

NEW RESIDENT MAGAZINE

Volume 07 | June 2025



When We Became New Zealanders



www.arcc.org.nz

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He Mihi

E ngā Mana.

E ngā Reo.

E ngā Waka.

He Mihi tenei kia koutou, nau mai, piki mai, kake mai, haere mai.

Haere mai, whakatau mai ki Aotearoa. He nui te mihi, he nui te aroha, kia koutou, ngā Iwi Taketake o te Ao.

I mahue atu o koutou whenua, o koutou kāinga, me o koutou whānau. Ahakoa enei, kiaū tonu kito koutou Reo, o koutou Tikanga, hei tikitiki mo o koutou mahunga. Pikauhia mai hoki ngā tini mate o te wā, kia tangihia, kia tukua he roimata mo rātou –kia tutuki ai te kōrero nei – “rātou kia rātou, tātou kia tātou.”

“Kotahi tekohao o te ngira e kuhuna ai te miro mā, te miropango, me te mirowhero. I muri kia mau ki te Aroha, ki te Ture, me te Whakapono.” He korero nā Kingi Potatau Te Wherowhero.

He mātāpono enei hei arahiiā tātou I runga I te tika, te pono, me te aroha.

Noho ora mai. Kia ora.

‘Bobby’ Robert Newson

English Translation of Mihi

Distinguished Guests.

Cultural Ambassadors and Leaders

Faith Communities Ladies and Gentlemen.

Greetings and welcome.

We bid you welcome – welcome to Aotearoa - New Zealand. We greet you; we honour and respect you the Indigenous peoples of the world.

With heavy saddened hearts you have left your homeland, your homes, and your family to find a new life in another land. We recognise and encourage you, as you seek to find this new life in this new land – hold on to your language hold on to your culture – your identity – who you are. To your Ancestors and loved ones passed, whom you cherish in your hearts let them meet as we today meet.

“There is but one eye of the needle through which the white, black and red threads must pass. After I am gone hold fast to love, to the law and to your beliefs.” Famous words spoken by Potatau Te Wherowhero the first Maori King.

The principles of Faith (belief) Hope and Charity will guide us through life.

Blessings to you all.

‘Bobby’ Robert Newson



Photo credit: **Ehsan K. Hazaveh**

Welcoming Message

A warm welcome to all the new Kiwis reading this.

As a politician I have been privileged to get to know many refugees and asylum seekers, and communities with refugee backgrounds.

As Associate Minister of Immigration in Jacinda Ardern's Labour government I was involved in the evacuation and resettlement of 1800 Afghans after the Taliban takeover in 2021. I set up a Human Rights Defender programme that gave refuge to at-risk human rights advocates from Afghanistan and Myanmar.

As a local MP in West Auckland I represent people who have come from all the world to make a new life including many former refugees. I have run organising projects with former refugee communities to empower people to vote in elections with confidence and make their voice heard.

And as Labour's immigration spokesperson I lead our work in this area, developing policy to improve New Zealand's performance as a welcoming place for people fleeing persecution.

In amongst all that, and what I love most about this work, is getting to know the people who against the odds make a new home in our country, often fleeing unspeakable hardship, and who contribute so much of themselves to this place.

I treasure the friends I now have in this community.

I have come to realise just how much our country is enriched by the people who make their home here after experiencing forced displacement. In my political life I want to make sure that as a country we do the best we can to welcome new Kiwis, and help them to settle and build new lives as successfully as possible.

I want to thank ARCC and the community of organisations and volunteers who work in this area for the great work they do.

While there is much we can be proud of in refugee resettlement, there is certainly much more to do. Laws, policies and programmes all are in need of reform. Family reunification stands out as one area desperately in need of attention.

As we walk together on this journey, we must in the interests of getting the best outcomes support participation and leadership of Kiwis with forced displacement backgrounds. Let's do this together.

Hon Phil Twyford
Member of Parliament for Te Atatū



Unlocking Entrepreneurial Potential: ARCC and the Iti Rearea Collective Business Start-Up Programme

By Pwint Soe and Dr. Abann Yor

Introduction

For many new migrants and former refugees in Auckland, starting a business is more than just an economic venture, it's a chance to rebuild their lives and give back to their new home. Over the past three years, the Iti Rearea Collective (IRC) Business Start-Up Programme, known as the NEST & SOAR programme, has become a vital stepping stone for these aspiring entrepreneurs. Inspired by the belief that with the right support, anyone can achieve great heights, this collaborative initiative empowers participants to transform modest ideas into thriving enterprises.

This article reflects on the journey and impact of the IRC from the perspective of the Aotearoa Resettled Community Coalition (ARCC) and makes the case for why this work must continue.

initiatives that could advance ethnic diversity and inclusion across Auckland. One powerful idea that emerged was the creation of a microfinance initiative focused on supporting new migrants and former refugees. This idea evolved into a pilot entrepreneurship and microfinance programme tailored to the needs of those communities.

By 2021, Foundation North approved a three-year pilot grant, and a group of partner organisations formalised the IRC. From the start, the collective's vision was to remove structural barriers preventing former refugees and other migrant communities from participating fully in Aotearoa's economic life. Through entrepreneurship training, mentorship, and access to microfinance, the programme fosters both self-reliance and social inclusion.

The Origins of a Collective Vision

The story of the Iti Rearea Collective began in 2019 when Foundation North brought together diverse community leaders to co-design bold

Who Makes up the Collective?

The IRC is a collaboration of several partner organisations, each bringing unique strengths:

- **ARCC:** Led community engagement, recruitment, relationship building and the strategic leadership.

- **Women Entrepreneurship Centre:** Delivered entrepreneurship workshops and training.

- **Catalysr X:** Provided one-on-one business coaching.

- **Ngā Tāngata Microfinance:** Offered financial mentoring and microloans.

- **University of Otago:** Oversaw monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

- **Belong Aotearoa:** Served as fund holder and provided backbone administrative support.

- **Momentum Mind Lab:** Later joined to support business coaching and mentorship.

This model of shared governance and collaboration has been central to the programme's success, creating a support ecosystem that wraps around each participant.

ARCC's Central Role

As one of the founding partners, ARCC has played a pivotal role in every phase of the IRC, from co-design to delivery. With a long-standing history of working alongside resettled migrant communities, ARCC brought deep insights, trusted relationships, and cultural competency to the table. It served as a vital bridge between programme design and community realities.

One of ARCC's most significant contributions was in recruitment. Across all six programme cohorts, ARCC took the lead in engaging participants. Through phone calls, face-to-face



conversations, outreach events and multilingual promotional materials, ARCC's team reached hundreds of community members. Flyers were distributed in churches, mosques and community centres. WhatsApp groups, ethnic radio stations and personal networks were used to connect with potential applicants.

Beyond recruitment, ARCC also provided holistic wraparound support. Team members assisted participants in overcoming challenges ranging from digital literacy to childcare and transportation. This pastoral care ensured that learners remained engaged and able to succeed.

The Impact So Far

Three years in, the impact of the IRC is undeniable. Over 2,000 community members were reached through outreach and information sessions. The programme received 204 applications, out of which 120 participants were enrolled in the NEST and SOAR programmes.

From these cohorts:

- **31 businesses** have been established, spanning catering, beauty services, event planning, trades, and education.
- **22 jobs** have been created, as many of these businesses have started to scale.
- Graduation rates were strong, with nearly **%60 of NEST** participants and nearly **%80 of SOAR** participants completing their programmes.
- **9 participants received seed grants** to kick-start their businesses, and one received a microloan to support growth.

Just as important as the numbers are the personal transformations. Participants consistently report improved confidence, clarity, and readiness to take their business dreams seriously. One graduate shared:

"The NEST programme helped me to unleash the inner me and make one of my dreams come true. I am thankful to the team for giving me confidence and the belief that nothing is impossible."



Looking to the Future

As the pilot phase concludes, ARCC and its partners believe that the journey is far from over. The IRC has proven that when given the right tools, guidance and community support, migrant entrepreneurs can thrive, and in doing so, strengthen the fabric of Aotearoa New Zealand.

We know the need remains. Many participants who completed the programme are now seeking advanced support, access to growth capital, tailored coaching, and peer networks. At the same time, others in the community are still waiting for the opportunity to begin their journey.

That's why we are actively seeking funding to sustain and expand the programme. We believe that with continued investment, the IRC model can support many more families to build sustainable livelihoods and contribute meaningfully to their communities. We also

believe that future phases of the programme can be improved with a more clearly defined governance structure, greater operational independence, and stronger communication across partner organisations.

Final Thoughts

At ARCC, we see firsthand how entrepreneurship is not just about business. For many former refugees and migrant families, it's about reclaiming agency, regaining confidence, and laying down roots in a new land. The IRC has helped plant those roots. It has also shown that when communities lead, supported by meaningful partnerships and resourced appropriately, the results are transformative.

As we reflect on the past three years of delivery, we are proud of what has been achieved, and hopeful for what could come next. With the right support, even the smallest among us can indeed soar.



Story No. 1

Dr. Hasina Dilawari



I was born into a family of engineers. Although I dreamed of becoming a pilot, my father envisioned me in a doctor's white coat. When a scholarship opportunity came up to study at Azerbaijan Medical University in Baku, I took it, and that's where I trained and qualified as a specialist in Ultrasound (Medical Sonography). After returning to Afghanistan, I started working as a doctor in a military hospital.

It was during that time I met my husband, who was also a medical doctor. Being doctors during a time of war was far from easy. I performed general surgeries, while he worked as a paediatrician. Later, I began working with the UN to reach even more people in need. We travelled from city to city with other medical teams, doing whatever we could to care for the injured and the vulnerable. It was relentless, physically draining and emotionally overwhelming. I was on the edge of collapse. People around us were being hurt or killed every day, and all we could do was try our best to save as many lives as possible.

After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, my husband and I decided to establish a private hospital using our own savings. It began as a modest ten-bed facility where we handled everything, from sonography to surgeries,

including caesarean sections. There was a severe shortage of surgeons, so I had to be everywhere at once. Over time, we used the same model to help set up three hospitals in other regions. We received no government or external funding. Our motivation was never profit, but service. The greatest reward came when patients thanked us and prayed for our wellbeing. That meant more than anything money could buy.

Just as things were going well, everything changed. The danger for me and my family increased significantly, and we had to leave Afghanistan. I fled to Pakistan with my children. We stayed there for almost a year before I was informed that I could apply for refugee status. Our lives were in danger, so I applied immediately. Within three months, our application was accepted. A few months later,



Regular catch-ups with the community are part of my commitment to social engagement, alongside my love for cooking. These gatherings are also a space where community members share their knowledge through workshops, including sewing classes.

in November 2015, we arrived in New Zealand.

Back home, we had lived a privileged life, running three hospitals, with drivers and a personal chef. In New Zealand, I had to rely on Work and Income support to survive. It was a huge shift. I didn't speak English; my native language is Farsi, and I had learned Russian to study in Baku. Whatever I wanted to do here, I was told I had to learn English first. Others told me I lacked New Zealand experience, but how could I have experience when I had just arrived? It was disheartening. I fell into depression. Each day I would drop the kids off at school, return home, and cry until it was time to pick them up again. I eventually saw a psychologist, but had an allergic reaction to the medication she prescribed.

It was during this difficult time that I met the

team at the Wise Collective in 2018. Being part of their programme helped me heal. I connected with other women who had experienced similar journeys, and that support made a world of difference.

Back in Afghanistan, I had never cooked. I had someone who did that for us. But cooking was something I'd always wanted to do. Out of necessity, I started cooking for my children in New Zealand and discovered I genuinely enjoyed it. I thought, if others liked my food and I liked cooking, why not turn it into a business? It felt better to cook than to sit at home and cry.

One day, a volunteer visited our home and I made baklava for her. She loved it and encouraged me to start a business. That suggestion stayed with me. I took a short



I love cooking at local markets—it gives me a chance to share my food and connect with people through the flavours of my culture.



Here's where the magic happens, my kitchen at home, where all the flavours of Hasina's Magic Kitchen are made with love!

course, and with Wise Collective's support, my confidence grew. I enrolled in business training and eventually registered my business. At the time, I had no resources to start, but that same volunteer, who has now been a dear friend for ten years, helped me from the very beginning. She even paid my business registration fees and assisted with paperwork. I borrowed money from friends and slowly began buying cooking equipment, piece by piece.

Three years after arriving in New Zealand, one of our former patients got in touch, searching for us. With his help, we were able to reconnect with my husband, with whom we had lost contact for four years. Fortunately, he was able to join us in New Zealand. He spoke English well and soon began working towards his medical

registration. Today, he is a practising GP and continues to advance his career at Hamilton Hospital.

I have five children, four boys and one girl, who were between 4 and 18 years old when we arrived. Now, they are busy with school and university. They help me with my cooking business, setting up stalls and delivering food, while I focus on the cooking itself.

People appreciate the discipline and care I bring to my service. I never turn down an order, whether large or small, and that has helped grow my customer base. I now serve a wide range of communities, and regularly participate in markets and festivals.



I have four sons and a daughter. They are my kids, friends, and colleagues all in one. They've all given me the support I've needed on this journey

Though my life has taken a different direction, I still try to support people. For me, being useful and contributing to society is essential. I couldn't give as much as I wanted back home, but here I do my best. New Zealand is a good place for children to grow. You can sleep peacefully at night without fear. In Afghanistan, my mind was always occupied, thinking about patients, about explosions, about surviving each day.

Even though we had a more luxurious home in Afghanistan, it was not peaceful. Here, we live modestly, but with calm. That, I believe, is one of life's trades—you lose some things and gain others. Life brings both hardship and blessings, but it's worth the fight. What's past is past. If you keep dwelling on it, you lose today too. I try to focus on the present and move forward.

I served as a medical doctor and surgeon for 21 years. I worked with international organisations to establish clinics in underserved areas of Afghanistan. I supported women's rights, organised community gatherings, and promoted education and sport for children. I helped run workshops and provided access to events that encouraged kids to connect, learn, and grow. Today, I continue that legacy in a different way. Alongside my business, I still find ways to bring people together and support my community.

Back then, I used my hands to heal pain through surgery. Now, I use them to cook—to bring people comfort and joy. When you live through hardship, you become stronger. You learn how to put yourself back together, again and again.

Story No. 2

Roqia Rasooli



I started my business, Decoration X, in October 2022. As the name suggests, we offer event decoration services and equipment hire. I began modestly, decorating with balloons for birthdays and baby showers. Although I initially worked mainly with the Afghan community, my clients now include people from Indian, Pakistani, Islander, and English-speaking backgrounds. As we have grown, we have expanded from small events to decorating weddings with up to 2,000 guests. The business continues to grow with the support of the communities and through promotion on Marketplace and Instagram.

For many years, however, life was full of challenges. Survival and starting over have become second nature. We have built things, lost them, and begun again. In Afghanistan, people lose their homes and loved ones constantly, yet they rebuild, with hope.

I was three years old when we moved from Kabul, Afghanistan, to Mashhad, Iran. I completed my elementary schooling there before we decided to reunite with my brother, who had a business in Esfahan, Iran. After completing my education, I married at the age of 21. Not long after, even though we had a comfortable life and a nice house in Iran, my husband decided to move back to Afghanistan because we didn't have legal status in Iran.

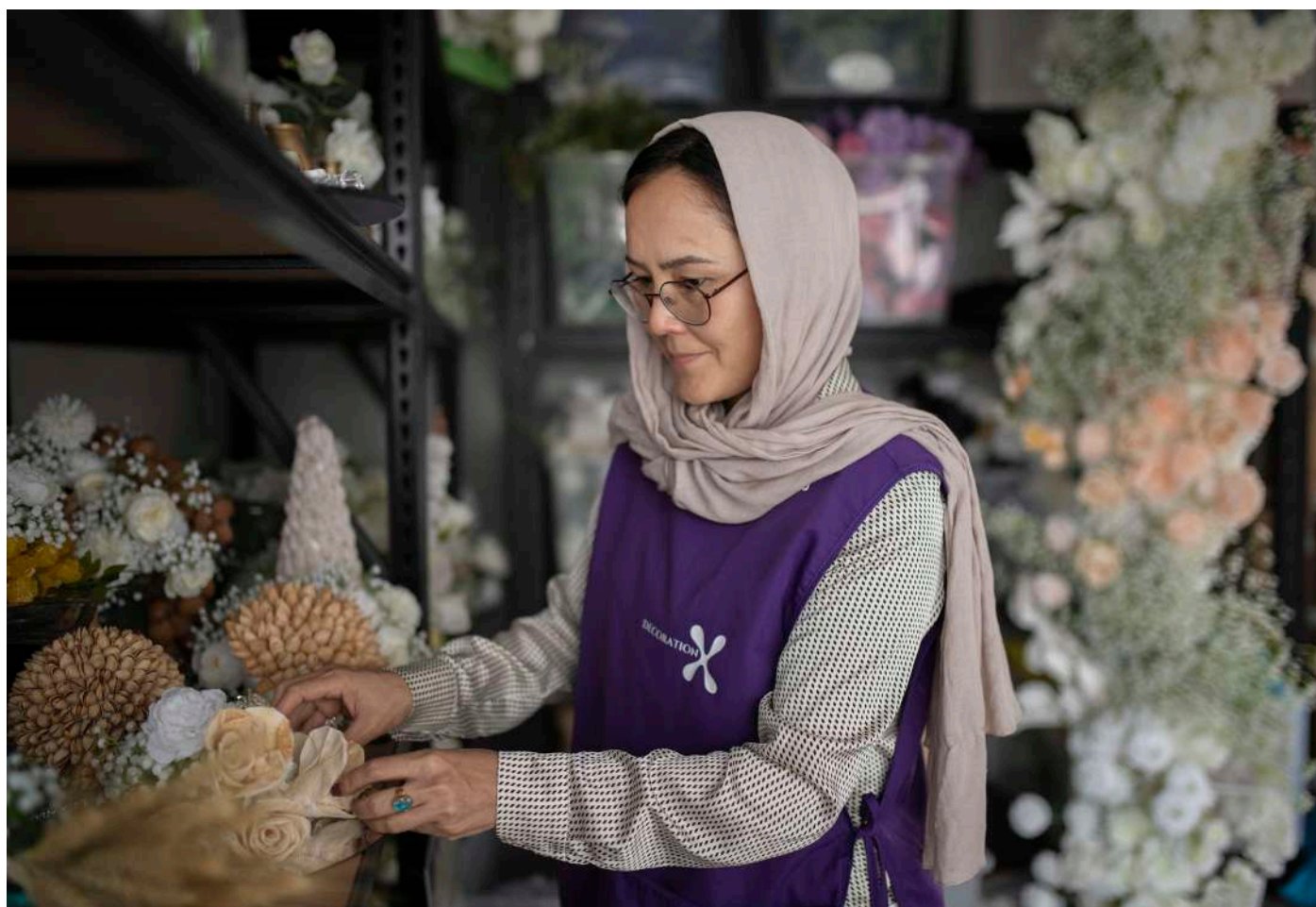
My husband had a printing business, and with that, we bought land and began building a home from scratch. We made the house just the way we wanted, nice and cosy. But once again, we had to leave.

This time, it was because the situation in Afghanistan was becoming increasingly insecure and not long after, my husband passed away. I took on any work I could find and began developing skills in event decoration to help support the family. We had to find a way to survive.

I sold our home in Afghanistan just to have enough to survive while waiting for the outcome of our refugee status and resettlement process.



We've turned our garage into a space where we can prepare everything. It's made things a lot easier than when we used to store everything in the living room.



I'm always trying to add new accessories and decorations. Trends change quickly, and it's important to keep up so clients have fresh options to choose from.

We fled Afghanistan in 2013, when Laya was eleven and Ali was nine. A smuggler helped us escape through India and Malaysia before we reached Indonesia, where we settled in a refugee camp.

Ali and Laya tried to continue learning and studying despite the inconsistency of education. No one in the camp was allowed to work or attend school outside, so the only option was to find volunteers within the camp to teach the children. Refugee doctors and engineers volunteered their time to teach while their own applications were being processed. For five years, Ali and Laya learnt subjects such as Maths, Physics, and English in this way.

We arrived in New Zealand in late 2018. We were initially placed in Hamilton, in a house

that was in poor condition. Luckily, the landlord later decided to demolish the house, so we had to move again, this time to Auckland, where we had more community support. It was stressful, especially worrying about how the kids would adapt to the education system and the language.

Also, once we settled in Auckland, we had to work hard to repay the debt we had accumulated from overstaying in Indonesia. Ali worked 14-hour shifts at McDonald's, Laya at Subway, and I worked in a restaurant. We all pitched in. Thankfully, everything worked out in the end.

While working in the restaurant, I met an Indian decorator whom I began helping. Over time, I started to think about beginning my own

business journey. Eventually, I decided to take the leap and start my own venture. Even if it meant earning a little less, it felt far more rewarding to build something that was truly mine.

The first client I had, needed balloon decorations for a small event on the North Shore. It was far, and the pay was low, but I was excited to see how it would go. I asked to be paid in advance and used that money to buy the materials. The good thing was that I could reuse them for future events. I wanted everything to be perfect. Laya came with me, and together we made it happen.

I'm lucky to have my children's support. They have helped set up Decoration X's social

media and website, and have assisted me with marketing. I find it easier to connect with clients both in person and through Instagram and Facebook, as I'm more comfortable texting than talking over the phone. I often invite clients to visit my home to see the flowers and decoration materials in person, especially those who are particular about the details.

Slowly, we've expanded to include flower arrangements as well. Now, we sometimes receive as many as four or five bookings a day.

With support from the Iti Rearea Collective, we're working towards officially registering the business. I started with nothing, or even less than nothing, considering the debt we carried



Ali and Laya have been my biggest supporters, and the community has also been a strong source of support. Sometimes they ask me to decorate their events. Other times, I ask them to come and help set up the events I've been hired for. Their support means a lot.

from Indonesia. Over the past two years, nearly every dollar I earned went into buying quality materials and equipment. This investment was essential to our growth.

One of the things I love most about this business is being able to prepare everything from home. We recently moved to a house with a garage and an enclosed shelter, which has made storage and organisation much easier. Before this, we lived in a much smaller house where all the equipment had to be kept in the living room. It wasn't ideal, but I made it work because I loved what I was doing.

Now, as the business continues to grow, I dream of renting a storage unit for the decorations,

so we can finally have more space at home to welcome guests. For now, I am simply proud of how far we have come, and I am deeply grateful to have my children beside me on this journey.

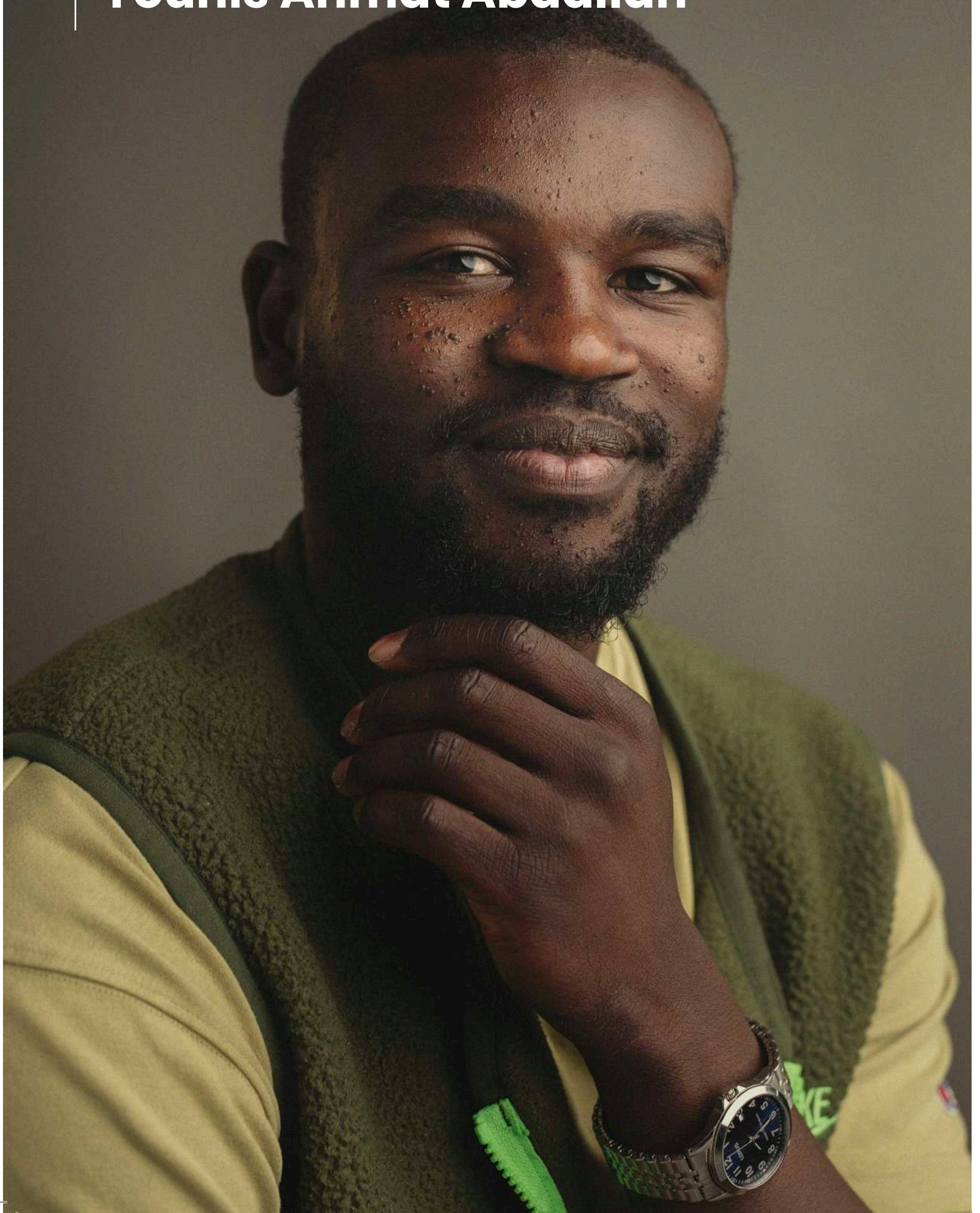
Our journey has been one of growth in many ways. While Decoration X has flourished, Laya and Ali have also been carving out their own paths. Laya is now pursuing her Master of Architecture at AUT and is also a talented painter. Ali is studying Architecture at AUT and works as an app developer. Seeing them succeed in both their education and professional lives fills me with pride. They are, and always will be, the most valuable part of my life.



While Ali and Laya have their own growth paths, they've always supported Decoration X. None of this would have been possible without them. They're the pride of my life and a big part of everything we've built.

Story No. 3

Younis Ahmat Abdallah



When I first arrived in New Zealand, I was just an 11-year-old boy trying to understand what was happening around me. I had spent my early childhood in a refugee camp called Gaga in Chad after fleeing conflict in Sudan in 2005. Landing in Aotearoa felt like being dropped into a completely different world. I didn't speak the language. I didn't know anyone. Everything felt unfamiliar.

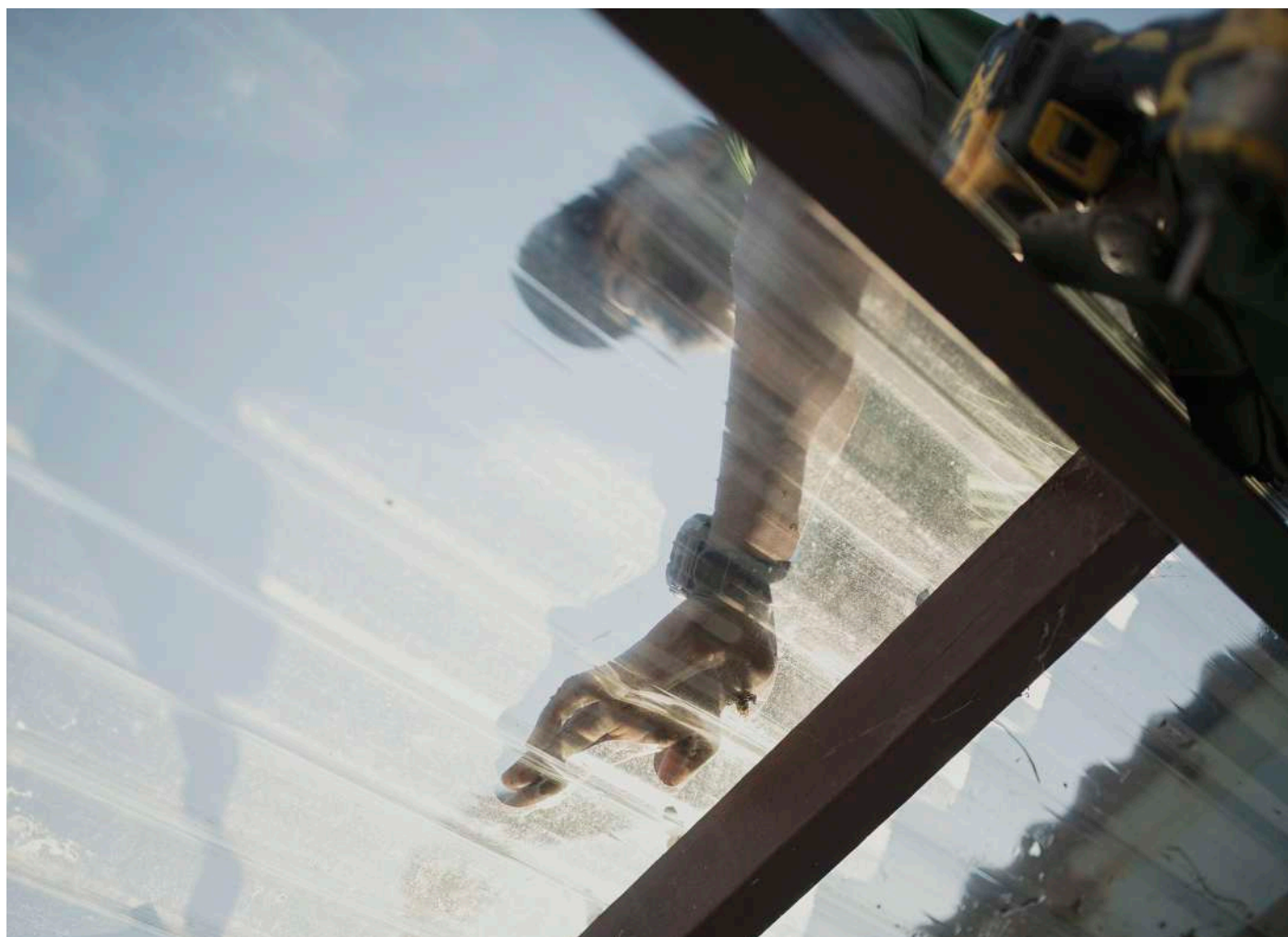
It sounds funny now, but back then, we were still trying to untangle the myths and wild stories we'd been told in Sudan and Chad. Some people said that when you arrived in New Zealand, a zip would open in the sky and people with big elephant ears would be waiting to eat you. Others told us the native people of New Zealand were Muslim and would take good care of us.

Those first days in New Zealand felt surreal. When we arrived at night and saw how bright Auckland was, we thought maybe daytime just looked like that here. I remember the first time I saw steam rising from my mouth in the cold air. I thought someone had planted a bomb inside us and we might explode at any moment. We took freezing showers because we didn't know we could turn the knob to get hot water.

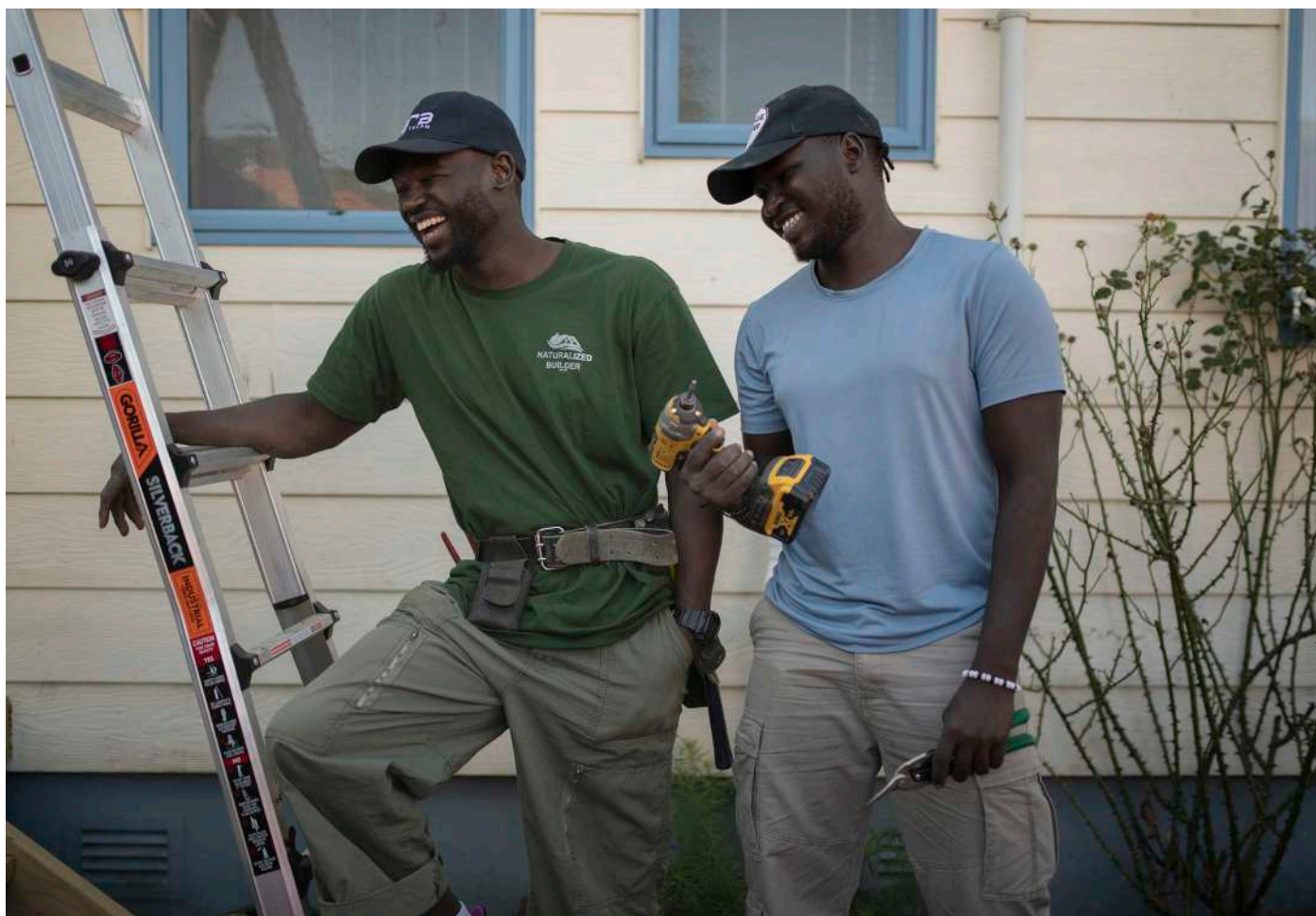
Even though our new house in Mangere had separate rooms, my siblings and I all stayed in our mother's room at first. That's where we felt safest.

When we came to New Zealand, we arrived with others from different countries at the Māngere Resettlement Centre. A bond quickly formed between us. My mum became a mother for many, and others were trying to support us in the centre. Sadly, after six weeks, everyone had to move to different cities, and we didn't have a choice where we went. That was hard.

A big part of why the transition wasn't as scary as it could have been was because of the community. The Sudanese and South Sudanese communities were strong and supportive. Abann and Auntie Mary were like our extended family.



Being a builder connected to my main goal in life: to build a house for my mum with my own hands. Anything I do and achieve beyond that is extra. That's the purpose that drives me.



I'm a registered contractor and on my way to becoming a certified builder. I also provide others with jobs too. They can learn by doing and make some money, so they help me, and I help them.

They brought us into their home and included us in everything: Christmases, gatherings, whatever it was, we were there. After school, my brother and I would go to their house, which was just a couple of minutes away from school. It became our second home.

From early on, I didn't want to just sit on the sidelines. That's how I got involved in youth programmes like Mixit, RASNZ, the YMCA's youth development programme, and eventually the youth leadership programme at ARCC. These programmes helped me explore who I was becoming.

They taught me how to think and act like a leader, how to treat others, how to run events, and how to represent my community. I was already involved a lot by 2017 and 2018,

but these spaces helped me understand my role more deeply. It wasn't just about being present, it was about holding space, uplifting others, and leading with purpose.

I've always loved being creative. I tried different creative activities, and eventually, I found that building was what aligned with me the most. I realised I could support elders by making their homes safer and more comfortable. I know some of them are retired and can't afford the cost of a safe home, so I wanted to help them. I believed I would get my reward from God.

Also, being a builder connected to my main goal in life: to build a house for my mum with my own hands. Anything I do and achieve beyond that is extra. That's the purpose that drives me.



Being Muslim is part of who I am. Through prayer and dawah, I try to lead by example and live with intention.

Being in creative environments pushed me out of my comfort zone. I remember how shy I was in the beginning, worried about my accent, worried about being misunderstood. But through workshops, shows, and programmes, I realised my story mattered. I didn't need to hide my background. That was actually my strength.

When I started working with a builder on a few jobs, something clicked. I began apprenticing and learning on the job. It wasn't easy, especially at first. Construction sites can be intense. Sometimes I was the only African guy there. I had to prove myself over and over. But the more I showed up, the more confident I became. I wasn't just learning how to build houses, I was learning how to build a life for myself.

As a kid, I had business experience. In Chad, I helped my parents sell things and I would sell lollies independently as well from the age of seven. My dad and grandfather had a mango forest in Sudan, and business was going well.

After the Sudanese second civil war in 2005, we had to flee. We passed the border to Chad and settled in the camp they made for those who fled the war. We adapted quickly.

My mum opened a small supermarket selling vegetables and grasshoppers, which are a good source of protein. My dad started making Sudanese Markoob shoes. They traded with native Chadian people who came to the camp every two or three weeks. As kids, our job was to go out and find people to do business with.

That meant travelling to the countryside where many people hated us. It was scary.

Having those experiences, when I got to intermediate school in New Zealand, I started buying lollies in bulk from a mass producer and selling them for 50 cents each. The students loved them, so I began bringing different flavours and shapes. That was my first real hustle here.

My first jobs in New Zealand, besides picking strawberries, were as a kitchen hand and a housekeeper. Later, I got a job as a sales

assistant at a duty-free shop at the airport. I worked from 4:30 pm to 11 pm, which worked well because I could study in the morning and work at night. Then COVID came, and we all lost our jobs.

I stayed committed to my dream. I kept learning, and eventually, I became a subcontractor. From that, now I'm a registered contractor and on my way to becoming a certified builder. I also provide others with jobs too. They can learn by doing and make some money, so they help me, and I help them. That's how I want to keep building homes, careers, and futures.



Playing sports has always helped me stay balanced. It keeps me active, connects me with others, and gives me a positive way to release energy.

Story No. 4

Muhammad Abdullatif



I was born in October 2000, in Syria. When I was just three years old, my family moved to Beirut, Lebanon, where I was raised. Each year, we would return to Syria for about ten days to visit family. Those trips were short but kept us connected to our roots.

Back in Beirut, my father worked as a private driver for a wealthy family. Most of our life there was spent by the sea, even though we lived modestly. After the war began in Syria, things became even more difficult. Opportunities were scarce, and my parents wanted a better future for us, especially when it came to education and building a stable life.

In 2017, my family and I moved to Aotearoa New Zealand. I came here with my five younger siblings and my parents. As the eldest of six children, I often felt a sense of responsibility from a young age.

We were originally meant to settle in Dunedin, but the cold was overwhelming. Coming from Beirut, the sudden shift in climate was a real shock to the system, it felt like we'd landed on a different planet. My father connected with a fellow

Syrian on Facebook, and with his help, we eventually made our way to Wellington.

Those early days weren't easy. In Wellington, we moved between six different motels and private houses, never quite settling. It took us a whole year of struggling before we finally received a housing offer this time in Auckland. We didn't hesitate. In 2019, we packed up and moved once again for a fresh start.

Life in Auckland has been kinder to us. Our neighbourhood is filled with warmth and diversity. Most of our neighbours are Pasifika families, and we've come to love them like our own. There's a saying we hold close: "Look for a good neighbour before you look for a good house." We feel incredibly lucky to have both. Our neighbours include Islanders, Chinese, and

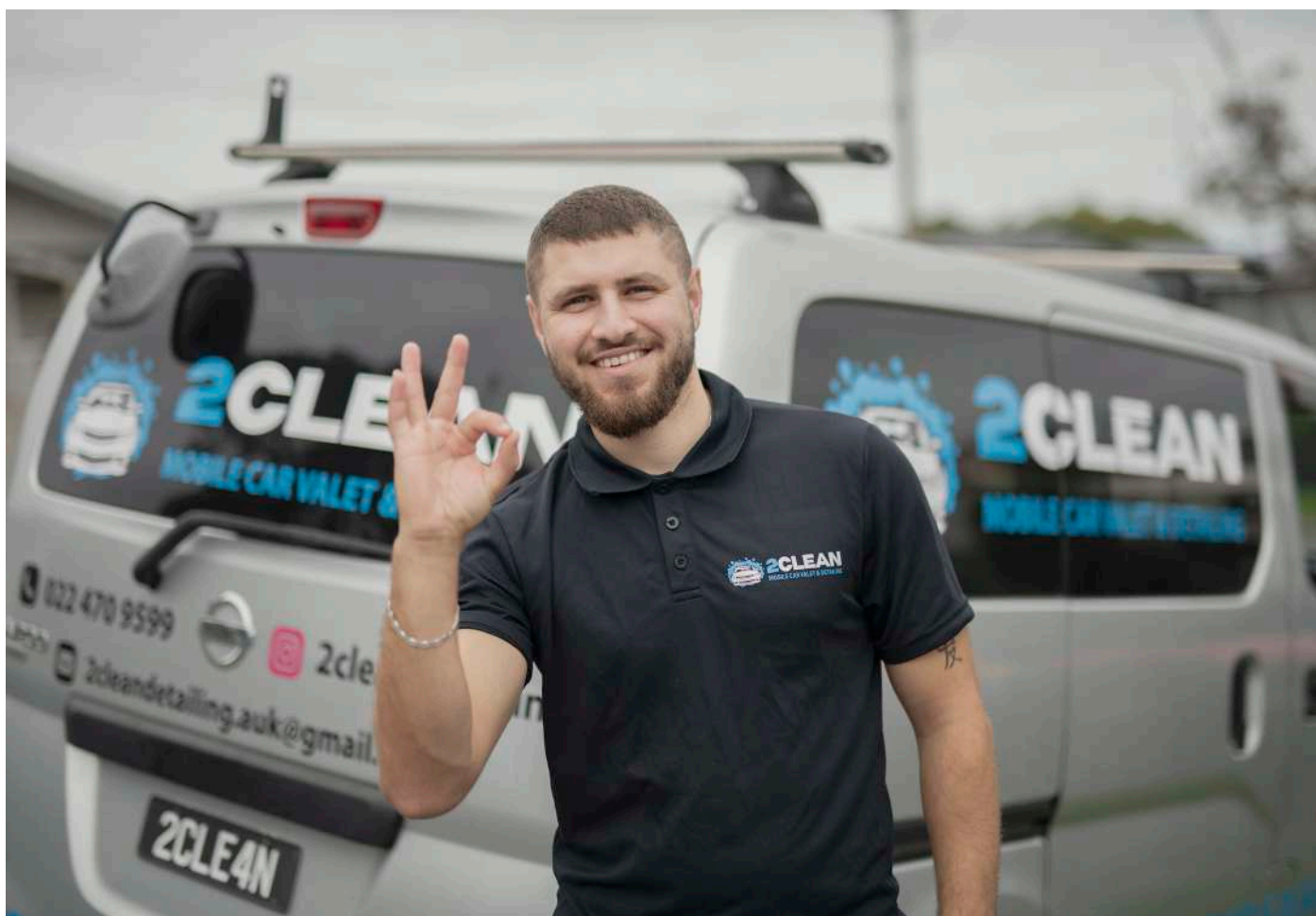
Koreans, people from all walks of life. Another saying we often repeat is, "A close neighbour is better than a distant relative." And here, that rings especially true.

To make a living, I started working at Chicking, a fast-food restaurant, where I met my best friend, David. We quickly became close. Once I'd saved up a bit of money, I began buying and selling second-hand cars, mostly models like the Honda Fit. When Chicking was sold and the management changed, instead of searching for another job, I thought it was time to find my own path. That's when I came up with the idea of starting a car wash business.

It was actually my dad's dream to own a car wash warehouse. We began researching how to make it happen. But the experts we spoke



I invest in all the right tools so I could offer top-quality, professional services.



I want to keep my prices affordable, and it's important for me to provide immaculate service.

to explained that running a full car wash facility would be very expensive. It would need proper infrastructure, including underground water filters to recycle the water. It was far beyond what we could afford. So instead, we were advised to start a mobile car wash. All we needed was a water blaster and a hose, and we were in business.

My dad got me a van and told me, "Don't let this go." With his support and David by my side, we started from scratch. In the beginning, David and I would go around together handing out flyers, trying to get the word out. Business was slow at first, and David eventually needed to take on full-time work. I kept going on my own, though it wasn't easy. I was still studying at the time, and it was hard to give the business my full attention.

Eventually, things began to pick up. I started getting two to three clients a day. Building something from the ground up is never easy, but when it finally starts to succeed, there's no better feeling. It becomes yours, something you've created with your own hands. My family's support has made all the difference. My brother helps me deliver flyers and often comes along to help with the washes. And my dad has always been by my side, guiding me every step of the way. He's not just a father, he's my mentor.

After about a year, I received an offer to sell the business. It was a good offer, and although I accepted it, I knew I wasn't ready to leave the industry behind. I wanted to continue doing what I loved, but on a bigger scale. So I started again from scratch, this time with more



**My dad has always been by my side, guiding me every step of the way.
He's not just a father, he's my mentor.**

experience and a clearer vision. I invested in all the tools I needed to offer high-quality, premium services.

Right now, making money is secondary to me. What drives me is the joy I see on people's faces when they pick up their freshly cleaned cars. One of my clients was so thrilled she asked if she could give me a hug. Others tell me their cars look even better than the day they bought them. That kind of feedback fuels me.

I want to keep improving and delivering better results. I believe that having the right tools is essential to providing an immaculate service, so I've invested in advanced water blasters, specialised cleaning chemicals, and steamers to ensure the highest quality. As the business grew, I expanded into carpet cleaning as well, and that's starting to take off, too. I love people, and I love connecting with them.

Promoting my business through flyers, letterboxes, Instagram, and word of mouth has been incredibly effective. People often tag me in their stories, which helps spread the word even further. But what I believe has truly contributed to the success of my business is my genuine love for connecting with people. I approach others not just to promote my services, but because I enjoy the interaction, whether or not it leads to a job.

That personal touch has made a real difference. If I see someone with a nice car, I don't hesitate to say, "Hey, that's a beautiful car!" It's a simple gesture, but it often sparks a conversation. While not everyone needs a car wash on the spot, one in ten might call me later, and that's more than enough. I've also learned not to take rejection personally. Over time, I've become comfortable hearing "no," and I understand it's just part of the journey.



One of the beautiful things about our community is how often people come together to check in on one another. It's that genuine care and connection that makes our community so special.

Guided by the Stars: Matariki and the Journey of Healing

A kōrero with Eru Rarere-Wilton on tradition, reflection, and transformation



Eru Rarere-Wilton is a respected Māori cultural leader, educator, and advocate based in Aotearoa New Zealand. Through his father, his Māori tribes are Ngāti Rautao, Ngāti Hape, and Ngāti Hauauru of Ngāti Maru. Through his mother's father, he is Ngāti Whātua, Ngāti Tahinga, and Te Waiohua. Through his grandmother, he is Raukawa, Ngāti Ranginui, and Ngāti Koroki. He has contributed significantly to the revitalisation of Māori traditions and the promotion of cultural heritage.

What does Matariki mean to you personally and to your whānau?

For me, Matariki is a really special time of year. It wasn't something we celebrated formally when I was growing up, a lot of those traditions had been lost or pushed aside, but there were still practices that aligned with the season. I remember going back to Raukawa, where my mum and my grandmother were from, and being part of river clean-ups, planting trees, and learning traditional Māori games. We may not have called it "Matariki" then, but the values were still there — connection, reflection, and renewal.

Today, Matariki has become an important marker for my whānau. It represents the Māori New Year, signalled by the reappearance of the Matariki star cluster.

For our iwi, we observe seven stars, though I know others now refer to nine, including Pōhutukawa and Hiwa-i-te-rangi. When our ancestors saw Matariki return to the eastern sky, it meant the time of hard labour was over, the harvest was done, the storehouses were full, and the ground was ready for rest. It was a time for wānanga, for strengthening whānau ties, especially in Tāmaki Makaurau, where many iwi lived closely together as the name "Makaurau" refers to being favoured by many, a reflection of the many iwi and shared resources and spaces.

What are some traditional practices associated with Matariki that are still carried out today?

These days, I try to use Matariki as a chance to keep our customary Māori practices alive. My Ngāti Whātua iwi have Matariki planting days at Ōrākei that we tautoko when we can, planting native trees to see the return of our native forests that were cleared.

Through my father's iwi, Ngāti Maru, they have Hautapu ceremonies, where there is a bonfire and food is cooked on it.

Through my mahi I've helped run Matariki events that include workshops on taonga pūoro (our traditional musical instruments), ngā taonga tākaro (Māori games), and even mau rākau, our traditional weaponry practices.

For example, with taonga pūoro, we're talking about instruments that were nearly lost, but thanks to people like Hirini Melbourne and others in the 1990s, they've been revived. I now make and play these instruments myself, incorporating them into kapa haka performances and as taonga in ceremonies.

We also teach ngā taonga tākaro, the traditional Māori games, which I learned growing up from my cousin Harko Brown, who's written books on the subject. Games like ki-o-rahi, hakariki, poutoti (stilts), and mara hupara (obstacle courses) are more than play — they're about building whanaungatanga and keeping our traditions alive.

With each of these customary Māori practices workshops, including mau rākau, we share the meaning and history first, because our ancestors wouldn't teach the physical side until you'd sat, listened, endured the long kōrero, and proven you understood the kaupapa. That balance of kōrero and action is something I carry into all my teaching today.

Why is Matariki a time for reflection, remembrance, and renewal in te ao Māori?

Matariki is a time of new beginnings. When the stars return, and especially based on how bright they are, it tells us what kind of year we might expect, a good harvest or a harder season. But more than that, it's about pausing to acknowledge what's been. Traditionally, it was a time to rest, to visit extended whānau, to strengthen relationships we couldn't nurture during the busy seasons.

Today, even though our work lives don't pause like they used to, the spirit of Matariki still calls us to gather, to reflect, and to prepare for the year ahead.

For me, it's also about healing. Matariki offers us a moment to decolonise, to recognise the harm done through colonisation, but not to stay stuck in it. We rise above it. We look at the dysfunctions we've inherited, and we choose not to pass them on. That's how we reclaim our future. It's intergenerational healing, for our tamariki, our mokopuna. Matariki gives us a window to reset.

Matariki marks a time to remember those who have passed and to look ahead with hope. How do you think this resonates with people who have been displaced or who have migrated from difficult circumstances?

I think Matariki speaks directly to that experience. When people arrive in Aotearoa from places of hardship, they carry memories of where they've come from, the people they've lost, the homes they've had to leave behind. Matariki gives space to acknowledge all of that. It's not about forgetting, it's about recognising the past, reflecting on it, and then setting your sights forward.

That's what our ancestors did too. After the harvest, after all the work, they stopped. They gathered. They honoured those who had passed, and then they looked ahead. There's a real similarity in that rhythm, it's one I think newcomers to this land can connect with deeply.

In what ways do you think Matariki can offer a sense of healing or reconnection for people who've had to leave their homes and start again in Aotearoa?

Matariki brings a sense of renewal. It's like a reset button. For people starting over, whether by choice or through forced displacement, it's a chance to reimagine the future, to ground yourself in a new home, and to find hope again.

The brightness of the stars was once seen as an indicator of the kind of year ahead, whether it would be abundant or require more care and planning. That metaphor still holds. Matariki reminds us that while the future might be uncertain, we can prepare, we can rebuild, and we can thrive.



**Do you see any similarities
between Māori stories of
resilience and the journeys of
former refugees?**

Absolutely. Our people have endured loss, displacement, forced assimilation, and yet, we're still here. That resilience is something I see mirrored in the stories of many former refugees. I've spoken to people who've seen horrific things, survived war, and still found a way to begin again.

For me, the key is to not let those traumas define you. To cut off what no longer serves, to rise above the dysfunctions passed down or forced upon you. I made that decision for myself. To live alcohol-free, to create a different future for my whānau. That's the power of reclaiming your story. And that's the kind of healing I believe Matariki can support, for Māori, for migrants, forced migrants, and for anyone choosing to plant new seeds in this land.

About ARCC

ARCC is a non-profit organisation that serves as the collective voice of communities with a forced migrant experience. We work at the local, regional, and national levels to contribute to positive change and support the settlement, integration, and thriving of these communities.

We consist of twenty-six member organisations representing twenty different countries/ethnic backgrounds, including Afghanistan, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Kurdistan, Myanmar, Palestine, Pakistan, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria and Uganda.

About New Resident Magazine

The New Resident Magazine is a biannual publication that shares inspiring stories from individuals with forced migrant experiences. These stories provide practical information about the resettlement and settlement process in New Zealand.

Through these stories, New Resident Magazine aims to challenge common misconceptions and stereotypes about forced migrant communities by amplifying the voices of community members. The lack of accurate representations in the mass media has led the public to have a distorted image of people subject to forced migration. This magazine provides a space where diverse stories unfold.

The intended outcome of the New Resident Magazine is to serve as a comprehensive resource that guides new residents on their journey towards successful settlement in New Zealand. Additionally, it helps educate the audience about the diverse experiences of these communities.

ARCC Sponsors

We could not do the work we do without the support of our trustworthy funders. We are grateful for their continuous support in our efforts to assist our communities.



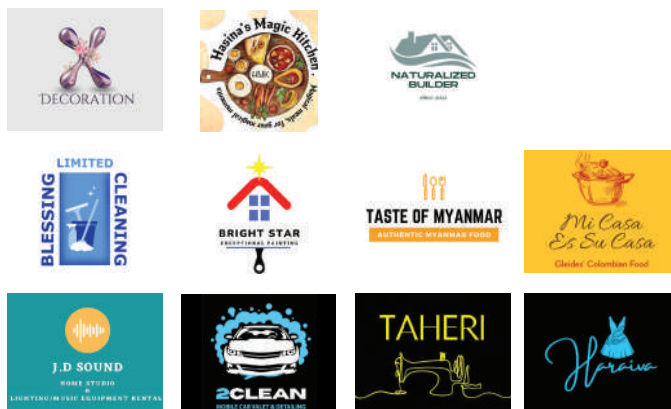
ARCC Supporters

We would like to express our appreciation to our ongoing supporters for their commitment to supporting the work of ARCC in various capacities.



Community Businesses

We are proud to see individuals from our communities develop their own businesses in New Zealand. We take pride in supporting their businesses and ventures through our New Resident Magazine.





Closing Remark

As we conclude this edition of the New Resident Magazine, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who shared their beautiful and inspiring stories. I also warmly welcome all of you who have taken the brave step of resettling in Aotearoa New Zealand. Whether you're reading this as a new arrival or someone already on the journey, your presence adds value to our shared home. To the citizens and new residents of Aotearoa, New Zealand I say thank you.

The journey of settlement, resettlement, and integration is not a quick or linear one, it takes time, patience, and courage. In truth, there is no fixed timeline for making Aotearoa New Zealand feel like home.

I invite you to carry with you the spirit of **Aroha** (Love), **Ubuntu** (I am because we are) **Whanaungatanga** (connection), **Manaakitanga** (hospitality and kindness), and **kotahitanga** (unity and togetherness).

Starting a new chapter in a new country is never easy. It comes with its own set of challenges, uncertainties, and changes. Yet, it also offers opportunities to grow, to flourish, and to build meaningful relationships. In this land of Aotearoa, we are privileged to live in a place that embraces diversity, where people from all walks of life come together to build a shared future.

No matter who you are whether you've arrived with **whānau** (family), on your own, whether you are young or old **he wāhi nōu kei konei**. There is a place for you here, I encourage you to make it your home and live in peace and harmony. Please reach out, say **kia ora**, share your story. Listen to the stories of others. These simple acts can break down barriers and create stronger, more inclusive communities where everyone feels welcomed, valued, and respected.

Let us not remain strangers. Let us choose connection over isolation, understanding over assumption, and community over loneliness.

So today and every day from here on I challenge you, get to know someone new. A smile, a greeting, or a conversation could be the beginning of something truly special and meaningful. **Nau mai, haere mai** — welcome to your new home.

Welcome to our community.

Red Tsounga
Chairperson- Neighbourhood Support Auckland City Inc.
President AAF- Aotearoa Africa Foundation

SETTLEMENT LOCATIONS IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Auckland, Waikato, Manawatu, Wellington, Nelson,
Christchurch, Dunedin, Invercargill, Blenheim
Timaru, Ashburton, Levin and Masterton.

RESETTLEMENT SERVICE PROVIDERS

If you are in need of support in any settlement locations. Please contact ARCC and we will connect you with the right service providers.

CONTACT US

If you need to be in touch with your community
within Aotearoa New Zealand.



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WELCOME TO AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

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