



REFUGEE REFLECTIONS

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Sixth Annual Regional Refugee Forum

The sixth Regional Refugee Forum on Refugee Health and Wellbeing, organised by the Canterbury Refugee Council Inc. took place at the College of Education, University of Canterbury on 16 February, 2015. The forum brought together participants from various Governmental and Non-Governmental organisations in the discussions. The forum also had an attendance from the refugee background people.

The event combined presentations with an interactive formative whereby participants were divided into small groups and given questions in order to exchange ideas and share experiences. This created an environment of diversity, inclusivity and productivity.

This forum constitutes an effective mechanism to bring stakeholders together to foster closer collaboration and co-operation between and among NGOs, and the government sectors for promotion and protection of refugees' rights to health in New Zealand. It provides a discussion platform for organisations working on refugee health issues in Canterbury, as well as promote inter-regional/organisational dialogue and networking for the implementation of discussions of the Forum.

To read the full report please contact the manager at cantyrefugeecouncil@gmail.com.





Workshop on Domestic Violence for Refugee background Women

Canterbury Refugee Council organised a workshop for women on Family Violence with the support of Community Law. The workshop was for women from refugee background as it was felt that they do not have a comprehensive knowledge of New Zealand family laws. Women from Ethiopian, Eritrean, Somali, Kurdish, Nepalese communities participated.

The workshop was conducted by Penny Arthur from Canterbury Community Law Centre and discussed the benefits of being aware of the family law for women and importance of being aware of family violence. Family violence can refer to any practice where one person has control over another and is manifested in many ways such as physical, psychological, sexual and emotional. Furthermore, Penny explained the difference between

the consequences of assault and domestic violence and also explicated on the differences between police safety orders and protection orders.

The women were also informed of the help available to both the victims and perpetrators of family violence. For the abusers there are stopping violence programmes as well as support groups which they can join. For victims there are programmes to provide life skills. For instance, there are several initiatives for children who have been victims to help them understand what is happening, to deal with any issues they might be facing, and to help them process their emotions. In addition to support programmes, there is relationship counselling available to couples and families that may be facing tough times, regardless of whether there is a protection order in place.

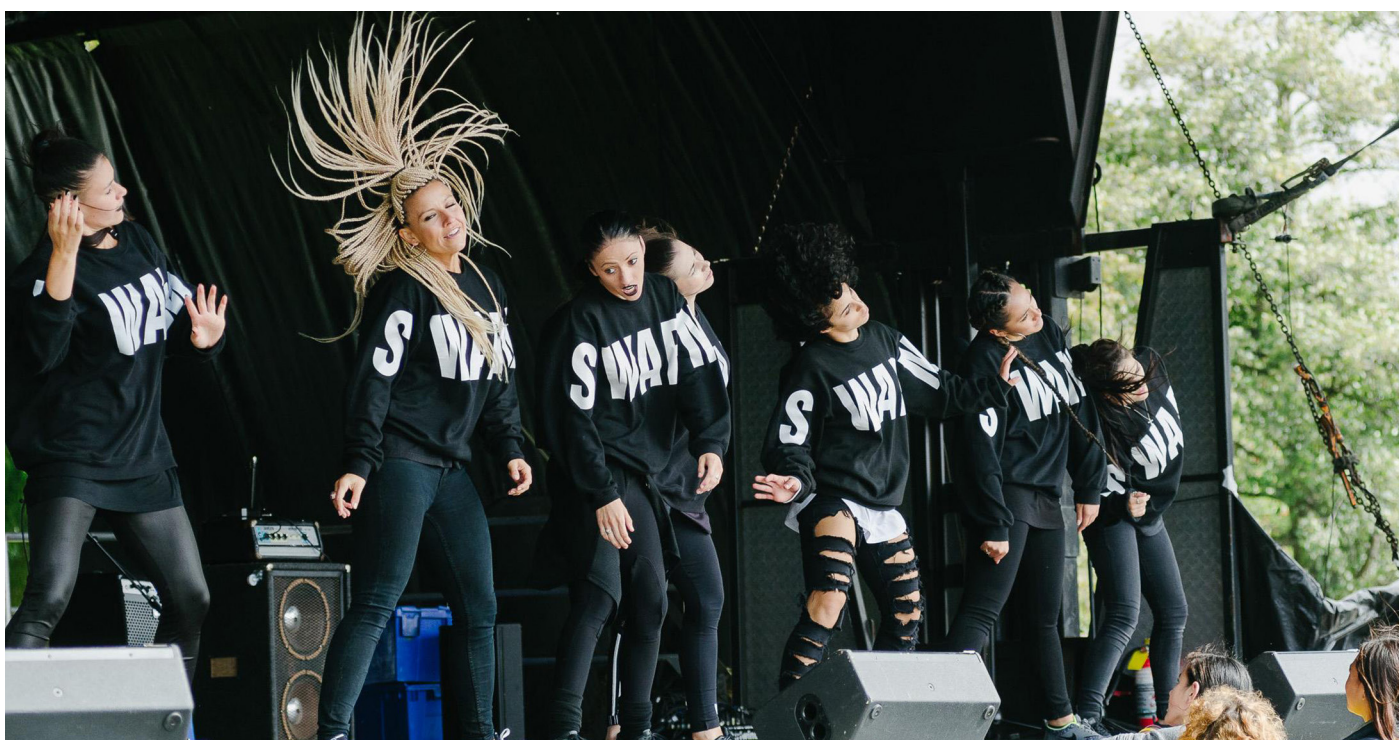
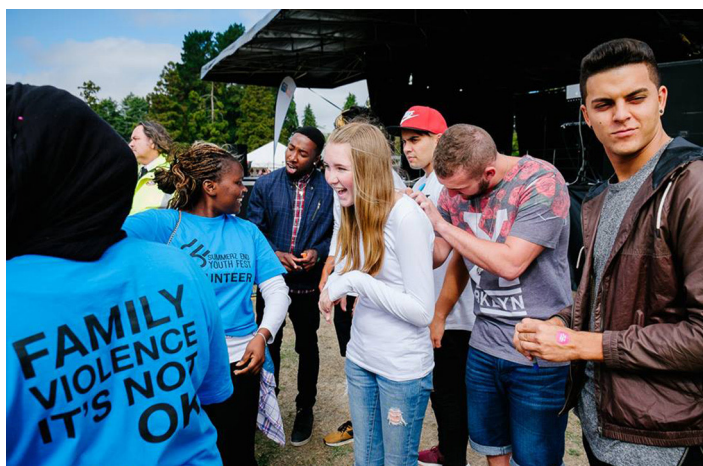
There was an activity session in which participants were divided into groups and given activity sheet on what constitute domestic violence.

The session produced consensus regarding the definition of family violence and that being aware of the laws will facilitate better awareness of rights amongst women. The participants found the workshop to be informative and believed that they had a better understanding of the laws. Comments were made at the end that New Zealand's laws "back up" their ideas of how family life should be. The women felt empowered to stand up for their own rights, and others knowing the laws are on their side.



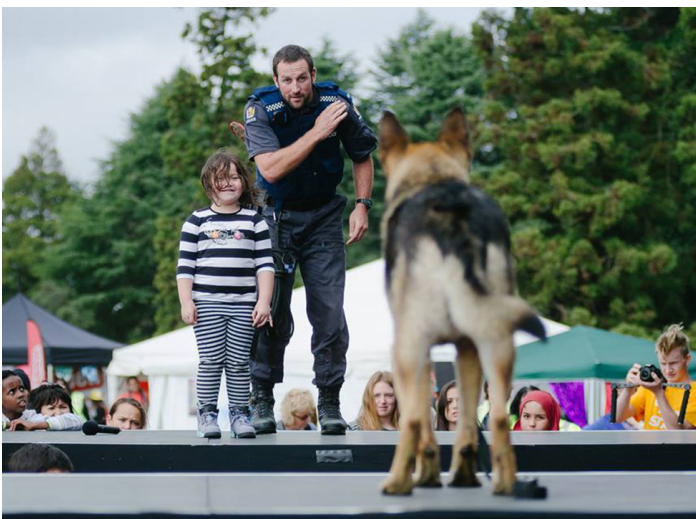
Summerz End Festival 2015; through the Lens of the Event Manager

It is quite a feeling when a large truck with a shipping-container sized trailer comes on to the park in pitch dark. It's like trying to imagine the venue filled with people and activity but with nothing there except a few objects placed seemingly at random. Apprehension was dominant, and the sick feeling that often accompanies the realisation that this huge monster of a truck and trailer unit is the heart of the whole event, the stage. If it doesn't function as the heart, the centre and life-blood of the day, then everything else lacks the coherence it needs to make it all hang together. White marquees had been erected the day before the event and loomed ghost-like in the blackness as the gang of technicians gathered to set the stage up.



However, with the energy that comes from all these various people setting things up, gradually confidence builds as the park begins to resemble plans made months ago. When light finally dawned, we could see everything beginning to take shape. The stage opened out on the top and the sides. People began arriving to set up the extensions in front of the stage to form the cat walks. Gazebos went up and electricity generators arrived and were turned on.

There is always a chaotic aspect to any event before it is up and running. Final placements of stalls need to be adjusted. A truly exciting part for an organiser is seeing the order slowly emerge from the chaos. For the week leading up to Summerz End, nervous people scanned weather reports and took it upon themselves to keep me up to date with shifting forecasts. As it turned out, the weather was warm throughout the day, with cloud cover, which I think is always best for an outdoor event of six hours. The sun broke through the cloud cover at about three o'clock and raised the spirits of the whole park.



The performances on stage began for me the moment Sally Pitama took the stage and delivered her awe-inspiring karanga and sang her waiata. Those sounds always thrill me. They are a cry from the heart that echoes down the ages and carries the stories of countless people in their sounds. Sally told the story of the Māori migration from Africa to Asia to South America to the Pacific. These stories are precious. They define us and remind us who we are and where we all come from. The opening act was Man Whānau, delivering rock steady beats that always make me feel like it's summer, (even at Summerz End!). And on to the rest of the programme. I tried to take in as much as I could, but an event coordinator is never free to enjoy the goings on, except in snatches and I did manage a few of those, and here they are:

Dumplings from Singapore. The awesome arrival of all the people from Malaysia. The brilliant football. My reunion with my drama school mate Eteuati Ete of the Laughing Samoans. The cup of coffee poured from an earthenware pot in the Ethiopian tent, hot, strong and bitter. Standing on stage and giving out prizes next to MC extraordinaire Rebecca Bastin. The smile on Zhiyan's face as she was able to enjoy the event. The bone-tired, satisfied feeling I had when at nine o'clock at night I had finished my work for the day after a 5:00am start.

Summerz End had an embarrassment of riches when it came to the performance programme. From the heart felt solo performances of Ashy Batchelor, a contestant on The X-Factor New Zealand this year, and Fadzai, younger sister of TK, from our headliners Titanium. Spectacular dance crews like Swarm Urban Performance, the Philippines dance group, Latin Addiction, the astonishing students from the Management and Science University of Malaysia and the popular Bollywood dancers. There was the special treat of the Laughing Samoans onstage, who've toured the world with their inimitable brand of self-deprecating humour. And all of this was in the one place for the enjoyment of all our festival goers, almost 5,000 coming and going during the day.

I can't begin to express my gratitude for all the support, energy and skills from everyone. Everyone who performed, stood behind a stall, served food and who just took part by being there. I wish I could do it all again.

Nic Farra, Events Co ordinator

STEPPING UP ?

New Zealand's Response to the Refugee Crisis

Screening of documentary "Stepping Up?"

Imagine being compelled to leave your home and going to a new land where the language and culture is completely new to you; not knowing when you will be back and in some cases knowing you will never return to your own country. This is the experience of an average refugee.

Stepping Up? A documentary screened on Wednesday evening by the CRC sheds light on refugee experiences in New Zealand. The documentary talks about the refugee policies in New Zealand, a timely subject given that the quota has not increased since 1987 and the current debate about New Zealand's refugee quota agreement between the New Zealand Government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The documentary is made by Lucia Dore, a former financial journalist who has lived and worked in both the UK and Dubai for more than 25 years and has recently returned home to New Zealand. This is Lucia's first foray into documentary filmmaking, a step she believes is a natural progression considering her extensive experience in journalism.

On a personal front the story of her Syrian friend living in Dubai who had fled Homs a few years ago and whose family was later killed in Homs influenced her a lot. The idea to choose refugee issues in New Zealand as the subject of her documentary stemmed from the various conversations she had with people in Dubai, most of whom said that given a choice to leave the region many people would like to move. The refugee policy of New

Zealand eventually became the theme of her movie. to one of three countries-Canada, Australia or New Zealand. Talking about her filmmaking experiences, Lucia says she found that although people here were really interested in the subject but they were well aware that they did not know much about it. For the purpose of research she contacted all the people in New Zealand working with refugees and their communities. The research has manifested itself in the documentary by having the "right" people speak on camera. The kiwi filmmaker says that even Susan Devoy, race relations commissioner at the Human Rights Commissioner (HRC), suggested that she interview someone else at HRC- Michael White, senior legal and policy analyst, because he advises Susan. Interestingly she says that there were no dissenting views on the fact that second-generation refugees can help the New Zealand community although there were some differences on how the government needs to maximise these opportunities.

Lucia hopes that her documentary raises questions and issues about refugees and have people debate them. She says that an ideal scenario would be for the government to review its policies towards refugees perhaps by increasing the quota or by increasing funding, and to make local communities aware of some of the issues that refugees face.



Statement by Canterbury Muslim Community Trust

Bismillah Irahman Niraheem, walhumdulillah wa Salaatu wa Salaamu 'ala Rasulillah ("In the name of Allah, most Gracious, most Compassionate, all praise is due to Allah and blessing and peace be upon the messenger of Allah") I would like to wish you all As'salaamualaikum, a greeting we use for each other which means, "Peace be upon you". Approximate 3,500 law abiding Muslims live in Canterbury who believe and practice true Islam with peace, who are keen to keep this area peaceful and denounce all forms of violence. We are all striving to create more channels of communication with the other communities and to improve ourselves. There are big differences between Islam as a religion of peace, happiness and mercy, and the understanding and behavior of a small minority who call themselves Muslim but they are grossly misrepresenting and perverting our Faith. We as members of Canterbury Muslim Community Trust categorically denounce any warfare, violence and atrocities that are taking place anywhere in the world. We are also New Zealand citizens and residents of Canterbury, for some of us our children have been born here, they go to school here and are happily integrating with many other children of their like from many faiths, making friends! I speak now for myself, for my colleagues in the Canterbury Muslim Community Trust, and for all my Muslim brothers and sisters whom I know and hold dearly in my heart that:

- We all... do not condone violence;
- We...do not support imposition of suffering and pain in the name of our beloved religion Islam an our Lord the Almighty;

- We... do not support the imposition of our ideas onto others;
- We... abide by the same laws as everyone else and pay the same taxes and vote;
- We... understand that it is the responsibility of the believers of all faiths to put their hands together in keeping New Zealand secure and safe; and
- We... must protect our children and the young vulnerable individuals from being an easy prey to dangerous ideology by education support and monitoring.

I stand here, judged by Almighty God, in front of all of you as witnesses that we are committed to peace. We may have different beliefs, different religions, different life styles but we abide by the same laws and share the same moral values as each and every one of you, that is respect for human life, respect for the dignity, and the human rights of others, and love for our families, our friends and neighbors and fellow man. I end this in the same way as I began my speech, that is, in the name of Allah, the most forgiving the most merciful. Assalaamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.... (May the peace, mercy, and blessings of Allah be with you).

Rob Dewhirst Chairman, Canterbury Muslim Community Trust

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