



Ngā Kōrerorero  
Stories of Odyssey



ODYSSEY



# Together it's possible

We are exceptionally privileged at Odyssey to share in so many journeys each year, journeys of acceptance and growth, of aroha and connection.

For many people, connecting with Odyssey is a turning point in their lives. Accessing our services provides the space and opportunity for reflection and discovery, for learning and practicing new skills, for working towards goals that support wellbeing.

This is true for tāngata whai ora and also for kaimahi.

Together, we learn, grow and challenge ourselves to move forward - with tika | trust, pono | honesty, kaitiaki | responsibility, manaaki | concern and aroha | love.

To celebrate our 40 years, we wanted to share with you some of our stories – stories where people, whānau and communities are connected and supported to live the lives they want.

**Here, Josh shares insights about his recovery journey with Te Ara Oranga and Odyssey's Te Wairua North. Ngā mihi nui Josh!**



# Putting the pieces back together and starting a new life with confidence

Joshua had been in and out of prison for around 15 years and as a result of methamphetamine use had ended up in hospital several times before he came into contact with Odyssey through the Te Ara Oranga Methamphetamine Harm Reduction Programme, a partnership between NZ Police, Northland DHB and various service providers in the region.

Josh was accepted into Odyssey's Te Wairua North in February 2020. By November, he was ready to move out, confident about his future and looking forward to "doing fun things in the community, which I've never been able to do before because I've been a full-blown addict."

Josh had a difficult upbringing, having been removed from his biological parents when he was seven and put into foster care when he was ten. He began drinking and

using cannabis in his teens, and then methamphetamine in his early 20s. That led to crime, such as car conversion, to fund his drug use.

In early 2020 he was facing another prison sentence when he was offered a chance to join the Odyssey programme through Te Ara Oranga. It was through this initiative that

**"You have to slow right down, throw everything that you thought made you 'you' out, and start at the bottom and rebuild yourself."**

Josh was connected with Odyssey Pou Whanau Connector, Nina Stanley. She regularly visited Josh at home, supported him through court processes and ensured he had a



## Te Ara Oranga

The Te Ara Oranga (The Path to Wellbeing) methamphetamine harm reduction pilot was co-designed with Te Tai Tokerau communities and launched in October 2017.

A joint initiative between Northland District Health Board (NDHB) and NZ Police, its goal is to reduce methamphetamine demand by enhancing treatment services and increasing service responsiveness. Anyone who would benefit from treatment is offered the opportunity and contacted within 48 hours of referral. More than one third of tāngata whai ora, referred to mental health and addiction services through these new referral pathways, were not previously known to these services. Te Ara Oranga has resulted in closer working relationships between communities, health services and NZ Police in Northland. Odyssey is on the Te Ara Oranga steering group and has supported 589 people access methamphetamine interventions and support since October 2017.


place at Te Wairua North. “She was a big, big help for me to get here,” says Josh. “She’s been great.”

Nina presented him with a make-or-break chance of an alternative future, he says, one that didn’t involved drugs or alcohol or “sitting in a cell”.

The first weeks with Odyssey were the hardest. Adjusting to a more structured schedule was a particular challenge, such as going to bed at a certain time and rising before 7am.

“I didn’t know how to sleep. I got so little sleep in the last seven or eight years, I was afraid to go to bed.”

Over the following months he learned a lot about himself, about his own sometimes aggressive body language and style of communication, and how to address that. He also learned to be more sensitive to others and to what might be going on in other people’s lives and minds. “And once I got a grip



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of that at Level One everything just started to like fall into place for me. Without the help of Odyssey I would have never figured it out.”

Having worked his way up through the different levels in the Odyssey programme and up to Level Four, he says supporting new residents and being a role model to them has been particularly satisfying. “That’s been huge.”

He has participated in several programmes offered through Odyssey. He points to the SMART Recovery groups (Self-Management and Recovery Training) which helped him identify personal goals and set a plan on how to achieve them. One goal achieved invariably led to the setting and achieving of another, he says. “So you set yourself a goal, then ask yourself, ‘is that realistic?’ Then you set

yourself a time frame for that goal. It’s a really clever approach because it helps you to set yourself a goal, keep with it, and when you achieve it, set yourself another goal.”

He adds: “I have learned so much here. It’s unbelievable. I feel confident that I can take what I’ve learned from here and take that out into the community and with a completely different me.

“It’s like Mike King says - ‘I’m sick and tired of being sick and tired’ and it’s time for me to get back out there.”

He will be returning to live with his foster father, and is hoping to train and become a Peer Support Worker, to work with and support others with addiction problems. “I have the practical experience. I know how it goes, so I think I’d be really good at it.”

Josh compares his experience at Odyssey as being given the chance to rebuild a vase that has been knocked off the table. “It breaks into a million little pieces, and you have to glue all those little bits and pieces back together.”

Advice to others entering the programme? “You have to slow right down, throw everything that you thought made you ‘you’ out, and start at the bottom and rebuild yourself.”

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Many thanks to Margo White for writing our 2020 Annual Review stories.