VOICE OF AROHA

NEWSLETTER

NL: 03 | 2025
MAY-JUN

WELLBEING SESSION 2025



YOUTH CULTURE NIGHT 2025



OPENING MESSAGE





Kia ora whānau,

As we reach the middle of the year, I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible momentum we've built over May and June. It's been an inspiring time watching our youth and volunteers continue to grow through their journey with Voice of Aroha, making the most of every opportunity.

This year's Youth Week was especially meaningful. Our amazing Youth Committee took the lead in organising a vibrant Youth Cultural Night, bringing together over 150 people from diverse backgrounds to celebrate culture, talent, and identity. It was a beautiful example of what happens when rangatahi are empowered to lead. Our podcast team and storytellers have also been hard at work. The rich kōrero and wide range of topics reflect the dedication happening behind the scenes a huge mihi to everyone involved in capturing and sharing these important voices.

In June, we also marked World Refugee Day in collaboration with our friends at Everybody Eats. The event was fully booked and filled with warmth, joy, and solidarity. It was a powerful night that highlighted the lived experiences of former refugees and the strength of inclusive communities. The evening was a true picture of social cohesion in action learning, sharing, and celebrating over a delicious kai.

We're also proud to celebrate the achievements of our volunteers, many of whom were nominated for Mahi Aroha Awards. Voice of Aroha was honoured to be named a Highly Commended Team a testament to the incredible passion, commitment, and leadership of our youth. Ngā mihi nui to each of you.

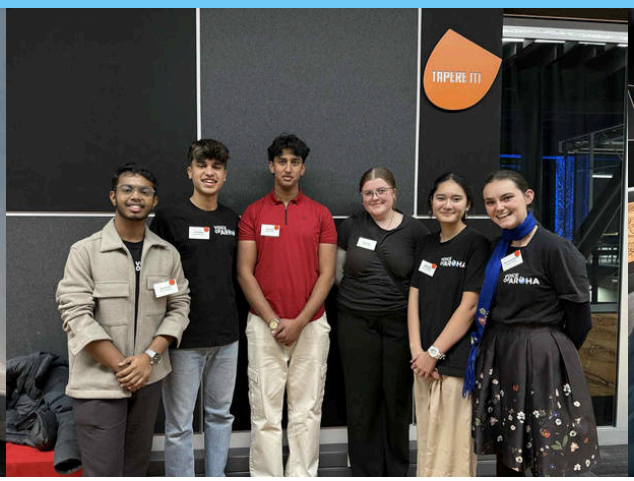
A very warm welcome as well to the amazing Rem Thatkhup, who has joined our Board of Trustees. Rem was previously a podcast co-host and volunteer, and now brings her deep knowledge, lived experience, and passion for community leadership into governance. We're so lucky to have her onboard.

While funding challenges remain across the sector, we are deeply grateful to those who continue to believe in our mahi. A special thanks to the Clare Foundation, whose recent support came at a crucial time and will help sustain our work into the future.

To our supporters, volunteers, partners, and communities thank you. Your belief and support in our kaupapa keeps us going.

Ngā manaakitanga,
Kodrean Eashae
CEO, Voice of Aroha

MAHI AROHA AWARDS 2025



We're thrilled to share some exciting news with our Voice of Aroha whānau, our incredible volunteers and team were recently recognised at this year's Volunteer Mahi Aroha Awards, a celebration of outstanding contributions to community wellbeing and service.

Several of our volunteers, Ayaan, Anishka, Atha, Ansh, Luca and Meg were nominated for the Volunteer Mahi Aroha Awards for their tireless dedication, compassion, and tireless mahi, amplifying the voices of those often unheard in our community. Their warmth, commitment, and quiet leadership have not gone unnoticed, and we couldn't be prouder.
In a heartwarming surprise, Voice of Aroha as a team was also nominated for "Team of the Year", recognising our collective work in storytelling, advocacy, and building platforms for authentic community voice. We were deeply honoured to receive the Highly Commended Team Award, a testament to the passion and unity that drives everything we do.

This recognition belongs to everyone who has shared their story, lent a hand, or simply believed in the kaupapa. We stand on the strength of our people, and this acknowledgment only fuels our commitment to continue walking alongside our communities with aroha and integrity.

Ngā mihi nui to all our volunteers, supporters, and community members.
This is your award too.

Written by Ayaan Chand



WORLD REFUGEE DAY (19TH OF JUNE)



Some nights aren't just events, they become memories. Thursday, June 19th was one of those.At a long table lit with warmth and aroha, we gathered to honour World Refugee Day, with stories, songs, shared food, and the kind of conversations that stay with you.

We began in stillness, grounded by a karakia. Then came words of welcome from Jack, representing our wonderful hosts at Everybody Eats, and Rem, speaking for Voice of Aroha. Both reminded us why we were here: to honour the courage of former refugees, and to celebrate the cultures, and communities they bring to life in Aotearoa. Abdul and Vira, incredible poets, did not just read poems, they cracked hearts open. Their words carried pain and pride, and in the hush of the room, you could feel what it means to carry your home with you, even when it's been taken away. Before anyone could fully recover, the Luo community lifted the energy with a performance so full of rhythm, and joy.

Later, things turned reflective as Dr. Arif Ali guided a powerful panel on the very real challenges refugee-led organisations are facing today. The takeaway was clear: now is the time to listen, invest in our youth, and back the community-led solutions already making a difference on the ground.

As all the best evenings do, it turned into a party. With plates full of delicious kai (huge thanks to Everybody Eats), we laughed, reconnected and celebrated National Volunteer Week, and said goodbye to our amazing volunteer Ansh, who's heading off to study overseas. The evening closed with live music from Hamid Majdi, lifting spirits and getting everyone dancing.

Huge thanks to all who came, and celebrated with us, and to Wellington City Council and our partners for making the night possible.

Written by Ayaan Chand

Let's keep the energy going, not just for one day, but every day.

WORLD REFUGEE DAY (19TH OF JUNE)





















WORLD REFUGEE DAY (21ST OF JUNE)





Voice of Aroha continues to honour World Refugee Day (WRD) by supporting and engaging in events throughout the week that celebrate the strength, culture, and contributions of refugee communities. Our commitment extends beyond just one day; we proudly promote, and support various WRD initiatives across the region.

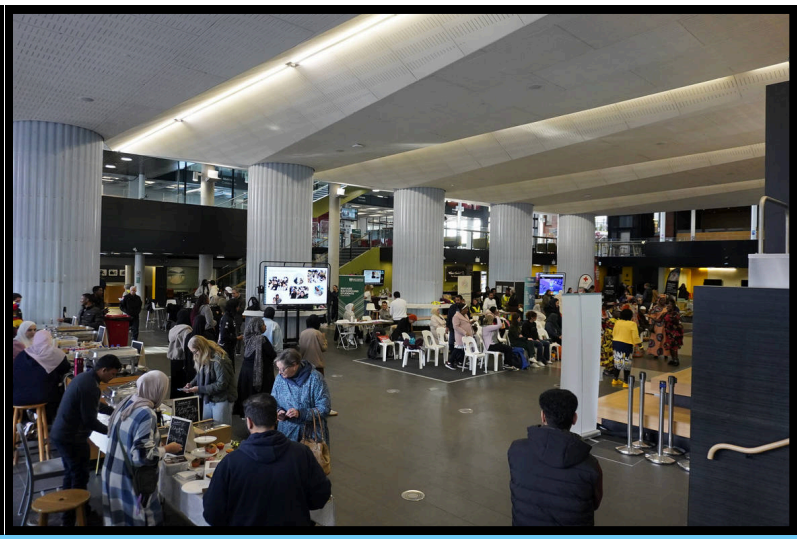
On Saturday, June 21st, we joined the vibrant celebration at the Hub, organised by ChangeMakers and the Refugee Adviser at Victoria University of Wellington. The event was a rich tapestry of culture, conversation, and community, with delicious food and powerful cultural expressions from diverse communities.

Voice of Aroha was on-site providing photography support and helping promote the event, while also engaging with community members about our mahi. It was a wonderful opportunity to connect, share our upcoming events and programmes, and hear from others about their journeys/aspirations.

We are proud to be part of a collective effort to uplift refugee voices and celebrate diversity, and we look forward to continuing this important kaupapa in the weeks and months ahead.

Written by Ayaan Chand





YOUTH WEEK - YOUTH CULTURE NIGHT 2025



On May 24th, The Hub at Victoria University of Wellington lit up with colour, culture, and community as over 150 people gathered for Youth Culture Night, a flagship Youth Week 2025 event proudly hosted by Voice of Aroha.
Co-organised by a passionate team of rangatahi, the night was a bold celebration of identity, connection, and the incredible diversity that makes Aotearoa so special. With nine spectacular performances, we went on a global journey through rhythm, storytelling, and soul.

We opened with the powerful and symbolic Chinese Lion Dancers, setting the tone for a night of energy and spirit. The Luo African Dance Group brought unstoppable rhythm and joy, followed by the high-octane moves of Infinity Steps, an Indian dancer who lit up the stage with colour and charisma. Binara's dynamic Sri Lankan drumming left the room buzzing just before we paused for a delicious kai break.

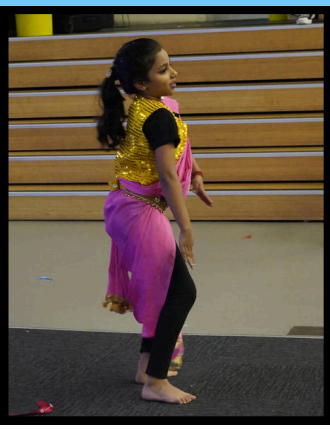
Act Two kicked off with heartfelt music from Max Horn and his Portuguese band, followed by a graceful and expressive solo Indian dance by Aishu, whose performance was nothing short of captivating. Kodrean's Assyrian dance blended culture and pride, while Oscar's dazzling light show had the audience in awe. We closed with the melodic and moving performance of Hamid, whose Middle Eastern keyboard sounds brought a fitting and emotional end to a beautiful night.

Continue reading to next page



YOUTH WEEK - YOUTH CULTURE NIGHT 2025





To every performer, thank you. Your artistry, culture, and passion made the evening one we will never forget.
Beyond the stage, it was the little moments that made the night magical: warm greetings at the door, meaningful kōrero over food, and a special birthday celebration for our CEO Kodrean, which included a cake, a song, and a hilariously unforgettable moment where the cake ended up on him during the dance circle! It was a perfect reminder that joy and connection often live in the unexpected.

This event would not have been possible without the dedication of the organisers Ansh and Aarthi, and the support team: Carlos, Ayaan, Guaranga, and Charlotte, and the constant support of the wider Voice of Aroha whānau: Kodrean, Rata, Sahar, and Hamid.
We're grateful to Ara Taiohi for Youth Week funding and championing youth-led action across Aotearoa, and to Victoria University of Wellington for so generously hosting us at The Hub.

Youth Culture Night wasn't just a show, it was a celebration of who we are, where we come from, and the power of coming together. From all of us at Voice of Aroha, ngā mihi nui to everyone who came, supported, performed, danced, and made the night unforgettable. Here's to more moments like this.

Written by Ansh Arya




WELLBEING DAY!

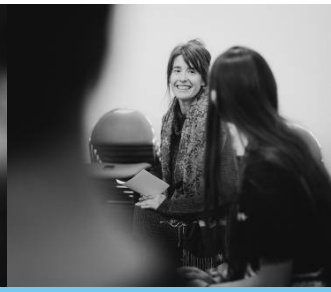


Our monthly wellbeing days, led by the amazing Coach Michelle, have been filled with connection, reflection, and joy. In May, we held a beautiful session at the Johnsonville Community Centre, which also coincided with our celebration of Youth Week. It was a truly special gathering where everyone brought a dish from their culture for a shared potluck creating a vibrant table of delicious food, laughter, and storytelling.

This session was not only a time to connect and recharge as the Voice of Aroha whānau, but also a meaningful farewell to our wonderful Michelle. While it's not goodbye forever, we marked her final session with aroha and gratitude. Michelle's warmth, care, and expertise made each gathering so special, and we look forward to welcoming her back in future sessions.

A heartfelt thank you to Michelle for everything she's brought to our community your impact will continue to be felt long after.



NEW EPISODES

From powerful kōrero on the VOA Podcast to the Youth Talk/Team Talk and Leaders Talk our amazing volunteers are creating meaningful conversations and building community. We've been joined by inspiring guests—leaders, changemakers, and young voices—who've shared powerful stories and fresh perspectives.

Check them out on our YouTube channel and don't forget to subscribe!



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NEW EPISODES

From powerful kōrero on series of Climate kōrero our amazing volunteers are creating meaningful conversations and building community. We've been joined by inspiring guests—leaders, changemakers, and young voices—who've shared powerful stories and fresh perspectives.

Check them out on our YouTube channel and don't forget to subscribe!



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NEW BOARD MEMBER

We are proud to welcome the amazing Rem Thatkhup to our Board of Trustees.
Rem brings a wealth of experience, passion, and community insight, and we're excited to have her as part of the Voice of Aroha Board of Trustees.

Hi, my name is Rem Thatkhup and I am a member of the Burmese (Zomi) community and has been involved with Voice of Aroha for the past two years. Inspired by the organisation's commitment to inclusion, storytelling, and authentic connection, I am honoured to take on this role with an organisation I deeply respect. Drawn to Voice of Aroha's powerful message of inclusion, storytelling, and community, I value the way the organisation lives out what it stands for—welcoming everyone and creating genuine spaces of connection no matter what background you have. Whether through podcast or community events, I am proud to be part of a team that uplifts diverse voices and brings people together with authenticity and heart.



CULTURE HIGHLIGHTS









Check out the full content on our platforms: Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

At Voice of Aroha, one thing we always prioritise is celebrating and highlighting the rich cultures of our diverse communities. Whether through video highlights or informative carousel-style posts, we love creating content that raises awareness and deepens understanding of important cultural celebrations. May and June were filled with important days—from ANZAC DAY, Mothers Day, World Refugee Day, National Volunteer Week, Youth Week and Matariki. Across our channels, we shared stories, visuals, and reflections to uplift and celebrate/ commemorate the significance of these days with our whānau and wider audience.

WORKSHOP BY OUR AROHA AMBASSADOR



As part of their media unit, GirlGuiding NZ recently welcomed former Girl Guide Aarthi Candadai to run an inspiring and hands-on podcasting workshop. Drawing from her experience as a podcast host, Aarthi encouraged the girls to brainstorm topics they were passionate about. ranging from sports and travel to outer space! Together, they explored what makes a compelling podcast, discussed storytelling techniques, and got to experiment with real-life podcasting equipment. The session was a hit, full of creativity, curiosity, and confidence-building, and it gave the girls a fun and practical introduction to the world of podcasting.

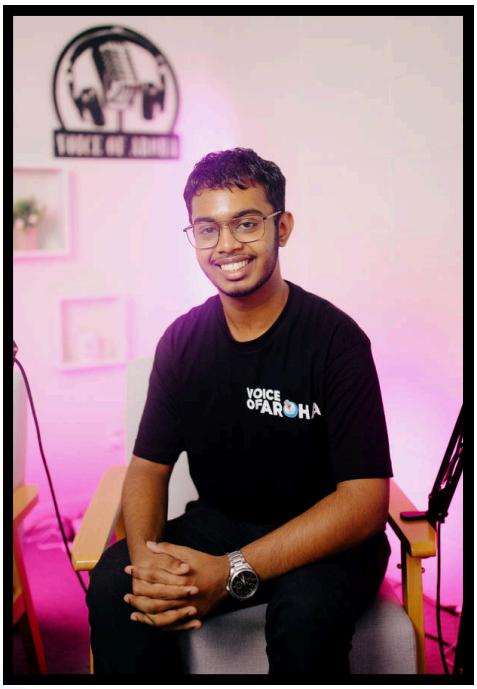
Written by Aarthi Candadai





VOLUNTEER STORY HIGHLIGHTS

This section highlights stories and experiences from our wonderful volunteers.



Kia Ora, Bula Vinaka, and Namaste!

My name is Ayaan. I hail from the beautiful Islands of Fiji and moved to the Kiwi land of Aotearoa in the year, 2023. I am 17 years old, turning 18 soon (excited ;))! I am currently in Year 13 at Heretaunga College in the amazing Hutt! I am also a High School Youth Ambassador for the UN Youth, a Generation Hope (Save The Children) Ambassador, and the Academic and Environmental Leader at my kura. Next year, I am planning to attend university and pursue law! I am the oldest sibling and have two younger sisters.

A fun fact about me is that I appear to be an introvert but I love talking (or as they say, 'yapping')! When I am not volunteering and in times of leisure, I love travelling, shopping, reading, baking, binging on netflix and spending lots of quality time with my family. There is a longer list, I promise!

I first got involved with Voice Of Aroha at the start of this year. I was inspired to join the Voice Of Aroha whanau after being moved and stoked to see the passion and aroha the VOA team has for our community. Thus, I decided to be a part of the outstanding mahi of this amazing organisation. I instantly knew that being a part of this team would allow me to amplify the diverse voices of Aroha and create the positive changes that I always wanted to!

Voice Of Aroha is not only a team of fabulous volunteers, but a whanau. A whanau where others flaws are seen as uniqueness, a place where you feel you belong, an emotion where you are cared for! All the moments that I spend with Voice Of Aroha fills me with so much gratitude. A particular volunteering moment that is especially memorable for me is my first ever hui with Voice Of Aroha. I was so nervous as it was my first time at the VOA studio but as soon as I met the lovely Kodrean, Rata, Sahar, Oscar, Hamid and all other new volunteers, I knew that VOA was my place. My first well-being session with Michelle has been another highlight of my career with VOA, where we all indulged in fun team activities and connected with each other!

Coming from a smaller country, I never had the opportunity to connect with such organisations where I could project my voice and contribute to positive and lasting changes. After my move to New Zealand, I was a shy and diffident person, with little to no volunteering drive. I realised that there is so much more; there are opportunities for volunteering which I could use to collaborate with like-minded people and help contribute positively to my wider community . Volunteering gives me the joy of being part of something bigger, where I can talk, greet people and also bring smiles on faces!

One thing that I have learned through my experience as part of the VOA whanau is that small efforts make a big impact. Even a smile can change someone's day. I have also learned that everyone has a story and when we take the time to listen, we build trust, understanding and real community.

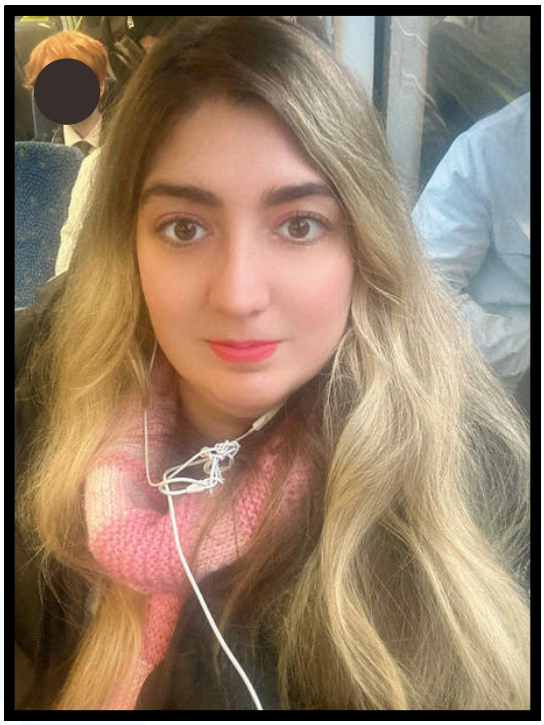
A message that I would like to share with you all is that there is strength in kindness, so show up and give your best. A few hours of your time will make others feel heard and valued!

Live Long And Keep Glowing! | Ayaan :)

Written by Ayaan Chand

VOLUNTEER STORY HIGHLIGHTS

This section highlights stories and experiences from our wonderful volunteers.



My name is Charlotte and I was brought up in Wellington, New Zealand. I am working in a busy frontline role in a large government department supporting clients who are needing support. I also do casual work in an English language school supporting events and English conversation. I enjoy volunteering and volunteer in a range of roles within the migrant and international student communities.

I was inspired to join in 2020 when u was inspired to join when I was able to share my university graduate experience on the radio podcast. I could not believe I found something which put my passion for radio and working with different cultures together and I immediately wanted to become involved! I was motivated further in 2023 where I was interviewed about my work in the refugee and migrant community and I have never looked back.

A memorable moment occurred during June 2024 at World Refugee Day. The speeches from a number of leaders within the community told powerful narratives of family sacrifice discussing the multiple jobs their parents did to support their children. They also emphasised the importance of education for supporting their community and leading for intergenerational change. It inspired me to pursue my career in the government department I work for helping people become independent and supporting our most vulnerable in the community.

Volunteering has been an extremely positive experience for me. I have always been interested in other cultures and have loved learning about different traditions. It has given me the chance to give back to my community and to implement positivity which I value. It has helped me continue the legacy and work of the people who inspire me the most.

I have learnt about the resilience of the refugee and migrant community. The stories of these individuals are often silenced or excluded from mainstream media. Within the school system we often only see tokenism and still a Eurocentric discourse is dominating. It is important to bring these stories to the front represented by people who are living these experiences. I hope that through our volunteering these communities have been made more visible.

Everyone can learn perfection but nobody can learn imperfection. They are yours alone and in the end, imperfection doesn't exist it's just being you without trying to find someone who has already done it and using it as an approval of being normal.

Be you and continue to spread peace, love and positivity.

Written by Charlotte

COMING UP EVENTS & PROGRAMS

"**Empowering Youth Voices**", a leadership and community-building program for youth in Porirua and Lower Hutt—and registrations are now open! This powerful program is designed for our rangatahi aged 15 and over to develop leadership skills, build confidence, and take the lead in creating real change through youth-led forums, events, and hands-on workshops.

What's Involved:
- Free leadership and public speaking workshops
- Support to develop a community project
- Opportunities to lead forums and events
- Mentorship and networking
- Fun, food, and friendships!

Where: Porirua and Lower Hutt
Who: Youth aged 15- 26
When: Start from July
REGISTER NOW:
https://forms.gle/NrorJwhwZQedLVVh7

Last DAY for registration: 1st July 2025

We're excited to announce that registrations are now open for our second **Community Climate Training** Cohort of the year, starting **Friday, July 5th**! See the poster attached.

This unique opportunity is for those who are 100% committed and ready to take part in our climate leadership journey. If that sounds like you, please reply to this email and register using the link below.

https://forms.gle/R2uurQUmcT9nuRAr8

If you're unsure or unable to fully commit to the program, we kindly ask that you do not register, so we can offer the space to others who are ready to engage.

Graduation and Celebration Day: Save the date – **Wednesday, July 9th.**

Opportunities like this don't come around often — and while it's still free, it's the perfect time to invest in your passion and growth!





Subscribe to the VOA Newsletter for exciting news, events, and community projects. Don't miss out on upcoming episodes—subscribe now to stay informed and get involved!



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