



The Principal and Board of Trustees

Dear Principal, Board Members and Guidance staff.

I am writing to explain the background behind the White Ribbon Ride and the kaupapa for a possible visit to your school.

A bit about White Ribbon

In 1991, a group of Canadian men formed the first White Ribbon campaign after 14 women were shot dead at the University of Montreal, by an “anti feminist”. Their call was for men everywhere to lay down their ‘arms’ against women and the White Ribbon became a symbol of that message. From there the movement has spread with 59 countries now taking the message of respectful relationships and non-violence toward women, to their communities. Every year the message takes on a slightly different focus. In 2019 the message was about challenging the stereotypes that boys grow up with about not being ‘manly’ to cry or express feelings. Having to ‘toughen up’ and ‘Be the Man’ are messages about toxic masculinity that have had a negative effect on many boys and young men growing up. This year (2020 was a non-starter due to Covid19) the messages are about changing the dialogues of toxic masculinity and encouraging respectful relationships

The White Ribbon Ride

This event is unique to New Zealand and is something that we are quite proud of. In November each year, a number of motorcycle riders take to the road to carry the Kaupapa of White Ribbon to schools, prisons and community groups. The



riders are just ordinary people some of whom have been through violence, and have stories to tell, where appropriate and others are there because they simply believe in the importance of the messages. Most of them take the two weeks off work as well as pay their own way. They do not ask for donations, they simply want to share the message and try to make a change and stamp out

violence towards Women.

The riders cover around 3000kms in the 10 days that they are on the road and make many stops along the way, visiting both primary and secondary schools, marae and prisons, while also attending many community gatherings that are organised in various centres on route. In the North Island the ride is organised slightly differently with a number of smaller



rides taking place. However, all of the rides culminate in a community gathering on November 25th, White Ribbon Day, where we ask men and young men everywhere to take the pledge, to 'Stand up, Speak out and Act to Prevent violence toward Women'.



What might a visit to your school look like.

The riders have visited many, many schools over the years and are very skilled at getting messages across to young people. Visits often start with all of the bikes and support vehicle riding onto the school grounds. The bikes are lined up and riders are often greeted with a Whakatau and short Mihi. The riders will respond



and either, move indoors to speak with the students if the weather is dubious, or are quite happy to speak outside. Some schools will offer a morning tea if timing is appropriate but is not expected. After the riders have had a chance to talk to the whole group, the students (and staff) are invited to have a look at the bikes.

Many photos are taken and some of the kids even get a chance to start and

rev them. (rides are not permitted due to H&S considerations). There is a chance here for the students to talk to the riders individually before they form up to ride on to the next venue. A police presence is likely. We have a great working relationship with the New Zealand police and they will most likely attend as well. We have had some visits where we are escorted with lights and sirens. It is a visit the students certainly remember if for nothing else but the bikes, but hopefully the messages of respectful relationships gets through and helps even one young person in the future.



The messages

Today's boys and young men are still being taught unhelpful messages about what it is to be real men. They are told to 'toughen up, don't cry, chin up, sit down, socks up, man up.....!' "boys and young men are routinely expected to betray their better natures, to smother their consciences, to renounce the best of themselves and submit to something low and mean. (Tim Winton).



- Therefore our key message is about

promoting healthy masculinity. Boys and men can still be 'brave', 'have muscles', be assertive and tough, love rugby, enjoy time with other men and boys. But boys and men should also be free to express sad and softer emotions, enjoy cooking, dancing, gardening and anything else that does not fit into gender stereotypes.

- Our other message is, that if they ever feel unsafe, or upset, they need to have someone they can talk to about it. A teacher, or teacher aide, a councillor, health nurse or even a police officer.

Our messages are not just to the boys. We want our young Wahine to hear the message that they should expect nothing less from the boys and young men around them. We want them to accept only respectful relationships and learn that it is important for them to walk away if things get toxic.

Where to From Here.

Please make contact with Te Waipounamu Riders Against Domestic Abuse Trust. admin@twradatrust.org.nz. If you are keen for us to visit, we will help with the logistics and pass on any requirements that the school might have. If possible we are also very happy to come and speak to you if you require more information. Meanwhile, there is a lot of extra information regarding the White Ribbon campaigns on the website, whiteribbon.org.nz

