

**I am a good man**



### **Cover Art:**

Ko Ngai Tai te hapū,  
Ko Ngai Tai te iwi,  
Ko Tairoa Flanagan toku ingoa.

Figure 20. A close-up photograph of one side of the carved tapatoru (triangle) and some of the pool balls enclosed by the rack. In the foreground, one of the pool balls also has a stylized Māori motif, pointing upwards and outward, towards the camera.

## **I am a good man**

Ae, I'm really proud to be Māori.

**I respect, I ask and I love.**

**I like knowing someone and them knowing me.**

I love being in a relationship. My two previous relationships have been with women who have a disability, but that does not define who we are as people, as family members or as a couple.

**I like cuddles, closeness and being sexually intimate.**

Intimacy and sex is part of being in a relationship – a healthy, normal relationship. I am normal, sex is normal, intimacy is normal and having intimacy in my relationships means good communication.

**I know lust and I know boundaries.**

Respecting personal boundaries and not pushing those boundaries. Yeah sure, I want to go further at times but I want it to be right for both of us. For us, both to be ready.

**I am a good man.**

**I cry when a relationship does not work out.**

It hurts when I break up. I'm heart broken, frustrated, angry, confused and unsure.

**I ask, who else would be a good man like me, to her, and will he know how to be her good man?**

I really cared and loved my previous girlfriend and it hurts me to think about her with another man. I just keep wondering if he knows her well and is a good man to her as I was?

**I will always love my ex-girlfriends because they were part of me.**

**I get support from my whānau, friends and especially my mum.**

I have a really supportive whānau and friends and I know that it will get a little easier over time to accept the relationship has finished and that I need to keep going with the things in my life. Whānau is key to my wellbeing.

**I work hard, I swim, I do my marital arts and I play pool.  
I am a good man.**

Being busy and being active is important. I do something most days of the week. I want to be a competitive pool player. I'm working my way up the pool ladder. I practice every day on my pool table and go to club champs.

**Who is independent and who has a license to drive.**

Being independent is key to feeling good about myself.

Mum has taught me to do things for myself so that I can be independent. She taught me to drive. Took me for driving lessons, and went with me to the defensive driving programme. I learnt that road code so well.

**Around the community I have come to know,  
And who knows me.**

I lived in Rotorua before I came to Ōtautahi, and Rotorua will always be where I am from, but Ōtautahi is a good place, because I know my way around and the people here, and they know me. I like knowing my place.

I attended a mainstream school, and had great relationships with my peers, teachers and the principals of the school. They knew me and I knew them. I still know their names and when they were principals at those schools.

**I am a good man, who will love another,**

My whānau tell me I will get through my relationship breakup and meet someone else. I am actually taking someone out this Saturday to the movies but I want to take it really slowly because I want to get to know her.

**And, one day  
I will be a good... dad.**

One day, not yet, not soon, but one day, yeah I would like to have a family and be a good dad (laugh).

## **I am a good man**

I am a good man

A proud Māori man

Of Ngāti Whātua me Te Arawa descent

I respect, I ask and I love.

I like knowing someone and them knowing me.

I like cuddles, closeness and being sexually intimate.

I know lust and I know boundaries.

I am a good man.

I cry when a relationship does not work out.

I ask, who else would be a good man like me, to her, and will he know how to be her good man?

I will always love my ex-girlfriends because they were part of me.

I get support from my whānau, friends and especially my mum.

I work hard, I swim, I do my marital arts and I play pool.

I am a good man.

Who is independent and who has a license to drive

Around the community I have come to know,

And who knows me.

I am a good man, who will love another,

And, one day

I will be a good... dad.

# Key Messages

## He is speaking my language

- The Storyteller spoke for us. It was because he had the same values. He spoke our language. His poem is true for us.

## Words can go a long way

- The words that you say about people are very important. Words can go a long way. These words were beautifully spoken.
- We think the most important words the Storyteller wanted us to hear were that he was a good man because of the way he treated other people. He said he respected, he asked and he loved when he was in a relationship.
- Negative words go a long way too. – In other libraries we know we are not written about as good men or women who respect and ask and love.
- People with a learning disability are also talked about as if they are never good enough, or never ready enough.
- Non-disabled men don't have to keep telling people they are good men.
- The problem is other people don't take the time to really get to know men and women with a learning disability.

## I love (too)

- We like that the poem spoke about the love people with a learning disability have for each other. It is important to understand that people with a learning disability love just as much as anyone else. We love just the same.
- We also heard it in the way he didn't move on from his ex-girlfriends because they were important. He said they were part of me. Being loyal in as-well-as out of relationship is important. We also think;
- When you have a real connection with someone it can take years to recover. We all felt that our most important relationships often go unrecognized by others.
- The Storyteller is right in telling everyone that learning disability doesn't define who you are. Inside of relationship, how you treat your partner is who you are.
- Intimacy and sex should be part of a normal healthy relationship. He was normal because sex and intimacy is normal.
- It is important to listen to the Storyteller when he tells us that one day he will love again. He is telling us he doesn't need protecting. He is also telling us that loving someone else is the way he will get his wish to become a good dad one day. We don't want to be over-protected.

### **Talking without words**

- We liked that the Storyteller said that sex was just another part of conversation. A good way of communicating. We also thought;
- He was respectful by not touching too. He went at their pace. To us, he was saying even though he wanted it, he only wanted it if his partner felt safe and felt comfortable. Sex shouldn't be about pleasing one person. It should be about pleasing both people. That is how you show you want them for who they are.
- Knowing when to touch and when not to touch was how the Storyteller showed his partners he truly loved them. We thought the Storyteller might be looking for someone who had the same values.

### **The Storyteller's whānau put him on the right path**

- We think the Storytellers whānau helped him to know who he was, including his belief that it was normal to have girlfriends, to have sex and to think about marrying and having children. To his whānau, learning disability didn't define who he was. They put him on the right path. We also thought;
- Whānau / family can also help "reset" the way people with a learning disability feel about themselves if they are bullied or get negative messages about their future.

### **I know my community and they know me**

- One of the gifts the Storyteller's whānau / family had given him was the skills and habits he needed to live a life of his own making.
- Driving meant he could be in the places he wanted, when he wanted with who he wanted. He could start and be in relationships on his own terms. He wasn't a passenger in a van – he was in the driving seat!
- We think that having ordinary relationships in ordinary places help to set the expectations the Storyteller had for himself. The ordinary wouldn't seem so extraordinary to this Storyteller.
- We wish all people with a learning disability had the same chance to begin relationships doing what they like doing, when they liked doing it, with who they liked doing it with.

### **Differences in the amount of baggage people carry with them**

- When we thought about the other stories in the library, we thought this Storyteller had less baggage to carry into his future. He hadn't made some of the mistakes other Storytellers said hung over their lives
- We also thought that in all of the stories men told, they wanted people understand they were good men too.
- We worry about how much opportunity men with a learning disability have to re-write their stories if the community never lets go of thinking badly of them.

### **What do you think?**