

# ETHNIC

## Women Leadership

1st Edition - November 2025



**CIRCLE  
OF  
STRENGTH**

**STORIES OF  
OUR IMPACT**

**VOICES FROM  
ONE OF US**

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# From The Editor

In many leadership spaces, I often hear the phrase, “lead yourself before leading others.” It sounds simple enough—until you find yourself, like me, a woman with ethnicity starting over in a new country, still figuring out where the supermarket keeps the rice. Yet somewhere between uncertainty and rediscovery, I found a sense of direction while reading every single submission for this first edition.

The Ethnic Women Leadership® Magazine is brought to you with encouragement, creativity, and the shared spirit of holding one another’s hands while finding our place in this land we now call home. In the first few pages, you’ll get to know the founder of Lady Khadija Trust and the vision behind this programme, you will also be welcomed by the Programme Lead.

Continuing the many successes of ethnic women in this country, we open with the story of Silky Sharma, whose business continues to grow from strength to strength. In celebrating authenticity that we hope will inspire our readers, we’ve also included Circle of Strength—a section offering reflections and tools to help us care for ourselves.

As a platform that showcases ethnic women, we feature stories from LiYing and Shahela, who give back to their communities in meaningful ways. The magazine also includes thoughtful reflections that have turned into a kind of toolbox, guiding us as ethnic women to move forward, yet remain grounded in where we come from.

We close this edition with artistic expressions from women across generations, sharing their reflections, voices, visions, aspirations, and of course, their remarkable talent in portraying life in this country.

In the end, I hope this first edition not only keeps you company over your morning coffee, but also offers a fresh lens through which to see leadership, one that grows from the lives and leadership journeys of ethnic women across New Zealand.

May this magazine be a gentle reminder that leadership begins quietly within ourselves, through grace in uncertainty, courage in transition, and care in every step we take together.

With gratitude and courage,  
**Dinda Veska**  
Editor & Communication Advisor  
Lady Khadija Trust





Lady Khadija Trust  
Empowering communities through compassion

# A WELCOME FROM Lady Khadija Trust

*Tenā koutou – Salam Alaikum – Peace and blessings,*

It is a privilege to extend a welcome to you within these pages, which present the diverse narratives of ethnic women in Aotearoa New Zealand. Beyond the promotion of inclusivity and diversity, this magazine aims to celebrate all of us who have come from across the globe and now call Aotearoa New Zealand home. Embodying a vision of a better world, Lady Khadija Charitable Trust seeks to empower communities through compassion, striving towards a future where communities thrive and flourish. Aligned with this vision, the Ethnic Women's Leadership® magazine serves as a celebration of various migrant women, their cultures, their journeys, their achievements and their aspirations.

In 2022, I was thrilled at the opportunity to launch Aotearoa New Zealand's first Ethnic Women's Leadership® course. The course's impact is evident in the testimonials we receive, with many of our alumni describing these sessions as "feeling like home" due to the safe space it created. Over the years, our alumni have told us their needs and what started as a course transformed into a programme of work – the Ethnic Women's Leadership® programme, which now includes leadership development, masterclasses on enterprise development, well-being, career development, dedicated courses for development of advocacy roles and a commitment towards an annual conference.

Over the years, my interactions with ethnic women have highlighted that they continue to face distinct challenges in Aotearoa New Zealand. But I also know that many ethnic women carry hearts of gold – through their generous sharing of skills and knowledge, they provide hope. Therefore, through this magazine, we want to showcase the challenges and the optimism. Every story shared within this magazine represents the unique ways in which ethnic women lead, inspire, and empower others, both professionally and personally.

I invite you, our reader, to engage with the knowledge, insights, and opportunities that this platform provides. And I welcome your contribution towards this kaupapa – by sharing your own journey, mentoring emerging leaders, contributing through your enterprise, or championing the value of diversity within your sphere of influence. So, join us by sharing this debut edition far and wide because, as the whakatauki goes

***"He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata!  
He tangata! He tangata!"***

***What is the most important thing in the world? It is people! It is people! It is people!***

*Ngā mihi nui,*

**Dr. Hafsa Ahmed MNZM**

**Co-Founder & Trustee of Lady Khadija Trust**



ABOUT

# Ethnic Women Leadership Programme



*Kia ora,*

As the Programme Lead coordinator from the Ethnic Women's Leadership® here in Christchurch, I am deeply honoured to share our journey with you. Established by ethnic women, for ethnic women, this programme serves as a safe space to explore identity, build confidence, and embrace our leadership with authenticities.

The year 2025 marks the third year of the Ethnic Women's Leadership Programme®, bringing together women from diverse cultural backgrounds from across the globe to learn, connect, and inspire one another. We share our stories, celebrate our cultures, and strengthen the skills we need to lead in our communities and beyond.

Watching participants step into their power and roles where their voices are heard is the most rewarding part of my work. I have seen participants arrive shy and uncertain, only to leave standing tall, speaking up, and taking the lead in their families, communities, and workplaces. Their growth is a testament to what can happen when women are empowered, supported, and encouraged to own their voices.

It is my hope that, whether you are already part of this community or are on the verge of joining it, your journey through this magazine will allow you to benefit from the values, stories, and experiences shared by the women whose voices are represented within these pages. Welcome to our story. Welcome to our movement. And perhaps, welcome to the start of your own leadership journey with us.

*Ngā mihi nui,*

**Benish Ibrahim**  
Programme Lead of Ethnic Women's Leadership®



# The Power of Authentic Leadership: Ethnic Women Shaping Aotearoa's Future



At the Ministry for Ethnic Communities, I am constantly inspired by the incredible ethnic women I meet, leaders who are shaping their communities while balancing work, family, and cultural expectations.

In my engagements, women share deeply honest reflections: the challenges or starting organisation or business from scratch, the moments of doubt and impostor syndrome, and the pride they feel when their work creates opportunities for others. Their stories remind me that authentic leadership doesn't mean having all the answers. It means showing up as yourself, staying true to your values, and leading with courage. That's why spaces for connection are so important.

Since August 2025, the Ministry hosted our first Ethnic Women Entrepreneurs Roundtable. Over 60 women entrepreneurs, business leaders, and researchers came together to connect, share their journeys, and exchange advice. It was inspiring to see how women drew strength from one another, turning challenges into lessons, rejection into resilience, and ideas into action.

These moments remind us that authenticity is not just an aspiration; it's a practice. It's about owning your story, challenging systems with courage, turning lived experience into

leadership, and building inclusive, resilient communities. Maybe one day, a young woman will stand up and say,

**"I chose to lead because I once heard the story of one of you."**

That's the power of authentic leadership. Every time a woman leads, in her family, her workplace, or her community, she becomes a trailblazer. Someone is watching, quietly learning that her voice matters too. These small, everyday acts of courage create ripples that grow into waves, shaping the leaders of tomorrow.

A heartfelt thank you to Lady Khadijah Trust for initiating this magazine and for your tireless work in developing ethnic women's leadership, regardless of their background, ethnicity, or faith.

**Mervin Singham,  
Chief Executive,  
Ministry for Ethnic Communities.**



# Leading as We Are

Women are really pivotal in the way we provide the vision and hold people together. Leadership, to me, isn't always about formal titles, it often lives in those everyday acts of care and courage that quietly shape our families, our workplaces, and our communities. Supporting women, especially those who have recently arrived or immigrated to Aotearoa, to build confidence, grow leadership skills, and live their full potential feels like a natural evolution of that truth.

At Rātā Foundation, our purpose is to strive for an equitable and sustainable society under the kaupapa of Te Tiriti — to empower communities to thrive. That means enabling people to have what they need to be well: connection, resilience, and a deep sense of belonging. We see connections as one of those vital pieces of social capital that bind us together. It's what allows people to say, "I belong here. I have my place here in Aotearoa." For us, women's leadership is about nurturing those connections to one another, to the place we stand, and to our own cultures.

Our ongoing relationship with the Lady Khadija Trust grows from this shared belief. Their work is deeply rooted in community, in helping women,

so supporting the Ethnic Women Leadership® programme felt like a natural continuation of that partnership, one that reflects our collective commitment to equity, connection, and authentic leadership.

Looking ahead, I hope each woman who takes part in this programme continues to live her full potential — playing a strong role in her community and family, weaving people together, and creating possibilities for others to flourish. And to every woman reading this, I hope you feel proud of who you are and of the contribution you bring to this country.

As you turn the pages of this first edition of the Ethnic Women Leadership® Magazine, may you find reflections of strength, courage, and authenticity — and may they remind you to keep standing in your own leadership, just as you are.

**Kate Sclater,  
Head of Community Investment,  
Rātā Foundation.**



## OUR WOMEN IN BUSINESS

# SILKY SHARMA

## AUTHENTICITY

## THAT *Inspires*

By: The Editor

After investing significant resources of both money and time in completing a Level 8 business qualification, Silky Sharma dreamed of building a career in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The path, however, proved far more challenging than expected. Rather than being deterred, Sharma turned those challenges into stepping stones,

drawing on her knowledge, skills, and practical experience to create opportunities rather than chase after them. Choosing courage over hesitation, she stepped into the world of entrepreneurship.

For a newcomer from an Asian country, offering event organising services is seen as taking extra study credit – challenging, yet rewarding. In the interview, she explained that balancing costs and benefits, navigating competition among highly skilled decorators, and simply being an effective facilitator for clients all depend on cultural, lifestyle, and social preferences. Along the way, she discovered that being a woman in business with Indian heritage was, in fact, a blessing for her venture. Having a robust understanding of the meaning of celebrations, festivals, and cultural identities set her apart in the field.

**Together these experiences have not only pushed me to grow but have ultimately strengthened my business and helped it stand out.”**

The pursuit of authenticity fueled her excitement to thrive.

Being a woman in business, motherhood soon became the next defining crossroads for Sharma.

**“Balancing the demands of running a business with the responsibilities of motherhood was incredibly difficult.”**

Yet, she remained persistent, finding a delicate balance between managing errands at home and closing deals with clients. Guided by her family values of determination, resilience, and the importance of never giving up when things get tough, Sharma continued to forge ahead, turning each challenge into an opportunity to grow.

Looking ahead, Sharma hopes her venture will achieve more than just financial success. “I hope to continue growing my business and inspire others, especially ethnic women of colour, to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams with confidence—breaking down barriers and creating opportunities where diverse voices and talents are celebrated and valued,” she expressed. Leading her venture as an ethnic woman has also made her deeply aware of the importance of inclusivity in the business community, “where every culture and contribution is embraced.”

We asked what she would tell her younger self about leadership or business. With passion, she said:

**“...believe in your own strength and the unique perspective you bring. Your passion and resilience will carry you through even the toughest moments.”**



# CIRCLE OF STRENGTH

## *Innate Wisdom and Wholeness*

### Emotional Intelligence in Action

By: Sharon Gardner - Registered Counsellor

**B**alancing two worlds comes naturally to some—but for many of us, managing our own needs alongside the demands of a new country is an ongoing, often invisible, skill. As immigrants, it's not just about learning new systems—education, workplaces, parenting, transport, social norms—it's about holding on to values that shaped us while adjusting to an entirely different way of life.

This journey demands resilience, adaptability, and immeasurable courage. In our effort to move with grace and truth in this new land, it becomes a quiet struggle when our emotions are silenced, dismissed, or lost in translation.

**E**motional intelligence is the self-awareness that helps us recognise those inner storms manage big feelings, and keep moving forward through challenge. While psychologist Daniel Goleman coined the term in 1995, emotional intelligence existed long before in the quiet teachings of Buddhist mindfulness, the self-mastery of Indian philosophy, the storytelling of South American elders, and the

Indigenous wisdom of harmony in relationships. For us as ethnic women, it's not just a psychological concept—it's lived experience:



1. Knowing when to speak, and when to pause
2. Managing strong emotions when navigating cultural clashes or transitions.
3. Continuing forward in the face of discrimination or hardship.
4. Understanding others—New Zealanders and people from different cultures—with openness.
5. Building respectful relationships, or advocating for yourself in schools, workplaces, or healthcare systems.

**O**ften, we're caught in the tension between cultural expectations and the pressure to survive quietly. In some cultures, expressing emotions—especially anger, sadness, shame, or

# “Model *myth* Minority”

fear—is seen as weakness. In others, self-sacrifice is idealised, and voicing pain is frowned upon.

As immigrants, we also encounter the “**model minority**” **myth**—the unspoken rule that we must be high-achieving, grateful, and silent. Add to that New Zealand’s own “she’ll be right” culture, where emotional needs are swept under the rug, and many of us find ourselves in a silent deadlock.

Emotional intelligence helps break this cycle. It gives us language for what we were told to hide—and permission to feel deeply, without shame.

As Stephen Covey writes, reflecting on Victor Frankl’s work:

**“Between stimulus and response, there is a pause. In that pause lies our freedom and our peace.”**

So how exactly does emotional intelligence serve us at home, at work, and in our communities?

Being aware of our emotions reduces their control over us and creates space to choose how we want to respond. Sometimes this means letting go of old beliefs, other times it means setting firm boundaries for our well-being.

Empathy helps in cross-cultural conversations—knowing others may see the world differently allows us to communicate with greater care and curiosity.

Self-regulation is especially valuable in difficult or hostile environments. We’ve all heard “*keep calm and carry on*”—but learning to actually be calm is a skill, not a slogan. Social skills strengthen our capacity to lead, advocate, and build bridges.

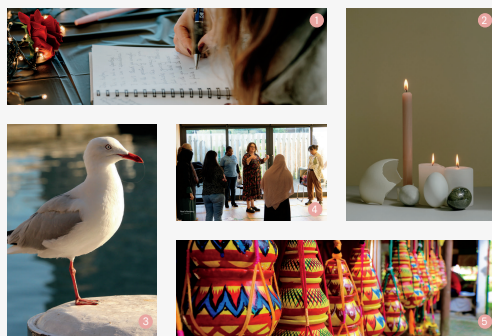
Emotional intelligence helps us reclaim our stories, so we’re not driven by emotion alone—but empowered to act with clarity and alignment with our goals and values.

## Growing Emotional Intelligence

And here’s the good news—emotional intelligence is not fixed. It’s not something we’re born with or without. It’s something we can nurture and grow.

For ethnic women, this often means unlearning messages we were taught about being “too sensitive” or “too much” and giving ourselves permission to feel, to speak, and to take up space.

Here are a few ways to begin:



1. **Journaling** helps unpack layered emotions like cultural guilt, grief, and anger. Writing gives shape to what has long gone unnamed.
2. **Mindfulness**, rooted in our own cultural or spiritual traditions—breathing, prayer, meditation—grounds us and honours ancestral strength.
3. **Assertive communication workshops** teach us to speak our needs clearly and confidently—a skill I’m still learning myself!
4. **Culturally sensitive counselling** or therapy offers a safe space to reflect, heal, and grow.
5. **Talking circles**, women’s groups, or community spaces offer collective support and a safe space to share common experiences and stories.



This is not a quick fix—it is a gradual unfolding. I am on this journey, too: finding my voice, holding cultural expectations with care, and learning to belong more deeply to this beautiful country called Aotearoa.

May this be a beginning—a return to your wholeness, your voice, and the truth of your being.

### **Building Emotional Awareness: Two Simple Practices**

These two brief exercises support emotional clarity and resilience:

#### **1. The 60-Second Emotion Scan**

Set a timer for 60 seconds, close your eyes, and slowly scan your body from head to toe. Notice where you feel tension or discomfort. A tight jaw might suggest anger, while a sinking feeling in your chest could mean sadness. This simple check-in helps you understand emotions through physical sensations, making it easier to stay in tune with how you're really feeling.

#### **2. Emotion Naming Practice**

Throughout your day, when a feeling arises, pause for 30 seconds and name it specifically. Instead of saying you feel “bad,” ask yourself—is it frustration, guilt, fear, or disappointment? Expanding your emotional vocabulary turns vague discomfort into clear understanding, giving you better tools to respond calmly and confidently.

Sometimes, the first act of emotional intelligence is simply to pause and ask:

**“What am I really feeling beneath this?”**

Psychologist Carl Jung said:

**“Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.”**

In the quiet of reflection, we find clarity. And from clarity comes courage and compassion.

### **Reclaiming the Sacred**

To be emotionally intelligent is not just a wellbeing tool—it's a sacred act. It is a reclaiming of who we are when the world tells us to be small, quiet, or grateful without question. I believe in the sacredness of this process: in learning to understand our emotions, we reclaim our voice, our wholeness, and our right to feel the full spectrum of human emotion.

**“..learning to actually be calm is a skill, not a slogan.”**



# Wahine from over 19 different countries



Photo Credits:  
Rami Baha,  
Dinda Veska,  
Razi Syed



# in our community *with* Confidence, Connection, & Leadership.




The Ethnic Women's Leadership® Course began in Ōtautahi Christchurch with a simple yet powerful vision: to create a space where ethnic women could explore their identities, grow cultural confidence, and discover their strengths as leaders. What started as a local initiative has now expanded to Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland, and Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington, reflecting both the need and the momentum of this kaupapa. Across six cohorts, participants representing over 19 countries have shared their stories, built enduring connections, and embraced the truth that leadership begins with self. Together, they form a growing movement of wāhine ready to influence communities and shape futures across Aotearoa.

## Thank You to Our Funders



Connect with us: [ethnicwomen.nz@gmail.com](mailto:ethnicwomen.nz@gmail.com)

A photograph of a person sitting on a wooden bench by a lake. The person is seen from behind, looking out over the water towards a range of mountains under a clear sky. The foreground shows some grass and a large rock. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

“The quieter  
you become,  
the more you  
are able to  
hear.”

Ram Dass

## CIRCLE OF STRENGTH

# The Power *of* PAUSE

By: Amanda Smidt

Pausing on a winter's morning in Ōtautahi Christchurch. Sitting in a coffee shop overlooking a carpark, beautiful trees, all at different stages of losing their leaves. In this light, the colours are both dull and vivid. Rain clouds furiously gathering in the distance, coming closer. I hear a soft thunder in the distance. Wind starts to shake the leaves – I feel a stirring deep within me, a flood rushing through my chest, I tighten my grasp around my coffee cup feeling the heat warm my hands. A quick thought of my DNA crosses my mind. I curiously hold onto this somewhat odd thought, and as I do, I think of all that has made me who I am today.

I think of my maternal ancestors migrating from Central Africa down into Southern Africa – this powerful image of the drive and resilience of that journey sits with me. I wonder why they decided to migrate. I wonder what it must have been like to uproot all that they knew as a community and set off to new, unfamiliar horizons – the unknown dangers, terrain, possibilities. As they journeyed, how did they make decisions about when and where to rest, who would lead and who would be on the lookout, who would hunt and who would take care of the community, when and where they would go next, futhermore, when and how they would finally put down roots to build their lives and livelihood. I wonder about what shaped them as people, and as a community in this new environment, and how their decisions, dreams, and actions have shaped subsequent generations – and me.

My own migration from South Africa to New Zealand hundreds of years later is not lost on me – as I, too, try to find my place to live well, be well, contribute, and belong – to find my *tūrangawaewae*. I recall learning this word, *tūrangawaewae*, in my first few months in New Zealand. Broken up it means: *tūranga* (standing place), *waewae* (feet), often translated as 'a place to stand'. I loved how beautiful it sounded to my ear, and how significant the word was as a new migrant grappling with finding my place in this new country, and what it means to me now as a “seasoned” migrant feeling a little more assured of my South African heritage and my joint-identity as a New Zealander.  
Ahhh. The joy of taking pause.

## Taking Pause

When I reflect on the words of Ram Dass, “the quieter you become, the more you are able to hear”, it is a reminder to me that taking a pause is not only about finding a place and time to quieten the external noise we are constantly confronted with both locally and globally, but it is also about softening our own inner noise – the constant chatter and conversations we have with ourselves – so that we can hear the subtle whispers.

As migrant women, life can get busy. We juggle multiple roles and responsibilities, often feeling the pressure to prove ourselves in our new environment. The demands of work, and finding meaningful work, of family, and social obligations, although a wonderful blessing, can leave us feeling overwhelmed and exhausted – sometimes feeling like we are on a treadmill and the speed button is out of our control. Amid this busyness though, the value of taking time to push the pause button, and to catch our breath, cannot be underestimated.

We bring with us such a rich tapestry of experiences, cultures, and traditions. Our journeys are unique, and our stories are incredibly powerful. Taking time to pause allows us to honour our heritage, to celebrate our achievements, to acknowledge the challenges we have overcome and are still working through, to ponder on those things that are not quite serving us – those things that are unsustainable – and gifting ourselves the time to find awe, inspiration and hope in possibility.

**When was the last time you intentionally took time to pause? Where were you? What came up for you? What did you do next?**

## Finding Moment of Stillness

I cannot stress enough the value of taking time to just be still at different times in our lives. This precious gift of reflection on our career and life allows us to reconnect with who we are and the person we are becoming, to remember our roots, and to appreciate the progress we have made, the seeds we are planting and nurturing.

Pausing gives us the opportunity to evaluate our goals, to reassess our priorities, and to adjust.

Personally, and as a career practitioner working with migrant women, it is these times of intentional introspection that has had a real and enduring impact on our personal growth and of our desire and ability to enact our purpose. Our “why”. It is when we are constantly on the treadmill of life at high speed that our “why” and motivation and energy to pursue our dreams can become blurred or lost or confused.

We are spoilt for choice with natural beauty surrounding us here in Aotearoa New Zealand! Enticing us, encouraging us, willing us to be still – to take a break from the hustle and bustle of life, and to find joy and awe in the simplicity of the present moment. In practice, finding the space to reconnect with ourselves could mean simply setting aside time in our calendar for “pause moments” each day or once a week, or at special times during the year – and being committed to it like you would with other calendar meetings.

## From pause to possibility

I am not surprised we finally have a magazine dedicated to migrant women in New Zealand. Born from many moments of pause. I look forward to finding my quiet space to read and reflect on the powerful stories and journeys of women from all over the world, making New Zealand their place to stand.

So, let us take a moment to pause. Let us find a quiet corner, a peaceful spot, and allow ourselves to be present. Let us reflect on our journey, on the lessons we have learned, and remind ourselves of the dreams we had as we migrated, and the new dreams and possibilities we are creating through stillness.



## OUR WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY

# Voices & Courage



## LiYing Cai

Carrying with her the heritage and ancestral values of a nation where the Silk Road finds its origins, LiYing Cai migrated to New Zealand in 2004 as a skilled migrant. Drawing upon six years of experience in media and international business, she demonstrated adaptability and steadfast determination in embracing change. Her initial role in the media sector expanded her professional and social networks, ultimately leading to her introduction to the field of policing through contemporary social engagement.

Overcoming considerable barriers to entry, she became the first overseas-born Asian woman to serve in the New Zealand Police. For more than two decades, LiYing has navigated the complexities of integrating into both Western society and police culture, drawing resilience from her heritage and maintaining an open and adaptive mindset. She has dedicated her efforts to bridging cultural divides while embracing opportunities for personal and professional growth. Her engaging presence and confident demeanour have enabled her to forge meaningful connections and challenge prevailing stereotypes. LiYing's distinguished journey stands as a testament to her perseverance, breaking barriers and inspiring others to flourish in unfamiliar environments.

## Shahela Qureshi

Shahela has worked as an educator for the last 17 years across three continents with diverse cultures and faith groups. This passion has led her to her current role of Muslim Chaplain at the University of Auckland where her goal is to be a trusted adviser and friend to the University, its students and its staff, as well as to provide pastoral care and a space of understanding for people's spiritual, mental and emotional growth. Shahela is based in the hall Chaplaincy office on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.



# No Place Like Home

VOICES FROM ONE OF US

By: Sumeera Dawood



## *What Does 'Home' Mean When You've Moved* Across the World?

They say the cities we live in exist only in our minds, a thought that stayed with me as the plane lifted from Christchurch Airport on my recent trip home. Home. It's a loaded word when you are an immigrant, and even more so when you belong to an ethnic minority.

For many individuals who have remained in their hometown or have never lived abroad, home is often the place where deep connections have been built over the years, from primary school, high school, and university, through to the family and friends they grew up with. This social wealth creates a sense of familiarity and comfort: home is the constant, the grounding presence.

For us immigrants, however, home can feel like an ambivalent, ever-shifting concept. When I return to South Africa, where I was born, home feels like sleepy Christchurch, where life is calmer and there are no family politics to navigate. Yet when I'm back in Christchurch, home becomes that rich, dense flavour of third-world chaos I find myself yearning for.

This ambivalence can leave one feeling as though we have a foot in each country, each carrying its own responsibilities, yet with no single place that is distinctively or exclusively home. Over the nine years I have lived in New Zealand, I have discovered there is a kind of power in that, and here are four personal truths that have helped me navigate this feeling of "nowhereness."

### **Let's your roots grow in more than one place**

There is immense power in recognising that life as an immigrant isn't written in neat, linear chapters. It is a process of starting over and crafting a new story with whatever lies before us. In grieving our old lives, we also release the place

that once held us, and perhaps more profoundly, the versions of ourselves that belonged to those places.

Yet there is magic in realising that, as multifaceted beings with intersecting identities, we don't need to choose just one place as "home." Home can be wherever we claim it. For me, that is South Africa (where I was born), India (my roots), and New Zealand (where I have built a new nest). I move between them with ease.

### **Takeaway:**

**Ask yourself, Where are the places calling to me?  
Where do I feel most rested and grounded?**

### **Create a home where you belong**

I once told myself that Christchurch was too slow and quiet for me, but that wasn't the full story. There is plenty of energy and stimulation here if you choose to seek it out. To truly feel at home, I had to reframe what the city meant to me and consider what it could offer, because our experience of a place is often shaped by how we choose to see it.

Once I recognised that Christchurch provided space for reflection and writing, a modest but tightly-knit circle of friends, and opportunities for personal growth through workshops and activity groups, I could finally stop dwelling on what it lacked.

**Takeaway:**

**Ask yourself, What is the gain here? What does this place offer me that I might not find elsewhere? Shifting your focus from the “gap” to the “gain” can be profoundly empowering.**

**Honour the place you left behind**

Each time I return to my birth country, I am struck by the reality that the home I left no longer exists as I remember it. Time moves on, people and places change. Or, as Nelson Mandela wrote in *The Long Walk to Freedom*, “there is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered.”

The truth is, the home you left is unlikely to be exactly as you remember, and that can be heartbreaking. Allow yourself the space to grieve this loss.



**Takeaway:**  
**Write down your memories of that home, the smells, sounds, colours, and textures. How did it make you feel? What did it give you that you can carry forward into the next stage of your journey?**

**Proximity is everything**

You’ve probably heard the phrase, “being in the right place at the right time.” The new life you’re building as an immigrant cannot be created while sitting at home in trackpants (if only it were that easy!). You need to place yourself where the possibilities arise that you are open to new opportunities.

Do you want to be a published poet? Join a writers’ group. Attend a talk by a visiting poet. Surround yourself with the energy of those already doing what you aspire to achieve. This is the first signal to the universe that you are open to new opportunities.

**Takeaway:**

**Who are the people achieving the things you hope to accomplish? Where do they spend their time? Make a list of similar places, events, or communities you can attend, explore, or engage with.**



WOMEN'S VOICES

# Follow Us In transit

Many journeys of finding *Home*

Every journey begins with a leaving, and In Transit listens to what comes after. Hosted by Dr Hafsa Ahmed MNZM, this podcast gathers the voices of migrant ethnic women weaving new lives in Aotearoa New Zealand. Supported by the Ministry for Ethnic Communities, In Transit is a tender reminder that every story of migration is also a story of authenticity, courage, and belonging.

**Broadcast Times: Tuesdays at 7 pm**  
**Host: Dr Hafsa Ahmed MNZM**

*Scan here to listen*



**PLAINS MEDIA**  
TE REO IRIRANGI O TE MAANIA



Powered by:



**Lady Khadija Trust**  
Empowering communities through compassion



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EDITOR

Dinda Veska  
info.ethnicwomen.nz@gmail.com

DESIGNER

Dinda Veska

CONTRIBUTORS

Sharon Gardner, Amanda Smidt,  
Sumeera Dawood, Valeria Sánchez, Hina  
Nasir, Manal Shorrab, Khosna Gupta,  
Zahra Sayyeda.

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We welcome submissions that highlight women's leadership, culture, and community impact. Be part of our next edition. Submit your story, reflection, or creative work to  
[info.ethnicwomen.nz@gmail.com](mailto:info.ethnicwomen.nz@gmail.com)

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# Empowering Youth from Africa

in Ōtautahi Christchurch



Founded in 2020 as an incorporated society, Embracing Diversity was created to uphold an African initiative for African youth in New Zealand, reinforcing their sense of identity and belonging. In a multicultural society, we empower young people to embrace their heritage while celebrating it alongside other cultures.

By fostering identity, self-esteem, and resilience against racism, we help children grow into proud Africans in a Kiwi context. These values are passed down to future generations, enriching Canterbury's cultural tapestry and encouraging active engagement in the community.

## Our Approach

At Embracing Diversity, we involve children and youth aged 4 to 30 in regular activities that build confidence, empower them to embrace their uniqueness, and deepen their understanding of cultural differences and traditions. Our programmes teach children to love themselves, develop a strong sense of belonging, and take pride in their cultural heritage. By promoting positive messages and celebrating individuality, we aim to empower youth to resist negative or disempowering narratives and thrive within a multicultural society.

## Commitment to Safety and Community

We are proud to share the important steps we have taken to keep our community safe and supported. A clear Child Protection Policy ensures all children and young people in our programmes are well cared for.

As a New Zealand Police Approved Agency, all our volunteers are police vetted, reinforcing our commitment to safety. We consistently meet regulatory obligations, completing annual reporting for both the Companies Office and the Early Childhood Development Fund, demonstrating our accountability, transparency, and dedication to the community. Recently, we launched a school holiday programme, providing safe spaces for children to share experiences, learn, and grow in confidence. Our funders are Christchurch Casino, RATA Foundation Grants, Lotteries Community Facilities Fund and Ethnic Community Development Fund (ECDF).

## Our 5 Guiding Pillars

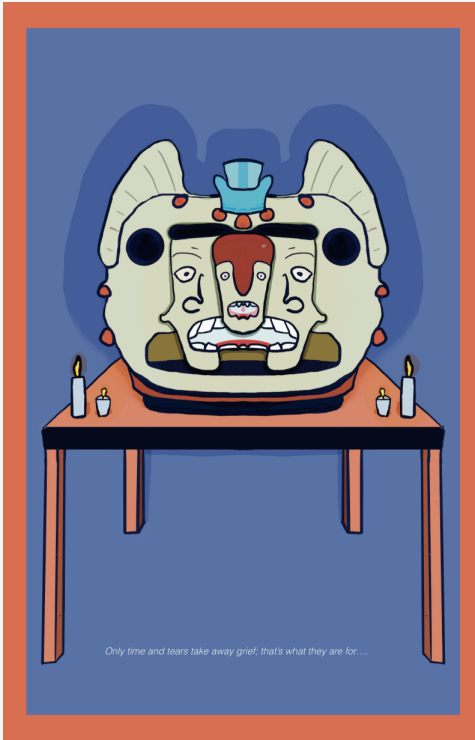
- **Empowerment:** Believe in yourself and take charge of your life, unlocking your true potential and inspiring those around you.
- **Identity:** Understand who you are, your values, and your culture, and make choices that are authentic to yourself.
- **Participation:** Engage actively in school, work, and community life, creating a sense of belonging and purpose.
- **Resilience:** Face challenges head-on, learn from setbacks, and grow stronger with every obstacle you overcome.
- **Connections:** Build supportive relationships and networks, providing encouragement and fostering unity.

Together, these pillars guide young people to live with confidence and compassion, shaping both their own journeys and the communities they serve. At Embracing Diversity, we are committed to empowering African youth to embrace their identity, celebrate their heritage, and thrive in New Zealand while enriching Canterbury's cultural tapestry.

# ARTISTIC

## Expressions

By: Valeria Sánchez



Moving across the world, leaving her family behind, **Valeria Sánchez** visualises her view points on living in foreign country down south of the globe as a worthy transformation. After experiencing some moments of struggle in losing a relative, a cat, and her father battling severe illness which made him almost blind, she took out the authenticity of her culture in making this illustration. **The cultural inspiration is about the power in death**, which she interpreted as a state where transformation of the soul in the aftermath. Therefore, it led her to see a transformation in her movement as something worth looking forward to.

By: Hina Nasir



A South Asian with whakapapa hailing from Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan, **Hina Nasir** (She/Her) working at the intersection of creativity, care, and cultural inclusion. Hina explains her work through these words:

"I embrace my scars, my pains as I step into next phase of life where I envision an equitable environment without discrimination and gender imbalance and social inequity. As I walk through the portal, I choose the ones that lead to the highest levels of love and broken chambers of the heart"

# LINE & RHYTHMS

From Egypt's land,  
so joyful and bright,  
With gentle hands  
and heart so pure,

But fate, it came from skies afar,  
Yet even through the darkest night,  
Through sickness came,  
she's strong and true,

From Egypt's soil to distant shores,  
My mother's love,  
my constant guide.  
Her caring touch,  
a love so sure.

In New Zealand's arms,  
she bears a scar.

Her love still shines, like a steady light.  
Her daughter's love saw her through.  
Her heart beats on forever more.

**By: Manal Shorrab**

I don't just want to lead  
I want to lead differently  
With care, not just control.

With presence, not just position.  
With courage that's quiet,  
and strength that uplifts.

I've learned that real change doesn't  
always start in boardrooms - it begins in  
conversations, in relationships, in the  
everyday moments where we choose to  
listen, include, and honour each other's  
voices.

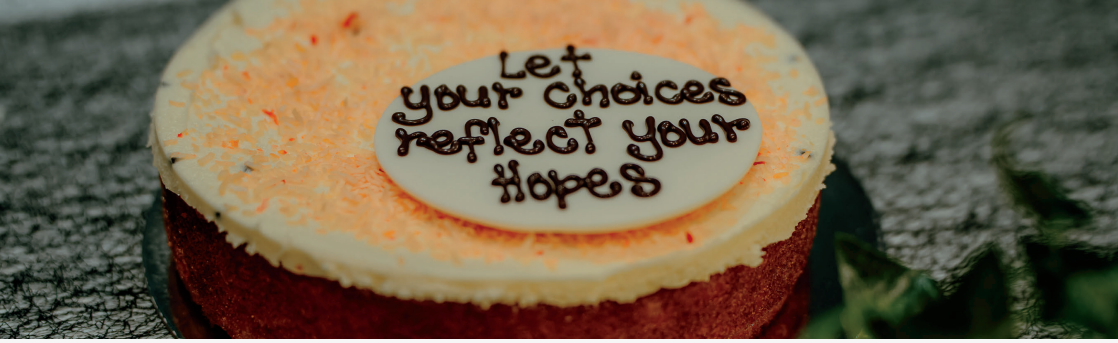
The change I want to begin with is  
personal, relational, and structural. It's  
about creating the kind of spaces I've  
longed for - and then holding them open  
for the others.

Because leadership, to me, isn't about  
being first.

It's about making sure others aren't left  
behind.

**By: Kooshna Gupta**





I've seen it with my eyes,  
How you come together and understood one  
another.

However different the situation was,  
You heard each other, helped each other.

The land we stand on, proof of your journey.  
The floor we're perched on, proof of your unity.

Your all strong, and of course,

*awesome*

I mean everyone is, but you gals especially.  
You have your own story.  
Each filled with hardship and your inner glory.

You are all immigrants.  
Of this,

Be *proud*

**By: Zahra Sayyeda (Year 7)**





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