

Annual Report

2021 - 2022

A year of accomplishments.


LATIN
STORIESAUSTRALIA
Inspiring Immigration Stories

 @latinstoriesaustralia

 latinstoriesaustralia@gmail.com

 [latinstoriesaustralia.com](https://www.latinstoriesaustralia.com)

Latin Stories Australia, 2022 

Author: Trini E Abascal & Cristina Abela
Design: Juan Camilo Hernández Cantor
(<https://hellojuanca.wixsite.com/juanca>)

 [juanca_cantor](https://www.instagram.com/juanca_cantor)



ABN 9755 8392 056
Incorporated Association (VIC): A0097599L

 @latinstoriesaustralia

 latinstoriesaustralia@gmail.com

 [latinstoriesaustralia.com](https://www.latinstoriesaustralia.com)



At Latin Stories Australia, we acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we learn, share and grow.

We acknowledge their long and continuing relationship with their land and thank them for caring for Country for thousands of generations.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and stand in solidarity with First Nations communities.

We would like to also acknowledge our own ancestors and all the diverse places they were born in and journeyed to.

We honour the courage it takes to make a new life in a new place and to welcome newcomers. We particularly recognise all of those whose love of this land has made this a place we treasure and seek to nurture

Table of Contents

Message from Directors	5
Our achievements 2021_2022	6
Moving forward: our new strategic plan	7
Alejandra's story	9

Awareness of our community contribution to Australia

Inspiring migration stories series 2022	10
Creating awareness of our work and community	11
Nuestras Voces	13

Supporting our communities well being

Juntos Contigo: Apoyándonos	17
Juntos Contigo: Estamos conectados	21
Te contamos, tu eliges	23
La sobremesa	27

Supporting those in need

Food relief	29
-------------	----

We are proud and pleased to share with you Latin Stories Australia's work and achievements for the financial year 2020-21.

Latin Stories Australia continued to support our community in response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic that continued to affect our lives this year. Our Spanish speaking communities also continued to show how supportive, resilient and strong we are.



Message from Directors

A highlight this year was the in person premiere of our documentary "Nuestras Voces (Our Voices)" as part of the 2022 Moro Spanish Film Festival by Palace that toured Australia. We presented to MP Katie Hall the findings report advocating for policy consideration in light of our findings. Nuestras Voces has received international awards but most importantly, it has been embraced and warmly received by our community who with tears, joy and laughter celebrate and embrace the stories of courage, strength and resilience that are being shared with Australian audiences and beyond.

We won the Community Innovation Award from the Victorian Government for the Nuestras Voces project, for highlighting our contributions to local communities in Victoria and increasing understanding and engagement between different generations and multicultural communities.

We would like to acknowledge all who participated in the continuation of the "Juntos Contigo (Apoyandonos)" and "Juntos Contigo (Estamos conectados)" workshops. We are so happy to provide our community with opportunities to learn and reflect on mental health, sense of belonging, empowerment and how to engage and create connections with the community.

This year we had the opportunity to consult with the community and key stakeholders for two of our projects (La Sobremesa and Juntos Contigo (Estamos conectados)). It is encouraging to see active community participation during these consultations which ensure we are developing relevant projects for our community needs.

As an organisation, we have welcomed new board members to strengthen our strategic plan; created a new project that focuses on respectful relationships and have participated in a number of forums and events. Finally, we had our first end of financial year fundraising campaign which attracted generous donors.

Thank you for your ongoing support in this dream of advancing multiculturalism and social cohesion in Australia.

Trini Abascal & Cristina Abela
Directors



Our achievements 2021_2022

Our impact in numbers

1,412

people directly engaged in our projects.

1,185

people attended the Nuestras Voces film documentary premiere and/or screening at the 2022 Spanish Film Festival in locations around Australia.

112

people participated in our engagement surveys to discover the community needs at that point in time
(with this information we then created a workshop for the community needs)

135

people attended the 6 online workshops we had during the Melbourne lockdown.

22

volunteers

776

volunteer hours representing a volunteer replacement cost of **\$39,000.** *2022 State of Volunteering*

We are present, seen and active in the social media space.

Through our social media channels (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn) we measure our engagement and impact with the number of followers, audience comments, likes and shares per posts against the number of impressions per project.

We had an overall increase of **25%** in followers from the previous year across all social media platforms.

Latin Stories Australia project 'Nuestras Voces- Our Voices' **received the Community Innovation Award at the Victorian Multicultural Awards** for Excellence 2021, presented by the Victorian Multicultural Commission held at Government House in December 2021.

A recognition to the organisation for all the effort in highlighting Latin American and Spanish communities and their contributions to local communities in Victoria with the aim to increase understanding and engagement between different generations and multicultural communities.

We collaborated and partnered with 3 organisations (**Momentum psychology, UNITED-Spanish Latin American Welfare Centre and SBS Radio Spanish**). These key partnerships provided guidance and knowledge through their professional expertise.

We consulted with three key stakeholders to inform our project approach (Embassy of Mexico, Ames Australia & Gals in Australia).

Latin Stories Australia works to help the community, and support everyone with their contributions, and in doing so, we provided three job referrals to three of our volunteers, who successfully obtained a new professional job in their field of expertise and studies.

Moving forward with our

new

Strategic plan

Strategic pillar		Aim
Increase acceptance and legitimacy of the Latin American migrant community in Australia		<p>Provide platforms that create awareness of the Latin American contribution to Australia's social capital and diversity</p> <p>Sustain platforms that enable participation and social cohesion</p>
Build opportunities for social cohesion and wellbeing for Latin American migrants, especially for those in need.		<p>Increase social justice and equity</p>
Enhance community wellbeing for all people in Australia		<p>Facilitate activities and develop content that supports general community experience of wellbeing</p>



“Do you know that we are about to celebrate 8 **years** since we started this journey?”

Alejandra's Story

Achieving our strategic pillar

Increase acceptance and legitimacy of the Latin American migrant community in Australia



I arrived in Melbourne, with four suitcases, my feelings, and a heart plenty of enthusiasm and hope I was astonished by every single experience I lived in this new environment. However, I had to cope with some feelings I could not understand very well.

'Hello, Alejandra, wake up! You are a migrant!', my inner voice attracted my own attention. Yes, it did. I realised that I was a migrant with a lot of challenges to achieve and to sort out.

In addition, life was still going on and wherever we are, difficulties and frustrations are waiting at the corner of the street.

And all of a sudden, Latin Stories Australia came up in my life by my Colombian community who shared their knowledge with the participants, giving us the chance to think, to reflect, to add new information and different points of view.

Every time I participated, it made me enhance my attitude to a variety of actions and decisions I had to face like looking for a job, connecting with people, trying new paths to meet goals, looking at me in a compassionate way and feeling more confident to thrive in this community.

Those workshops gave me the chance to meet amazing people with whom we became friends afterwards.

That was the first workshop of many others organised by Latin Stories Australia. I found there a lot of amazing women who work for the integration of this enormous Latin community in Australia.

Attending the workshops I could know that I was not alone, that those perturbing feelings were felt by others and the people I met there, let me understand that they are part of any migrant journey. The opportunity to speak the same language felt like I was being cuddled by my mum. We exchanged our stories and learnt from each other.

Latin Stories Australia's women introduced other professionals from the Latin Stories Australia was a strong support for me, specially during the pandemic which added more worries regarding the family I had overseas.

Last but not least, Latin Stories Australia made me connect with the deep pride of being a Latinwoman.

This is my story about my experience with LSA and those lovely women who, certainly, helped me to feel part of both communities: Latin and Australian.

From the bottom of my heart and always, thank you so much!

Awareness of our community and contribution to Australia

Inspiring migration series
2021-2022

Since 2015 we have been collecting and publishing stories from the Latin American community, this has been our main activity and source of inspiration.

We tell their stories and share their migration journeys. Through storytelling we learn about their lives, their main challenges, what differences they saw upon arrival and what piece of advice they can give to our community.

11

This year we shared stories from **five Latin American countries:**

Our monthly stories **are promoted** in the newsletter, in our social media channels and within our community.

Colombia - Chile -
Mexico - Brazil - El
Salvador

People from all walks of life, who through their story showed us their **courage, resilience and ideas** to make a difference in the communities here in Australia.

Through stories, we showcase the **Latin America talent, create culture, community and inspire** others to work towards reaching their goals.

Creating awareness of our work and community



Monthly newsletter

Every month our community receives a newsletter where we share information about what we've been doing, a new story to showcase and other important information for our LatinStories community. With time, we have realised this is a valuable source of information, and a way to share news, success stories, upcoming events and any other information we consider valuable to share to the community.

Participation in forums, talks, panels and events.

Engaging with University Students:

Latin Stories was invited to participate in an online chat with Professor Adrian H. Hearn's of the Spanish and Latin American Studies Program at the University of Melbourne. Afterwards, some of his students signed up to volunteer with us.

Engaging with migrants:

LatinStories was part of a virtual session with students from City Language Centre where we shared our migration journey and the relevance of learning English.

Engaging with Victorian organisations:

Cristina, LatinStories Director, participated at the Future Females Conference 2022 as a panelist in the "Visibility in Stories", women of colour session. There, she spoke about our organisation and also on diversity, tolerance and calling in people once they have been called out on bias or racism.



Up

Nuestras Voces
project

coming

Latin Stories Australia - Annual Report 2022

Nuestras Voces

About



Last year 2021, we reported on the "Nuestras Voces" project



A very special project developed by Latin Stories Australia



Between September 2019 and June 2021



Supported by
Victoria Government

The project had five main components:



Documentary film
"Nuestras Voces"



"Destino Australia"
podcast series, in
collaboration with SBS
Radio Spanish.



Online publication
of the individual
stories on our
website.



Recollection of stories
of seniors through a
storytelling migration
journal designed
specifically for them to
write, reflect and
remember their story.



Findings report distributed to the
Victorian Government, organisations,
Parliament Victoria library and the
broader community.

This year, one of the components of this project - documentary film) was not only screened for the first time to the Australian community, but it was taken to the next level:



Online Private Premiere - Oct 2021:

Online Private Premiere: Oct 2021: There was an online private premiere with a Q&A session moderated by Carlos Colina from SBS Radio

Spanish, with special guests: Diana Paez, the director; Trini Abascal, producer representing Latin Stories Australia; and 2 people who were featured in the film (Alfredo Munoz and Alejandro Vargas).

During this event, more than **280 devices were connected.**

We estimate that **at least 560 people watched** the film and the online Q&A session afterwards.

Australian Premiere: April 2022:



Australian Premiere: April 2022

The in person premiere of the documentary film, as part of the 2022 Spanish Film Festival.

The premiere was held at the Palace Cinemas in the iconic Astor Theatre! During the premiere, Latin Stories Australia presented the findings report of this project to a representative of the Victorian Government, who later addressed the community.

Around 300 members of the community attended this event. The screening of the film was followed by a Q&A session moderated by producer **Trini Abascal, representing Latin Stories Australia with special guests: Diana Paez, director; and 2 people who were featured in the film: Rafaela Torres and Arun Munoz.** After the Q&A session, attendees enjoyed an afternoon with music by Alejandro Vargas.

Film presentations around Australia:

As part of the 2022 Spanish Film Festival, the movie **was screened 14 times** around Australia in:

Melbourne, Sydney, Perth, Adelaide, Byron Bay and Brisbane.

Some of these screenings had Q&A sessions afterwards and online engagement with different people from our community.

Participation in different events:

The movie was screened regionally, as part of the Refugee Week, in an event organised by CAFS in Ballarat.

Main Achievements



Best historical film by the Toronto International Women Film Festival 2021

Listed as the **top 10 of the 2022 Spanish Film Festival** Australia.

Best feature film by the Latino Feedback Film festival California USA 2021.

Watched by over 1200 people.



Our impact

While the “Nuestras Voces” project gives voice to our not very visible Spanish-speaking communities, it also reflects the stories of many other migrants and refugees on this country. Part of the outcomes of this project is to increase understanding of the experiences of migrants and refugees, and increase empathy towards others.

Feedback collected from attendees at the premiere shows an increase in understanding of different cultures, migration experiences, empathy towards migrants and refugees, contribution to Victorian history and sense of community.

From those who returned the survey

97%

Strongly agreed or agreed that the session fostered a sense of community and belonging.



95%

Strongly agreed or agreed that they have more empathy for migrants and refugees.



93%

Strongly agreed or agreed that they have increased their knowledge of the Spanish-speaking communities' contribution to Australia.

93%

Strongly agreed or agreed that they have a larger understanding of different cultures and migration experiences.

JUNTOS CONTIGO

apoyándonos

(Together with you: Supporting each other)

Connecting with your resilience, sense of belonging, and empowerment.

About

In 2021, while Melbourne was experiencing a lengthy lockdown, we were living some unprecedented times which tested our resilience and gave us limited opportunities to fully participate in the Australian way of life.

As a response, Latin Stories Australia developed this project -online workshops- in collaboration with Momentum Psychology, to support our Spanish speaking community during these challenging times.

Juntos Contigo: Apoyándonos took place in August and September, and it consisted in a two part series of online workshops. The first one covered topics of empowerment, inclusion, isolation, sense of belonging and resilience, this gave the participants the opportunity to create community and increase connections.

In addition, those who participated in the first workshop, had the opportunity to attend to two support group sessions ran by Momentum Psychology to continue the conversations from the workshops and to network with like-minded individuals.

This project was possible given the support of the City of Melbourne.



OUR IMPACT

Who participated?

109 attendees from 8 different countries, mainly from Colombia, Mexico and Argentina
Female (89%), Male (11%).

Outcomes

The workshops provided a **sense of belonging, community and empathy** with those who participated.

Working with Momentum Psychology gave us an opportunity to engage with the community at a different level making the most of their expertise.

Afterwards the feedback suggests that:

96%

have a better understanding of other people experiences

92%

Identified their strengths and learnt strategies to overcome isolation and loneliness

91%

Felt more connected with other people

90%

Felt safer to participate in activities that are relevant to them and their wellbeing

88%

Identified forms to participate more in community

65%

Met someone new who they can call to have a coffee or in case of emergency

This project was a great opportunity to **create community and increase connections** – in particular given the lack of opportunities we experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions in place. This was mentioned by the participants:

“The most important thing for me was to learn that sometimes we think we are alone, but the issue is that we do not find bridges to connect with each other.”

“Connecting with other Latinos and gent to know their experiences. Until now I didn’t have the opportunity to meet so many.”



The project also gave opportunity to **empower others**: After the workshop and the follow up sessions, a participant decided to volunteer and develop another session for the participants. We provided the support to do this and run an extra session.

In addition to that the comments the participants provided suggest that they **learned strategies that will support them in the future to face their problems.**

“I learnt new tools to manage isolation.”

“I feel happier and more connected to the world around me. I think this workshop has contributed to a healing process that I have embarked ever since I started to think about my identity more critically.”

Do you know...



Since the pandemic began, we have **supported over 500 Latin Americans**, by offering food vouchers, developing mental health workshops, and creating tailored projects to help them feel part of our community

JUNTOS CONTIGO

estamos conectados



(Together with you: We are connected)

About

Latin Stories Australia in recognising the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had in our communities, partnered with Momentum Psychology and Wellbeing and delivered two free mental health workshops in Spanish to our communities in October 2021.

In order to identify the needs of the community and the most relevant issues due COVID-19, we developed a survey and asked the community directly. In total, 112 members of the community answered the survey. We also had a focus group with 3 key organisations that support our target community. The themes identified were as pressing matters were **Self-care for parents and Reconnecting with my optimism.**

Our impact

Who participated?

26

Attendees from Peru, Argentina, and a large proportion from Mexico and Colombia.

Female (80%), Male (20%).

Outcomes

Overall, the feedback suggests that the workshops were successful in achieving its outcomes (see below)

Overall, the feedback suggests that the workshops were successful in providing a sense of belonging, a sense of empathy and a sense of unity with everyone who participated in these workshops. The findings suggest that afterwards:


96%

strongly agreed or agreed that they received valuable information to support them during these difficult times

88%

strongly agreed or agreed that the session provided them the opportunity to feel connected with other people in the community

In addition to these, participants **learnt specific tools they can keep using to manage their wellbeing**



"The exercises that we did in the session are exercises that we can apply in our daily life to help us to remember and encourage us to execute our projects."

"I learnt to acknowledge that I as a parent have the right to have feelings and express them, it is okay to feel vulnerable and sad."

"Building community is very important for mental health in times of crisis."

Te contamos, tu eliges

About

Given the presence in our community, Latin Stories Australia was contacted to support the Victorian Department of Health to inform the community about COVID-19 and access to vaccines. Latin Stories Australia organised 3 sessions with the Spanish-speaking community to provide quality information about the COVID-19 vaccination program, coronavirus symptoms and testing, the vaccine development and approval processes in Australia, eligibility and how to book your appointment to receive the vaccine in Victoria. The sessions were developed to provide information and tools to our community, so they could make an informed decision. The information sessions were delivered by the Victoria Department of Health.

To support the message and to be able to understand the needs of the community, we developed social media posts and a video with the support of the community members, encouraging the broad community to get vaccinated and encouraging respect for one another despite the different opinions about this sensitive topic.



Our Impact

Information Sessions

In total

30 participated in the 3 sessions.

Two sessions were online with mainly people between 20- and one session was organised in conjunction with UNITED for the senior community.

Outcomes

Before the session, **50%** of respondents considered their knowledge of the COVID-19 vaccination process in Australia was high or very high. After the session, there was a significant change to a **100%** of the respondents considered their knowledge was high or very high.

Some of the learnings mentioned by the participants include

"Knowing the differences between vaccines and the statistics of people affected by the virus."

"Having more information is important for me in order to feel safe."

"The part about that pregnant woman are more at risk of entering an ICU, if they are not vaccinated and contract the virus."

"Knowing that there is financial aid regardless of visa status."

Online engagement

One of the strategies we used for this project was to reach out to the community via our social media platforms in order to reach a bigger audience. For this reason, we developed a video where members of the community were invited to be part of. In total, 14 people participated in the video.



[Click here or copy below to watch the video \(https://youtu.be/HsPv7ifM1Ww \)](https://youtu.be/HsPv7ifM1Ww)

The final result was remarkable and the feedback we received from the community after watching the video was very positive. The video had a post reach of

395



704



372



views

We also developed resources for the community in Spanish that included the main concerns mentioned by the community during an online consultation process ([some examples next page](#)).



An online survey to explore attitudes towards gender equality and healthy relationships (**68 responses**).

3 consultation sessions with **22** members of the community.

"Glad to know that they are leading such uncompromising change. I hope that the result of this project is very productive and that it changes minds."



We are looking forward to play the board-games with the community!



Supporting those in need:

Food relief, referrals to support agencies & resources to guide in Spanish

This year, Latin Stories Australia continued supporting our the community members who contacted us and identified as affected by the economic and mental health impacts of COVID-19.

The majority of these people struggled financially due to the decrease on casual work shifts and continuing expenses.

Who did we support?

166

of \$50 vouchers for culturally relevant food were provided to members of the community - including 27 families in need.

The project also supported

Latin American and Spaniards small businesses

as we acquired the **\$50 dollars** vouchers from them. This represented an income of over **\$8,000.**

Most of the community members who received the vouchers were students (82%) and mainly from Colombia.

However, the beneficiaries were from 10 different countries.



What people told us?

"Thank you very much for this voucher and for giving us well-being. A hug with much gratitude."

"I greatly appreciate your goodwill and the support you provide to the International Student community in Melbourne. Thank you for reminding us that we are not alone on this journey and that we can always count on organizations like yours to help us get ahead. My greatest wishes are that they continue to grow and succeed because their work is very valuable, and they help many of us."

(translated from Spanish)

We acknowledge the importance of culturally appropriate food as a way to maintain identity and as a central aspect of recovery from trauma.

Annual Report

2021- 2022

LATIN
STORIES AUSTRALIA

Inspiring Immigration Stories

latinstoriesaustralia.com

✉ latinstoriesaustralia@gmail.com

📷 [@latinstoriesaustralia](https://www.instagram.com/latinstoriesaustralia)