

Bringing Little Pieces of Africa to the Lower Mainland

Margaret Alala's vision for her business originated from two significant experiences that changed the way she saw the world.

The first experience was during her travels in Africa over 10 years ago. Alala fell for the beautiful artwork created by locals. "I'd see the most amazing paintings. I'd usually buy a painting or two or more if I could afford it." On a rare occasion, Margaret would return to find that a painter had been discovered and achieved great success. More often though, "I'd be told that talented artists I had followed had given up painting and taken on clerical jobs – they need to eat and painting doesn't put food on the table. In many cases, their brilliant work would never be seen again."

The other side of Alala's vision developed with she volunteered with hospice patients. "By letting me into their lives for days, weeks or months and by allowing me to comfort them in their final moments and make their transition out of this world easier, dying people were in reality giving me the biggest gift – a very important purpose to my life."

It wasn't an immediate shift to starting Maridadi Craftz for Alala. Moving to Canada in 2002, she chose the stable route to get settled, taking a bookkeeping job. "I enjoy bookkeeping and I enjoy working with numbers, but bookkeeping alone five days a week is not my cup of tea".

At the end of Alala's first year in Canada, just before Christmas when she really needed the money to travel, a slow period hit and her hours of work were cut. She was upset that at the last minute, she could no longer afford to travel see her family and friends like she'd planned. Margaret spent her first Christmas in Canada with too little money and too much time on her hands, wondering how she could get more control over things that happened in her life.

Alala started thinking of starting her own business. She had no clue what to start it in. The book at the library said, "Do something you love." Alala combined her business philosophy with her passion and Maridadi Craftz was born.

Margaret's dream is to help people with talent get a chance for a better life by creating an opportunity that allows them to do what they love, to grow their own business, and to earn enough income to nurture their families and pursue their own dreams.