



**ETHNIC VOICE**  
NEW ZEALAND INC.

***“Intergenerational Relationships”***  
***From Challenges to Companionship and Comfort***  
***in new Kiwi families***  
***Conference***



**July 2006**

**Tamaki Campus, University of Auckland**

## **Foreword**

The Intergenerational Relationships Conference has created an ideal platform where healthy discussions has taken place. It will no doubt build trust and enhance understanding not only among their own family units but also among families of other ethnic communities.

It has been a tremendous success for our organization Ethnic Voice NZ as our aims and objectives were achieved.

The proceedings of the conference collated in this report will be of great value to all of us living in our multi cultural multi ethnic Aotearoa New Zealand.

Dr N Rasalingam  
President  
Ethnic Voice NZ

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## **Introduction**

The topic of intergenerational relationships in migrant families is becoming increasingly important as more families are immigrating to New Zealand and struggling with cultural and language issues that are impacting on family relationships.

Although all cultures face intergenerational relationship difficulties between children and parents, when you have the added strain of adjusting to a new culture and are trying to 'fit in', relationships can become even more strained. Roles change, values conflict, and children are likely to adjust quicker than parents, for the simple reason that they are forced to interact in society at school, and this leaves parents feeling as though they are losing control and/or confidence and family relationships suffer.

It is important that we hear about and understand these difficulties to enable us to put in place some guidance processes for migrant parents to ensure the family unit remains intact through the adjustment period.

This report presents the intergenerational relationship challenges migrant (Korean, Muslim, and Tamil, South Africa) parents face and provides feedback from the audience. It also presents speeches from Dr Bruce Hucker, Dr Hans Everts, Rajen Prasad, Abraham Mamer, Dr Samson Tse and Hon Chris Carter.

### **Bob Newson – Human Rights Commission**

Bob opened the seminar by saying it was an honour to stand at the conference and welcome everyone, especially, on behalf of the Tangata Whenua of the area, Ngati Whatua, and he began with a "karakia". In his karakia Bob paid his respects to the mountains, pa sites, the holy places of Ngati Whatua, and to the harbours Manukau and Waitemata. He then honoured and welcomed everyone – tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou. "To each and every one of you, from so many different places in the world what an honour it is to be here and utter these words of welcome. May god's blessing be on this day and greetings and welcome."

### **Dr Rasalingam – President EVNZ**

Dr Rasalingam welcomed the audience to the Intergenerational Relationships seminar on behalf of Ethnic Voice New Zealand. He encouraged everyone to share their views of bringing

up children in New Zealand. He told the audience that Ethnic Voice NZ would pass on these views to policy makers. He welcomed and gave special thanks to all the speakers and parents who had given their time. He also thanked the audience and encouraged everyone to join in the discussion.

Special acknowledgements went to Auckland City Council who partnered Ethnic Voice NZ in this seminar, Centre for Asian Health Research and Evaluation (CARHE), University of Auckland who generously sponsored the venue, and Vidcom who part sponsored the recording of the seminar.

### **Dr Bruce Hucker**

The first speaker was Dr Bruce Hucker, Deputy Mayor of Auckland, who welcomed all, Ki ora ta tou. He said it was an opportune time to call a conference of this kind on intergenerational relationships because it is important to all families to feel they are supported and are able to find help with the challenges they face. He continued saying that this topic is also being looked at in the political arena and he spoke of three central themes that government are looking at (1) Economic transformation, (2) Families, young and old, and (3) National identity. All these areas impact on refugee and migrant communities and New Zealand as a whole.

Auckland City council has developed a vision - "We wish to build with you a better city for our children and their children". This vision provides a context for the direction of today's theme. Dr Bruce explained that "In order to achieve this we need to take account of Auckland's, New Zealand's, changing international relationships and Auckland is New Zealand's only global city of scale. Unless we pay attention to quality of life together and our own lives, and to care for our environment, we will reduce the choices of our children and their children."

Expanding on the issues of most concern, Dr Bruce believed that dealing with growth is tied in with the common investment we make for the future. It is our job to help build a city to give our children choices. We talk about statistics but the human issues are about enabling grandparents, parents, children and family to stay in touch with each other in a relative degree of proximity. Our plan is to create a place people want to be and creating investment for our city and our future. To create community and diversity, government is investing 1.35 million to promote diversity and our key task is to build, with our community, a genuine multicultural society in which each person has a place. Dr Bruce explained that his own family

has Cook Island/Maori, Samoan, Chinese and Pakeha and that this is becoming the face of Auckland. Creating a truly multicultural society is not an easy task and part of that task is to deal with the fundamental fears of the Pakeha community and the threats they feel - "A fear of difference, migrants threatening their jobs, and their children". Auckland City Council and the wider community needs to join in the difficult task of addressing these fears and replacing them with common hope for the future that fosters respect for differences, and contacts between people. "We need to get talking to one another," said Dr Bruce.

For generations, young and old, migrants and refugees, settling in New, they Zealand face different problems. For many of the migrant community, values may be very different to that of New Zealanders who value the individual above the communal. For some migrants, this may be difficult having to handle the new concepts of social status not in the community especially, where filial piety may have been more apparent. Children from migrant communities are faced with encouragement of goals of self development which are important values of the New Zealand education system, but which can damage generational relationships at home and within the community. To explain this further Dr Bruce borrowed a century old saying from sociologist, Max Favour, who said "Power is important and access to power". Children from migrant and refugee families, have the power because they have the command of the English language and are likely to learn more quickly how to adapt and participate in their new community, whereas parents adapt more slowly. "You are not alone, you are all here but building successful intergenerational relationships does require everyone's commitment to the future," said Dr Bruce.

### **Dr Hans Everts**

Dr Hans opened with a personal perspective. "What I want is to share with you today are three things – (1) my individual experience, (2) my professional experience, and (3) the importance of power and collaboration."

Dr Hans spoke firstly about his individual experience. Personally I am an immigrant son, who came with no English and because of that lost a year of schooling. I learnt very quickly that I had to learn to live like the others as there were not many other migrants in that day and age. I'm not proud to say, but my mark of acceptance was receiving "six of the best" for a prank I pulled at school. Suddenly I was like every other kid in the school and accepted by my peer group. I learned how to live on the margin and finally learned how to be comfortable being different in relation to my peer group.

My parents were my real teachers and I would like to share their teachings with you.

- Have a sense of optimism – hope – there are possibilities.
- Hang in there – perseverance – if you persevere you can go where you want to go.
- Having a sense of faith – belief in something bigger for which is worth living for.
- Be aware of what's going on.

All of these equal resilience – the ability to cope with stress and challenge but also being able to bounce back and in the process learn to cope and grow stronger.

**Adversity and challenge is a good opportunity if you come out stronger.**

In the second part of his address, Dr Hans talked about his professional experiences. As for my professional side I have been a psychologist for 35 yrs and am fascinated and committed to a multicultural community where all people are part and all contribute.

From a research and clinical perspective there are four elements that help families to be strong.

1. Parents

Parents are responsible for family and parents give the quality and skills to be resilient.

2. Relationship between people in families

Emotional – affective – parents need to love unconditionally whether their children are good or bad, this allows the family to be together – we only have each other so we must give each other our love.

Commitment – I am there for you, for better or worse. At times this is extremely hard to commit to but you need to hang in there.

3. Skills in relating to each other

Communication skills, listening, being able to express yourself, problem solving and words by action. If we don't communicate we miss the relationship, we need to work together and collaborate, "we are all in this together" – work toward common goals.

To summarise his points, Dr Hans explained, we need individual strength, emotional relationship, affection, the ability to communicate and to work towards common goals together.

For most migrants their networks are left behind and it is crucial to build up and create a support network in your new home. The immediate family is your first support network and there are times when you will have to stand back-to-back defending each other from everybody else, anybody that threatens your family unit. Standing together is what makes a successful family and that's what leaves a legacy for our children that makes them stand tall.

In the third part of Dr Hans address, he made the special reference to the importance of power and collaboration. As I counsellor and educator it has been my privilege to work with lots of ethnicities who have joined the programme to become counsellors. That has been the opportunity for a professional collective partnership in which both resources are required, that is, working with people from within the community and collaborative expertise to build bridges.

Family resilience, building on your resourcefulness, bringing your skills and qualities together are the keys to success. We have developed resources that express multicultural community and resources have been developed and people trained. Strength through collaboration.

### **Yueen Kim – Korean**

Yueen Kim spoke about her own experiences as a mother and a Korean migrant.

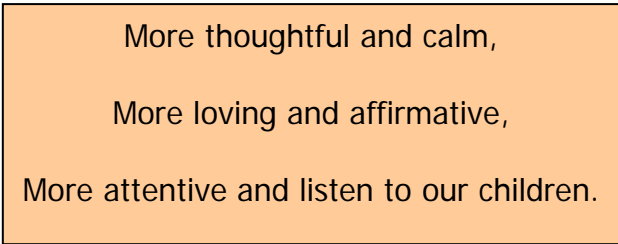
I am short, and I always feel like a dwarf in this country. I have Kiwi Korean, English and Irish in my family. I am a mother and my boy speaks Korean and English and he teaches me many things. Today I want to talk about Hans's project of Effective Parenting Programmes which were run over three years and the objective was to help Korean and Chinese parents who needed help with parenting.

The parenting programme was taught in Korean and Chinese as most of the parents could not speak English that well and found it was difficult to express themselves in English and to understand what was being said. The most useful topics covered were the power of encouragement of children, communicating, training, and effective discipline. Parents had low self esteem and with their children speaking English, did not know if their children even respected them as a guide anymore. Most parents had high expectations of their children and this contributed to communication breakdowns. Disciplining children within cultures is very different and has resulted in some of the parents having their children taken off them as the disciplinary methods used are not acceptable in New Zealand.

Yueen Kim explained that attendees of the parenting programme were grateful that it was taught in their own language because it enabled them to connect with the programme leaders. As well as teaching, attendees received pictorial and visual handouts to help understanding. Group discussion was extremely helpful and gave the parents a chance to express their concerns and worries and share with other parents experiencing the same concerns. Discussion also provided a practical element and real life examples were able to be discussed rather than made-up examples which may have not have been as relevant. From these examples parents were able to address how they could modify their behaviour to enable positive relationships with their children. Modifying their behaviour was not about learning how to do it the Kiwi way, but rather the programme taught parents how to combine the two together and find their own system, culture and way of building a positive relationship with their children.

Yueen Kim began her conclusion by saying, "Being a parent in another culture makes you feel cornered, lonely and marginalised, you feel stupid and this is the process many of these parents are going through – with this programme the parents could draw strength from each other and know that they were not alone. Counselling helped me – I was speaking the language of a six year old."

In our families we need to become:



More thoughtful and calm,  
More loving and affirmative,  
More attentive and listen to our children.

Only then can we begin to feel more confident, feel like we can manage, know that we are a good parent and begin to enjoy our new life with our children. In many cases the roles have been swapped and the parents have to learn and rely on their children – as parents we need to see the positive in this and not feel like we are losing control.

## **Rose Joudi – Muslim**

Rose Joudi introduced herself as a 1.5 Muslim Iraqi New Zealander. Rose is a researcher and lecturer – all because of her parents. As she says, “My parents sacrificed a lot and gave me a lot.” Rose has recently finished research into intergenerational relationships between Muslim youth and their parents in New Zealand. Her research involved understanding the intergenerational issues in transition between mothers and daughters, the challenges that faced and documenting the solutions they would like.

Muslim migrants to New Zealand find the values and customs in New Zealand very different from their own and there is a vast difference in religious beliefs. Although the youth want to be part of New Zealand society their parents do not allow it and make their children adhere to the strict religious values which are contributing to intergenerational conflict. For the daughters, it is even more difficult to integrate into New Zealand society as they are not allowed boyfriends or allowed to go out at night alone and because of this they get teased by their peers. They see their peers going out with boys and having the freedom to do many things and question their parents on why they are not allowed. Parents who want to uphold the values and religious customs begin to panic and see their child losing their identity. For the youth, this creates a sense of isolation as they want to ‘fit in’. The youth are also burdened with the responsibility of becoming an interpreter for their parents causing identity confusion, especially, for a daughter having to take on this role.

For the parents, they feel they are losing control and their authority is diminished. The father is no longer the leader as he feels he does not have the resources to guide and lead his family. The research found that there was a genuine fear that they would “lose their identity because western society has bad conflicting evils that were against Islam”. Parents were also concerned about the whitening and blackening of their family and are of the view that they would lose face if their family is blackened.

Mothers – preservation – protecting their children (especially girls – from research)

“I want our culture to be like a bridge. A bridge between them and between us. Like between them over here and their roots over there. Of course this would helping a lot in preserving our identity, like it will let them bond more and it will also bring the younger generations living here closer to home.”

There is a cultural bridge for daughters – their parents want to protect them and attend all events that their daughters go to, the sons have more freedom, this means for the daughter they can't be 100% Kiwi – they will always be Muslim/ Kiwi and they do not know who to please.

In closing Rose believed that mothers' perspectives were that they were striving to raise their children according to their own cultural views and beliefs – "I'm fighting to keep the culture preserved" I know that my children are speaking English and in the future their children will speak English and we will lose our language and adopt western values and that is what I am scared of.

### **Nisreen Hannif – Muslim parent**

Nisreen has been in New Zealand since 1988; she has three children of 3, 7, and 9 years old. When she first came to New Zealand there was not a big migrant population, this meant that Nisreen had to break down the barriers herself. She went to the school and explained the differences that would affect her children in the school, for example, Halal food, and Muslim expectations. Nisreen decided that the only way to be part of New Zealand and be able to inform New Zealanders of her cultural values and religion was to join in and actively participate in society. She joined the PTA and Girl Guides and each time would explain about the Muslim ways so that others were aware why they did things as they did.

Nisreen says it is a lot easier today for migrants as there are more migrants entering New Zealand. Nisreen and her family immigrated at the time of the stock market crash and found it very difficult to get jobs, and as a result lost their confidence. Today she is proud to announce she has a child finishing university, and she is a grandmother.

This did not come without ups and downs. The peer pressure her children felt, the many calls from the school counsellor, the children being very confused, Nisreen wondered why something couldn't be done to help. Nisreen attributes her success to educating schools about the Muslim way so that, at least, the children have a chance, and also joining groups. She started the Islam women's council as she found parents needed someplace where they could share their ideas and support each other. Nisreen encourages all migrant women to join groups, and be open. Getting support from these groups as well as from family is crucial to fitting into a new life and being 'visible'.

## **Ann George – Tamil parent**

Ann opened with, "The first thing I need to stress is that for refugees they are often not here because they want to be – they have had to flee from the atrocities that are happening in their home countries and this adds to the difficulty of settling down in New Zealand."

Ann and her family arrived in New Zealand in 1983 half qualified. To ensure they got the best start they could Ann and husband George worked and studied part time in the evenings to get ahead. Unfortunately this meant less family time but was the reality of survival, and like many refugee parents doing the same, they found that the gap between them and their children grew. There is not enough time for quality time with the children and in the meantime the children pick up the language and values as they are interacting within the New Zealand environment more than the parents. Many of the parents focus on their children's future and place high expectations on them. However, getting feedback from the school is near impossible for parents who do not have a great command of English and are embarrassed to communicate with the teachers because of their language level. There needs to be a greater emphasis on the relationship between parents and schools.

Technology has also had a big impact on family life. Ann believes parents need to be more technologically savvy and need to understand how to use a computer and how to text to protect their children as well as being able to relate with their children. In saying that she said it is hard for parents to upgrade and learn as they are busy working to ensure a life for their family. Again a /catch 22 situation.

Sports are one other area where the intergenerational relationships suffer. Ann said with the parent/s working and/or mum not being able to drive, they are unable to accompany their children to sports matches which means they are missing out on an essential part of relationship building. She believes it would be great if the parents could go to sporting events and give their children the support they need, especially, when the migrant kids can see the Kiwi kids being supported by their parent/s. Ann believes the solution lies in having more network groups for parents to help parents bridge the gap between their own culture and the kiwi environment.

## **Shireena Bagirathi – South African parent**

Shireena Bagirathi was not able to attend the conference and in her absence Shireena submitted the following address and asked that it be read out on her behalf.

Here is a brief encounter of my journey to, and life in New Zealand. Nine years ago, I began a journey, which was to change my life forever. A year after the birth of my son in Johannesburg, South Africa, we arrived in New Zealand to start a new life. I clearly recall arriving here on a very rainy August day, with the sun flashing an occasional bit of orange. The weather mirrored my emotional state of great trepidation punctuated with the odd bits of excitement. I said to myself that irrespective of what lay ahead, I had to find and sustain the courage to start a new life.

The search encompassed looking for work, finding new friends, babysitter's, good schools, good shopping, etc. This would be the broad experience of most new migrants. One always feels a sense of patriotism to the country of one's birth, and at some stage of our lives here in New Zealand, we should develop that same patriotism to the country in which we now live. For me, this is when it really becomes home.

One of the challenges of many migrant families is the need to integrate into New Zealand society and still maintain their cultural values. Many of us actually enjoy the best of both worlds, which is blending the heritage of ethnicities we have been born into with the values of New Zealand society, thus enriching us all.

### **Feedback from Audience**

The audience was split into groups to discuss topics that had come out of the morning's presentations. These topics were: Parent Networks, Economics, Trauma, Family Roles, Volunteering - Integration

#### Parenting Networks

The group decided it was not about parenting as such but more about networking. There is communication within the community but the group found that there is a lack of communication outside the community. We need to network between neighbours. A simple way of communicating is by ringing up your friends and neighbours and asking them to pass on the message. This is a powerful way of communicating and then you also begin to grow a network outside your own community.

#### *Networking*

The group found there are a lot of networks but many are not *informed* networks. This means that although networks do exist, they are not informed about other networks and communities.

There is a problem in reaching the outlying communities. We have many resources but do not have the capacity to reach all communities. To ensure we reach out to everyone we need funding and time and resources. In saying that, if there is a will there is a way, but we live in a society where we rely on funding and resources. The bigger communities could also help build capacity of the smaller communities.

### *Community Dynamics*

The group discussed the fact that many of us do not know ourselves. We do not really know who we are and we need to understand and have knowledge of who we are. By knowing ourselves we can build trust but this takes time.

### *So how do we address these issues?*

We need to find out what networks exist. Are these networks integrated or do they have a silo mentality. We all need to reach out – give some time and volunteer, and finally we need to empower communities.

### Economics

How does the economy impact on intergenerational relationships? For most migrants it is difficult to get a job and without a job confidence diminishes, family relationships suffer. The standard response most migrants get is that they are over qualified or they do not have New Zealand experience, which in itself is a kind of protectionism, but has a negative effect for migrant families. New Zealand is a small country and there are only so many jobs but there is a lot of new business and many opportunities. However as a migrant you also need to make the effort and take the responsibility of making yourself employable. The most common problem is the language. If English is your second language and you do not speak it well, there needs to be an effort made to learn the language well – English is the official language. Also remembering the opportunities you can give businesses here in New Zealand, for example, you have many contacts back home and this may be an advantage. The New Zealand government needs to recognise the potential migrants bring with them and set policies accordingly. This will empower migrants and family life will be improved.

### Trauma

The group's discussion led to the conclusion that migrants go through three phases of trauma. The first phase is about making the decision and preparing psychologically to leave their homeland and immigrate. The second phase is the actual migration journey. For some, especially refugees, their trip may not be direct and they might have to go through and stay in other countries before reaching New Zealand.

Finally, when they reach New Zealand the trauma of resettling, adapting and integrating is traumatic. Most migrants have expectations of what their life will be like and when these expectations are not fulfilled they become disappointed and disillusioned and maybe isolated. At that stage the parents have to re-evaluate how they are going to fit into society.

*So how can we address this?*

Form Community Support Networks – a network that is already established and that migrants can join and not have to find their own networks to begin with. These networks could assist migrants with resettlement, introductions, and support. The support network could also include counsellors to help with resettlement issues.

Network Education Resources – in different languages. Although we understand migrants need to integrate, but first they need to feel confident and by supplying educational resources in their own language first they will know what do, how to cope, and at the same time, empower them.

Ethnic Office at the Airport – Other countries have an ethnic office at the airport that is ethnically aware and can help new migrants. If we had an ethnic office at the airport they would be aware when groups of refugees were coming in and be able to assist them minimising their apprehension and anxiety.

### Family Roles

When we talk about families we must not forget the voice of the children – especially the phenomena that exists where children are not being allowed a childhood or adolescence because of the communication expectations heaped onto them. Many parents who do not speak English burden their children with communication, translating for them in all matters. The child is then given the opportunity to decide what courses they will select at school and the parents will not allow it as this is not the way they do it back home and they have different expectations of them. This is extremely stressful for the child and creates tension, identity issues and leaves the child asking – what about me? Do you know where I'm coming from? Do you hear my voice? So it is extremely important when discussing intergenerational relationships that we do not forget the children.

### *Solution*

Create a platform to achieve two things – firstly a platform where parents can learn skills to communicate with their children and secondly to pick up knowledge. These need to be at the parents' level of empathy and parents need to have the willingness and interest to understand where their children are coming from.

We need to raise the level of awareness across the board for parents and children. We can use the word **mindfulness** – being mindful of your culture, values, and baggage that you bring to your children and being aware of what the younger generation is experiencing.

This group also agreed with a former group that it is not about parenting skills but rather about the context. For example – my family not being treated fairly by other families, my family being discriminated against by the wider community, and those migrant families not knowing how to deal with these situations. If the parents become isolated how can they enhance their children's integration? And this causes conflict within the family Schools can help by breaking down the barriers, and minimising the negative impact of isolation.

### Volunteering – Integration

It was agreed that we need to have more volunteers who can approach the communities and spend time in working with them to helping with the integration process. We all need to share the responsibility - families, individuals, and the mainstream sectors of New Zealand society. The group's discussion highlighted three areas which could help with integration and intergenerational relationships – being proactive, having confidence, and creating opportunities.

Individuals and families are trying to be proactive but in order to be proactive, they need to have confidence and to share what they are doing with other community groups. They need to identify what they want to do and what they want to achieve and then create opportunities from that.

Mainstream sectors also have a responsibility to be proactive and create opportunities for migrants. The suggestion was that guest speakers from our organisation could be invited into schools, DHBs and even ESOL classes. Organisations need to be confident in offering us this opportunity and to share what organisations are currently experiencing and/or the difficulties being experienced with us as an organisation. Let us be part of mainstream organisations.

### Solution

Migrant and refugee organisations can be used as the bridge to connect the gaps between individuals and family and mainstream. Migrants will feel more comfortable about approaching these organisations and speaking with someone in their own language who can help them enter the mainstream organisations. The government also has some responsibility to fund these organisations so that they can bridge the gap.

### Open floor

Time permitted a short period in which the audience was invited to add to the discussion.

*Trauma* – we all need to help educate migrants and refugees but we should also be educating and enlightening New Zealanders about who we are. We felt New Zealanders did not understand our issues and do not allow opportunities for foreign language. Learning another language is key for the younger generations to build a foundation for understanding other cultures.

*Economics* – many migrants coming here do not have a choice but for the invited migrants it is different. The government spends a lot of money getting them here and then do nothing to look after them. Local government should be looking at the skills that migrants are bringing into the country. There should be emphasis on utilising these skills instead of underpaying or not employing skilled migrants who will leave as soon as they get the opportunity – a loss to New Zealand. For refugees there needs to be more emphasis on upskilling so that they are able to contribute to New Zealand. Employers need to change their attitude and stop discriminating.

A member of the conference discussion groups had something to add on the importance of the Family – I am a New Zealander now and my children and their children will probably live here for the lives. The choices I make dictate the life I lead. When I first decided to immigrate I made the choice for my wife, for my daughter and I am responsible for that choice. We have a different social structure where we come from but having made that choice must accept where we are now and put our family first. If you believe you are a New Zealander then you are. You are the only one who can have belief in yourself - you need to set yourself goals - you are the only one who can make them happen.

### **Rajen Prasad – Families Commissioner**

“Great to be with friends,” said Rajen. I have been here now for 42 years and understand the dilemma of intergenerational relationships in a very real and personal kind of way. There is nothing particularly different about all of our families in New Zealand - the interests of one family are the interests of another family also and what makes one family a success is exactly the same as what makes another a success. We came here with our values, culture and family all intact and we’ve gone through an enormous period of change. We made the decision to come and agreed to adopt this country for our future and our children’s future. Change is inevitable and we will never be who we were before we left our own countries – I believe we will be better otherwise, what was the point of coming? We migrate only to make things better for ourselves not to make things worse. Keep that image of change and what we are changing for.

We have a great interest in families especially in families bringing up children and with dependant children. We talk about resilience which is a powerful concept but not that easy to achieve. I often hear people comment that they would like an ideal life but there are always going to be good times and bad times. It is in these bad times that we need to keep faith and stay positive and use any resources we have to keep going forward. Families do survive!

When I am in trouble I always think of my mother who was the matriarch of our family and she demonstrated many skills and it was mum who would guide us to how we might go about things.

The notion of resilience is important. Important characteristics of resilience are skills and families need skills such as parenting or communication etc to be resilient. Another important skill of resilience is maintaining a balance between family and work and I know as I stand here what my wife would say to me about that! Your kids need you and your family needs you and it is important through periods of change that you maintain a work-life balance, especially if you have younger children. Economics is also important and it is important that you have the resources – but how much is enough? We have many safety nets in New Zealand and provide welfare for people in need. When economics and work come together it is easier to be resilient.

We conducted research with 4,000 New Zealand families a year ago and I would like to share some of the findings with you. We asked families what was important to them, what worked and what did not work, what needed changing. You can find a full report on the website.

- When asked what is important for your family, they answered – love, affection, unconditional love. These are particularly important in times of stress or crisis and are important to being a successful family.
- When asked what they value, what is important to you, the main answers were – honesty, trust, respect and mutual support.

These are everyday values that make families successful and when you think about them what is so magical about them? It's nothing new. Sometimes we just need to be reminded.

- The question about extended families found that for many New Zealanders, this is becoming more and more important. Maori and Pacific Island cultures already value extended family and it appears to be rubbing off onto Pakeha. We see grandparents looking after grandchildren. Our extended family are key supports and we need to keep progressing in this area and looking after our families. For migrants, extended families are a support base and having extended family here makes it easier to settle. It is my belief that the Immigration Policy should have a family perspective.
- Aspirations of migrant parents – what do they want for themselves? Most families indicated that they wanted their children to do well and be successful. Education is important and the results indicated that education is also becoming more important for Maori and Pacific Islanders who are now placing higher value on education.
- Another important finding was that migrants feel closer to their ethnic community than their geographic community. Many migrants will drive to see other family and friends from the same ethnic backgrounds. To create a sustainable community as well as our churches, mosques or places of worship we need to get to know the people we live beside and the people in our neighbourhood. This is important in creating a community and a sense of belonging.

So if all these things make families successful what does it take for us to monitor that and ensure our families are successful? We come here to settle but how do we live as a Kiwi family, we must accept change, and this does not mean we lose our identity but grow as a strong New Zealand family. What happens in our homes is important as are the values we bring with us and the way we are brought up. But we need to accept that our family relationships will change in our new environment. For example when I was growing up we were closer to our mum, she picked up the pieces and Dad worked. We were very respectful of our father but I couldn't say that I was mates with him. The relationship between my children and me is very different and as well as their father I am their mate. This relationship exists because I have taken the advantage of New Zealand values and now have a great relationship with my children. Although it is important to note that neither way is wrong and both ways create respect. To be strong and unique you have to work at it and it will not be the same as before and that's OK.

We need to develop links in our community. If we do not open up then how can New Zealanders understand us? In our street for example, we have many ethnicities, Fijian Indian,

South African, Korean etc we have all got to know each other and this has enriched our lives. So it is important for us to work on local linkages and participate in New Zealand society. It is important to participate in policy, education, and language, and become embedded in New Zealand society. Without participating we will not be heard. If we do participate and engage our families will be stronger.

I would like to finish by telling the story about the professor and the jar and two cups of coffee. The professor filled the jar with golf balls and asked his students whether the jar was full? Yes, they said. He then got a handful of pebbles and poured them into the jar and shook the jar and the pebble fell into the gaps between the golf balls, is it full now he asked? Yes, the students replied. He then got some sand and poured it into the jar, tapped it with his finger and it filled the gaps. Is it full now he asked? Yes, of course said his students. Finally he picked up one of the cups of coffee and began to pour it into the jar and it filled all the gaps. He said now recognise that this jar is your life. The golf balls represent the important things in your life – family, friends, health, passion etc. The pebbles represent the things we enjoy – our house, car, and the sand all the little things in our life. If we put in the small things first we have no room for the big things.

Make time, set your priorities and the rest is sand. What about the other cup of coffee, asked a student? Ahh, said the professor no matter how full your life is there is always room for a coffee with a close friend.

### **Abraham Mamer – Ministry of Education**

Abraham spoke on the importance of education, saying that education is particularly important in intergenerational relationships especially when the children are at school learning English and the New Zealand culture, and conflict often arises in the clash between home values and New Zealand societal values.

The MOE is here to listen and help migrant students to succeed and to help their parents understand the school system here in New Zealand. There is a lot of work to do in helping migrants at school and we can provide resources to schools to help deal with resettlement issues. If parents can understand the school system they are better equipped to help their children be successful. The MOE have identified needs such as language and the environment and as a result, it manages and designs solutions and resources to help and support schools in the implementation of these needs. Regardless of where you come from, if you engage and understand the systems, you will be able to help your children and your family.

Another important aspect is career support. Where I come from if I am not a doctor, police officer or lawyer I'm nothing – here it is very different. You are able to enter university with less than an A pass and you are able to choose which career you choose.

It is important to share information, especially about educational backgrounds. For many migrants they come from a text book society, here in New Zealand it is different. Teachers also need to talk to parents and understand where they are coming from. Part of our role is to provide support for teachers who have many students from different ethnic backgrounds which makes it extremely hard. They need emotional and physical support.

Schools now celebrate culture and have adopted the Calendar of Culture initiative introduced by Ethnic Affairs. This gives students an opportunity to learn about other cultures. Schools are equipped to support adaptation however there are three key points we need to understand.

- (1) Influence - children who remain within their family influence find it hard to adapt and generally do not adapt well.
- (2) Transference – parental rejection of school and/or culture and belief that our kids are running away from us, can't communicate with them.
- (3) Adaptation – adapting to the school life – living in two worlds. This creates a lot of pressure and this is where the communication between school and home is vitally important.

Programmes to address the needs of individual children are available to support their learning and activities at school. Most children bring some type of activities home and it is important that parents can help and do the activity together with their children. The problem is if you do not understand the activities, you and your child face a big problem and this can cause intergenerational relationship problems and/or conflict.

Understanding assessment tools and interpreting school reports can also add to other resettlement challenges. In New Zealand schools are communities and are run by a Board of Trustees and are monitored by government but for some of us, especially in my country Sudan, schools are controlled by government. New Zealand favours an open framework and syllabus learning whilst in other countries education is by rote learning. In New Zealand the teachers are trained and equipped to understand each student's strengths and teach to the level of students. Each student is tested on their individual strength not tested by class as a

collective. This is important to understand as we are seeing parents moving their children between schools because they don't understand the system, adding more pressure to their children in the resettlement process.

My belief is that if you have a strong community and get involved in school activities the relationship between you and your child will be stronger. We need to inform our parents, our communities and equip ourselves to engage in the community.

### **Samson Tse – Ethnic Voice NZ**

Samson had the following to say about the role of the family and the importance of building intergenerational relationships. We all have ups and downs but what contributes to and makes families work? What can intergenerational relationships offer to families? I will start by showing you a photo of my family – here we are celebrating a birthday together. Look at how I communicate with my boy, we do fun things together, we do things that we enjoy. My relationship with my parents was different and how I bring up my boy is different to how my parents brought me up, I have a lot of differences from my parents even though we live overseas.

We have been conducting research over the past two years about why people gamble. Intergenerational relationships can sometimes teach negative behaviour which can lead to excessive gambling. Sometimes our intergenerational relationships are a source of strength and at other times they are not such good learning experiences. One thing we do need to be reminded of is the way we as parents influence the second generation.

In our study we found that families had a great impact on effective problem gambling intervention. When we asked participants why they sought help or counselling, especially when it is associated with such a stigma, one of the main replies was, "We did it because when we look at our children we wanted to give them some hope - give them a future – so we sought help." The value of intergenerational relationships is that they can influence us by giving us a reason to do better; they can give us a reason to seek help in a situation like this.

This was also true for research conducted with Chinese recovering from mental health issues. We asked 52 people what they found helpful in their recovery and they replied it was not about receiving social support, but more about being able to support others and being able to

help other family members. For example, babysitting for grandchildren gives a sense of meaning and a purpose that helps recovery.

Conversely other research we have done on family violence in Asia, (Chinese and South Asia) showed that intergenerational relationships can be the cause of conflict resulting in abuse and violence, especially against children, women and elders. I would like to remind you that abuse comes in many forms not just physical, for example, in one family we found that the grandparent was forbidden to phone home.

Our research has shown that intergenerational relationships are sometimes good and sometimes bad. However, overall surely intergenerational relationships are a source of strength.

### **Hon Chris Carter – Minister for Ethnic Affairs**

The Hon Chris Carter began, "Great to be here and be invited to participate in such an important topic." Each of us plays an important role in our communities and in intergenerational relationships through advising and supporting each other and the challenges we face. Intergenerational relationships are a perennial human condition. If we look back in history philosopher Aristotle wrote a long essay on how useless the next generation was, also Confucius made comments of the succeeding generation, our parents said it about us and some of us are saying it about our children.

Society is always changing and generational tension is part of that. Our expectations of parents are never quite met by the next generation. This is not a bad thing. This tension is compounded when we move to a new society and want the best for our children. I would suggest that all migrants that come here are looking for a better life for their children. Even though they have come and are highly skilled they may not be able to use these skills in their new life so they focus on their kids' future. For migrants, existing natural intergenerational relationships challenges are compounded by living in a new place, new culture, new values and the conflicts that they create. We have to be flexible, we have made a choice, and need to adapt to different lifestyle, values, languages, customs and practices and there has to be a willingness by their parents to be flexible at the same time the child has high expectations placed on them. As well as a new culture and lifestyle, many migrants find they are suddenly a minority in society or at school.

Structures that provide support for parents are going to be harder in a new culture and other support for the children also needs to be there as they too will be feeling a sense of dislocation, of being torn between two cultures. My department is doing a lot of work in this area and we have just had an interesting meeting with Muslim youth as it is important for youth to be able to talk about their feelings and have a safety valve. We have also launched the Youth Portraits Programme and you can find out more about this from Ethnic Affairs.

Having good role models and having good people speaking positively and confidently about the values of their parents is important. For example, Parliament has made the decision to celebrate festivals. We are sending out a message to New Zealanders that migrants are now part of these festivals and are now part of our society and these peoples' festivals and cultures must be respected too. We are saying, "Yes you are a Kiwi now but you also have a distinctive cultural flavour that is respected."

Support is needed for parents and grandparents where there are going to be tensions compounded by living in a new society. Parents need support, for example, if their daughter will not marry the person the parents would like her to. Acceptance of this is going to be really hard for some parents and grandparents, but that is one of the realities of living in this society today.

I visit schools where parents are seeing their children turning into little Kiwis very quickly, even picking up Kiwi accents and very quickly finding their own way and sense of identity. There are many cultures here that have been here for over 100 years, for example Chinese, Indian, and Jewish, they have retained their culture but have also fitted into New Zealand society. We all need to provide support for each other.

## **Conclusion**

Support systems and networks are vital to assist integration, to retaining a successful family unit and maintaining confidence as a parent. Understanding New Zealand values, systems and policies will help parents understand why their children act in the manner they do as they adjust quickly to their new environment and also give parents confidence to understand how the new culture can enhance their own. Learning the culture and becoming fluent in English is important and will have a positive impact on relationships overall. Migrant parents must appreciate that life will change and it is up to them to keep their vision and goals of their new life in mind as they take on the challenges.

## Recommendations

It is recommended

1. To identify existing networks, support existing networks and where gaps in the migrant communities exist, build new networks.
2. To help migrants identify their own goals and what they want to achieve.
3. To provide better opportunities for migrants to learn English quickly and to a high level.
4. To help bridge the link between schools and home, between teachers and parents.
5. To educate organisations on the need to be proactive in creating job opportunities for migrants.
6. To recognise the importance of family and intergenerational relationships, and to provide support for families within the home and wider community.
7. To help parents become more active in their children's learning and sporting activities.
8. To encourage parents to participate in their new community, to be confident in being a new New Zealanders.

# Appendicis

## Appendix I - Presentation Rose Joudi

Muslim Youth  
*The Challenge & Confusion*

Rose Joudi  
Auckland University of Technology  
&  
Muslim Social Services Group (MSSG)

السلام عليكم  
*Peace Be Upon You*

My Focus

- Intergenerational Cultural Transition: *Iraqi Female Migrants Talk About, and Make Sense of Cultural Adaptation and Preservation in New Zealand* (2002) – SASP.
- The isolation, conflict, and challenge of being *Arab Muslim female* migrants in New Zealand (2004) – Te Papa.
- The Social Participation Challenges of Female Arab Muslim Refugees in New Zealand (2004) - UNITEC.
- “*Know me before you judge me*”: The Experiences of Young Arab Muslim Women in New Zealand (2006) - DIA.
- Muslim Youths in NZ – a workshop (2006).

- Adolescent migrants struggle to develop an identity that integrates both their ethnic values and those of the host society.
- On one hand they live with parents who encourage the preservation of ethnic values, customs, and language.
- On the other hand, they live among and socialise with peers who belong to the other society, and the adolescent migrants go to educational institutions that encourage them to learn and be proficient in the host societies language, customs, and beliefs.

Intergenerational Conflict Cont.

Challenges of Parents/family:

1. Parents feel less in control.
2. Concern over children's loss of identity.
3. Whitening/Blackening the face of the family.

Cultural Bridge

Intergenerational cultural transition

- Mothers – preservation –protecting their children (especially girls).

“I want our culture to be like a bridge. A bridge between them and between us. Like between them over here and their roots over there. Of course this would helping a lot in preserving our identity, like it will let them bond more and it will also bring the younger generations living here closer to home.”

## Cont...

- Daughters – flexibility.  
“The way they think is quite complicated, while we think everything is, you know, is easy, you know so what if you go out or something you aren’t doing anything bad. But you know you have to face it. It’s a free country no one...it’s not going to annoy anyone. *You gotta’ change so you can... you know, fit in.*”

## Living in 2 different worlds

- The issue of mixed messages - Muslim & Western world.
- First-generation face acculturation challenges, whereas the second and subsequent generations face challenges of developing their ethnic identity.

## A Healthy Identity

- Youth require to be in contact socially and culturally with members of their ethnic group.
- Ethnic identity of youth is derived from information regarding their ethnicity and ethnic group through social learning experiences provided by their families and communities, as well as by the dominant society.

## Constructing Identity

“It’s something they have been brought up on for centuries and many years and they are trying to revive it in us, just as their parents did to them...the pathway that they walked through, they want us to walk through it too. Because if we don’t abide by that we’ll have our own path than theirs... and we wont turn out like them, and they want us to turn out like them.” - D

## The construct of the Arab mother

- Mothers - cultural preserver, advisor, Mujahida (Jihad – to struggle, or strive).

“To be quite honest, it requires Jihad. I mean for the mothers that come here and are able to protect their children, I mean that is a form of Jihad. God will reward them.”


“So now u can say that I am fighting...it’s like a form of Jihad for my kids...it’s true they make mistakes and slip...but at the same time I am around so when these mistakes do happen...I resolve them.”

- Although the participants constructed a distinctive identity for themselves in relation to Western society in New Zealand, they were also keen to some extent to establish membership to that society despite their sense of difference and exclusion.
- According to Haj-Yahia (2000), these approaches lead the individual to forego personal aspirations in order to pursuit and enhance the family’s status and reputation in order to whiten the face of the Arab family.

- Although the participants constructed a distinctive identity for themselves in relation to Western society in New Zealand, they were also keen to some extent to establish membership to that society despite their sense of difference and exclusion.
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## Appendix II - Presentation Dr Samson Tse

Resilience & Strengths



- Where do I find strengths to bounce back (ex & current mental health service users, family):
  1. **Oneself:** recognize symptoms, self-control, doing meaningful activities, exercises, positive mind-set
  2. **Therapy or professional help:** practical assistance, counselling, WRAP, home-visits, care, kindness & professionalism, medications
  3. **Community, wider context:** community activities, housing, healthcare & social welfare system
  4. **Social connections:** peer & family support, helping others, harmonised relationships
  5. **Faith in God and associated activities:** Christian faith & social support
  6. **Family support**
  7. **Socialise with "normal people"**
  8. **Securing paid work**

Cont'd



Strengths and capacities in preventing and reducing family violence		
Mapping of individual strengths	Mapping of collective strengths	
Family	Ethnic specific media	Help from family
Role models	Existing organisations/groups	Help from the neighbourhood
Religious beliefs	Existing family violence services	Help from professional services
Peer support groups	Translated printed material on family violence	Help from legislation and the legal framework
Working as a volunteer		

## Appendix III - Feedback from Audience

### Family Roles

- 1) Can't be a child – the stress, expectations (tension and negotiation), ID issues (clashed values), what about me – independent v relationship
- 2) How does family deal with the differences (value it), use skills as a platform to combine knowledge and level of empathy.
- 3) Increase the level of awareness – beliefs, id, religions – conflicts arise after arriving (the suddenness and lack of control for people from refugee background)
- 4) Wider context – influence the family (eg other families, discrimination), issue of family/parents isolation, what schools can offer and/or change.
- 5) Values, family/parents, children, peer, community

### Parent Networks

1. Issues – communication within the family, outside the family
2. Network formation (informal network) SKIP programme, playgroup – find out what is in the community re network (integration of services)
3. Outreach to the communities – resources, funding, time and people – join volunteering groups
4. Community dynamics – trust v time
5. Capacity of communities – empowering the community
6. Not about parents, but is about network.

### Trauma

1. prior to leaving – 2 the journey 3 transition – war – resettlement- refugee
2. Expectations, disappointments, lack of connection and support, isolation, health- depression, self esteem, communication
3. Lack of identification in new home
4. Educational resources that cater for ethnic needs
5. Ethnic officers
6. PTSD – educational groups

### Volunteering – Integration

1. Proactive – pathways – responsibility of individual and organisations (mainstream organisation, school, health board, citizen advice bureau, sports organisations)
2. Confidence
3. Sharing – opportunity to learn and teach
4. Opportunity to integrate – cultural organisations
5. Bridge between main stream – individuals and families and migrant and cultural

## Economics

1. Over qualified – lack of NZ experience (protectionism and overcoming it)
2. Catch 22 situation (skill shortage – poor economic growth)
3. Skills development – improve English language, bi-lingual
4. Migrants bring more opportunities
5. Govt recognition and support of migrant potential and contribution
6. Empowering local Ethnic migrant communities (part of the broadened host community)