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Ministry for
**Ethnic
Communities**
Te Tari Mātāwaka

Ethnic Voices

Kia ora koutou and apa khabar (*Hello in Malay*),

Welcome to the inaugural 2024 edition of our Ethnic Voices newsletter! I hope you enjoyed a refreshing Easter break and a productive first quarter of the year.

I'm pleased to reconnect with you as we embark on another year dedicated to supporting and partnering with our vibrant communities.

Before starting, I want to acknowledge the ongoing humanitarian situation in Gaza, which I touched upon in our previous edition. Our Ethnic Communities Development Fund continues to [support community-led initiatives aimed at promoting understanding and healing in affected communities](#).

This edition provides insights into our recent endeavours and upcoming initiatives.

Over the past three months, I've had the privilege of engaging with stakeholders nationwide, from community gatherings to economic development meetings. These interactions have been invaluable in strengthening relationships and shaping our future focus areas.

In February, we celebrated the Lunar New Year event at Parliament, hosted by Hon Melissa Lee, Minister for Ethnic Communities. This occasion brought together diverse communities, fostering connections and camaraderie as we welcomed the Year of the Dragon.

[In the previous edition](#), I shared that I called for the first Faith Leaders Forum in September 2023. Following that, I'm delighted to share that we hosted [our second Faith Leaders Forum](#) in February. This



platform supports faith leaders from across New Zealand in connecting and establishing ongoing communication.

This solidarity across faith leaders is vital to the preservation and promotion of harmony, particularly when times are tough. I sincerely thank those involved for their commitment to this cause.

Continuing our commitment to economic empowerment, we convened [our second Business Roundtable](#) in March. Business leaders from various sectors joined Minister Lee to discuss critical topics such as ensuring ethnic businesses have better access to government information, appropriately supporting foreign investment in New Zealand, and providing more support for women-led businesses.

In March, our Executive Leadership Team joined me in engaging with several community organisations in Auckland, including the African Communities Forum Inc. and the Pan African Community Centre.

We also met with the Migrants Career Support Trust and learnt more about the important work they do. These engagements help us further understand the diverse contributions and challenges of different ethnic communities, which is integral to our work.

On 15 March, I had the opportunity to engage with the Muslim community in Christchurch. This year, the fifth remembrance of March 15 held particular significance, coinciding with Ramadan and falling on a Friday. The event, hosted by the March 15 Whanau Trust and the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand at the Al Noor Mosque, was deeply moving. It underscored the resilience and unity displayed by New Zealanders in the face of adversity.

I also want to acknowledge our Muslim community, who turned this tragedy into a catalyst for unity and solidarity for the whole nation, not only their community.

As you may know, like many government agencies, we're undergoing organisational changes to meet budget-saving requirements. We're transparent about this process, ensuring the impact on our people and communities is managed with care while striving for greater effectiveness.

Our communities' needs continue to be the compass for deciding priorities and future focus areas. Despite the change, our Ethnic Communities Development Fund remains steadfast in supporting community-led initiatives.

The Ministry's team sincerely appreciates the feedback from our communities, which highlights the importance of our work for them and for New Zealand.

Speaking of change, I'd like to share a quote that resonates with me: *"The only way to make sense of change is to plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance."* Alan Watts.

I want to conclude by congratulating our ethnic communities on several occasions over the last couple of weeks, such as Nowruz and Holi. Early Eid Mubarak to our Muslim community, which is celebrating the

end of Ramadan soon. Check out our [calendar of key cultural and faith dates](#) for our New Zealand communities to stay updated on the upcoming cultural celebrations and engagements.

I invite you to explore this edition and join us in celebrating the resilience and diversity of New Zealand's ethnic communities.

He taonga rongonui te aroha ki te tangata - Goodwill towards others is a precious treasure. (This is a whakataukī that beautifully encapsulates the idea that kindness, compassion, and love for fellow human beings are invaluable gifts that enrich our lives and the lives of those around us.)

Noho ora mai,

Mervin Singham
Chief Executive
Ministry for Ethnic Communities



Coming together

Inaugural Lunar New Year at Parliament



On 12 February 2024, Minister for Ethnic Communities Melissa Lee hosted the inaugural Lunar New Year event.

Prime Minister Christopher Luxon extended greetings for the Year of the Dragon and highlighted ethnic communities' vital contributions to our nation.

The event showcased East and Far East Asian cultures with folkloric performances: a Chinese gu zheng solo by Athena (Ruo Yan) Zuo, a traditional Korean Fan Dance by Jina Yoon and Hannah Kim, and a Vietnamese ao dai fashion show accompanied by bamboo flute music.

[Read more about the event.](#)

Check the event's full album on our [Facebook page](#).



Second Business Roundtable

We held our second Business Roundtable meeting on 1 March.

The meeting was held in Auckland and brought about 20 business leaders and representatives together to meet Melissa Lee, the Minister for Ethnic Communities, and Mervin Singham, our Chief Executive.

The meeting was an opportunity for business leaders to share insights and experiences and discuss some of their concerns with the Minister and Ministry.



We remain committed to working on initiatives that improve economic outcomes for ethnic communities, aligning with the priorities in our Strategy.

[Read more about the Business Roundtable meeting.](#)



Unity through music: New Zealand Symphony Orchestra's 'Beyond Words' concert series pays tribute to Christchurch victims

The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra (NZSO) collaborated with The Central Iqra Trust, Muslim communities nationwide, and our Ministry to present the 'Beyond Words' concert series.

This symphonic tribute featured concerts and engagement programmes in Christchurch, Auckland and Wellington, during the weeks leading up to the 5th remembrance of the Christchurch Mosque attacks.

The concert series received positive feedback from the community.

'Beyond Words' highlights the power of art in fostering unity and healing during challenging times.

[Read more about this unique initiative and its community engagement activities.](#)



Key updates

Greetings in different languages



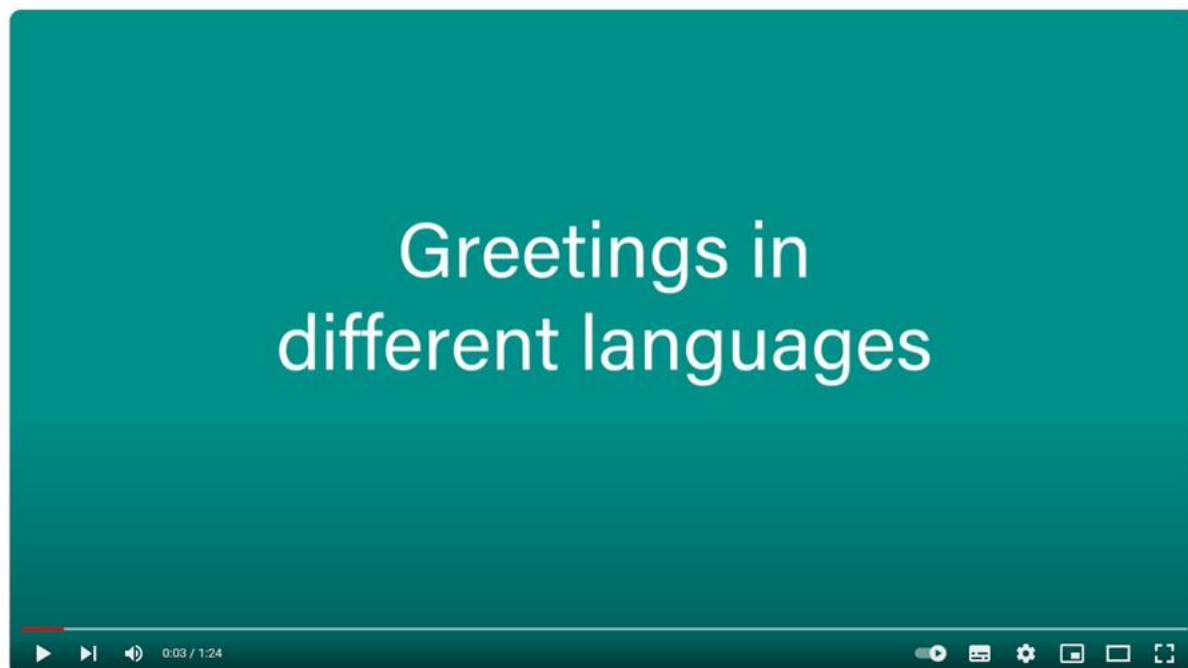
你好, Kumusta, Guten tag, வணக்கம், 안녕하세요! Hello!

Learn general greetings and phrases in 21 different languages with our recently launched resource: [Greetings in different languages](#).

The new resource includes spoken greetings such as 'hello', 'how are you?' and 'thank you'. It also includes time-specific greetings like 'good morning' and 'good night' and key cultural phrases, such as 'Asalaamu alaikum: Peace be upon you' in Arabic.

This new feature on our website includes recordings of each greeting, the translation in the language's script, a transliteration in English (if applicable), and phonetic pronunciation.

[Find out more about the project.](#)



How to say 'hello' (formal) in different languages

[Watch a video on how to say 'hello' \(formal\) in different languages.](#)



Community Stories – A new section on our website

Our new 'community stories' section on our website celebrates New Zealand's ethnic communities. It is a collection of stories about community organisations and individuals who are working to improve the lives of Aotearoa's ethnic communities.


We have officially launched this new section and will share new stories each month.

[Check out our new 'Community Stories'.](#)

Community Stories


Find out about what our communities are doing to help create a diverse and inclusive Aotearoa New Zealand.

Learn more about our communities




Natraj Dance School: 25 years of promoting cultural diversity through art
In celebrating its 25th Anniversary, Natraj Dance School is a beacon of creativity and expression in Wellington.

[Read the story](#)



New Zealand Centre for Digital Connections with India
This new initiative aims to build connections between New Zealand and India's information Technology (IT) sectors.


[Read the story](#)



Multicultural Federation of New Zealand: A vision for a Te-Tiriti-based multicultural Aotearoa
Multicultural Federation of New Zealand (MfNZ) considers the founding document of Aotearoa in everything it does.


[Read the story](#)

Cyclone and flooding response




Mt Roskill Collective
The Collective has helped uplift the community in a range of ways, including running water safety skills classes for women, and teaching people how to find and engage with Government services.

[Read the story](#)



Tairāwhiti Multicultural Council
The Council has provided emergency grab bags, run workshops on how to make an emergency plan, and published a video on emergency preparedness in 23 different languages.

[Find out more](#)



KAMI Bay
Hawke's Bay's local Indonesian community group has made sure the community checks in on one another during emergencies and other events through a new Buddy system.

[Learn more](#)



Key events and dates for New Zealand ethnic communities 2024

Our website now features a list of significant cultural and faith days recognised by New Zealand's ethnic communities.

[View the 2024 calendar.](#)



Community-led initiatives supported by our Ethnic Communities Development Fund

Empowering communities in the wake of March 15 attacks



In the wake of the March 15 attacks in 2019, our Ministry has remained steadfast in supporting community-led initiatives aimed at recovery, awareness, and promoting social cohesion through our Ethnic Communities Development Fund (ECDF).

These initiatives promote healing, education, and social cohesion.

These community-led efforts not only strengthen community resilience but also enrich the cultural fabric of New Zealand, aligning with our Ministry's strategic priorities of fostering diversity and meaningful inclusion.

[Find out more about these inspiring initiatives on our website.](#)



Community-led initiatives helping those impacted by the Middle East conflict

While the Middle East conflict continues, our Ethnic Communities Development Fund (ECDF) helps

community-led projects that promote understanding and togetherness.

For example, the Asturlab Cultural Centre's "4 for 40 Stop the Silence Campaign" spreads awareness about the Gaza crisis, bringing people from different backgrounds together to care.



The Jewish Museum of New Zealand Charitable Trust raises awareness about Jewish culture.

These projects, supported by the ECDF, show our dedication to promoting peace and harmony in our diverse communities.

[Read more about community-led initiatives helping impacted communities.](#)



Mervin Singham interviews James McCulloch, Manaaki Tāngata | Victim Support

Over the last two years, we introduced our Chief Executive video series to bridge the gap between ethnic communities and government agencies.

The series aims to answer community questions and explain services available for all New Zealanders, including ethnic communities.

In the third of our *Law-and-Order* series, Chief Executives Mervin Singham and James McCulloch discuss what support is available for victims of traumatic events, and how they can access it.



Watch the full interview: [Mervin Singham interviews James McCulloch, Manaaki Tāngata | Victim Support](#)



Highlights from our ethnic communities

Natraj School of Dance

Celebrating 25 years, Natraj Dance School, led by Prabha Ravi, has been a hub of cultural diversity in Wellington since its founding.

With over 1,600 students trained, the school blends Indian dance with other cultural elements, creating captivating fusion performances.

[Discover more about the School and its founder's journey.](#)



Multicultural Federation of NZ: A vision for a Te-Tiriti-based multicultural Aotearoa



Multicultural New Zealand (MNZ) follows E Tū Whānau values as it works to support migrants and refugees to integrate into communities. It has 26 councils throughout the country, each supporting a specific region.

We caught up with MNZ President Pancha Narayanan, who shared the organisation's vision for a Te Tiriti-based multicultural Aotearoa.

[Read our story on Multicultural New Zealand.](#)

Cyclone and flooding response

We worked closely with ethnic service providers following the Auckland flooding and Cyclone Gabrielle in early 2023.

We shared their concerns with relevant government agencies and advised response agencies on the community's immediate needs.

One year after the devastating events, three groups share their experience of the past year, including how they have supported their communities to be better prepared for future severe weather events.

[Read the communities' stories.](#)

Cyclone and flooding response



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[Learn more](#)

What's on?

Free mental health workshops for ethnic communities

We are hosting free mental health workshops for ethnic communities. These workshops are run by [Blueprint for Learning](#) as follows:

- Stress, Resilience and Wellbeing workshop for ethnic communities – online, 19 April (10 am-12.30 pm)
- MH101® workshop for ethnic communities – online, 7, 8 and 9 May (10 am-12/12.30 pm)
- MH101® workshop for Ethnic Communities – Dunedin, 9 May 2024 (9 am-4.30 pm)

Register for the workshops through this link: [Mental health and wellbeing support | Ministry for Ethnic Communities](#).



Are you interested in serving on a public sector board or committee?

Would you like to contribute your skills and experiences to the strategic direction, decision-making and success of public sector companies, entities, or committees?

Our Ministry regularly nominates ethnic people from our Nominations Service database. These nominations are for governance vacancies on public sector boards and committees.

We always look for people with the right skills and experiences to join our database.

If you're interested, visit our website, [Nominations Service | Ministry for Ethnic Communities](#), to learn more about the requirements and what's involved.

To join the database, [download the registration form](#) and send it, along with your current governance CV, to nominate@ethniccommunities.govt.nz.

To be eligible to join, you need to identify as Asian, African, Middle Eastern, Latin American or Continental European.



Spotlight on other government agencies' initiatives

Labour Markets Snapshot

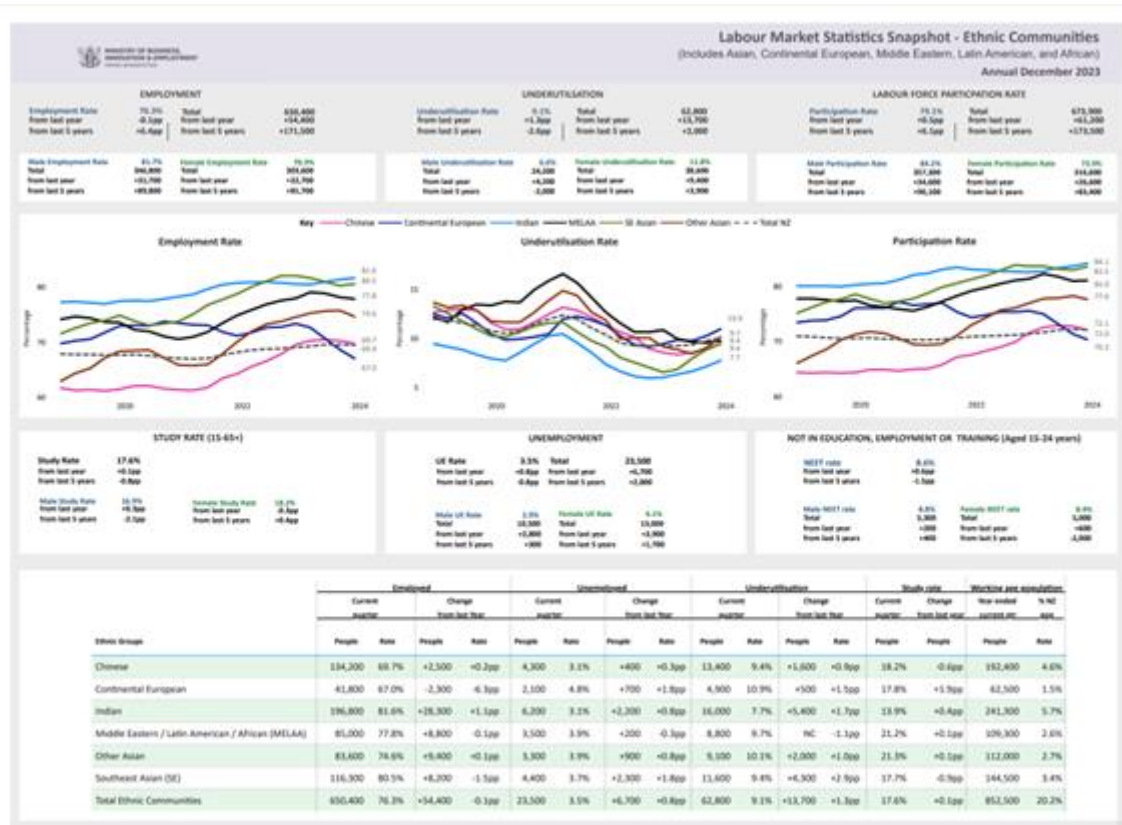
Our Analytics, Monitoring and Evaluation team has been working with government agencies on methods to make more data about ethnic communities available.

We are pleased that the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) now includes ethnic communities in its Labour Market Snapshot.

The quarterly reports include data on employment, unemployment and labour market participation rates.

The reports are published every three months on the MBIE website.

[View the latest Labour Market Statistics Snapshot.](#)



Stay up to date and connect with us!

Check our website and social media below.



Contact Us

Our regional teams are here to help facilitate and encourage inclusiveness and diversity in Aotearoa and to offer support and advice to all of our ethnic communities.

You can reach out to us by email at info@ethniccommunities.govt.nz.

Take care of yourselves, your families, loved ones and wider communities.

Ngā mihi nui,

Ministry for Ethnic Communities

Forward to a friend



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Te Tari Mātāwaka



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