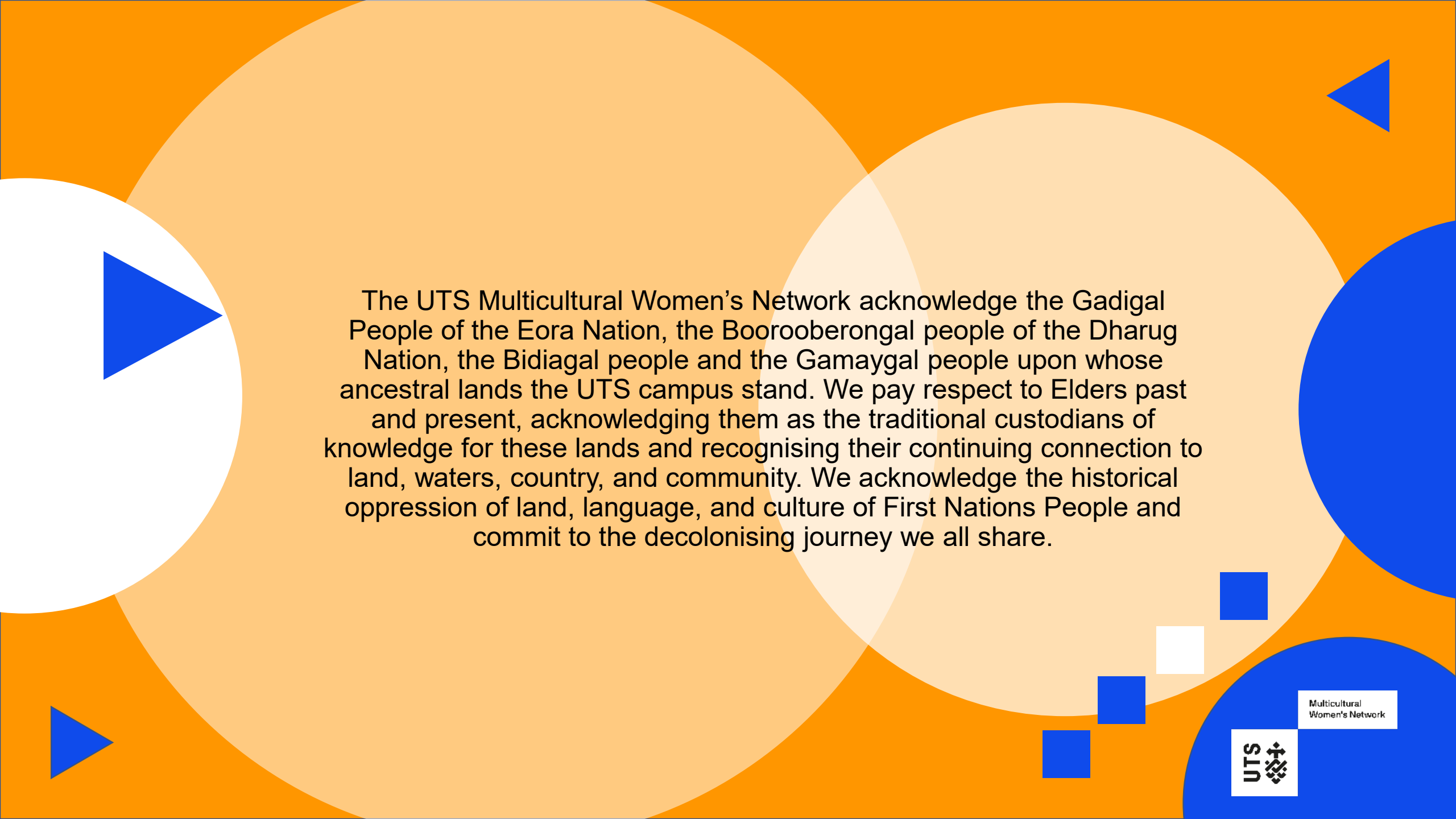


# How I Celebrate

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.

## 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  
**Raksha Bandhan/**  
**Rakhi/Raki**





## Raksha Bandhan is...

The ancient Hindu festival is made up of two words, namely "Raksha" and "Bandhan." As per the Sanskrit terminology, the occasion means "the tie or knot of protection" where "Raksha" stands for the protection and "Bandhan" signifies the verb to tie.

The festival is celebrated by different cultural groups in India and the Indian diaspora.

The festival symbolises the eternal love of brother-sister relationships which does not mean just the blood relationships only. It is also celebrated among cousins, sister and sister-in-law (Bhabhi), fraternal aunt (Bua) and nephew (Bhatija) and other such relations.

# Most important things about Raksha Bandhan...

Making or picking out the rhaki (special bracelet)

Celebrate and appreciate family connections

Making time to spend with family

Not taking family love for granted

Making the effort to connect with siblings even if they live overseas

Appreciating the kinships we share



# Stories from our UTS community

***Happiest times celebrating  
Raksha Bandhan...***

Reka Sadagopal  
Senior Research Officer, Faculty of Law /  
Faculty Research Office

Getting to observe this exchange between the siblings in the morning and getting my first Raki that year made me feel like part of the family. I remember feeling happiness over having a colourful Raki for myself and appreciate being included by the in-laws. Of course, we had a jolly good time making fun of the siblings after the exchange and every year since.





# What is a raki/rakhi?

Raksha Bandhan is celebrated between siblings through the giving of a **Rakhi** bracelet. This bracelet is made of many coloured threads, usually red and gold. It also has different stones and jewels, which are all threaded together to create a beautiful bracelet.



# What is an aarti plate?



Traditionally, the sister then prepares the aarti plate that has objects with special symbolic meaning. The aarti plate contains different elements:

**Rakhi thread -**  
the thread for  
the special  
bracelet

**Red powder -**  
used on the  
forehead during  
the holy ceremony

**Sweets - made**  
especially for  
the ceremony

**Diya, a lamp or**  
candles - used to  
represent good  
over evil

**Chawal - a**  
type of rice

Rakshabandhan celebrates the bond between a brother and a sister, every year the brother promises to protect his sister. For myself and my brother it was hardly about him protecting me but more about both of us being there for each other in hours of need. Until I came to Sydney, we used to make it a point to meet on this day, either I would travel to him or he would visit me. It was non-negotiable!

We fight a lot usually...we have two very different personalities, but this day would be so special! We would chat for hours, share childhood memories, I would dress up and force him to dress up too! Those are the memories I will carry with me for life.

**Nema Madnani**  
Project Support Officer, Student Equity,  
UTS Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion

Ideally during this festival, the sister would personally buy "Rakhis"...for her brother and I would always get it personalised for him, never picked up a generic or ethnic design but something which represents him- a little beer mug, his favourite phrase "cool man", just thinking about this makes me miss him.



# Raksha Bandhan with Nema Madnani





Nema Madnani

This one particular year, my brother was going through a very difficult phase, and I had fought with him a lot about the issue...Even though we were in a tough phase, I travelled to his city...we took a little road trip to a nearby resort to celebrate and take a fresh start. Surprisingly, we forgot our suitcase back at his place and that upset my mood so much...I had planned outfits for both of us. Seeing my mood being extremely off, he called up his friends back at his place, arranged for a local bus driver to come drop it off at the resort, barely sleeping at all, just so I have the stuff early in the morning the next day- in time for the ceremony!...He has always been my problem solver since then...That morning was serene, our bond felt stronger, I tied his Rakhi next to a lake, and it felt so fresh and positive. I miss not being with him on this day...



# What role did you or others play?

I would be a totally different person each year on Rakshabandhan. My family would always make fun of me, the whole year I would fight with him but for this day I would make everything special. From decorating the ceremonial plate- where we decorate with flowers (I would pick them from the garden myself and no body is allowed to do this for me), the rakhi thread and the sweet I would have personally chosen to feed him.

For some years I have also make his fav cake, choc truffles to go instead of traditional sweets on the plate cause he likes that more. I don't really know what he appreciated more- the ethnic part of this festival or the fact that it brought us together. I have always made a huge deal about celebrating it, making sure everything is perfect.

This festival would perfectly showcase or channel the love and care I have for him which would get masked by long distance or disagreements on petty issues all year long. Sometimes I do take his love for me as granted but now I have realised a little bit of it is not wrong cause he is my brother and this is his way of showing his love- by being my personal problem solver!

**Nema Madnani**

This is an event that is celebrated by my in-laws, specifically between my husband and sister-in-law annually. My sister-in-law visits us in the morning with my husband's favourite snacks and Rakis for us.

Raksha Bandhan requires not much preparation on our end, expect to make sure we're home in the morning, showered and dressed before sister-in-law shows up. It's the anticipation!

**Reka Sadagopal**



My mum absolutely loves this day...one day we don't fight and we behave like picture perfect siblings!...The entire family comes together and it is a long day of delicious food and sweets! Even my father would receive rakhis sent over by his sisters and sometimes one of his sisters would visit him too.

**Nema Madnani**



**Final Thoughts**



**Happy Raksha  
Bandhan/  
Rakhi/Raki!**





# JOIN US!

Supporting women at UTS to  
reach their full potential



For more information,  
email:  
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This booklet  
was created by  
**Dr. Elaine  
Laforteza**

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Multicultural  
Women's Network

