracks is about and aren't resistant. So besides age, what further indicators suggest that a boy is ready to become a young man?

The onset of puberty is often the first sign that a boy is commencing his move towards young manhood. The onset of puberty in boys generally occurs between the ages of 10 – 15. The indicators above will not all happen at the same time; puberty in boys generally occurs over a 2 – 4 year period. If your boy has been experiencing puberty for at least one year then he is possibly ready to consciously become a young man.

The most important indicator of a boys' readiness however is found through conversation. One place to start is to talk in general about the big changes in life. There are many. Name a few: leaving school, starting work, getting married, relationship changes, becoming a parent and career changes are all times of big change.

You can also direct the conversation towards the transition from boy to young man.

The following questions are possible conversation starters:

- What do you think is the difference between a boy and a young man?
- What do you think are some of the indicators that a boy is becoming a young man?
- What do you think are some of the needs of a young man?
- What sort of changes would you like to see in your life when you become a young man?

If the discussion focuses on a young man having more freedom, introduce the idea of responsibilities. With increased freedom comes increased responsibility.

- What do you think are some of the responsibilities of a young man?

This conversation is now the foundation for other essential discussions and negotiations. These negotiations are necessary, over time, in order to effectively adjust the family roles (parenting, siblings and son) to accommodate the boy becoming a young man. So what does this conversation tell you about his readiness to become a young man?

- If he engages with interested answers or attempts to answer he is probably ready.
- If he has no idea and the concepts are too much for him at the moment, he is not yet ready. Continue to help him explore this over the coming months.
- If he is difficult to engage, maybe a family friend, other significant male or a Tracks Trust professional would be better placed to broach this topic.

### **'WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE THE CAMP?'**

We suggest that before the event there is an opportunity to celebrate the childhood of the boy. This could be something like having a special meal with other family members like grandparents, looking through old photos, telling stories, and making reference to the coming Rite of Passage and its new beginning. We encourage the boy's parents to make some time before the event to talk about what the Tracks Rite of Passage means for them. This can prepare the boy for leaving his childhood to become a young man, in a new relationship with his mother and the feminine and a new relationship with his father and other men.

This also means working towards a new contract or set of agreements that will take effect after the camp. This will assist with understanding the new level of responsibilities and freedoms of being a young man.

We ask the boy to bring an item or photo to represent his childhood along to the camp, a symbol of the childhood he is leaving behind.

We ask mothers to find a symbolic gift to mark this time for her son, which will be presented at the beginning ceremony.

We ask the fathers or another significant man to find a symbolic gift to give to the boy during the event. If they cannot be present at the event we ask that they also write a short letter of recognition to the boy, to be presented on the day of his transition at the same time as the gift.

### **'WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE EVENT?'**

After a Tracks Trust 'rites of passage', young men report a stronger sense of self worth, increased resilience to peer pressure and identify more often as valuable members of a community. They are able to see themselves more clearly as consciously crossing from childhood to adulthood.

We suggest that after the event the family makes a special occasion to celebrate the new young man having completed his Tracks Rite of Passage. This could be a special meal with family and friends with an opportunity for the young man to tell his story of the event and the honouring and acknowledgements he received. This is all a part of building his confidence and a foundation for himself as a young man.

We mail out a package a few weeks after the event that includes; a collage of photos, a contact sheet, a follow up letter, info about upcoming Tracks events, the writing or drawing the person from the event did on the visioning morning and a certificate for the Trackers to recognise their service & leadership.

### **'WHERE DID TRACKS START?'**

Tracks was started in early 2002 by men, Youth workers, leaders of men's groups, counsellors, teachers, friends and fathers from all over Aotearoa. The experience of these men in their lives and work was that the time of adolescence is very dangerous, confusing and crucial time that has fundamental effects on an individual's life. They gathered together to create a program that recognises this crucial time of change young people go through on their way to adulthood. We now have participants coming from all over the country to our purpose built outdoor events site in Golden Bay adjacent to the Abel Tasman National Park and have plans for regional development around the country over the next few years. We have a passionate and professional staff and a dedicated group of Trustees. Together our vision is:

### ***'Strong, healthy men and families through community led rites of passage for boys'***

We hope this information has answered some of your questions. Tracks Trust Rites of Passage events are powerful, exciting and enjoyable and help to build solid beginnings for young men on their way to manhood.

Tracks is about boys becoming men and has a sister program 'Tides' that focuses on the transition for girls becoming young women. More information about Tides can be found at [www.tides.net.nz](http://www.tides.net.nz)

Please contact us if you have any questions,  
Ka kite ano,

#### rites of passage event registration

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