



People. Place & Potential.

Today we celebrate the women we are, the place we call home, and the potential we carry together. Welcome.



2026 Ethnic Women's Leadership Conference

30th

MAY

2026

Multicultural Recreation and Community Centre,
Ōtautahi, Christchurch

Enabler:



Funder:



Media Partner:





CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

AM MC: Solangie Gil

Session	Time	Venue
Doors open	09:00	Function Room 1 GF
Karakia, Health & Safety	09:15 - 09.25	Function Room 1 GF
Welcome Performance – Tara	09:25 - 09.35	Function Room 1 GF
Opening Remarks – Dr Hafsa Ahmed MNZM	09:35 - 09.50	Function Room 1 GF
Ministry for Ethnic Communities - Deborah Lam	09:50 - 09.55	Function Room 1 GF
Exhibitor Update	09:55 - 10:05	Function Room 1 GF

Morning Tea | 10:05 - 10:30 AM | Function Room 1 GF

Workshop 1,2,3 | 10:30 – 11:30 AM

Presenter	Topic	Venue
Sharon Gardner	Honouring Where We Stand, Shaping Where We Go	Workshop Room (First Floor)
Dr Seema Gautam	An Introduction to Holistic Well-Being	Art Room (First Floor)
Carolyn Prebble (ASB)	Financial Wellbeing Session	Function Room 1 GF

Lunch | 11:30 A.M- 12:30 PM | Function Room 2 (First Floor)

PM MC: Dr Hafsa Ahmed, MNZM

Session	Time	Venue
Keynote – Amanda Smidt	12:30 - 12:45	Function Room 1 GF
Supporting Community Safety and Security - Engagement Manager of the NZSIS	12:45 - 01:15	Function Room 1 GF
EWL Magazine - Edition 2 Launch	01:15 - 01:30	Function Room 1 GF

Workshop 4 | 1:30 – 2:30 PM

Presenter	Topic	Venue
Agnieszka Parr	Beginner-friendly workshop on personal branding and why it matters	Function Room 1 GF

Afternoon Tea | 2:30 P.M- 3:00 PM

Session	Time	Venue
Keynote – Dr Michelle Shields	03:00 - 03:15	Function Room 1 GF
Concluding Remarks - Dr Viviana Zanetti	03:15 - 03:30	Function Room 1 GF
Feedback	03:30 - 03:40	Function Room 1 GF
Closing Remarks & Karakia – Dr Hafsa Ahmed MNZM	03:40 - 04:00	Function Room 1 GF



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KEYNOTE SPEAKER PROFILES



Amanda Smidt

Amanda Smidt is an Executive Director of The Career Development Company. A Career Counsellor, Educator, and Mentor originally from South Africa, with a career spanning secondary education, vocational training, governance and career development across Aotearoa.

Grounded in a systems theory worldview, Amanda's practice centres on people, context, and connections. She champions career wayfinding as an approach to guiding individuals, particularly women from migrant communities, to recognise their strengths, reclaim their professional identity, and navigate purposeful, values-aligned futures.

As Professional Member of CDANZ, and lead of the Professional Careers stream within the Ethnic Women's Leadership Working Group, Amanda brings both practice and advocacy to this work.



Dr Michelle Shields

Dr Michelle Shields has been a member of the Christchurch community for nearly a quarter of a century. She has lived here longer than former place called home including, rural Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Texas, in the US.

Upon receiving her PhD in 2002 she and her then 10-year-old daughter joined Scottish husband John in New Zealand. She is in her third life and is finishing almost where she began – teaching and growing leaders for New Zealand.

She currently teaches leadership on the MBA programme at the University of Canterbury and facilitates leadership development programmes across New Zealand as part of her partnership with the Zenger Folkman group, a leadership research company with partners throughout Australasia, North and South America, Europe, and Africa.

She is the founder and coordinator of the Canterbury Culture First group, was the recipient of the 2023 Learning and Development consultant of the year and a 2025 recipient of APAC's Elite Women in the HR industry.

30th May 2026 | 9 AM - 4 PM

MRCC, 455 Hagley Avenue, Christchurch



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Our workshops are designed with you in mind — your wellbeing, your growth, and your place in this world. From honouring the ground beneath our feet to shaping the path ahead, from understanding our financial health to discovering the power of our own story, each session offers something practical, meaningful, and deeply personal. Come ready to learn, reflect, and leave with something you can carry forward.

WORKSHOPS INFO

Workshop 1, 2, 3 | 10:30 – 11:30 AM

Honouring Where We Stand, Shaping Where We Go – Sharon Gardner |

Workshop Room (First Floor)

In this interactive and reflective session, we'll explore how our stories, cultures, and lived experiences shape who we are — while also discovering how we can move toward the future we want. Grounded in practical, strengths-based approaches, this workshop will help you make space for challenges, reconnect with what truly matters to you, and take small, meaningful steps forward.

An introduction to Holistic Well-Being – Dr Seema Gautam | Art Room (First Floor)

Here we will explore the interconnectedness of mind, body, and spirit. This workshop provides a foundational understanding of how physical health, mental clarity, and emotional balance work together to create a sustainable sense of wellness. We will walk away with practical strategies to integrate holistic practices into their daily lives for long-term vitality.

ASB's Financial Wellbeing session – Carolyn Prebble | Function Room 1 GF

Financial Wellbeing series, Everyday Money Tips. Saving Savvy. Borrow Smart, Pay Off Debt. This series of workshops provides simple steps and tools to help build your confidence when it comes to managing your money, now and in the future.

Designed to help all New Zealanders, not just ASB Customers!

Workshop 4 | 1:30 – 2:30 PM

Brand You: A Simple Introduction - Agnieszka Parr | Function Room 1 GF

In this practical, beginner-friendly workshop, you will learn the foundations of personal branding and why it matters. Discover how to clarify your audience, define what makes you unique, and start showing up with confidence both online and in person. You'll leave with simple tools and a clear starting point to begin building a personal brand that feels authentic and aligned with who you are.

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WORKSHOP FACILITATOR PROFILES



Sharon Gardner

A counsellor and psychologist, she brings warmth, insight, and a genuine curiosity for each person's unique story. A proud mum with lived experience of migration, she is passionate about supporting mental health and wellbeing through life's transitions. Indian at heart and now calling New Zealand home, she values culture, connection, and a strong sense of belonging. When she's not working, she enjoys a good cup of chai and long walks to recharge. Her work centres on celebrating strengths, embracing identity, and helping people honour where they are while gently shaping where they want to go.



Dr Seema Gautam

A dedicated literacy expert and wellness facilitator with a PhD in Literacy and Language Acquisition. With a deep academic background to advance understanding in language development, she serves the community as a facilitator for the Art of Living, leading transformative breath and meditation workshops. This unique combination of intellectual rigour and mindful practice allows her to bridge the gap between cognitive growth and emotional well-being, offering a truly holistic approach to human flourishing.



Carolyn Prebble

A Community Banker for the Canterbury region. She has worked for ASB for 27 years and has enjoyed a rewarding career meeting and working alongside many incredible people. She has always been passionate about caring for people, educating as many as she can about their financial well-being and raising awareness on the important issue of frauds and scams. She is working closely with local communities and businesses, sharing the knowledge and experiences she has gained and supporting ASB's purpose of Accelerating Progress for all New Zealanders.



Agnieszka Parr

A visual designer and communicator, Agnieszka brings a rich professional practice spanning creative direction, branding systems, illustration, and creative production. She has extensive tertiary teaching experience across multiple New Zealand institutions within design programmes, alongside leadership roles that include heading a graphic design department and qualification development. She facilitates workshops for creatives, including professionals, and is actively engaged in community mentoring, events, and small business support. Originally from Poland, she brings a personal perspective on immigration, adaptation, and building a creative life in Ōtautahi, Christchurch. She runs a small design studio from her home office.

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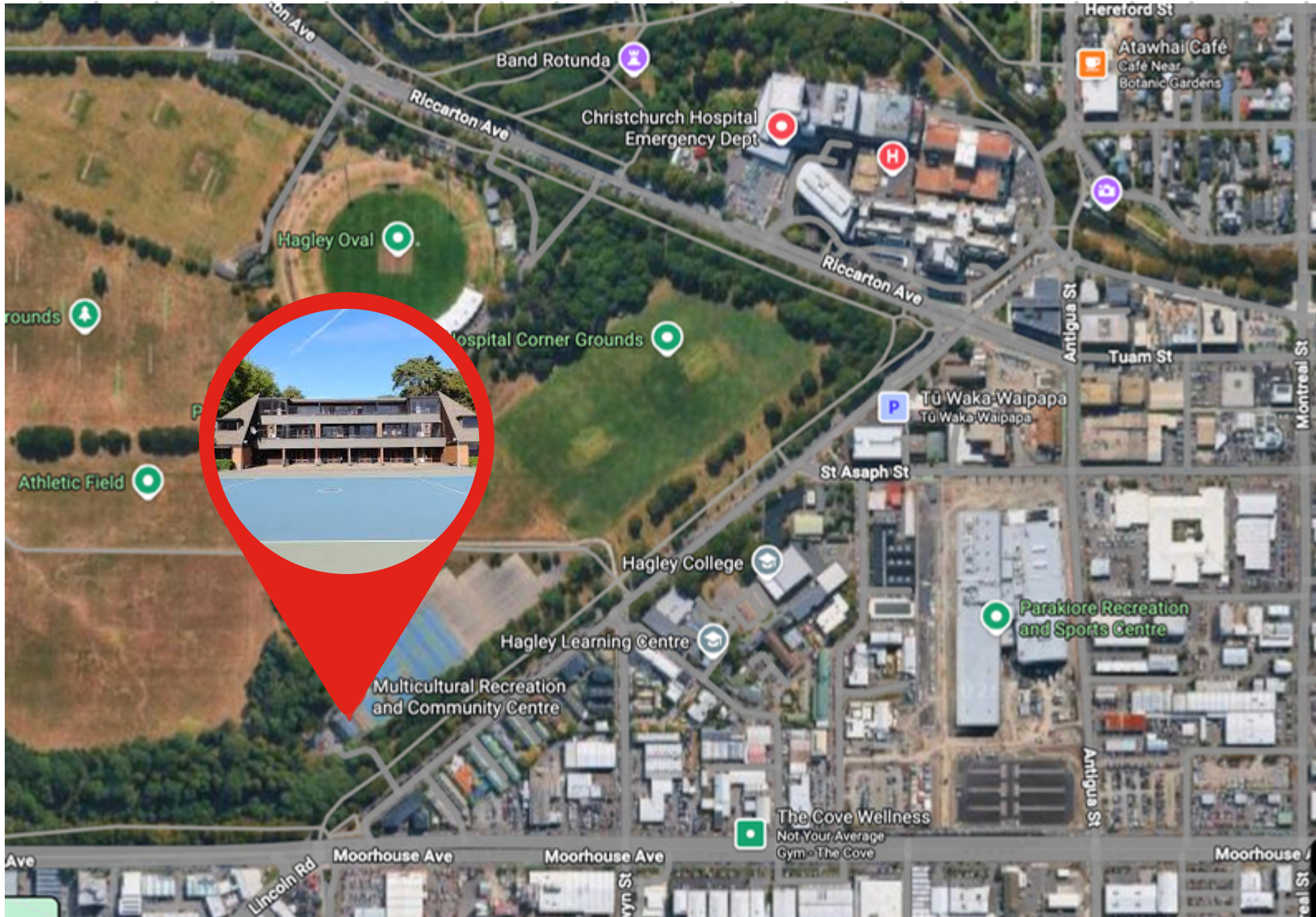
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VENUE DETAILS

Parking Info:

Parking is available throughout the MRCC car park. **Please avoid spaces marked with a reserved parking sign.**

Other Info:

We invite you to bring your own water bottle as a gentle nod to sustainability, because the place we celebrate today is worth protecting.

*To every woman who walked through the door today, thank you.
This day was yours as much as ours.*

With Gratitude,

Neha Razvi, Dinda Veska, Surya Menon, Laila Iftikhar, Benish Ibrahim,
Zahra Sayyeda, and Dr Hafsa Ahmed MNZM.

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