

A multi-generational documentary exploring Rites of Passage in our modern world, and the mysterious 'golden thread' that connects us all.



Visionary rite-of-passage facilitator, Jim Horton and filmmaker son, Jay, embark on a global quest to learn from experts to co-create a life-changing program for fathers and sons. But when Jim is diagnosed with a terminal illness, and Jay's children reach the rite age; life and legacy are cast into question.

Watch the Trailer & Full Proposal

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## SYNOPSIS:

As a father of two boys, dabbling in drugs, alcohol, and cars, Jim was compelled to create the type of rite-of-passage that he wished he'd had the opportunity to undertake. Our journey begins in a circle of trees, with a fire, and a vision to 'create something for the boys'. 20-years ago around that fire, a program for young people was seeded... 'Tracks' is a multi-day process of initiation, challenge and growth that has gone on to impact thousands of families, since its inception in 2002. People travelled from far and wide, to share their stories, to learn, and to heal. They began to remember an ancient and natural process, and in this film, we speak to some of the participants and facilitators about the lasting impact the 'tracks experience' has played in their lives.

*A central thread in the Fathers & Sons story is the colourful character of visionary youth pathways director Jim Horton, told through the lens, and gentle humbleness of filmmaker son Jay. When Jay discovers a box of old 8mm video and a lifetime of archival footage the story of why the family gave up a successful dental practice in Canada to move to the end of the road in Golden Bay, New Zealand, becomes clear.*

In their new home at 'Tui Community', the Horton family explores a life connected with ritual and nature as Jim embraces the mythopoetic men's movement and literary greats such as Robert Bly and Joseph Campbell whose words form a solid foundation for our feature-length story... *"We have not to venture the journey alone for the heroes of all time have gone before us, we have only to follow the thread of the hero's journey."*

Throughout human history ritual forms have emerged that coincide with significant transitions throughout our lives: birth, coming of age, marriage and death, are marked and managed through life-cycle rituals. These ritual events not only assist and support an individual's transition to a new stage, but attend to their relationship too and the needs of their family, community, culture, ancestors, spirit, and nature. As Celia Lashlie, former prison manager and author of Raising Boys notes *"If men can begin to share their stories with their sons ... and if we can honour these stories within our society... we'll be taking a significant step forward in guiding our young men successfully into manhood."*

***But what is manhood? Why are these experiences so important in shaping young adults into powerful agents of good in our communities? And how are we redefining the stereotypical male role model in our modern world?***



Since 2004, Jim and Jay have embarked on several 'quests' to attend events, meet and interview thought-leaders in Australia, Hawaii and the continental United States. Many of these visionaries have returned to visit the Tui events park as guest facilitators, or elders in the numerous rites of passage programs that run for Men, Women, Boys and Girls. Over the decade Jim was the Tracks 'event director. Jay provides a more colourful explanation of his father's role; *"Jim loved to speak poetry into moments of depth and transition, ritual spaces, into gatherings of men and boys becoming men. He physically wasn't able to speak much in the last couple years because of his condition - which frustrated him intensely - he always had so much to say and was known for his oratory power and skill."*

It was 2014, and Jay was living in Amsterdam with his partner and two young children when he received the phone call from Jim. His father calmly explained that he had just been diagnosed with ALS or Motor Neuron Disease. This triggered a turning point in both their lives, as Jay returned home. A new desire to share their story and legacy emerged, and thus the book, 'Making Life Stages' and an associated film project was created. Looking back, this event could be considered a rite of passage, but how they and those around them navigated this new 'edge' to life and the circumstances around Jim's courageous suicide five-years later, takes us into the void and an exploration of the dark night of the soul.

Depression, hopelessness and suicide are very real issues facing young and old in our challenging times. Jim and Jay's experiences will be woven into the fabric of *Fathers and Sons* and presented to our audience as a collective story, with observational footage from the 'Tracks' rites of passage journey; poetic reflection and cinematic montages. We will also draw on the experience of facilitators who provide their own experience navigating the twists and turns of life.

In the final act of reflection a year after Jim's passing, we celebrate life and seek to understand why he disappeared into the night with only a brief note. We acknowledge the heroes who have gone before and turn to face the future. For Jay, that reflection turns to his legacy and his children. With a son who has moved to Wellington for high school and a teenage daughter questioning her gender identity at the time of her rites of passage, he is now forced to redefine the process that has been much of his life. He begins to make new connections and ask the question, how 'traditional' rite-of-passage programs can evolve to reach a new 'gender-fluid' audience. Are the 'masculine' and 'feminine' dissolving into a new space of one-creation?

We will explore this new uncharted territory while engaging with our core audience. There will be more on this as part of the impact campaign as we continue to build on existing connections and partner programs that support rites-of-passage around the world.

