

INSPIRATIONAL STORIES

NGĀ KETE MĀTAURANGA POUNAMU | DECEMBER 2024 VOL. 01

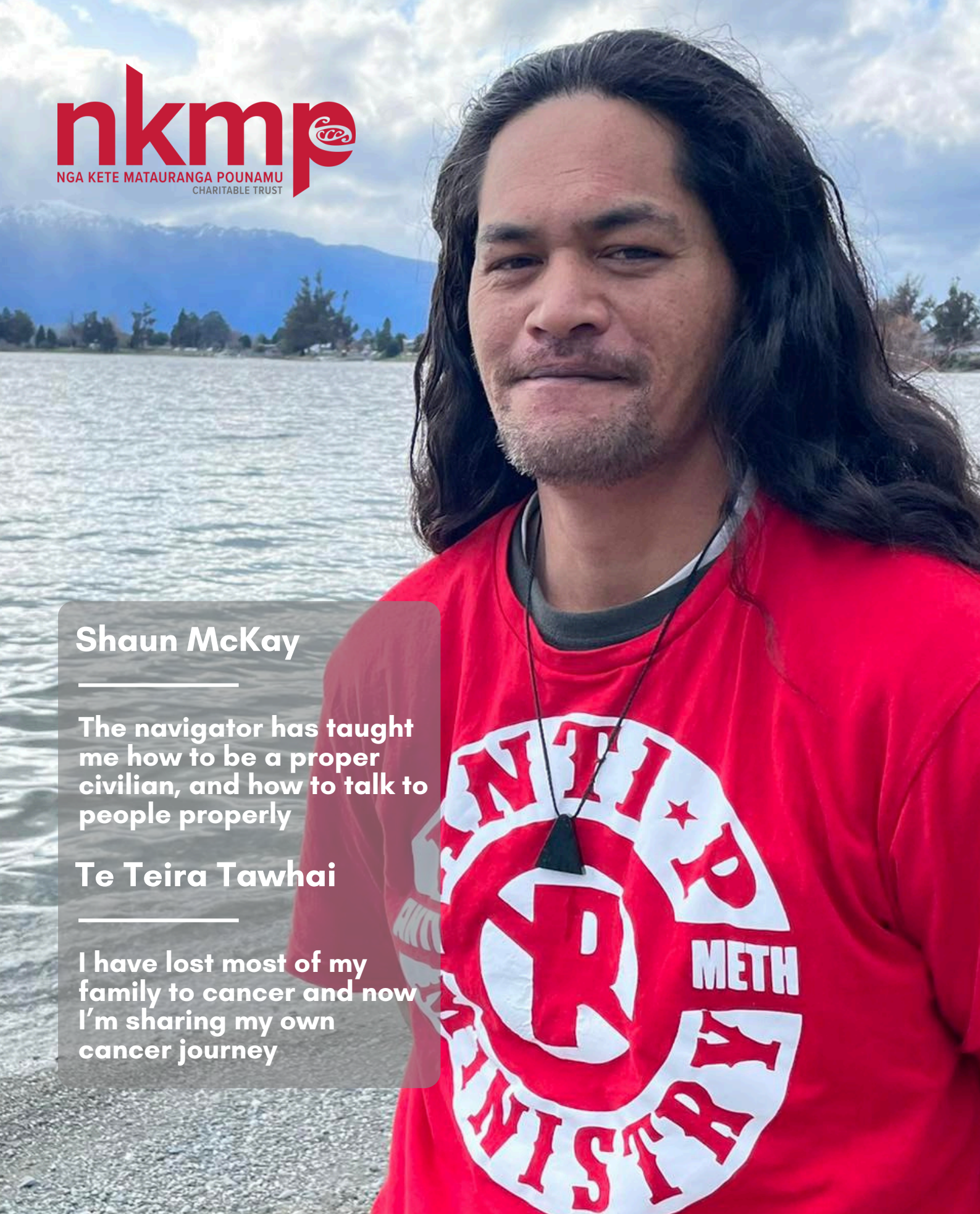


Shaun McKay

The navigator has taught me how to be a proper civilian, and how to talk to people properly

Te Teira Tawhai

I have lost most of my family to cancer and now I'm sharing my own cancer journey



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FROM THE CEO

TRACEY WRIGHT-TAWHA



Ngā mihi mahana,

The power of the personal story gives us an insight into the voice, perspective, and journey as a client of our service.

The power of lived experience can influence and shape service delivery approaches.

The power of our consumer voices can be found in our service policy, information and marketing.

This publication gives a lens into the clients journey, what matters, how they felt, what was important to them. I am deeply grateful that whānau agree/consent to sharing their story as they shine a light on experiences and pathways that inspire or assist others.

The stories remind me of our guiding mantra:
Aroha Ki Te Tangata

Thank you to all contributors.



TE TEIRA TAWHAI



CANCER KAIARAHĪ SERVICE

TE TEIRA TAWHAI

OCTOBER 2024

I have lost my entire family to cancer and kidney failure, a son to a car crash, and now I am recovering from my own battle with cancer. Throughout this journey I have met some incredible people and received some amazing support.

I was born in 1977 and raised on the east coast with Te Whānau-ā-Apanui (Māori iwi). I lived with my parents and brother in the school house because my father was a principal and my mother was a sign language teacher.

I didn't enjoy school because I couldn't read, write or spell. I was only going to eat my lunch and play rugby. I never fit in either; I was whiter than everyone else and the only one with coloured eyes, freckles and straight hair. I stood out like a sore thumb.

At home though, life was wonderful. My parents were my idols. If I wasn't outside with Dad, I would be in the kitchen cooking and cleaning with my Mum. They taught me everything I know.

Every weekend Dad and I would go up the river on horses, camp at our favourite spot, and go pig hunting. He taught me how to garden too, which ignited a life-long passion. Dad was a kumara grower and would sell his kumara to turners and growers in Tauranga. The kumara was a gift passed down from our tupuna, and then passed on to me.

In my eyes, my father was famous. He was an actor, a kapa haka leader, and had travelled all over the world. Before I was born he was teaching in America, and before that in India. He was an amazing man with so much wisdom and knowledge.

Together we continued to grow kumara. Dad showed me how to grow it – You have to awahi it like a pepi! Our gardens got bigger and bigger and I was doing a lot of kumara growing mahi. At one point we had 75 fish bins full of kumara in our shed. We would often give bins away at birthdays and tangi.



I left school at 14. I was so excited – no more pen and paper! My Uncle, who was in forestry cutting down pine trees with a chainsaw, asked if I wanted to work with him and I jumped at the chance. I actually thought it was the only job in the world because where we lived there weren't many other options. I stayed in forestry for the next 30-odd years.

My mother was a wonderful woman. She would always make sure my lunch was made for mahi, and would have something prepared for me when I got home.

She was from the Chatham Islands and we would go and visit every school holidays. I always said that one day I would live there because I loved it and I fitted in.

In 1994 my mother was diagnosed with bowel cancer.

IF I WASN'T OUTSIDE WITH DAD, I WOULD BE IN THE KITCHEN COOKING AND CLEANING WITH MY MUM. THEY TAUGHT ME EVERYTHING I KNOW."

I was about 16 at the time and I started noticing a lot of whānau coming in and out of our whare. I didn't know what it meant. A day or two later I arrived home from mahi and went to the school for a shower. While I was in the shower one of my cousins raced over and yelled to me Mum is calling you, come quick!

I quickly got dressed and raced home to find my brother and cousin sitting on





Mum's bed. I was too late. By the time I arrived she had peacefully passed away. She was just 52-years-old. I knew she had been unwell but I had no idea what cancer was. I honestly thought she would be OK and get better. My Dad, brother and I stayed in the school house for another year until my father retired and we moved to another house 10 minutes down the road. We never went back to the Chatham Islands after Mum was gone.

My father remarried and moved to England with his new wife. She is a wonderful woman. Her name is Barbara Ewing and she is an author and an actress. They lived in England for 12 years. When they returned home I remember putting on a huge celebration at our marae and another wedding.

While they were living in England, I went there for my 21st birthday. Their home was amazing. It was right in the middle of London, 75 stairs up (no elevator!). There were gargoyles around the windows and on the roof Dad had



built beautiful gardens. The view was amazing – you could see the Queen's Palace and the biggest toy store in the world!

Back in New Zealand, In 1997, I decided to head south. I had seen England, but I hadn't seen my own country. I went to Rotorua Airport and flew to Christchurch where I met up with a cousin and together we moved to Invercargill. I was running drugs at the time. I met a woman and she got pregnant but I was too scared to tell my father so I left. I moved to the Chatham Island and I stayed there for the next three years.

Eventually I came back to Invercargill and met my daughter. Her mother and I decided to work things out and we stayed together for the next 18 years. During that time we had three more children. My kids are now 28, 25, 21, and my youngest would have been 19 now.

In 2012 my father was diagnosed with cancer of the hip bones. He was 75-years-old and he passed away at his office. He wouldn't stop working. I miss him so much. In 2018, my brother also passed away after being diagnosed with kidney failure.

When my partner and I parted ways I moved back up North and she stayed down here. My two youngest sons moved up North to live with me. I loved it! I taught them everything my Dad had taught me from diving to gardening, hunting, kapa haka and rugby.

The only thing I couldn't help them with was their school education and eventually they moved back to Invercargill to carry out their final years of school.

Some time later my son messaged and asked if I would come to Invercargill for his birthday and I was on the next plane here. That was two years ago now! While here I met a woman and we fell in love.

Life was great! I was so happy. Then, about six months after I arrived back in Invercargill, I went for a dive. I would often dive, I loved it, especially in the South where there was just an abundance of kai moana. But something felt wrong. My breathing was strange, my energy was low and my body didn't feel right.

The following morning I discovered a lump the size of a tennis ball on the side of my neck. After some testing at the hospital it was discovered I had head and neck cancer, which had started between my eyes, travelled down my cheeks and ended in a lump on my neck.

I had the lump removed and while I was recovering the thought crossed my mind that I had no support around me apart from my kids and partner – I knew no one else, I didn't even have a doctor.

Then I met the Ngā Kete Cancer Support Kaimahi, and I was blown away. They supported me with everything I needed to do and walked alongside me throughout my cancer journey. Their support was amazing – I've never had support like that before.

I started chemotherapy and radiation in Dunedin – every week day for four months. At the time I weighed 116kg and, aside from the cancer, I was in my prime. I was the strongest and biggest I had ever been, and I was proud of my body.

My partner and I would arrive home every Friday for the weekend. All I can remember was sleeping over those weekends. I lost my taste buds, I stopped eating and my weight started dropping but I knew I would pull through.

Every Friday when we would return home my youngest son, O Maruhuatau Otuwhare Tawhai, would come over and help us unload the car. One week he came running up the driveway, put his arms around me and said Dad! I love you! He was giving me the biggest hug I think he had ever given me and to this day, I always think about that because he had never done that before.

One week later, we were heading home and I called him just as we were driving past the Eastern Cemetery to let him know we were almost home. He told me he was at my house and was just shooting to the shop with his mates and that he would come back soon.

When he didn't arrive I thought it was odd but we unloaded the car ourselves



and I phoned my son's girlfriend to find out where he was. She thought he was at my house. She, along with my other son, went out to find him. Around 10pm that night my daughter, who was living in Auckland, phoned me. She said, Dad, don't be scared. I said what's up? And that's when she told me my son had been involved in a car crash. "Maruhuata has been in an accident. He's dead Dad." I just screamed and screamed and ripped the hoses through my nose, down my throat, from my body.

The following day I found out my son had been killed along with three other young men from Bluff in a car crash on Queens Drive. I was sick. I couldn't do anything. I had to go back to Dunedin on the Sunday for treatment because if I missed any I would have to start again.

My body was destroyed. My head was destroyed. I couldn't understand what was going on and because of all of the treatment I couldn't focus, I couldn't grieve.

That was the hardest thing I have ever had to go through. I lost a child while having cancer and fighting for my own life at the same time.

All the whānau came down to pick up my son and take him home. When I finished treatment for the week I went to the Marae to see my boy. Everyone had to clear the room because COVID was only just happening and I couldn't afford to catch it.

I spent some hours with my boy and then I would go back to Dunedin. We did this every day, driving backwards and forwards so I could be with him. Sometimes I would just sit in the car and look at the marae, watching the people go in and out.

At his tangi I had to keep my distance. I couldn't hug my whānau. Once I saw him go down, I walked away. My whole family were looking at me but not touching me or hearing what I had to say. When we were leaving the urupā, I went to the marae and gave a mihi to all the cooks that put the kai on for my son. It's all I could do.

I went back to Dunedin and straight away, I caught COVID. I had to isolate in a room for three weeks by myself, and I can't even put into words what that was like.

I was never able to grieve for my boy during the rest of that year, but as soon as I was in recovery, the grief set in. I missed him and I cried for him. How could I have stopped this? What if I didn't ring him that day? I shouldn't have asked him to come around. He would still be alive if I wasn't sick. I blamed myself for a long time. If it wasn't for my partner and the Cancer Kaiarahi Service I would never have got through it.

The Cancer Kaimahi would visit me and they were incredibly supportive during my grief and recovery. While I was grieving, they mentioned a support group they were thinking of starting. I remember when I first arrived at the Cancer Support Group I was the only male and I realised it wasn't just for Maori, it was for everyone. I was able to open up to the group and I strongly believe the group saved me. I was able to kōrero about my feelings. I've been going for almost two years now and it's growing. I'd like to see it grow even more.

I've been given the all-clear now. Sometimes my mouth still goes dry and I hate that I am so skinny but I am eating now and hopefully will start gaining weight again. It's been one year since I finished treatment.

I hope to once again grow kumara. I now have tā moko all over my body that is kumara and kumara vines. I waited 30 years to get that tā moko, and I am so proud of it.

I often think about all of those that I have lost throughout my life, but I am grateful for what I still have. I appreciate the little things in life and I am looking forward to a cancer-free future.

LYNN WEST



CANCER KAIARAHİ SERVICE

LYNN WEST

OCTOBER 2024

Four years ago I was suffering from a nasty flu, which ended up saving my life. That flu led to early detection of cancer. Throughout my treatment there were some days I didn't think I would make it to see the following day. The Ngā Kete Cancer Kaiarahi Service were a huge support and feel like whānau to me now.

Suffering from a nasty bout of the flu, I went to see my doctor who sent me to the hospital.

This happened right around the time COVID entered the country and, due to this, I was placed into a tent for around seven weeks. I continued to get weaker, which concerned the doctors so much they sent me for a CT scan.

That scan showed I had cancer on the inside of my body near my hips. I was so shocked by the diagnosis, I had no idea I had cancer. If it wasn't for the flu, I don't know how I would have found out and, due to the early detection, it saved my life.

Soon after, my son took me to Dunedin to get a biopsy, and later a doctor told me if I didn't start chemotherapy, I would be dead within two months.

That was a huge scare! I didn't hesitate. I immediately started my chemotherapy. I had chemo every Thursday of every third week for around seven months, and I can't even begin to describe how ill I was during this time.

“I DIDN'T KNOW IF IT WOULD BE A GOOD DAY OR A BAD DAY. WOULD I BE ALIVE TOMORROW?”

I was sick every day, lying on the couch, and sleeping a lot during the day. I could barely eat and I dropped to 58kg. I was just skin and bone. I also got thrush throughout my mouth and that made eating even harder.

It was a hell of a ride. It's so hard to describe what it was like going through treatment. I didn't know if it would be a good day or a bad day. Would I be alive tomorrow? My mind continuously travelled all over the place, but I just couldn't stop it.

My daughter helped me to refer to the Cancer Kaiarahi Service at Ngā Kete, and they were with me throughout my entire treatment. I remember that I could barely walk, and they would come to my house, help get me up, help me to the car, take me to my appointments and bring me back home again.

It was amazing to have their support. I can't even put it into words. The Kaimahi, as well as the nurse from hospital, kept me going. They are like whānau to me now. I know I can ring them whenever I need.

One of the kaimahi even took me to Dunedin for my radiation treatment, following chemo. She organised the entire thing including my accommodation at Daffodil House. Radiation wasn't as bad as chemotherapy, although I suffered from numb hands and feet for a long time. I still managed to have a few laughs during this time. I remember thinking, I've never sat around and drunk a ton of water with a group of men!

I have really struggled to talk about what I have been through, so I was grateful when the kaimahi introduced me to the Cancer Support Group. I found it helpful to talk to people who had been through the same as I had. I still enjoy attending the group every fortnight. As well, I am also part of the Kaumātua group every Wednesday at Te Tomairangi Marae.

I love being a part of it. Taurite Tū (strength and balance class) has been helpful for me, and I love being part of the ukulele group. It gives me a reason to get out of the house, which is great for me because I enjoy getting out and doing different things.

At my latest specialist appointment I was told the cancer is gone, and I feel lucky that part of my life is over. Now I can focus on the future. I feel so grateful to have had the support of Barbara and Jo, and the nurses at both Southland and Dunedin Hospitals.

**“IT WAS
AMAZING TO
HAVE THEIR
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WORDS. THE
KAIMAHI, AS
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NURSE FROM
HOSPITAL,
KEPT ME
GOING.”**



SHAUN MCKAY



A portrait of Shaun McKay, a man with long dark hair and a beard, wearing a red t-shirt with a graphic. He is looking slightly to the left with a serious expression.

NAVIGATIONAL SERVICES

SHAUN MCKAY

SEPTEMBER 2022

I had a rough upbringing with a father who was in and out of prison and a mother who wasn't interested in me. I was placed into foster care but that didn't work out and I ended up living on the streets. I am now a happily married father-of-six, and since I've been in the south, NKMP has supported me to completely change my life.

My upbringing was tough. I was placed in foster homes but it never worked out.

My dad got out of prison and tried to care for me but he wasn't fit to have me so when I turned 12, I left home and lived on the streets. I wasn't coping and I tried to commit suicide multiple times throughout the years. My life just feels like it's been one huge battle.

I didn't know it back then, but I resented not being loved and I resented not being nurtured by a mother who cared about me.

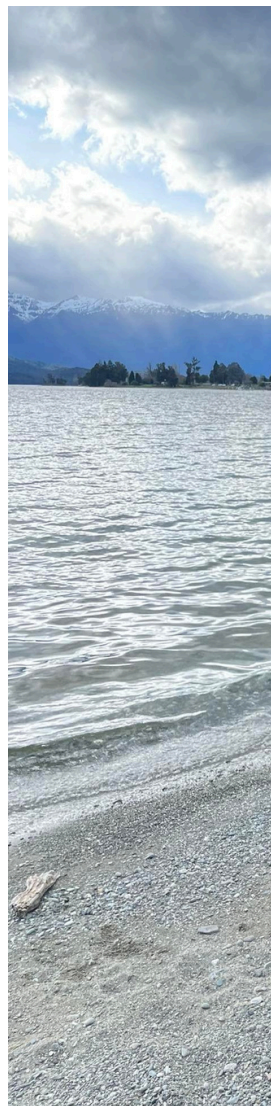
I met my partner at 15 and she soon fell pregnant. We were kids raising kids and times were tough.

I've assaulted my partner a lot due to having little feeling towards women. Whenever I was pushed into a corner that was my only mechanism of getting out of it. I know it's cowardly and I am still working on this. I've also been on methamphetamine most of my life – I've sold it, smoked it, the whole lot.

My partner got to a point where she was over it with me, but I promised her I could change.

We decided to leave the North Island to start fresh, so we jumped in a campervan and made our way south. We had no idea where we were going but once we arrived in Fiordland, we just knew this was our new home.

Once we were here and settled I knew I had to continue on my path of healing for my family, so I started by coming to see Sandra at the Southern Stop Smoking Service.



I had been a heavy smoker since I was seven – I would smoke three 50g packets a week.

I was spending thousands and thousands of dollars on cigarettes. That's how I had always lived – I would smoke cigarettes and drugs instead of eat. My family thought I would never give up but I was stressed about money and I knew I had to.

I've been seven months smoke free now with the support of The Southern Stop Smoking Service. The service was great! There was no pressure to give up and no judgement. There were days when I wanted to smoke but I kept thinking about the CO machine and beating it. I feel so much better now! I have also been three years meth free – a habit I managed to break myself.

Sandra referred me to the Whanau Ora service, and it has completely turned my life around.

“THE NAVIGATOR HAS TAUGHT ME HOW TO BE A PROPER CIVILIAN, HOW TO TALK TO PEOPLE PROPERLY AND NOT ALWAYS RESPOND WITH VIOLENCE”

He has also taught me how to put myself first for once.

We have been working through some goals, one of which was to stop smoking, and another was to get my restricted license, which the navigator supported me with and I will get my full in December.



He has helped me to secure a job. He gave me the confidence to apply and to go through the interview process.

Another of my goals was to get fit, and so often, we would run along the banks of Lake Te Anau together while continuing to talk about things. We were working towards me competing in a 10km marathon, but I caught COVID on the day of the race, so we are now working towards another.

I have also started seeing the Nga Kete Mahana Southern Maori Mental Health and Addictions Counsellor, who comes to Te Anau every fortnight. He is supporting me around my resentment issues, which has been incredibly helpful. Mahana is another of Nga Kete's wraparound services, from their hub of services.

**“COMING DOWN HERE, I FEEL SPIRITUALLY
CONNECTED. BEING AROUND NKMP AND HAVING THIS
SERVICE WRAP AROUND ME IN THE WAY THAT IT HAS
– I HAVEN'T FELT LIKE THIS BEFORE. IT HAS
EMPOWERED ME AND MY MIND-SET AROUND SO MANY
THINGS IS CHANGING.
WITHOUT THIS SERVICE, I KNOW I WOULD HAVE
FALLEN BACK OFF THE RAILS.”**

PATRICK HUTANA



NAVIGATIONAL SERVICES

PATRICK HUTANA

JUNE 2023

Homeless, living in my car, begging and borrowing became my way of life until Nga Kete and the Australian Chinchilla Community Centre stepped in and turned it all around.

Four years ago my Mum and I moved to Australia for a fresh start.

Things over there were good for a while. Mum was living with my ex-wife on a farm and I was living elsewhere and working with young people. I really enjoyed my job but when COVID hit in 2020 it ruined everything.

I lost my job, which left me with no where to live. I had no income and, being a New Zealand citizen, I was not entitled to any support through the Australian Government.

I started living in my car in a parking lot outside the Chinchilla Community Centre. The staff were wonderful and would offer me a hot meal and a shower every day.

I begged or borrowed, mowed lawns, and cleaned bathrooms just for a meal. I don't know how I survived to be honest. I had absolutely no where to go – no friends or family support. I couldn't bring myself to tell my Mum what was going on because she was unwell.

**“I BEGGED OR BORROWED, MOWED LAWNS, AND
CLEANED BATHROOMS JUST FOR A MEAL. I DON'T
KNOW HOW I SURVIVED TO BE HONEST.”**

I eventually got a job driving a harvester but I still couldn't find anywhere to live. I continued to live in my car for about a year and a half, and during this time I became suicidal and depressed.

The staff at the community centre would watch me head back to my car every night and they desperately wanted to help me. They thought it would be best if I was back home where I could receive Government support and get back on my feet.

They started researching who could support me in Invercargill and they found Nga Kete online.

They contacted the Whanau Ora service and a plan was made to get me back home.

Before I arrived back in Invercargill, Nga Kete had already found me shared accommodation housing, set up a bank account (as I didn't have one), and had organised with Work and Income to cover the cost of board for three weeks in advance.

The navigator supported me in obtaining a Jobseekers benefit, enrolled me with He Puna Waiora Wellness Centre and on-referred me to the Tōku Oranga Health Coach and Mahana Southern Māori Mental Health and Addiction Service. I was also supplied with a food parcel.

The support from the navigator and the Chincilla Community Centre has meant everything to me. I can't thank them enough. I feel blessed.

I've got money in my bank account now and I have a goals plan, which was created with the navigator. I am going to attend the Southern Institute of Technology and get a bar managers license, I will also save up enough money to get my own house and bring my Mum home.

**“I WOULD NEVER HAVE COME THIS FAR WITHOUT THE
SUPPORT I HAVE RECEIVED. IF IT WASN'T FOR THE
COMMUNITY CENTRE AND NGA KETE, I WOULD STILL BE
LIVING IN MY CAR STRUGGLING TO GET BY.**

NOW, I HAVE SO MUCH TO LOOK FORWARD TO.”



ASHLEY FULTON



TUI ORA

ASHLEY FULTON

NOVEMBER 2023

Te Rourou Pai Oranga (Nutrition Programme) and Taputapu Mātua (Parenting Programme) have enabled me to find my confidence this year, strengthened my parenting skills, and taught me how to better communicate with my husband.

Growing up was tough for me. At 13, following my parents divorce, I was couch surfing, drinking heavily and skipping school – or turning up to school drunk.

At 16 I went to live with my Nana and, while things were better, I couldn't shake the alcohol addiction which led to an arrest at 19-years-old, and a court order to attend addictions counselling at Ngā Kete Mātauranga Pounamu Charitable Trust.

I completed some counselling but I wasn't ready to stop drinking. At the time, I didn't think I had a problem.

But, things continued to spiral and I found myself in trouble with the Police again. It all became too much for me and I attempted to take my own life. My family had completely washed their hands of me and I was feeling alone and lost. I decided it was time to sort myself out and I came back to counselling at Ngā Kete. This time, I was ready for the support.

**“THE FACILITATOR HAS ENABLED ME TO BE MORE
CONFIDENT AS A PERSON, AND MY PARENTING IS SO
MUCH BETTER.”**

The counsellor enabled me to open up, be honest, and gave me ideas of how I could fill my time without having a drink.

At 24-years-old I became pregnant and had two babies within a short time. They were my life savers. It wasn't long after, I had completely overcome my alcohol addiction. I wasn't interested in it anymore.

It was around this time my husband decided to seek support for alcohol addiction, and he began addictions counselling at Ngā Kete. I watched him rebuild himself through this and he too, overcame his alcohol addiction.

After all of this, I decided I needed to make some changes in my life. I wanted to get out in to the community. I started volunteering at a local primary school in the community garden and later in the canteen, and that's when I noticed an advertisement for a nutrition course run by Ngā Kete in the school newsletter.

I was interested in learning how to make a meal before pay day when you have nothing in your cupboards and bendy vegetables. I would often throw them away and feed the children cereal for dinner. But, in the first week the facilitator had taught me how to make a soup with the leftover vegetables.

I have learnt how to better hide vegetables in meals to encourage my children to eat better. I also don't like wasting anything so if I can use it, I will. The participants of the course have also started a group chat where we share recipes and tips and tricks.

After the nutrition course I decided to also do the parenting course. I was interested to learn new tips and tricks and add some more tools to my parenting toolbox.

The course showed me that my husband and I parent differently, which I had never noticed. It helped me to understand him better and our relationship is now the best its ever been!

I have also learnt to use the "I-statement" rather than the "you-statement": You-Statements emphasize Blame, I-Statements take responsibility. Starting a sentence with "you" sets the speaker up to focus on the listener's actions rather than their own experience. I-Statements, in contrast, encourage the speaker to take full responsibility for their feelings and needs. www.relationshipcentre.com

I have also learnt that it is important to have a reason as to why I am saying no to my children. I had a habit of saying no just for the sake of saying no.

These programmes have really helped me. I honestly feel I wouldn't be where I am today if I hadn't taken part. The facilitator has enabled me to be more confident as a person, my parenting is so much better, and my husband and I are communicating better than we ever have before.

I also feel that all of the course participants have empowered each other and built each other up, and I am so grateful to have been a part of that. The women in the group are in my life daily now and we support each other with our kids – some days 10 children at one playdate! These women drive me to be better.

I intend to keep doing what I am doing. I have also just been offered a paid job at the school as a teacher aide, which was my dream!

Everything has worked out perfectly.



CRISIS RESPITE AND ADVOCACY

CRISIS RESPITE SERVICE

ANONYMOUS

MAY 2024

Throughout my life I have lived on the streets, been married and divorced, worked a variety of jobs and spent time in a mental ward after being diagnosed with depression and a split personality. Often I have felt like ending it all. Recently, I stayed at the Crisis Respite Support Service and it has given me a new fight and motivation to carry on, and to sort my life out.

Growing up, my father would often lash out. Sometimes at my mother, sometimes at me.

I always felt I could never do anything right. I can remember one time when I didn't finish the dishes on time I got the strap from my father. Another time, when I was about 10, he dunked me into the cow trough several times. I became frightened and disillusioned.

And so, just before my 16th birthday, I jumped on my bicycle and took off. My father threw stones at me as I quickly peddled out the driveway, but I didn't look back.

After leaving home, I stayed with a friend for some time. My parents tried to get me to come home but I wasn't listening. I was done.

Realising I couldn't stay at my friend's house forever, I decided to leave. But that meant I was completely on my own.

I found a bridge and I slept under it for a while. I slept in lots of different places during that time – wrecked cars, park toilets, an abandoned building; anywhere I could find shelter. I had no money and just the clothes on my back. I would sometimes find food like discarded bread rolls but otherwise I didn't eat.

Eventually I was found by social welfare and sent to a boys' home. I really enjoyed my time at the boy's home. We would go camping, rabbit shooting, and all sorts. We even had a swimming pool. I really felt at home.

After leaving the boys' home I moved around a bit and eventually settled in

Southland where I stayed for a large number of years and worked in various different jobs.

I met a woman, got married and together we had a child a year or so later. Things were going really well for me and life was good. However, unfortunately, the marriage fell over and my grandmother, who I had become very close to, died around the same time.

This started my journey into mental health.

I was angry, destructive, sad and lonely and after a while I was admitted to a mental health ward. I was deemed a danger to myself and diagnosed with depression and a split personality.

Everything inside me had just crashed and left an empty hole in its place. I wasn't myself for a long time.

I spent years receiving support from the hospital, psychologists and psychiatrists, and eventually I ended up living in my own flat and working full time.

After a few years I had to stop working due to an injury. I have been unable to work ever since.

After finishing up at work I moved further south, and while I was happy I noticed I had started shutting myself inside a lot.

Recently my key worker from Community Mental Health told me about the Crisis Respite Service at Ngā Kete. She thought it would be beneficial for me, so I decided to give it a go.

I didn't know what I was walking into but I quickly learnt it was exactly what I had needed. I didn't realise how much I needed it until I was there.

The staff were fantastic, the room and meals were fantastic and I learnt so much about myself while I was there. The staff were so easy to talk to and they would often take the time to sit with me. They even took me places like the doctor and into town to get new footwear.

This opportunity meant the world to me. It has helped me to open up more and not stay so enclosed within myself. It has given me the fight to keep going and to enjoy everything that's around me.

I am now back in touch with my mother and sister after many years, and I am taking care of myself much better. Everything is tracking in the right way for me now. I am no longer shutting myself in.

CRISIS ADVOCACY SERVICE

ANONYMOUS

APRIL 2024

For the first few months of my life I was tortured at the hands of my own parents, which set my life on a path of complete destruction from which I couldn't escape. To this day I still wear the scars on my face, have improperly healed broken bones and a deep-seated distrust of males.

I was just 18 months old when I was discovered by Social Welfare tied to my cot in a dirty nappy covered in scars and completely alone. Following this, I spent four months in hospital healing from multiple injuries.

I was soon placed into foster care and through until the age of 17 I was in and out of more than 59 foster homes. During some of that time I was physically, sexually and emotionally assaulted.

I started using solvents at a young age as a suppressant – a way to block out all of the emotion and trauma. I could close out the world and everyone would leave me alone. I continued this for the next 26 years.

At 16-years-old I ended up in a mental institution where I received shock therapy and was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. Due to this I was deemed unemployable for the rest of my life.

“I FEEL LIKE, FINALLY, THERE IS A FUTURE FOR ME NOW. I AM STEPPING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION AND I HAVE LEARNT THAT I AM CAPABLE. I AM NOW SEEING LIFE THROUGH MY OWN EYES RATHER THAN SOMEONE ELSE.”

This set my life up for complete failure. I spent the next 40-odd years living either on the streets, in a mental institution or in prison.

I've led a violent life but it has mainly been others being violent towards me. People always seem to read the cover with me but never take the time to sit down and talk to me. Instead they see my scars - my life tattoos I call them. What they don't see is I am a kind person who attends church weekly and enjoys playing musical instruments and making people happy.

Three years ago I was re-diagnosed. Gone was the diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia and in its place I was told I suffered from complex post traumatic disorder, ADHD and bipolar, which is now being managed. This makes much more sense to me.

Last year I transferred to the He Puna Waiora Wellness Centre to engage with a new doctor because I felt I wasn't being heard by the one I was with. The doctor here was absolutely wonderful, and straight away I knew I had made the right choice. I finally felt as though I was being heard. The doctor is kind, caring and thorough.

When I was here, I decided to come upstairs to seek some support and I was referred to the Crisis Advocacy Service at Tūmanako Oranga Wellness Centre.

The staff here are amazing. I am absolutely absorbing everything they are giving me. Coming here has opened so many doors for me within myself.

The advocacy kaimahi supports me with appointments because I struggle to take everything in. She often picks me up to take me to the appointments and later helps me to understand everything that was said.

The staff here will sit down and listen to me. I feel like I'm really being heard and not judged for the first time in my life.

I am also seeing a counsellor here and she has supported me in trying to deal with all of my past trauma. Last weekend was one of the best I have had all year because on the Friday I sat down with the counsellor and she allowed me to upload, and offload.

She often sees things I don't see and helps to put things into perspective. I feel comfortable to open up to her and seeing her has been healing for me. She is helping me to move forward and I feel like something has finally lifted.

Everyone here makes me feel comfortable - even the male staff which is huge for me. I know if I'm having a bad day I can call and talk. Through coming here, I am learning patience and self-control and how to live life rather than survive life.

I feel like, finally, there is a future for me now. I am stepping in the right direction and I have learnt that I am capable. I am now seeing life through my own eyes rather than someone else's.

A woman with long blonde hair, smiling, holding a baby. She is wearing a light green long-sleeved shirt and dark jeans. The baby is wearing a grey hoodie and black pants. The background is a bright, out-of-focus indoor space with large windows.

SAM PAYNE

MAHANA ADDICTIONS

SAM PAYNE

DECEMBER 2021

As a teen, a traumatic event and a breakup sent Sam Payne's life spiraling out of control. For over a decade, she was addicted to methamphetamine feeling invincible and convinced she didn't have a problem. At rock bottom, she found herself left with nothing and spent two years in jail on remand. Today, Sam is clean and sober and, for the first time, is looking forward to her future.

I was a good kid growing up. I had a great upbringing, a loving family and I did well at school.

I was in a relationship with a great man and life was good. But, four years into the relationship some of my friends were killed in a car crash and I started to spiral.

I left the relationship because I wanted to party with my friends. I was too young to settle down. This led me into a new and exciting relationship with a gang member who was "cool" and introduced me to methamphetamine.

The drug made me feel powerful and made everything seem so much clearer. I was with him for about a year but he beat me a lot, once so bad I ended up in hospital. During that year, I lost my job, my license, and I had become fully consumed by meth.

"I PUT MY FAMILY THROUGH HELL, I LIED TO PEOPLE, I BECAME NASTY AND RESENTFUL AND I HAD NO EMOTIONS WHATSOEVER. I KNEW AT THIS POINT THAT I HAD A METH ADDICTION."

Turns out, it was just the beginning of a decade long addiction.

I left him and moved to Christchurch at around 20-years-old, and things just continued to get worse. I was smoking meth day and night. I would have smoked over a gram a day at this point, which would have been around \$1000 a day.

This went on for a couple of years. If you'd asked me then, I would have said I wasn't a drug addict. I smoked it because I could.

Eventually I'd had enough and so, together with my new partner, we moved away and tried to get clean. I went from riches to rags fast but I knew I needed to do it. I still smoked meth but not as much. We were living in Motueka and things were great but we couldn't seem to escape the meth, it followed us everywhere.

I got a job at a pub and later became manager. My partner and I split after continuous fighting and I met someone new. I was back into the meth use big time. My new partner was into it too, but I didn't realise at the time just how much.

By now, the meth was doing absolutely nothing to me. I had been hooked on it for almost a decade. I'd even started experimenting with new drugs just to get high.

Things went downhill quick when my new partner left \$200,000 cash in my pub and then we were raided. I was arrested and lost my job.

After the raid, we decided to drive down to Christchurch so he loaded the car and picked me up, but he was running late so he was driving erratically to get there. I was on a curfew.

Next thing, we were pulled over and the cops found a huge amount of meth in the vehicle. It turns out my partner wasn't even who he'd said he was. He had a fake ID. It turned out to be one of Nelson's biggest drug busts and my name was splashed all over the papers in connection with it.

I was left, once again, with nothing. No job, no partner, no friends. I felt hopeless, lonely and completely destroyed. The meth was all I had to feel alive. On it, the pain of what my life had become could fade away and become less significant.

I really lost it. I came back to Invercargill so drugged up I had no idea what I was doing. I put my family through hell, I lied to people, I became nasty and resentful and I had no emotions whatsoever. I knew at this point that I had a meth addiction, but I didn't do anything about it because I just didn't care.

I ended up with more than 50 charges due to a range of offending here and in Nelson, and I spent two years in prison on remand. Being sent to prison was the best thing that could have happened. I needed something to happen to stop me.

I worked in prison and I really straightened myself out. I watched so many girls come back and I didn't want to be one of them. I ended up writing to a man while I was in prison and he was incredibly supportive of my situation. He and I are still together now and we have a beautiful baby boy.

After being released from prison, I attended the He Kete Oranga o Te Mana Wahine

Residential rehab. A psychologist there really helped me to understand my behaviours and I got a better understanding of who I was. It really worked.

I then started coming to Nga Kete and attended the Te Rongo Pai group every week and counselling. The counselling has helped me through some tough times, and has helped me to stay on track. I know that if I need to talk to one of the counsellors, I can just call and they'll be there to help.

The group has also been really great and so different to any other group. Being in a room with people who have been through the same thing as you, but different, it just does something to you. I have tried to encourage others I know to come along.

I feel like the dark part of my life is completely over now. I've lived it and went out with a bang. Now, I know exactly who I am. I'm a completely different person – I'm a Mum (my son is my world!) and I'm the happiest I've ever been. I feel sorry for those on meth. I get so much anxiety now when I think of meth.

I'm budgeting now and I'm saving. I aim for things and I work towards them and I'm so proud of that.

Telling my story is part of my cleansing. One day, I want to become a motivational speaker, but for now I want to reach out to other addicts in a peer-support role. I feel I could really help people.

I am so proud of the person I am today.

TE KORE - GROUP

ANONYMOUS

JULY 2022

I spent my entire life holding on to trauma and hurt from my childhood, thinking I was unworthy and unlovable. However, by participating in Te Kore I am learning to truly love and accept all of me unconditionally. This group has saved my life in more ways than one.

I was born to a 15-year-old who was still a child herself and had lied about her age to my father. They were from different backgrounds and were both struggling with their own identities and sense of self.

I am the eldest of my siblings and we were often shipped around to different family members and friends of my parents who had their own ideas on how to raise children, which weren't always healthy or loving.

There were times I can remember being left home alone to take care of my younger siblings before we ended up in state care in the late 70s. It was this disconnected and disjointed foundation that set the scene for abandonment issues, lack of trust towards myself and others, no self-worth and no self-love. All of these factors and many more flourished throughout my life and became the driving force behind my unhealthy and dysfunctional relationships later on in life, especially the one I had with myself.

I became a mother of two daughters by the age of 23, which brought about many challenges in its own right, let alone adding no self-value or self-importance to the mix. I didn't know what self-love or self-acceptance was and I carried feelings of not being good enough and insignificance around like an open wound that only I could see. It felt like a huge scab inside me that never seemed to heal. I couldn't even look at it because it was hideous and excruciatingly painful so I used drugs, alcohol and many other coping mechanisms to survive what I felt was like a steady consistent internal torture.

I had been working at the freezing works for many seasons feeling numb and on autopilot with my life when I heard about a course at SIT through a friend, which I immediately felt drawn to. I signed up for the course and started my journey as a social worker. My initial reasoning for undertaking this learning was firstly to understand why I do the things I do, and secondly how can I transform these insights into my life to help my daughters. I was not thinking about myself or what

it could do for my own life as I had always put others needs and wants before my own.

Those four years of fulltime study, while working and raising two daughters, were extremely exhausting and there were countless times I didn't think I was going to make it. I began working in the field of social work, and it wasn't long before I was bombarded with what I now know were triggers from my own childhood trauma. My instinct, along with financial pressure, was to stay and try to manage it the best I could. What I didn't realise at the time was I didn't know what I was trying to manage or that I didn't even have the tools to manage whatever it was.

I ended up back at the freezing works feeling like a total failure and a disappointment. Those feelings of failure and disappointment added yet another layer to my internal wound.

Along my social work journey I met Diane from Nga Kete who I thought was this bright light and she had this energy that I was drawn to. Our paths crossed again years later and she told me about Te Kore. I knew immediately that this group was something I needed to do.

I started the group on 4 May 2021 and I thought because of my social work and life education that I was already ahead of others in the group that didn't have that foundation behind them. What I came to learn in that very first session was that I hadn't even scraped the surface off what was really at the core of my internal hurt and pain. Te Kore has been the most frightening, terrifying, painful, intense, raw, honest, authentic, self-accepting, self-awareness, therapeutic, healing chapter of my journey so far.

The two facilitators allow me to feel what I need to feel, when I need to feel it in my process of rebuilding myself, which is all in a safe and non-judgemental environment. I am gently encouraged and supported to be really honest with myself, to listen, to feel, to share and explore my trauma at my pace while being brave and vulnerable.

I know now how important it is to be brave enough to look inside myself and to allow myself to be vulnerable. It has been through my vulnerability that I have had my most personal growth and healing happen. The facilitators help give me the tools within a safe environment to be able to do what I need to do to move forward in my life with self-acceptance and self-love.

**“I FORGIVE
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AND FREE.”**

Up until the end of 2021, I spent my entire life holding on to childhood trauma thinking I was unworthy, not good enough, not important and unlovable. By continually participating and contributing in Te Kore I have turned my inner dialog from a negative prospective of myself and others, to an accepting loving one. I am now forgiving myself for the survival patterns and traits that I picked up while enduring trauma. I forgive myself for who I needed to be to survive. I am truly on my way to the place within me that I have always wanted to be - peaceful and free.

My two adult children have witnessed an immense transformation in me and the domino effect from that has been life changing for us all, including my moko. I've been on a real emotional rollercoaster ride since starting Te Kore, however I wouldn't change any of it. It has been through attending and participating honestly and openly in this group that I have been given the opportunity to have a life filled with self-love and self-acceptance.

To love myself unconditionally is the best gift I have ever received. I am very grateful for my life and I'm excited about what my next chapter holds for me. I will continue to attend Te Kore because I believe there will always be things I can learn about myself which in-turn allows continual personal growth and healing. I whole heartedly recommend and encourage people to attend this group because I believe it has saved my life in more ways than one.



KELLY LUKE





TE PAE ORANGA & BFC+ **KELLY LUKE**

NOVEMBER 2023

I was referred to Te Pae Oranga after the Police raided my home and found I was in possession of marijuana.

I was anxious and nervous about attending the panel because I had a vision in my head of what it would be, but it was absolutely not what I expected.

Ahead of the panel, the facilitator clearly explained everything that would happen. She was caring, supportive, and thorough.

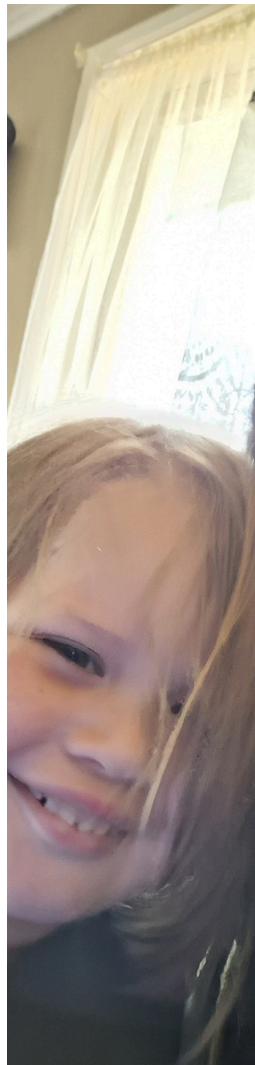
The panel were understanding and made me feel comfortable throughout the entire process, which meant I was able to open up and talk without feeling judged. They asked me direct but fair questions, and gave me a lot to think about.

I knew I needed to front up and be held accountable for my massive mistake. But I was very relieved to have avoided Court and a conviction. I feel so grateful to have been given this opportunity, and there's no way I would re-offend.

I was given three outcomes – write a letter of reflection to my daughter and engage with Building Financial Capabilities Plus and Mahana Southern Maori Mental Health and Addiction Counselling at Ngā Kete.

I started by writing the letter to my daughter. The letter actually helped to strengthen our relationship and brought us closer together. She deserved the letter. I had been selfish and didn't realise how much it had affected her. Our relationship is so much better now.

I then met with the BFC+ Kahukura and the Mahana counsellor. The BFC+ Kahukura was comforting which made it easier for me to attend the appointments. She reinforced what I already knew and what I should



be doing in terms of finances. She helped me through a lot more than just budgeting and I felt I could talk to her about anything.

The Mahana counsellor enabled me to be open and honest about my anger issue and we ended up delving into the crux of the problem, which came from my past. I didn't think I would ever need counselling, but I'm so pleased I went because, although I am still working through everything, it has really helped me to start healing.

I have also started attending Aronui Art Therapy at Ngā Kete. I really enjoy drawing and while I've been doing something I enjoy, I have also been able to open up with everyone else in the group which has been wonderful. They all make me feel so comfortable.

I'm so grateful to have been supported in the way I have. My outcomes were not only achievable, but also healing and I don't have to walk around with my head down. All of the people involved have made a huge difference in my life.





TREVOR LEIGH



SOUTHERN STOP SMOKING

TREVOR LEIGH

MARCH 2023

I've been smoking heavily for 45 years desperately wanting to give up but not knowing how. But recently with the support of the Southern Stop Smoking Service, a change in routines, and a personal challenge set, I am now three weeks smoke free.

I started smoking at the age of 12 and the habit increasingly got worse as I got older. Eventually I was smoking around 30-40 cigarettes a day and spending over \$1000 a month on three 50g a week.

I always had a cigarette in my mouth. If I was getting the cows in, which takes an hour, I'd have 5 cigarettes in a row. I wasn't eating much and when I did, it was unhealthy food because nothing ever tasted right.

Smoking was my entire lifestyle and the smokes became my friend. That friend was with me when I was at work, when I was at home, when I was enjoying a hobby. It didn't matter what I was doing, my friend was always there.

I knew I shouldn't have been smoking. I have a bad heart as well as asthma, but I just couldn't seem to kick the habit. Over the years I tried to stop about three times but nothing worked even though I didn't enjoy the habit.

One day recently, I received a phone call from my GP asking if I wanted to stop smoking and I said yes but I needed help. They put me in touch with the Southern Stop Smoking Service and the coach came to visit me. It was so important for me to have someone come and see me and check in on how I was doing.

I started using a vape and lozenges, and I set myself a challenge that I would stop. I would get angry with myself if I slipped up, but the coach kept me on track and I knew if things got bad, I could ring her and there was never any judgement. She was always there for me. I think if she hadn't been I probably would have been smoking again within a few days.



The coach was there for me. I could trust her and she helped me to change my routines and set me on the right path.

One of the biggest things that helped was leaving my smokes in the car at night time. I didn't want to have to walk to my car to get them, so I didn't and once I'd run out completely I just never brought anymore.

My whole world has changed since I stopped smoking. I can go for walks and not get short of breath or tired, I can taste food properly, I don't have to put flavour in my water anymore, and I haven't had to use my main Asthma inhaler for two months (since I cut down).

I'm looking forward to going on my first ever holiday – I've never been able to afford it – to Stewart Island and I'm excited that I am now able to save money.

The challenge is still in place and I am determined not to be beaten. I feel so good now that my friend is gone. I don't miss it and I'll never go back.

TINA KELLAND



A portrait of Tina Kelland, a woman with short red hair, smiling. She is wearing a colorful Māori-patterned garment and holding a wooden haka shield. The background features a blue wall with a stylized Māori design.

PŪREREHUA TRANSFORMATION

TINA KELLAND

OCTOBER 2024

Against a backdrop of rejection and family dysfunction, life growing up was tough which led to low self-esteem and low confidence. But after engaging with Ngā Kete I feel like a whole new person with purpose, confidence and strength.

Times were tough growing up. My mother was an alcoholic who would often choose the bottle over my brother and I, she would lie to us, and constantly fight with her boyfriend – especially if they run out of alcohol.

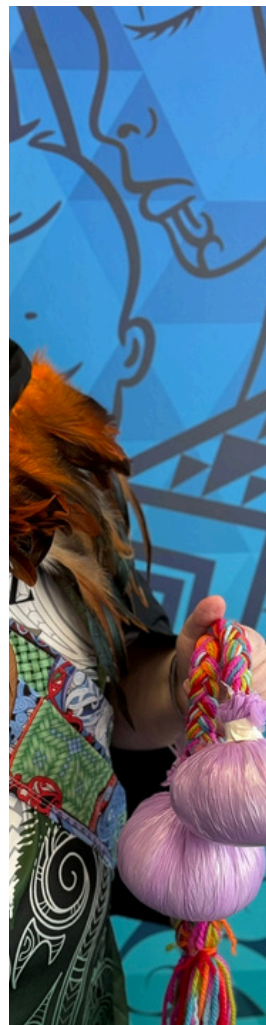
Home was never a nice place to be for me. I would spend most of my time riding my bike, visiting my aunt, or listening to music just to get away.

When she finally told me who my real father was I tried to have a relationship with him, but that didn't work out either. I haven't even spoken to my brother in 30 years because of the lies my mother told him, and now he's on borrowed time with a terminal cancer diagnosis.

After I left school I moved into a flat and started drinking heavily to numb myself. It wasn't long though before I realised there was more to life than that – all I had to do was look at my mess of a mother. I had boyfriends but majority were violent. It's like I couldn't escape or break the cycle.

In 2003, I enrolled with the Southern Institute of Technology to undertake Māori studies, and I was tutored by Koro Riki Cherrington. Through this I was able to ground myself and this was, my far, the best time of my life. I loved it there and being tutored by him.

Later I started working at the meat works and while there I met a man and we had a baby. She had a few issues as a youngster but things were good and I just loved being a mother. Unfortunately the relationship with her father fell over and he moved to Christchurch when our daughter was one.



On top of this I had damaged my knee in a motorbike accident and later ended up in hospital in agony with swollen legs. I was later diagnosed with arthritis throughout my entire body and Fibromyalgia – a chronic long-lasting disorder that causes pain and tenderness throughout the body as well as fatigue and trouble sleeping. This condition cannot be cured.

I met a social worker who supported me and later, when she started working at Ngā Kete Maturanga Pounamu Charitable Trust, she introduced me to Te Rourou Pai Oranga (Nutrition Programme) and Taputapu Mātua (Parenting Programme).

These programmes were amazing. I learnt so much and made new friends along the way. I learnt how to cook good food, and how to use everything in the fridge and cupboard so there was no wastage. The parenting programme taught me different tips and tricks and it brought me closer to my daughter. Our relationship improved and I felt I could understand her more.

“ALL OF THE KAIMAHI AT NGĀ KETE THAT HAVE SUPPORTED ME HAVE HELPED ME TO BECOME A STRONGER PERSON.”

That was the beginning of my journey with Ngā Kete, and they have been supporting me ever since. I was referred to the Pūrerehua Transformation Service and the kaimahi has been incredible. She supported me as I was starting my business, Te Whare Poi, and she was always there if I needed to talk. Often I would walk in with my head down, but I would always leave with my head held high. I could talk to her about anything!





I also started seeing a Mahana addiction and mental health counsellor, and she allowed me vent about my mother, and things in my past I had been holding on to. She gave me sound advice and continued to support me with things that are happening in my life now.

All of the kaimahi at Ngā Kete that have supported me have helped me to become a stronger person. They have helped with parenting, cooking, self-strength, self-belief, my confidence is higher than ever and I feel I am finally strong enough to deal with past and current traumas. My business is finally establishing and I have enrolled with SIT to do my business papers next year.

I am so grateful for the support and I feel like I am finally where I need to be in my life.

TE WAKA TUHONO



TE WAKA TUHONO PARTICIPANTS STORIES

OCTOBER 2024

Here's what one of the rangatahi had to say about Te Waka Tuhono and a recent camp in Waitati:

"I'm 15-years-old and I live in Invercargill. I am Ngai Tahu. I entered Te Waka Tuhono after I was referred from my school. I was referred because I wasn't well behaved at school.

I'm a tuakana now. I attended my first camp with Te Waka Tuhono about four months ago."

I have learnt so much since being a part of the Te Waka Tuhono service. I have learnt waiata, how to do a karakia, how to make pois and so much more. The cultural aspect has meant so much to me because I have been able to learn more about my culture and I feel more connected.

I have more energy now and it has definitely helped to keep me out of trouble. I am due to start back at school again soon.

It's like having another whānau being part of this. It has also helped me to put some goals in place. I am re-focused and back in line!"

**"AT HOME I CAN'T BE ME – I HAVE TO WEAR A MASK
– BUT HERE I CAN JUST BE MYSELF, TALK FREE, BE
FREE. I WAS ACCEPTED."**

Another rangatahi (15 years) said being part of the service had meant so much so her because she it allows her to feel free, accepted, and comfortable in who she is.

"My life was confusing growing up. There was no structure at home, no straight line, and I never caught a break. There was always drama. It hasn't been an easy life for me.

My Dad left when I was about five. He promises me things but he never keeps them. At school I was ditching a lot and arguing with students and teachers. I wasn't communicating.

One of the Deans at school suggested a school counsellor and it was her who referred me to Te Waka Tuhono. I thought it would just be another waste of time programme – I've been in so many and none have helped. But I thought I would try and I am so pleased I did!

At home I can't be me – I have to wear a mask – but here I can just be myself, talk free, be free. I was accepted. I was, for the first time, comfortable in a place. My space is respected, my values and wishes are respected. I love being here because it's a break from not being me. The kaimahi are always there for some great advice too!

I have learnt so much. Coming here has taught me how to be free, how to be myself, how to react to things, and I have learnt a lot of my culture which is nice because I've never been connected to it. I feel like I am now.

In the future I want to work in social welfare and do things similar to what the kaimahi at Te Waka Tuhono do. I want kids my age to feel how I felt be comfortable.

Another rangatahi (13 years) who joined the camp is feeling more connected to her culture.

"I love the camp. It's so much fun!

I have learnt heaps about my culture, and I feel so much more connected. I am even a tuakana now!

Being a part of Te Waka Tuhono has been so important to me because my Grandad wanted me to learn more about my culture, and also to not be anything like my mother.

I have kept that promise."



ANONYMOUS



MANAWA ORA

ANONYMOUS CLIENT

JANUARY 2023

Heavy drinking for 40 years, leading up to more than an 18-pack of beer a day allowed me to blank out the pain I was feeling from childhood trauma, but when my health started playing up and I was afraid of losing everything, NKMP stepped in and changed my life! I have been sober for almost four months and will never look back.

I've been a heavy drinker since I was 14 and over the years it continued to get worse.

I had a traumatic childhood. I spent my first few years in a children's home and at 14 I was sent to live with my abusive, alcoholic father. My younger siblings were sent to my Mum's. I could never understand why I was the only one left with Dad. It felt like a punishment. She told me later it was because I reminded her too much of my father. We never had a relationship after that.

My dad was an awful man. He would abuse me mentally and often beat me up. I felt like I was completely on my own. Every day he would come home from work, shower and head to the pub where he would stay until closing leaving me to fend for myself. I would steal money off him sometimes so I could feed myself, but he would find out and beat me up.

"WE STAY IN IT BECAUSE WE LOVE IT. IT'S ALL ABOUT THE PEOPLE. IT'S REWARDING WORK."

My first experience with alcohol was when my father was at the pub and I was trying to find something to eat. I found a bottle of Port and thought I'd try it. I really enjoyed it so I had more and next thing I knew I was passed out on the kitchen floor. My dad arrived home, picked me up and put me on my bed. He didn't care and he never spoke of it again.

I continued to drink a lot. I was trying so hard to hide all of the pain and anger I felt towards my father. I would often get into fights with other people and eventually I was sent to a mental institution. I stayed there until I was 16. During my time there, I was abused sexually, mentally and physically. I continued to get angrier and angrier and I continued to drink (home brew made by another patient).

Once I got out, I got my own flat. My whole life revolved around drinking and getting into trouble because I didn't care about anything else. I was now trying to block out my father as well as what happened in the institution. When I was about 18, my Dad kicked a coffee cup out of my hand and that was it. I was so angry. We didn't speak for years after that.

He remarried and his wife was one of the best people to ever come into my life. She really cared about me, and it felt like, for the first time I had someone in my corner. In her early 60's she was dying of cancer and she asked me to promise that I would look after my father in his elderly years. Because I respected her so much, I did as she asked, even though he continued to push me away. He passed away about seven years ago, but he continues to live on inside my head.

My drinking continued to get worse as I got older. By now, it had become a lifestyle. An 18-pack of beers a day was normal, a lot of times it would be more, and I was spending around \$400 every week. This carried on for about 25 years. It made me feel bulletproof.

I would only drink at night, after work, but I would clock-watch and think about it all day. I'd be up at 6am or earlier to go to work but I always felt tired and sluggish during the day.

I met my wife 19 years ago. She has been my rock and I don't know how she's continued to put up with me all of this time. I was always emptying our bank accounts just to drink and everything else would suffer. She would be in tears because we couldn't afford basic things. I will never put her through that again.

Things started getting really bad. I was on the brink of losing my marriage and everything else. I walked into my boss' office at work one day and started talking. I had a complete breakdown. I told her what was happening and that my health was also starting to suffer – enlarged liver, spleen and prostate.

She told me to leave and go see an EAP counsellor, so I did. Once I was there, she took me over to Nga Kete and I've never looked back.

I was referred to the Manawa Ora Alcohol and Other Drug Community Withdrawal Service and Mahana Southern Maori Mental Health and Addiction Service. The withdrawal service was great. The nurse didn't judge me. She was there to help and she helped me. I know at this stage I was ready as well and I found it easy to stop because I was excited about getting away from it.

The nurse would talk to me, explain things to me, and I felt I could relate to her. The Mahana counsellor was the same, there was no judgement, and both have been incredibly helpful and supportive.

I know if I have cravings or I am feeling down, I can give the counsellor a call. He always picks me back up. He has also referred me to an ACC counsellor to support with past trauma.

They are both fantastic. I am so impressed with the services. I don't have enough words to express how I feel about what they've done for me. Without them, I would probably still be drinking, feeling lost, not knowing how to stop.

Thanks to Nga Kete I have done it! I have stopped drinking entirely and for good. I don't miss it at all.

I feel good. I feel happy. I've got lots of energy. My health has improved tremendously. I drink lots of water. We've got money in the bank. At 58, I just brought my first ever home which I never thought would have been possible.

I'm so excited for my alcohol-free future!

HIWA-I-TE-RANGI

ANONYMOUS CLIENT

JULY 2024

I was a “raging addict” with severe trust issues when I met the Hiwa-i-te-rangi Advocate. Having her in my corner as I transitioned to an addiction-free life has been one of the most surreal parts of my life.

Growing up I was often left to myself. My Mum was always working and my Dad was in and out of jail so I never had stability and I hung out on the streets with the boys a lot.

When I was a young teenager, maybe 12-years-old, I was doing dumb stuff all the time, like breaking into empty businesses, smoking weed and drinking alcohol.

When I wasn't out on the streets I'd be with my Nana. She would take my cousins and I to the pub and we would have to wait in the car all day while she was playing the pokies. She'd give us \$3 each for the day.

I left school at 14 and started drinking alcohol more often. I was drunk a lot. When I turned 17 I got pregnant to a violent man who would often beat me towards the brink of death, but I was naive then and I thought that was his way of showing me he loved me.

“HAVING HER IN MY CORNER HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MOST SURREAL PARTS OF MY LIFE. TO BE ABLE TO TELL HER ANYTHING WITHOUT FEELING JUDGED ... WELL I'VE NEVER HAD THAT BEFORE”

At 19, I finally had enough and I left him. I honestly thought afterwards that he would try and kill me or have someone do it for him, and I went through a lot of anxiety.

Later on I had another child but the father and I didn't stay together.

When my second child was around eight months old I found out what methamphetamine was. I would have been about 22-years-old then. I knew I was becoming addicted and, before I got too deep into it, I asked my mother to look after my children.

I spent the next five years addicted to meth.

The fast-paced lifestyle attracted me because it meant I had no time to stop and actually think about anything, but the longer I stayed in it the less appealing it became. I couldn't go a day without it and then I started selling it to fund my own habit, which I knew was a dangerous slippery slope.

Last year I decided I'd had enough. I wanted to live a normal, structured life for the first time.

I self-referred to the Hiwa-i-te-rangi service at Ngā Kete Mātauranga Pounamu Charitable Trust. I remember the first time I met the advocate, I was so high I was shaking. I barely remember what I said to her, but the second time I met her I knew I had done the right thing.

Her support has meant the world to me. She supported me in every way as I transitioned from the meth life to my new life, living with my Mum and children.

She slowly started to build my confidence up and would push my boundaries in a way I so desperately needed. She would look things up for me because I didn't know how, and she showed me tons of study options. She even taught me how to cook some things!

Her support has kept me on track and I know that without her I would have gone right back to my old life, because it would have been so much easier.

Having her in my corner has been one of the most surreal parts of my life. To be able to tell her anything without feeling judged ... well I've never had that before. Not with anyone.

She has been a saviour for me.

The Hiwa-i-te-rangi counsellor also supported me and kept me on track to stay away from methamphetamine.

I have now been referred to the Pūrerehua Programme and the kaimahi has been equally supportive. She has helped me to book in for my restricted license, which I am sitting soon, and with her support I am working towards getting my own car, completing some study and eventually travel with my children. It is amazing to have some goals in place!

I am in a great place now. I appreciate life so much more, especially the little things, and I am so grateful for the amazing support I have had along the way.

HIWA-I-TE-RANGI

ANONYMOUS CLIENT

JULY 2024

An Invercargill woman has led a turbulent life from drug addiction to abuse and violence, to almost losing custody of her children. But, she says, the massive hub of services at Ngā Kete and its wrap-around approach has enabled her to move forward, get sober, gain employment, and finally get on the right track.

I grew up with a handful of my 11 siblings, a mother who was a heavy IV drug user, and an abusive father who would often hit me, my siblings and my mother.

My parents split when I was 9 or 10 and I lived with Mum. She became an IV drug user after an incident during my birth left her with chronic pain syndrome. For the pain she was prescribed methadone and that quickly turned into an addiction that continued to worsen and progress.

I felt like I owed Mum because of her pain starting when she gave birth to me. I was also conceived by rape and I took all of that blame of my own shoulders. I felt it was all my fault and because of this I needed to look after her. She was a neglectful mother and drugs always came first, but I really do think she tried her best.

“HAVING HER IN MY CORNER HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MOST SURREAL PARTS OF MY LIFE. TO BE ABLE TO TELL HER ANYTHING WITHOUT FEELING JUDGED ... WELL I’VE NEVER HAD THAT BEFORE”

Her way of raising me was to let me do whatever I wanted, which at the time was great, but in hindsight it only made everything worse.

A few years ago my mother passed away from a drug overdose.

Throughout my teenage years I was drinking heavily and smoking weed. I would often get in trouble at school picking fights with other girls, but it escalated when I once went too far and I was charged with grievous bodily harm. The judge wanted to send me to Te Puna Wai, but instead I agreed to attend school properly and complete some courses.

Despite this, I continued to offend. I got into further trouble for more assaults, willful damage, stealing – just lots of dumb stuff. I also started selling drugs to put food on the table.

By the time I was 18 I was addicted to methamphetamine. At 22 I met my partner and, while we love each other, we were both heavy drug users with a turbulent relationship. I refused to stop using even while I was pregnant with all three of our children. I feel absolutely terrible about that now and I do everything I can to try and make up for it.

A couple of years ago my partner and I had an argument, which turned physical. I left the house and called the police to check on him because I was worried about his mental state. When police arrived they realised that he had assaulted me in front of the children and a referral was made to Oranga Tamariki.

We were told, during the Family Group Conference, that we needed to stop using drugs or we would lose our children. Around the same time one of my family members was also fighting for custody.

This was the massive wakeup call I needed and I knew we had to clean our act up. I love my children with all of my heart and the idea that they would be taken away from me was heartbreaking.

Oranga Tamariki led me to Ngā Kete. I was referred to the Tui Ora service where a Whānau Tautoko Practitioner supported me with everything that had happened with OT. She helped me to understand what was happening every step of the process, and kept us on track to ensure we could keep our children.

She then put a referral through to Tūmanako Oranga Wellness Centre where we started seeing a drug and alcohol counsellor and the Hiwa-i-te-rangi advocate. We also underwent detox with a nurse, which went really well as we were already two weeks clean by ourselves.

I started working through my childhood trauma with the counsellor and she on-referred me to an ACC counsellor, which has been a huge help. I see the ACC counsellor fortnightly now. The Hiwa-i-te-rangi counsellor helped me to start to heal and made me feel so comfortable.

The wellbeing and therapy facilitator helped with breathing exercises, and the advocate has helped a lot with goal settings and keeping me on track. She helped with my CV and employment – I am now working full time – and she helped me to get my license. We have also worked together on a wellness recovery action plan and safety plans. We have written down my triggers and the people who can help

me when I am feeling those triggers, some coping mechanisms, and ways I can look after myself.

I was also referred to the BFC+ service and that is helping so much with paying off old debt and we are putting together weekly budgets, which has made life so much easier. We have done the parenting course and nutrition course through Tui Ora. The parenting course has really helped with our communication. We were on completely different pages in terms of how to parent and this has helped so much in that respect.

My partner and I are now in the best place we have ever been in. We are sober, communicating properly, and enjoying our lives together. I'm finally working through all of the past trauma and my triggers so I can stay on the right path.

Everything is more stable and settled now. The huge wrap-around service at Ngā Kete has meant everything to me. I didn't realise all of this support was available. Without all of this, we probably wouldn't have had the kids. I will be forever grateful.

TEOTI JARDINE



CULTURAL CONNECTION

TEOTI JARDINE

APRIL 2024

Riverton man Teoti Jardine, 80, is a potter, poet, psychiatric nurse, and gay rights activist who believes wellbeing is about taking care of ourselves and being who we are. Here Teoti lays bare the shock of discovering homophobia and how he escaped to the other side of the world to feel safe and accepted.

I was born in Queenstown in October 1944 and grew up on Kawarau Falls Sheep Station, which was my father's family farm. My father met my mother Sheila Wilkinson when she was nursing at Frankton Hospital. She grew up on Rakiura and has Kai Tahu whakapapa through her Great Grandmother Kuihi Bates.

Growing up I didn't realise how sheltered and free I was.

I spent my spare time dancing and playing with dolls and my parents and everyone around me accepted it. They accepted me just as I was which led to a wonderful, supportive upbringing.

So when I enrolled at Southland Boys' High School as a boarding student and became surrounded by homophobia and bullying, I quickly learnt I wasn't "normal."

"THE HOMOPHOBIA AFFECTED ME SO DEEPLY I STARTED CONSIDERING SUICIDE. I BECAME SO ANGRY THAT THERE WAS A LAW THAT BASICALLY SAID IT WAS A CRIME FOR ME TO EXIST."

In the 1940s and 1950s, Queenstown was a small town where everyone knew each other. It was a wonderful place to grow up. I knew from a very young age that I was interested in men rather than women. I remember, when I was about seven, I told my brother I wanted to kiss his friend Barry and he told me not to be so ridiculous. I couldn't understand why but thought, OK, there are some things I shouldn't say.

When I was at the boarding school there was a homosexual event published in the Southland Times and homophobia became rife. I thought to myself, Oh OK that's me. I had better hide who I am. That was the first time I had ever really felt that way. I had to bury who I was and play a game of not being myself.

The homophobia affected me so deeply I started considering suicide. I became so

angry that there was a law that basically said it was a crime for me to exist. I got so angry that I decided actually no, I wouldn't kill myself. Instead I would get as far away as I could from this country with this ridiculous law; where I could be who I am and feel safe.

So in 1965 at the age of 20 I found myself living in Montreal, Canada. I quickly made friends who introduced me to shows, drag queens, gay bars, and a safe way to live my life being who I was. I remember going to a drag queen event on Halloween on my first ever night at a gay bar, and my friend introduced me to someone and said, this is straight George from New Zealand.

I admitted to him that I wasn't straight and he said "I knew you weren't, you bitch." That same night I was dancing with a man who kissed me and it just felt like a ton of bricks had lifted off my shoulders. It was extraordinary. I didn't realise until then how much weight I was carrying not being able to be myself.

From that point forward I lived my life the way I wanted to. I joined a dance troupe, completed my psychiatric nursing training, studied pottery, learnt to touch type, and went to shows, especially the opera. I joined the peace movement, I meditated daily, and I met Arthur Weinstein, an interior designer from New York, and we fell in love.

**“FROM THAT
POINT
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WANTED TO.”**

During my time overseas I was hired as an assistant to the Chief Technician of the Cardiac Catheterization Operating Room at The Royal Victorian Hospital in Montreal. It was exciting and interesting, but I found my relationship with the patients gave me more satisfaction than my role as a Technician. To that end, I trained as a Psychiatric Nurse. People living with Mental illness are also disenfranchised and I could truly empathize with them.

Working with people who are experiencing psychosis, I soon learnt to be centered and balanced in order to be their anchor, and be there for them.

In 1970 Arthur and I moved to Italy so we could concentrate on pottery. 18 months later we moved to the United Kingdom where we set up a pottery studio. I also studied at the Beshara School for Intensive Esoteric Education at Chisolme House in Scotland. This was based on the teachings of 13th century Arab-Andalusian Muslim Scholar, mystic, poet and philosopher Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi. This made a huge impact on me, and I felt a deep connection with the school that continues today.

For a very short time we moved to Jamaica to chase the warmer weather, but it didn't work out. We ended up moving to Nova Scotia and that's where I lived for the

next 10 years. In 1977 my relationship with Arthur ended and I purchased his share of the property. We remained good friends until his death in the early 90s.

During this time, in 1972, I travelled home to New Zealand to spend time with my father after he suffered a major heart attack. It was such a blessing to have that time with him. I really got to know him during that time and I realised that if I had told him I was a homosexual when I was younger and that I wanted to be a dancer, he would have done everything in his power to make that happen. I know that now.

He passed away shortly after in 1973.

Later I trained to become a deckhand at a nautical school, and then worked on research vessels. I remember on one trip we sailed the St Lawrence Seaway, into the arctic and through huge icebergs, to Bermuda, through the Caribbean and finally the Panama Canal. What an extraordinary experience it was.

One day during meditation one of my tupuna visited me. He had a complete tā moko, and pounamu pendant hanging from his right earlobe. I could feel his strength coming into me and it was like he was telling me I needed the strength and vigilance of a warrior. He awoke in me my taha Māori and I knew I had to come home, and even though it took me seven years to do so, I returned home in 1984.

While staying with Mum in Invercargill I saw an advertisement in the Southland Times inviting homosexual men and Health Professionals to a talk by Bruce Burnett about HIV /AIDS. We became good friends and I became a member of the AIDS Network, which later became the AIDS Foundation, and now The Bruce Burnett Foundation.

He was a lovely man filled with energy to spread the information around safe sex practices. He lived with HIV and it was an AIDS related condition that took his life in June 1985.

Later, in Dunedin, I met and became friends with two well-known poets, Hone Tuwhare and Cilla McQueen. This peaked my interest in poetry. In 2022 I was asked to write a poem for a publication celebrating 100 years since Hone was born. I will forever cherish that hand-made publication.

In 1988 I moved to Geraldine and worked at Timaru Hospital and also managed Heaton House, a psychiatric supported accommodation house. While I was working at Timaru Hospital I attended a Health Hui at Arowhenua Marae. After the Pōwhiri I was talking to one of the whānau who asked me about my whakapapa. When I told her, she said, "You're one of us". This was where the Tūpuna had called me to be.

I'll always be grateful for the Arowhenua whānau who so generously stepped me

into Te Ao Māori. I was with them for almost 30 years.

I attended the Hagley Writers Course, became a member of the Canterbury Poets Collective, a member and eventually chair of the Avon-Ōtākaro Network executive committee, and an iwi representative on the Canterbury Aoraki Conservation Board.

In 2018 I felt the call to come home to Murihiku and so I rented a flat from the Ōraka Aparima Runaka.

At the Riverton Medical Centre one day, I asked the nurse what was happening for the LGBTQI+ whānau down here. She asked for my phone number and I received a call and was told that CHROMA LGBTQI+ Initiative for Southland held a drop-in session every second Tuesday in the library of Ngā Kete.

I went along and met these wonderful young people doing such a great job and enjoyed these sessions just being queer together. They invited me to become their Kaumātua, which I felt humbled and honoured to accept.

I have come completely full circle. I fled Murihiku so I could be myself and now I am solidly being myself and supporting this group supporting so many others. I feel honoured.

Wellbeing to me is all about taking care of ourselves and being who we are. I believe, in a health setting, it's all about looking after our people. It can be the most simple things: Introduce yourself, it's about mihimihi, take the time, allow the tangata whaiora to tell you about themselves. You just have to make that time and if you do, everything else will fall into place.

Life is wonderful living in the beautiful Aparima! I live with my dog Aimee who I walk by the beach daily. I continue to connect with the Beshara School. We do readings every Wednesday morning via ZOOM. That nourishes me and my spiritual wellbeing. Living in Te Ao Māori is the main source of my spiritual wellbeing and I feel blessed.

Recently I was invited to speak at a Gay Pride event in Nelson. What an honour it was to be there and to share my thoughts. When young gay men come to me saying they would like to tell their parents but are feeling vulnerable about doing so, I tell them to wait until you are feeling strong about who you are. You can do that here in Aotearoa now, not go to the other side of world like I had to.

During my life people have asked me what happened to make me queer, what's wrong with me? What happened is that we are born and we are who we are. Stand strong within yourself. Ngā mihi.



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NGA KETE MATAURANGA POUANAMU
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