



# Arts Access® Aotearoa

WHAKAHAUHAU KATO A O HANGA

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## Big 'A' Prison Arts Leadership Award

**Winner: Mark Lynds, Programmes Manager Area 1, Northern Region Corrections Facility and Auckland Prison**

**Judges' comment:** "Mark is a motivator, taking a project from the beginning and seeing it through to the end. He plans, works strategically and knows how to get what he wants for his projects. He's a mover and shaker, showing outstanding leadership qualities in his work with prison arts."

**Some background:** Mark Lynds takes a holistic approach to working with prisoners and believes that firstly, you need to find the key to unlocking the potential for good. For him, art and cultural knowledge is one of the most important keys to restoring mana and a sense of self-worth.

Mark has been working in prisons in New Zealand for 19 years – for the past six years as Programmes Manager at Auckland Prison and more recently at both Auckland Prison and Northern Region Corrections Facility (NRCF). He has constantly promoted the arts as a vehicle for rehabilitation and a vocational option.

"International research shows that the arts in their many forms can be a powerful rehabilitation tool for prisoners," Mark says. "Art creates the opportunity for self-expression, self-belief and mana enhancement. There are also opportunities for some of the really talented artists inside to build knowledge, gain qualifications and create a viable vocational option for themselves."

Thanks to Mark's leadership skills, prisoners' work is displayed inside and outside of prisons. He has raised money for charity through the sale of prison art, thereby encouraging prisoners to give something back to society.

Over the years, he has worked closely with art tutors and helped them promote art as a positive influence for change. He provided the impetus for several major projects, including the A+ Starship Hospital art project in 2004/2005. This culminated in the gifting of more than 30 artworks to the hospital.

Mark is a Pākehā of Irish descent but grew up in Te Kuiti surrounded by taha Māori. His wife is of Ngā Puhi descent and they have three children. Since moving from Auckland to Kaikohe and NRCF, he has breathed new life into its carving school and tikanga philosophy, with mentors/peer tutors teaching other prisoners traditional performing arts and whakairo. Several major works now adorn the public areas of the site.

These mentors are now working towards their Adult Teaching Certificates (Level 4). Two recently released mentors have taken up work with community groups while another who worked on the A+ Starship Hospital project from start to completion is now back in side – not as a prisoner but as a tutor in Tikanga Māori.

In 2007 and again in 2009, Mark organised an open day at NRCF, displaying the programmes, arts and culture to members of the local hapu, iwi and community. The open day in 2009 included an exhibition of artworks by staff and prisoners.

The carving school at Auckland Prison has also produced major works under Mark's supervision. It has gifted a waharoa (carved entrance) to a local school and is involved in several other community projects.