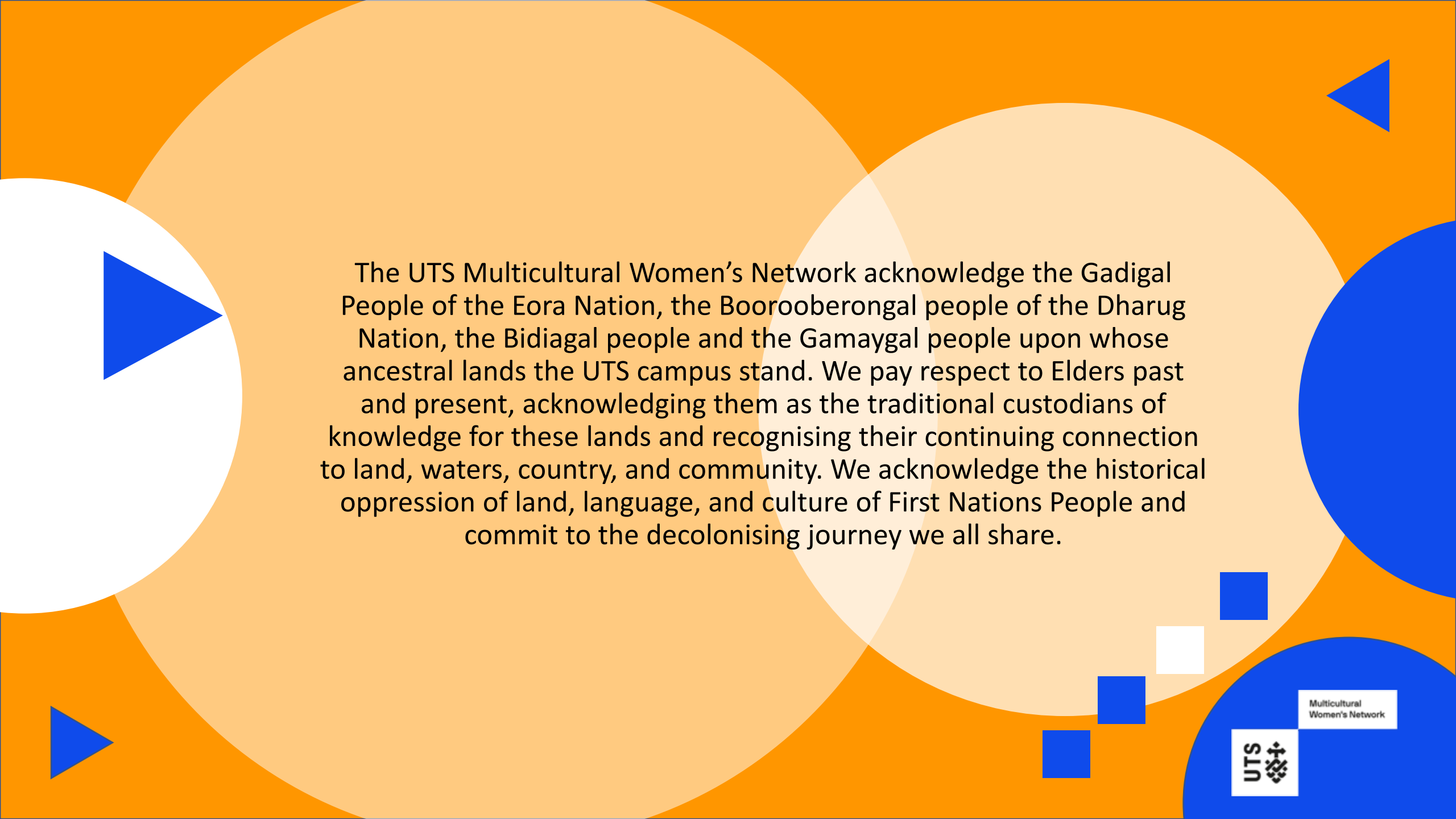


How I Celebrate

UTS Multicultural Women's Network

2023





The UTS Multicultural Women's Network acknowledge the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, the Boorooberongal people of the Dharug Nation, the Bidiagal people and the Gamaygal people upon whose ancestral lands the UTS campus stand. We pay respect to Elders past and present, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for these lands and recognising their continuing connection to land, waters, country, and community. We acknowledge the historical oppression of land, language, and culture of First Nations People and commit to the decolonising journey we all share.



Multicultural
Women's Network

WHAT?

The Multicultural Women's Network aims to showcase significant cultural events through our e-booklets.

WHY?

To acknowledge the cultural diversity of UTS. Using an assets-based approach of amplifying how people celebrate, this project aims to empower people to feel proud of their cultural backgrounds, as well as to celebrate the cultural diversity of our UTS community.

WHO?

This is for UTS staff, students and anyone else you think would benefit from learning more about cultural events.



This month, we're spotlighting

**Songkran
&
Sinhalese & Tamil New
Year**



"Temples, Buddha images, and houses were tidied and cleaned as a way to clear away negative influences."

"The festival originated centuries ago as a purification rite, in both a physical and spiritual sense."

"Traditional celebrations involved a gentle sprinkling of scented water."

Source: <https://www.elitehavens.com/magazine/make-a-splash-this-songkran/>

Our UTS community says that Songkran is about...

Being polite, showing love, and making everyone feel warm as a family.

New beginnings

Having a positive attitude

A time for forgiveness

Celebrating with family & friends

Going to a Buddhist temple

Playing with water/water festival

Community gathering

Paying respect to the family elders

Deep cleaning the house

This year

I am planning to celebrate it with UTS Thai Society by going to a Buddhist temple and afterwards celebrate by having water activities at the park. Also every year, my family do the 'pay respect to elders' ritual where my mum prepares perfumed water with petals where we pour water over the Buddhist statues in our shrine, and my siblings and I pour water over my parents as a sign of respect.

Tatiya Kuleechuay

Student, School of Communication,
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,
UTS Thai Society President



<https://www.activateuts.com.au/events/songkran-thai-new-year/>

SINHALESE & TAMIL NEW YEAR

In Sri Lanka and its diaspora, "the Sinhalese and Tamil communities celebrate New Year when the Sun enters the zodiac of Aries, which falls in April.

For both communities, the New Year is one of the most important events of the year and brings together families as they practice a number of traditions.

Sinhalese and Tamil traditions differ, but the joint celebration of the New Year unites these two prominent communities."

Source: <https://www.srilankainstyle.com/blog/the-sinhalese-and-tamil-new-year>

SINHALESE & TAMIL NEW YEAR

"The holiday is unique in the way the two cultures celebrate it together and at the same time... Sinhalese make up about 75 percent of the population of Sri Lanka and Tamils, about 16 percent. The two groups fought against each other in bitter civil war that lasted from 1983 to 2009 and left around 100,000 dead...but the two groups generally hide or leave behind their ill feelings and enjoy the holiday together."

Aluth
Avurudda/Avurudu
in **Sinhala** and
Puththandu
in **Tamil**

Source: https://factsanddetails.com/south-asia/Srilanka/People_Srilanka/entry-7981.html



Sinhalese & Tamil New Year involves...

Connection
with family

Traditional
food

Celebrating as a
community

The sequence and
timing of activities
to ensure you have
a happy and healthy
year ahead

Playing games
with friends and
family



Stories from our UTS community

Happiest times celebrating Songkran...



Tay Chitsumran

Compliance Advisor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor
(Research)

“

...my favourite time of the year as a kid. We usually visit relatives, pay respect to the elders in the family, go to a Buddhist temple, thoroughly clean the house for the start of the new year and spread water to everyone on the streets - the streets are usually closed, and people would go out and play with water.

”

Happiest times celebrating Songkran...

I had the chance to visit Thailand during Songkran when I was younger and was able to be involved in the epic water fights, face clay fun and got to pay respects to my grandparents and relatives after meeting them for the first time.

People drove past in their utes with water buckets at the ready, waiting to splash others and there was a face clay war going on among the kids. My mum had to help me change clothes around five times that day because I kept getting wet and joined the kids on the street for the water fights.

Being an Australian born and raised Thai person, I felt that *my involvement in this Songkran tradition allowed me to embrace and be more connected to my Thai heritage*. I got to be part of the community in my neighbourhood and make new Thai friends my age.

Tatiya Kuleechuay





***Happiest times celebrating
Songkran...***

Anonymous Respondent

...was when my family would wake up really early and dress up...to go to the temple. Then we came back to our house to show respect to the elders by pouring holy water through their hands while they are blessing me for the year. In my case, I did it to my mother, father and grandmother. After that, we would pour water on the monk statues that we had in our house. I felt that it was a very traditional day; we all had the same intention of celebrating the new year in a Thai way.



It was a visit to Sri Lanka that coincided with the New Year (Aluth Avurudda). I was able to carry out special customs that are part of these celebrations with my parents and sister. We were all dressed in the designated colour for the occasion. I remember it was blue that year – extra special since that is my favourite colour.

Later on in the day, my cousins and their kids came to pay their respects to my parents as elders of the extended family. Some of them would bring the traditional gift of a sheaf of bulath (betel leaves) for my parents. My kids were happy that they got more modern presents!

***Happiest times
celebrating New Year***



Kumudika (Kumi) de Silva
UTS Gender Equity Programs
Manager, Centre for Social Justice
and Inclusion



There were many special Avurudu foods on the table – kiri bath (milk rice), kavum (deep-fried ‘cakes’ made of rice flour and palm syrup), mung kavum (made from mung bean flour) and sesame sweets. It was bliss to crunch into delicious kokis made of rice flour and spices.

Kumudika (Kumi) de Silva

Happiest times celebrating New Year



Recipe for [mung kavum](#) and a recipe for [kokis](#)



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***Happiest times
celebrating New Year***

**Kumudika (Kumi) de
Silva**



Sinhalese & Tamil New Year...

Kumudika (Kumi) de Silva

I was happy that my children were able to be part of the local family celebrations with their grandparents. I was the bridge between two cultures - Sri Lanka and Australia - translating terms and customs. I had to try to explain the intricate nature and reasoning behind the rituals that do not make much sense in a modern world.



Sinhalese & Tamil New Year...

Kumudika (Kumi) de Silva

“

As always, my father's role was to set off a string of fire-crackers in the garden at the dawn of the New Year. It's a deafening time as the entire community does this!

The first activity for the New Year is 'lighting the hearth' – these days this is translated into pressing a button on your stove top. So, at the correct time, my mother started cooking milk rice for our first meal. Most of the other food is already prepared by this time. My sister got the children involved in collecting flowers from the garden and preparing the oil lamp for the table. At the right time, we then sat together and ate the first meal for the year. We all watched the clock as we knew the importance of timing!

”





**Happy New Year to
our Thai, Sinhalese
and Tamil community
members!**

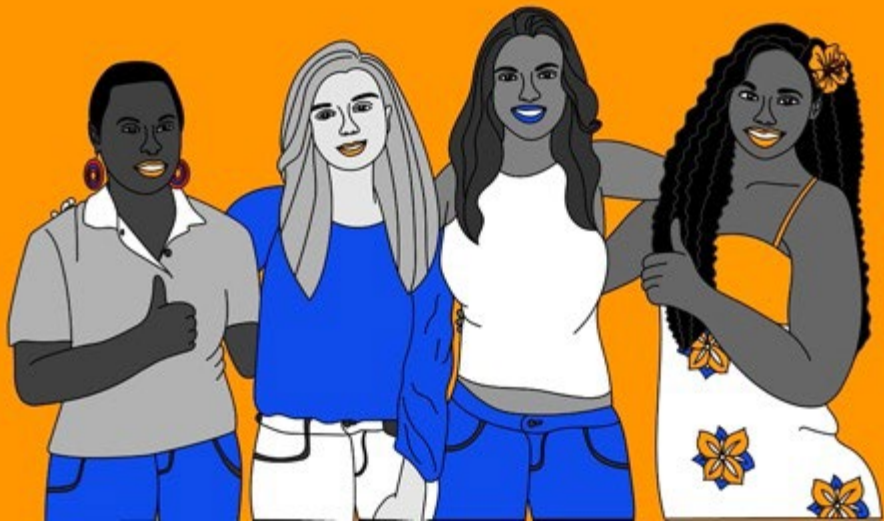




Multicultural
Women's Network

JOIN US!

Supporting women at UTS to
reach their full potential



For more information,
email:
mwn@uts.edu.au

**This booklet
was created
by Dr. Elaine
Laforteza**



A big thanks to the UTS Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion for their support and to everyone who shared their stories and photographs.



Multicultural Women's Network

