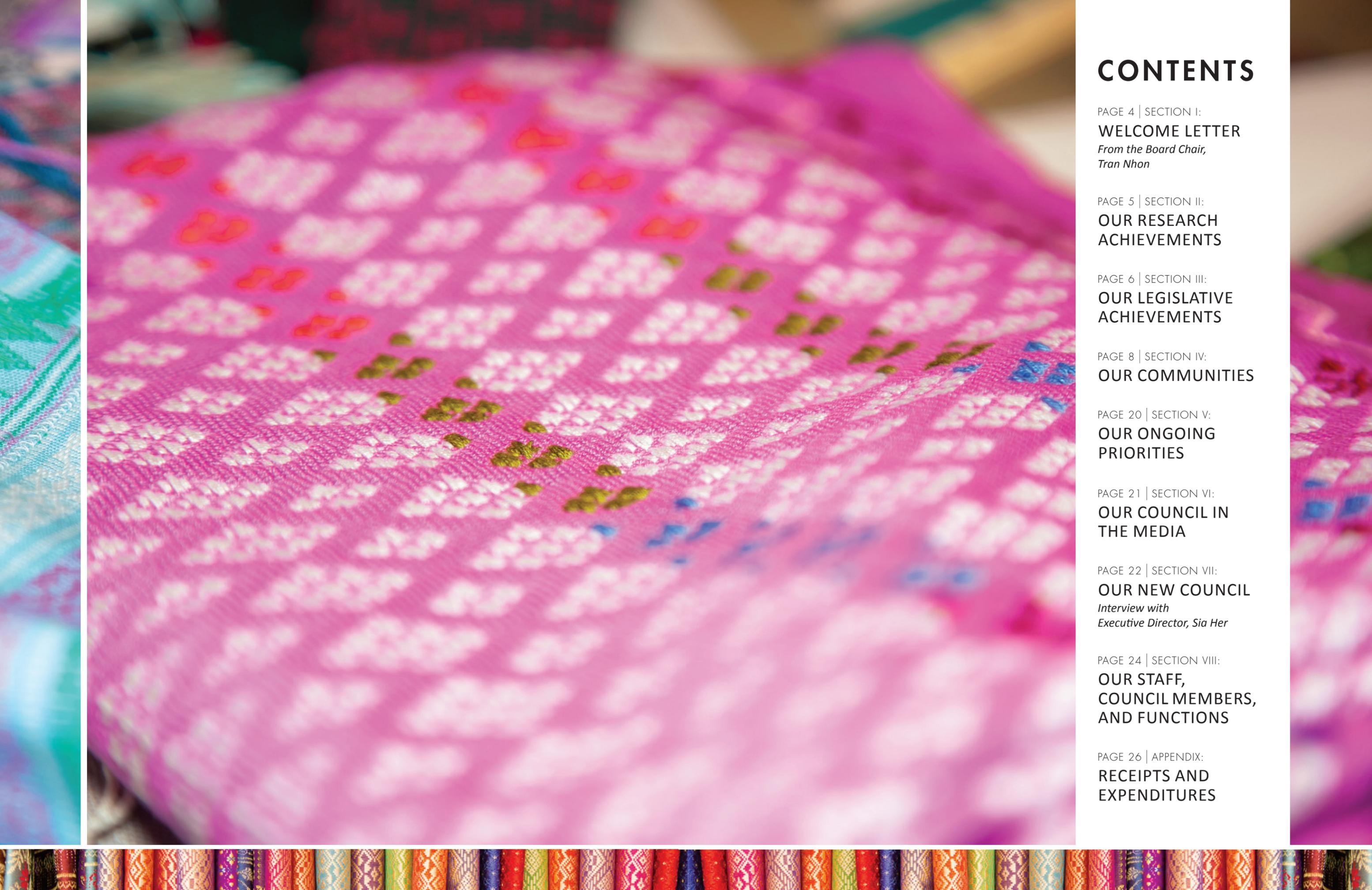




COUNCIL ON ASIAN PACIFIC MINNESOTANS
A STATE AGENCY SINCE 1985

ANNUAL REPORT 2015





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I. WELCOME LETTER

Dear Community,

The staff and the board of directors of the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans welcome you to our 2015 report.

We have much to be proud of in 2015. Collectively, we accomplished many things because we **established and strengthened relationships with legislators and our communities, testified before committees, networked with advocacy organizations, hosted dignitaries, and produced a significant report on early childhood education.**

As the state agency charged with **bridging the gap that often exists between state government and the Asian Pacific community**, we take our role and responsibilities seriously. As an agency and board, working together, we were successful in **advocating** and **advising** legislators and their staffs on

behalf of Asian Pacific Minnesotans. As a team, **we brought together legislators, commissioners, experts, citizens, civic leaders**, and others to share knowledge and create policy and civic change. Representing our diverse and vibrant collection of communities is at the heart of the work we do. Our Council continually seeks to elevate and increase the voices of Asian Pacific Minnesotans within state government.

We are excited to share with you our key 2015 achievements. First, the **Legislature changed the way the three ethnic councils operate.** *The new enabling statute positions our Council to more effectively deliver on our mission.* Second, we led efforts to pass an important bill that created the **Working Group on Violence against Asian Women and Children**, which will result in a study on violence against Asian women and children in Minnesota. Although our legislative proposal for the creation of a **rental voucher pilot program for victims of gender-based violence from emerging communities** was not adopted, we brought this issue into the legislative limelight. Third, we released an original research report, *Early Childhood Education: Opportunities for Southeast Asian Children.*

All of these issues, and many more we focus on, are covered in the pages that follow.

On a personal note, this year will mark the end of my service at our Council. I say “our Council” because for us to be effective it truly has to be “we,” not “me.” This must be a group effort where we recognize that our strength is in our ability to sustain shared cultural experiences, while celebrating our unique, defining characteristics. It has been an honor and a privilege to have been able to serve as a member of the Council’s board and as the 2015 Chair.

And last, but not least, Happy 40th to our Hmong, Vietnamese, Lao, and Cambodian communities in Minnesota. Forty years after the Southeast Asian conflict came to an end; forty years of the story of our valor, resiliency, tears, and triumphs. Let us continue moving forward together as we were meant to: Out of Many, One.

Thank you for your involvement with the Council. We look forward to continuing to serve you.

Tran Nhon
Board Chair

II. OUR RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENTS

One of the key duties of the Council, per Minnesota Statute (M.S.) 15.0145, is to contract for or perform studies designed to help policymakers better understand and design policy solutions that address the needs of Asian Pacific Minnesotans.

In 2015, the Council published its long awaited in-depth study of Southeast Asian Minnesotan children’s access to affordable and culturally appropriate early childhood learning education. Printed in July of 2015, *Early Childhood Education: Opportunities for Southeast Asian Children* shares the results of a study that involved 425 parents and caregivers.

The report focuses on the five Southeast Asian heritage communities: Hmong, Karen, Cambodian, Lao, and Vietnamese, which represent more than half of the state’s Asian Pacific population. We embarked on this study because national studies have shown that Southeast Asian heritage children are less likely to be enrolled in preschool and less likely to graduate from high school than Caucasian and children of other Asian Pacific heritage communities, such as the Chinese and Asian Indian.

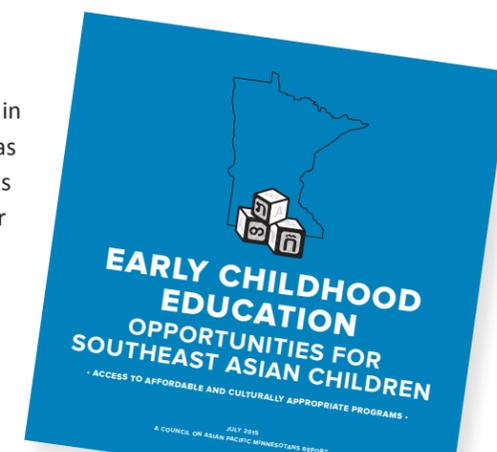
The report offers the following key findings:

- **66 percent of children** age four and under are **cared for solely by a family member**, such as a parent, grandparent, or other relative over age 16.
- **Only 11 percent of children are enrolled in public or private childcare** – Head Start, a childcare center, pre-school, pre-kindergarten, or licensed family care.
- The average family **spends 18 percent of their income on childcare.**
- **85 percent** of the parents feel it is “**very important**” for their children to grow up learning **the parents’ native language.**

Based on the study’s findings, the Council issued three policy recommendations:

- **Promote bicultural and bilingual** early learning opportunities in licensed pre-K programs that are respectful and cognizant of the realities of Southeast Asian heritage families.
- Ensure **access to affordable and quality early childhood education** for all children.
- **Disaggregate data** to track by ethnic community.

As Minnesota continues to debate the choice and level of investment in early childhood education, the Council hopes that this report will serve as a catalyst for more in-depth discussions and research. These discussions and further research, we believe, will lead to the state choosing to tailor policies that support Southeast Asian Minnesotan children as part of the broader effort to close the achievement gap by providing better access to quality early learning opportunities.



III. OUR LEGISLATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS

The Council's new enabling statute mandates a focus on legislative and administrative actions that will improve the social and economic conditions of Asian Pacific Minnesotans. The Council achieves this by working with policymakers to draft and pass legislation, advising the Governor and the Legislature on the implications of their decisions for the Asian Pacific community.

We had a busy legislative session in 2015. While we tracked and broadly endorsed a number of bills, we focused on efforts to restructure the state's ethnic councils and address violence against women and children in the Asian Pacific Minnesotan community.

KEY PRIORITIES

- **Senate File 1419/House File 1353.** The Council actively supported **this legislation to restructure Minnesota's three ethnic councils.** We believed the modest reform effort was timely and **would increase the accountability, transparency, effectiveness, and responsiveness of all the councils.** The legislation passed. What the new enabling statute (M.S. 15.0145) means to the Council will be discussed by the executive director later in this report.

During the legislative debate the Council advised legislators against creating a consolidated **Department of Ethnic Affairs** to replace the current ethnic councils' structure.

- **Senate File 310/House File 336.** The Council initiated this bill, the *Working Group on Violence Against Asian Women and Children*, requesting a **study on the nature, scope, and prevalence of violence against Asian women and children in Minnesota.** The bill's chief authors, **Senator Jeff Hayden and Representative Karen Clark**, succeeded in securing an appropriation of **\$200,000** to fund the study. The legislation received **bipartisan support** and attracted a diverse coalition of supporters.

In committee hearings, our staff and community members gave powerful testimonies about the pervasiveness of gender-based violence in our communities, including the hidden but strikingly common practice known as "international abusive marriage" in the Hmong community. These relationships involve older men marrying younger, often underage, Southeast Asian girls and bringing them into the United States.

We believe this legislation is the first in the nation to address gender-based violence in the Asian American and Pacific Islander community. While the anecdotal stories are plenty there is a dearth of quantitative data on violence against Asian women and children, particularly in Minnesota. A multi-disciplinary team will oversee the study; **the Council will report back to the Legislature in 2017.**

- **Senate File 311/ House File 335.** The Council initiated this bill, the *Exploited Women and Children Rental Assistance Program*, requesting \$2.5 million for a **rental voucher pilot program** for women and children from emerging communities who are victims of gender-based violence and are at risk of becoming homeless.



The Council provided support to the community members who testified in support of this legislation. **Bea Vue-Benson, an in-house therapist at the domestic abuse shelter Asian Women United of Minnesota, told a chilling story of a client who was in an abusive relationship with an older man.** The 25-year old Southeast Asian woman, a mother to four children, was married to a 56-year-old Hmong man. It took her five years to escape from her abuser, only to then become homeless. The survivor applied to 15 different transitional and public housing programs without any success and to date is still homeless. Unfortunately – and alarmingly – her story is not unique. The Council plans to re-introduce this bill during the 2016 session with **Senator Alice Johnson and Representative Karen Clark** as chief authors again.

OTHER LEGISLATION

The Council actively advised legislators of the potential impact of legislation on the Asian Pacific community and testified when necessary. Based on community input which resulted in our **2015 legislative agenda**, the Council supported or advised against the following bills:

- **Senate File 875.** The Council testified in support of increasing the number of voters an individual is allowed to assist in marking ballots at polling places. More than 50 percent of the Asian Pacific community identifies itself as Southeast Asian – Hmong, Lao, Karen, Vietnamese, and Cambodian – in Minnesota. According to the 2010 Census data, 40 to 50 percent of this community identify as individuals with limited to no English proficiency. If the language barrier is addressed, voter turnout among Asian Pacific Minnesotans will likely increase.
- **Senate File 6.** The Council testified in support of **universal all-day preschool access for four year olds**. The Council shared with legislators a key preliminary finding from its **Early Childhood Education for Southeast Asian Children** research report: for these families, child care cost was by far **the greatest barrier to early childhood education**.
- **House File 1638.** The House Health and Human Services Omnibus Bill included provisions to repeal MinnesotaCare, a subsidized health care program for the working poor. The Council testified against repealing MinnesotaCare because approximately 8,000 Asian Pacific Minnesotans depend on it for health insurance.
- **Senate File 1691.** The Council brought in a mental health expert from the Asian Pacific community to share with legislators why they should support this request for an appropriation of \$100,000 for culturally-specific mental health services for Southeast Asian veterans. Our Southeast Asian veterans are not recognized as members of the United States Armed Forces and are ineligible for veteran benefits. This legislation attempts to begin addressing service gaps for this group of Minnesotans.
- **Senate File 282/House File 997.** The Council is a member of a coalition that initiated the **Housing Opportunities Made Equitable (HOME) legislation in 2013** to increase home ownership rates in communities of color. The Council provides assistance and technical support to the coalition as it works to increase targeted funding to develop educational programming for first-time home-buyers from these communities.

IV. OUR COMMUNITIES

As the **advocate** for, and the **bridge** between state government and the Asian Pacific community, the Council has increased its presence in communities by attending events, introducing legislators to their constituents, and connecting Asian Pacific Minnesotans with all levels of government. We see our role as fostering relationships, gathering data on issues and trends, proactively **advising state policymakers on issues important to our community**, and ultimately **empowering** Asian



Pacific Minnesotans to advocate for themselves.

In 2015, we **participated in a total of 49 community events and hosted eight events**. Many of the gatherings have become annual events that community members, speakers, and our staff look forward to with great anticipation. Among those the Council holds annually are the following:

- **Asian Pacific Islander Day at the Capitol.** Held on January 21, 2015, the event centered on a 45 minute rally that included the following speakers: Ramsey County Attorney John Choi; Senators Jeff Hayden and Alice Johnson; the Honorable Judge Gail Chang Bohr; and community activist Ms. Sipra Jha. After the rally, dozens of Asian Pacific constituents met with their representatives to speak about issues impacting our communities.
- **Community conversations with legislators.** During the legislative session, the Council held meetings during which members of our community were able to share with policymakers their stories. The **Hmong and Karen** met with their representative, **Rod Hamilton**, at the Capitol and in Walnut Grove and Marshall. The **Karen and Karenni** met with their senator, **Dan Sparks**, in Austin. These community members shared that housing and education are key issues for them.

- **Annual Asian Pacific Leadership Awards Dinner.** Held in May, the Council celebrated **Asian Pacific American Heritage Month** by recognizing outstanding Asian Pacific leaders who have made significant contributions to our communities and the state. The dinner brought together more than 400 Asian Pacific leaders from an array of sectors, including state and local government, small businesses, health management organizations, and nonprofits.
- **Community conversation with U.S. Ambassador to Laos, Daniel Clune.** In March the Council and the Minnesota Department of Human Rights hosted the Honorable Daniel Clune during his stay in Minnesota. Ambassador Clune had an active visit. The ambassador received legislative recognition on the floor of the House of Representatives, lunched with legislative leadership from both sides of the aisle, and visited the *We Are Hmong* exhibit at the Minnesota Historical Society. In addition, he spoke to an audience of more than a hundred community leaders about U.S. foreign relations with Laos (the Lao People’s Democratic Republic).
- **2015 Legislative Session Recap.** In July the Council hosted an annual legislative recap for our metro constituents. The Council issued a summary of major legislation passed in the 2015 session in the areas of K-12 Education, Health and Human Services, Higher Education, Jobs, Economic Development & Housing, and Public Safety. Legislators in attendance hosted round-table discussions with Asian Pacific community members and shared key legislative proposals they supported. Community members shared their perspectives and experiences with legislators. In attendance were **Senators Jeff Hayden, Alice Johnson, Roger Chamberlain, and Susan Kent, and Representatives Carolyn Laine, Sheldon Johnson, Tim Mahoney, Peter Fischer, and Karen Clark.**
- **Release of the Council’s report, “Early Childhood Education: Opportunities for Southeast Asian Children.”** After almost two years of research, the Council released the report to the public. The report’s findings and recommendations were presented at a public event attended by legislators, Asian Pacific parents, and other parties. **The report illustrates the importance of understanding the realities of Minnesota children of Hmong, Vietnamese, Lao, Cambodian, and Karen descent.** Together, these groups make up more than half of the total Asian Pacific population in the state.
- **Community events.** The Council attended a number of events as chief guests to **foster relationships with different Asian Pacific communities**, among them the Lao Diaspora Symposium, IndiaFest, Southeast Asian veterans, Tibetan New Year, Khmer New Year, Hmong 40 at the Minnesota History Center, and the Karen Organization of Minnesota’s 5th Annual Gala. In addition, the Council participated in the Vietnamese Amerasian Society, Bhutanese Deepavali, and the Association of Nepalis Dashian.



Snapshots of Asian Americans in Greater Minnesota

FILIPINO AMERICANS

Increasingly, Minnesotans of Asian descent are living in all corners of our state. In northwestern Minnesota a small community of Filipino Americans lives in Baudette, Warroad, Roseau and Badger.

Baudette is the largest city, with slightly more than 1,000 people. Many of the city’s residents of Asian descent hail from the Philippines; the majority of them are from the beautiful and most densely populated southern island of Cebu. They are generally women who married American men, according to Marissa Theis, a business owner of Filipino-descent who moved to Minnesota when she married. Marissa is from the northern part of the Philippines.



Marissa acknowledges that there are great differences in the climates of Baudette and the Philippines. However, the weather has not reduced their quality of life in northern Minnesota. **“The Filipina women came here for family, love, and a better life,”** she said. A busy work schedule and family obligations leave less time for socializing with other Filipina friends in the area. This is offset somewhat by the Baudette community’s acceptance of them.

“We are hardworking people,” Marissa said. “Many of us love to cook, entertain and be the best we can be in dealing with everyday life. **I love living here in Baudette.** It is peaceful and so quiet and almost **everybody knows everybody.** There is even more we could do if we were given a chance to participate more in the community. We love to smile and are God-fearing individuals.”

HMONG AMERICANS

The Asian heritage population in Southwest Minnesota is mostly Hmong, Lao and the Karen. They are generally concentrated in Worthington, Mountain Lake, Walnut Grove, Tracy, Austin, Albert Lea, and Marshall. These communities within communities are taking advantage of the opportunities rural Minnesota offers.

Councilman Sean Xiong Yang is one of the estimated 421 Hmong Americans living in Walnut Grove, Minnesota. The councilman was born in Laos and brought to the United States in 1989. He remembers walking the harsh terrain along the route the refugees took, trying to cross the Mekong River over to Thailand. After graduating from college in 2004, the California native accepted a job offer from Schwans in information technology and has worked there ever since.

The councilman strongly believes that rural Minnesota provides young families with opportunities to thrive and succeed even if it means driving 100 to 150 miles to the



nearest mega-store shopping center.

Many people, the councilman shared, ask why Asian Americans would move to rural, small towns such as Walnut Grove, where opportunities and good jobs appear to be hard to come by. Yet in these small towns Hmong Americans have discovered an environment where they can flourish socially and economically.

“We see opportunities here that we do not see in the large cities,” the councilman said. “There is always the chance that we may fail to achieve our dreams, but **should we succeed, we will be greatly rewarded because we are breathing life into our town and region.**”

Snapshots of Key Asian Pacific Non-Profit Organizations

KAREN ORGANIZATION OF MINNESOTA (KOM)

Minnesota is home to the **largest Karen population outside of Burma**. The majority of the more than **9,000 community members** reside in Ramsey County, home to the nation’s only Karen community-based organization, the Karen Organization of Minnesota (KOM). The organization’s **mission** is to provide employment services, social services, and youth development programs **to enhance the quality of life for all refugees from Burma** in Minnesota.

As with refugee groups before them, the Karen are confronted with roadblocks associated with integrating into a new society. Despite these challenges, **Karen Minnesotans are reveling in the opportunities** only accessible to them since their arrival in the United States. In recent years, a growing number of Karen have relocated from Ramsey County and elsewhere in the nation to greater Minnesota for jobs. In response, KOM recently opened



a satellite office in Marshall, Minnesota, to help these families **achieve stability and integrate** into their new communities.

Program manager Saw Morrison says the Karen purposely chose Minnesota because they “concluded that **in Minnesota language and cultural barriers will not hinder our growth and success as Americans.** There are lots of people and organizations here who have the language skills and cultural knowledge to help us succeed.”

INDIA ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA (IAM)

Established in 1973, the India Association of Minnesota (IAM) represents **a robust, growing, and accomplished group of Minnesotans.** The non-profit organization works to build **a strong and cohesive community of Indian Minnesotans** through education, information, events, and other activities such as IndiaFest.

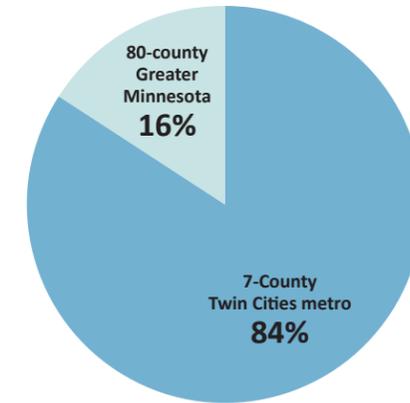
Today, Minnesota is home to more than **47,000 Asian Indians.** These Minnesotans make up one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the state. This rapid growth in population is largely driven by demand for high-skilled labor in Minnesota’s high-tech companies. A majority of the community resides in the Twin Cities metro region, followed by Rochester, home to the Mayo Clinic. This community is one of the **highest earning and most educated groups** in Minnesota. Asian Indians have a median annual household income of \$89,000 and 81 percent of the community have earned a bachelor’s or an advanced degrees.

“We are **proud to be contributing to Minnesota’s economy** with our talent and education,” said President of IAM, Babu Chimata. A software engineer and a senior manager at CenturyLink, Chimata sees greater opportunities for Minnesota’s growing manufacturing and agriculture sectors to “find markets in India for their products and services.”



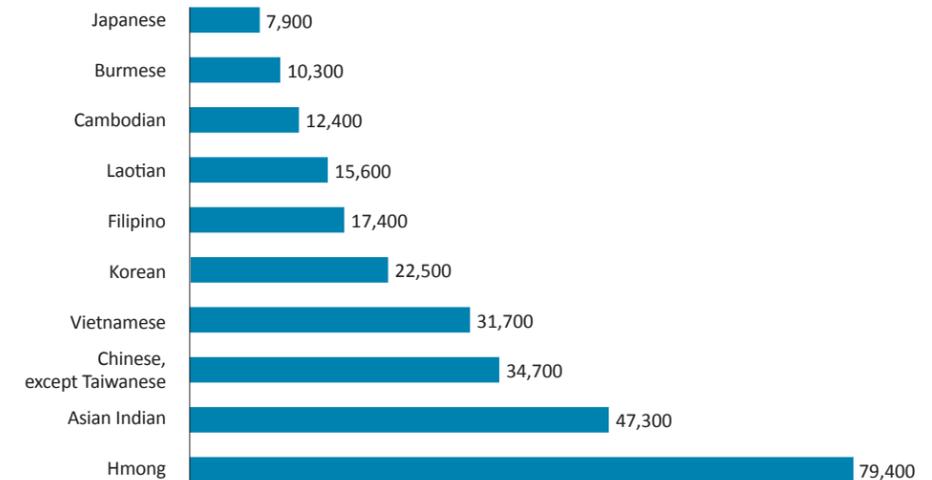
By the Numbers AT A GLANCE

1. Where Asian Pacific Minnesotans Live in Minnesota

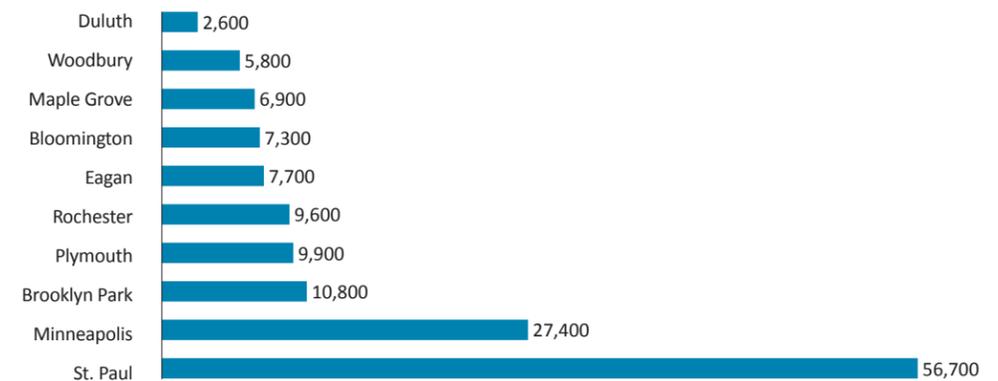


292,500 population, identifying as Asian (alone or in combination with other races.)

2. Largest Asian Ethnic Groups in Minnesota



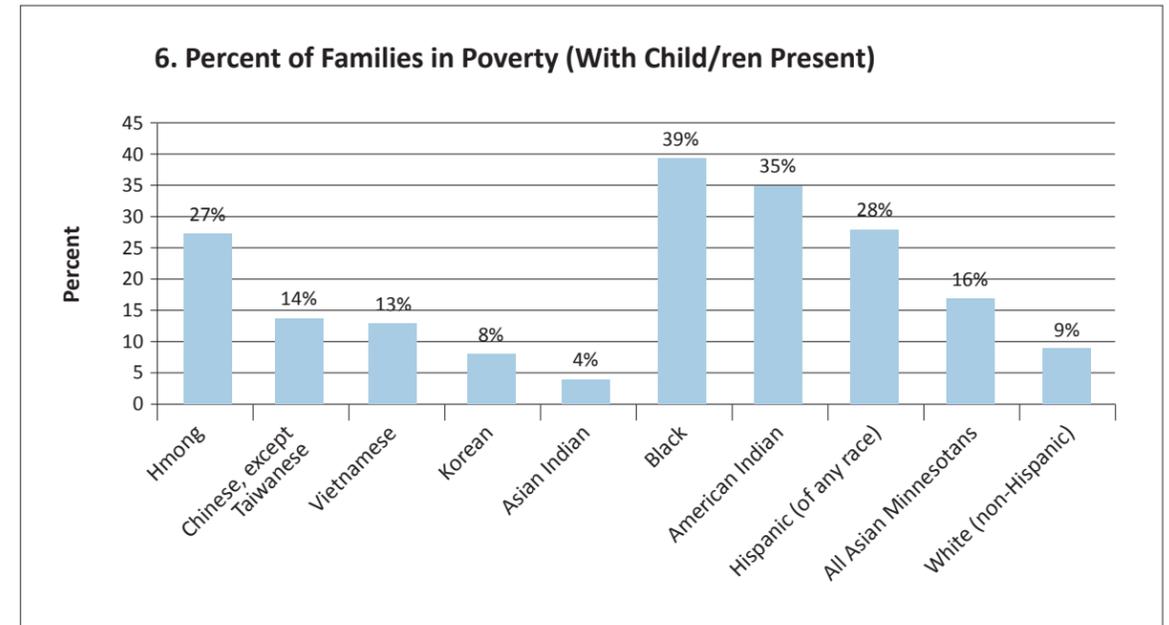
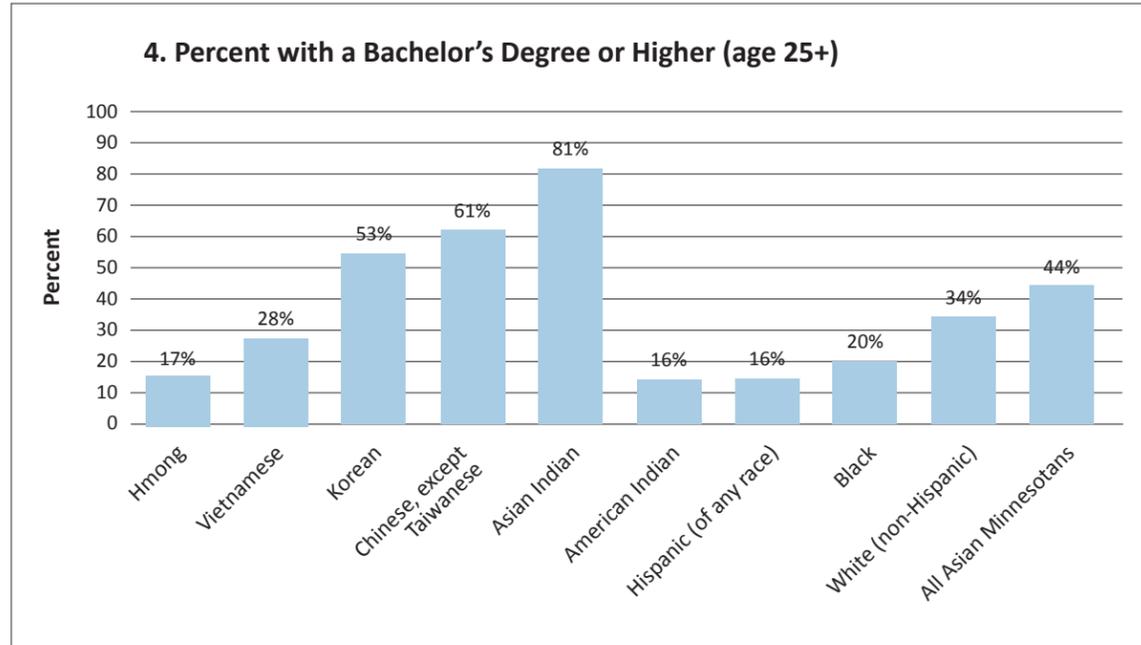
3. Top 10 Cities of Residence



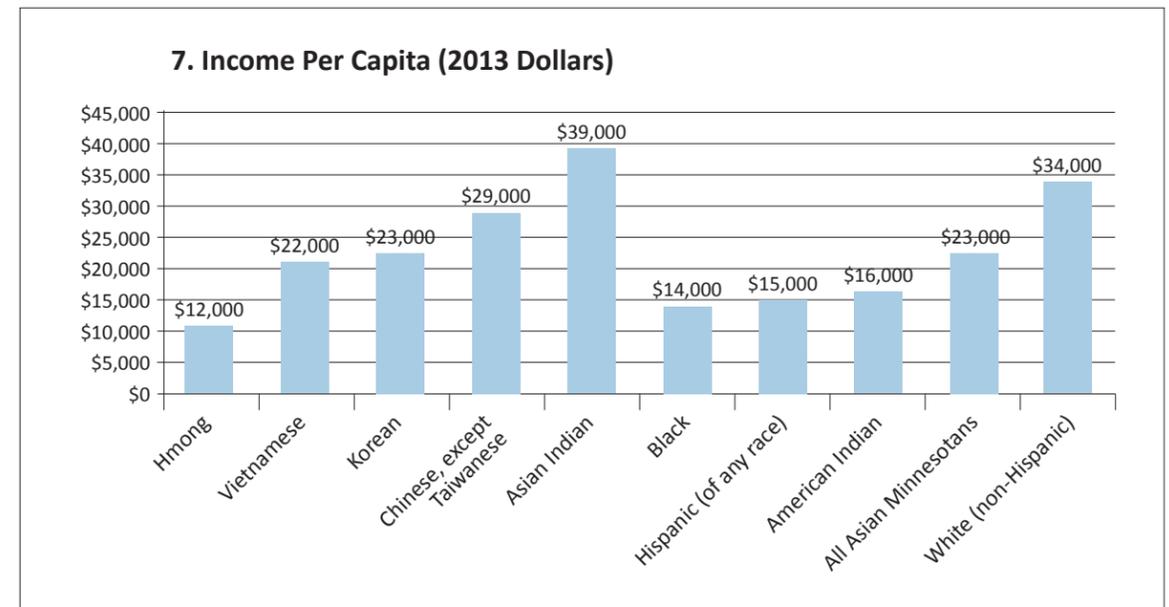
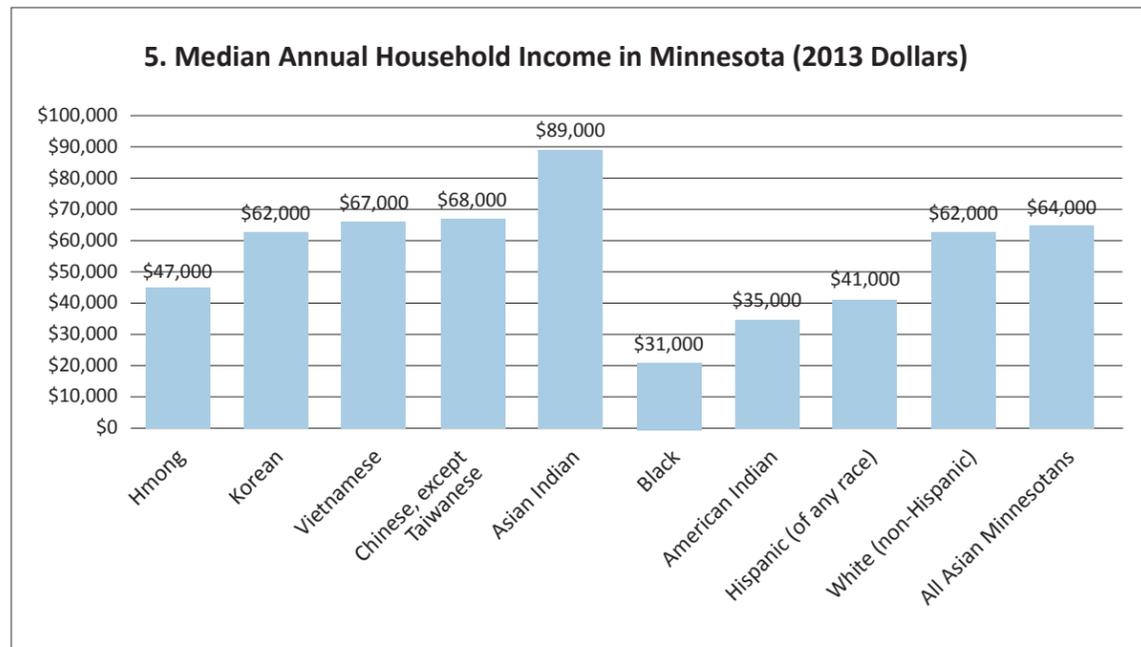
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey. Note: Data estimates result from a survey, and thus have error margins around them. Data should be considered approximate. For additional information, please contact the MN State Demographic Center.

By the Numbers

AT A GLANCE



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2013 American Community Survey. Notes: Data estimates result from a survey, and thus have error margins around them. Data should be considered approximate. Data for only the five largest API group were available. For additional information, please contact the MN State Demographic Center. Race groups include individuals who self-identified as that race alone, as well as that race in combination with one or more races.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2013 American Community Survey. Notes: Data estimates result from a survey, and thus have error margins around them. Data should be considered approximate. For additional information, please contact the MN State Demographic Center. Race groups include individuals who self-identified as that race alone, as well as that race in combination with one or more races.

V. OUR ONGOING PRIORITIES

In 2016, with the our new statute, we continue to focus on prioritizing our policy work. We will continue to advocate, advise, and bridge. We will continue to advocate at the Capitol for legislation that benefit all Minnesotans, including Asian Pacific Minnesotans. We will continue to advise and support the Legislature and the Governor's Office as they seek to govern effectively and efficiently. We will continue to act as a bridge between our communities and legislators, commissioners, and others.

The legislation and projects we plan for this year include the following:

- **Exploited Women and Children Rental Assistance Program Bill.** This bill was introduced during the 2015 session and did not pass despite receiving bi-partisan support. This legislation requests that the state funds subsidized rental vouchers for survivors of domestic violence, sexual trafficking, international abusive marriage and forced marriage who face significant barriers in housing. The Council will re-introduce this bill in the 2016 legislative session as part of its broader advocacy work on affordable housing to meet the needs of vulnerable Minnesotans.
- **Report on Violence Against Asian Pacific Women and Children.** As a result of the Council's legislative work in 2015, the Legislature appropriated to the Department of Health \$200,000 to study the nature, scope, and prevalence of violence against Asian Pacific women and children. The Council will collaborate and provide technical support to the Department of Health, Department of Public Safety, and Department of Human Services as the study unfolds under the supervision of the Working Group. The Council will submit the report findings and recommendations to the Legislature in 2017.
- **Report on Emerging Asian Pacific communities in Minnesota.** Within the last few years, Minnesota has welcomed new refugee and immigrant communities from Asia and the Pacific Islands. This report will provide a brief introduction to, and description of, each community and the challenges they face. The communities we will feature in this report are the Lhotshampa Bhutanese, the Chuukese, the Kurdish, the Karen, and the Karenni.

In addition, we will continue to partner with state agencies and serve on the following councils and committees:

- Governor's Diversity and Inclusion Council, E.O. 15-02
- Minnesota Housing and Finance Agency, Inter-Agency Council on Ending Homelessness, Sr. Advisory Committee
- Department of Human Services, Cultural Ethnic Leadership Council, M.S.256.041
- Department of Health, Center for Health Equity Advisory Committee
- Department of Public Safety, Violent Crime Coordinating Council, M.S. 299.642

Other issues will certainly emerge as the year evolves. We look forward to serving the Asian Pacific community again in 2016.

VI. OUR COUNCIL IN THE MEDIA

The Council recognizes that every community has unique success stories and rich cultural contributions that make Minnesota strong and vibrant. We are proud to celebrate the many unique and rich cultures that make up our Asian Pacific communities. At the same time, the Council also recognizes that each ethnic community has many unique challenges and barriers, things that they may not be proud of and need support to address.

In 2014 and 2015, at the request of our community, the Council took on gender based violence in the Asian Pacific community as a legislative priority.

Our work in our community leads us to believe that international abusive marriage is one of the most prevalent forms of gender-based violence in the Asian Pacific Minnesotan community. This practice involves older men who marry younger, sometimes underage women, from abroad and then eventually bring them into the United States. In most cases, these men are already married. These women and children involved in international abusive marriages are vulnerable; their experiences almost always go unseen by mainstream America and our criminal justice system.

The Council's legislative work on gender-based violence captured an enormous amount of local, national, and international media attention in the last few months due to an unprecedented federal court case that encapsulates the issue. Panyia Vang, 22, using Masha's Law and the PROTECT Act, seeks \$450,000 in damages from an older Hmong American man she alleges raped her at the age of 14 in her native country, Laos.

Several media outlets covered the story and made note of the \$200,000 allocation to the Department of Health from the Legislature for a study on the nature, scope, and prevalence of gender-based violence in the Asian Pacific Minnesotan community. Among them were *KSTP*, *the Pioneer Press*, *the Washington Post*, and *Minnesota Lawyer*.

"It's a complex issue, but we recognize how harmful and dangerous it is," Sia Her, Council executive director, told the *Star Tribune*. **"This is an open secret that everybody knows in the Hmong community... Many elders will say this is an airing of dirty laundry. Or such marriages have always been allowed for men."**

"We can no longer remain silent ... for fear it's going to shed negative light on our community. ... It's time for people to stand up and say we are against this."

– Sia Her, Council's executive director





VII. OUR NEW COUNCIL

Minnesota’s ethnic councils are undergoing dramatic change after legislators passed M.S. 15.0145, which focuses on clarity of purpose, accountability, term limits for board members, and measures to encourage transparency. The three ethnic councils seek to represent Minnesotans of Asian, Latino, and African heritage.

We supported the legislative revision and saw it as increasing the vitality of the ethnic councils while removing the ability of executive directors and board members to concentrate their power. The reorganization is a response to a critical report on the councils from the Office of the Legislative Auditor. Our executive director, Sia Her, spoke about the revisions to the ethnic councils.

What are the main changes to the Councils’ structures?

The board makeup is different now. Before, the three ethnic councils had boards of various sizes. Our Council’s board could have a total of 23 members, of which 19 would be from the community and four from the Legislature. Now all the councils have 15 members, 11 community members appointed by the Governor and four appointed by a bipartisan group of legislative leaders. At least five members on each board must be women.

What was not working previously?

For one, board culture. Under the old statute, board members could seek reappointment and in a sense, serve as long as they wished. Over time, this led to all sorts of challenges within the Council. One of these challenges was little accountability between Council stakeholders. Secondly, at the time I became executive director, many of our board members had been around for years but did not clearly understand the Council’s role and responsibilities. The new statute more sharply defines these duties and reminds the Council to focus on legislative and

administrative actions that will improve the social and economic conditions of Asian Pacific Minnesotans. Term limits, board member duties, and board training mandates were not present in the former enabling statute.

What is a working board?

The new statute describes in detail the duties of the board members in ensuring that the Council delivers on its statutory responsibilities. Subdivision 7 of the new statute specifically says that board members must actively engage with their respective communities and help to carry out activities as the executive director or the Council deems necessary to achieve the statutory mission.

Do board members get any help in understanding their role?

The new statute also mandates that board members attend trainings provided by the Department of Administration. The training is to ensure board members understand their roles, responsibilities, and specific duties.

Has the role of legislators serving on your board changed?

Yes. For one, legislative board members are now voting board members, which wasn’t true before. It was said that some legislators failed to attend board meetings consistently because they may have felt they had no power to influence the debate or the discussions. Although, in my time as executive director, our legislative board members have had a strong attendance record. To ensure that there are some checks and balances within the board, legislative board members now also have the power to vote community members off the board if they see fit.

How has your role changed?

My responsibilities are much clearer now.

Also, executive directors now serve at the pleasure of the Legislative Coordinating Commission (LCC). I believe this is a good idea as it ensures that there is a stronger relationship between the Council and the Legislature (the executive director is now accountable to the LCC rather than just to the board). The role of the LCC is important because in the past, the executive director served under boards that did not necessarily understand the Council’s duties and powers, state government, and the legislative process; the presence of the LCC ensures that both the executive director and the board have an added layer of support.

Does the new statute change your relationship with the governor?

The new enabling statute now affords the executive director the opportunity to advise the governor when it comes to the appointment process. Previously, the board would not allow the executive director to advise the Governor, even when his office sought our advice.

Has the Council board composition changed due to the new statute?

Yes. The five largest ethnic communities are each guaranteed a seat on the Council, but no more than one seat. These communities are the Hmong, Asian Indian, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean. Other members must come from other Asian Pacific ethnic groups.

What do you think of the restructuring?

I have been all for restructuring of the councils. Our board voted, and I testified, in favor of the bill that became our current enabling statute. I believe our Council needed to be changed and we needed legislators to take the actions they did.



VIII. OUR STAFF, COUNCIL MEMBERS, AND FUNCTIONS

STAFF

Sia Her, *Executive Director*

Sia Her has been executive director for almost three years. Before joining the Council, Sia served as Education and Training Department Manager at the Hmong American Partnership and as campaign manager for the successful Saint Paul Public Schools’ “Strong Schools, Strong Communities” levy referendum. She holds a master’s degree in public policy from the Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs and a bachelor’s degree in political science from Macalester College.

Contact: sia.her@state.mn.us

Direct: 651-757-1741

Tenzin Dolkar, *Legislative Liaison/Public Affairs*

Tenzin Dolkar (“Dolkar”) has been with the Council for more than a year and has an exceptional expertise and background in research, community organizing, policy advocacy, and civic engagement. She holds a master’s degree in Social Work from the University of Minnesota and a bachelor’s degree in International Studies from the University of Saint Thomas.

Contact: tenzin.dolkar@state.mn.us

Direct: 651-757-1743

Karina Vang, *Office Manager*

Karina has been with the Council for two years. She has more than a decade of professional experience in providing high-level administrative support to managers and vice presidents within the insurance industry.

Contact: karina.vang@state.mn.us

Direct: 651-757-1740

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Under the Council’s new enabling statute, M.S. 15.0145, the Council now consists of 15 total board members. Eleven are members of the Asian Pacific community appointed by the Governor. Of these, five members must be from each of the five largest ancestry Asian Pacific populations; the rest of the community Council members must be broadly representative of the Asian Pacific community, with no more than one member from each of the state’s many Asian Pacific communities. Four legislative members – two Representatives and two Senators – are chosen by legislative leaders from each of the two major political parties. The Council meets once every other month and as needed.

A community Council member may serve no more than eight non-consecutive years. A legislative Council member may serve no more than eight consecutive years or twelve non-consecutive years on any one council.

GOVERNOR APPOINTEES

| Governor Appointees | Ethnicity | Term Expiring |
|----------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Faamati Aumua Winey | Samoan | Jan 2019 |
| Grace Lee | Korean | Jan 2019 |
| David Maeda | Japanese | Jan 2018 |
| George Thaw Moo | Karen | Jan 2018 |
| Melissa Kwon | Chinese | Jan 2017 |
| Tsewang Ngodup | Tibetan | Jan 2017 |
| A.S. Liyanapathirana | Sri Lankan | Dec 2016 |
| Hoeun Hach | Cambodian | Jan 2016 |
| Mukthar Thakur | Asian Indian | Dec 2016 |
| Tran T. Nhon | Vietnamese | Dec 2016 |
| Hue Danny Lee | Hmong | Jan 2016 |

LEGISLATIVE APPOINTEES

Sen. Fong Hawj (DFL, SD-67, St. Paul)

Sen. Roger Chamberlain (Republican, SD-53, Lino Lakes)

Rep. Carolyn Laine (DFL, 41B, Columbia Heights)

Rep. Rod Hamilton (Republican, 22B, Mountain Lake)

CORE FUNCTIONS

Mission

The Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans (“the Council”) was created by the Minnesota State Legislature in 1985 to advise the Governor and the Legislature on issues pertaining to Asian Pacific Minnesotans; to advocate on behalf of this community on these issues; and to act as a broker between the Asian Pacific community and the rest of Minnesota Society. The Council represents individuals and ethnic groups from over 40 nations.

Vision

Serving as a conduit to state government for Asian Pacific Minnesotans, the Council advises the Governor and the Legislature and, when necessary, recommends bills designed to improve the economic and social conditions of all Asian Pacific Minnesotans.



APPENDIX: RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES

| Lists Receipts | FY 15 |
|---|----------------------|
| General Fund | \$ 394,338.00 |
| | |
| Revenue Funds | |
| Heritage Month Registration Fees | \$ 15,700.80 |
| | |
| | \$ 410,038.80 |
| | |
| Expenditures | |
| Full-Time | \$ 265,446.69 |
| Part-Time | \$ 3,977.81 |
| Over-Time and Premium Pay | \$ 12,623.28 |
| Other Employee Cost | \$ 2,425.00 |
| Space Rental, Maintenance, and Utilities | \$ 20,272.56 |
| Repairs, Alterations and Maintenance | \$ 1,645.45 |
| Printing and Advertising | \$ 8,516.43 |
| Professional/Tech Services Outside Vendor | \$ 46,835.00 |
| Communications | \$ 568.68 |
| Travel and Subsistence—INST | \$ 6,358.63 |
| Supplies | \$ 3,763.01 |
| Equipment-Capital Leases | \$ 1,918.79 |
| Employee Development | \$ 2,160.00 |
| Other Operating Costs | \$ 7,469.10 |
| Statewide Indirect Costs | \$ - |
| Equipment-Non Capital | \$ 953.88 |
| Centralized IT Services | \$ 8,342.87 |
| | |
| Total Expenditures | \$ 393,277.18 |
| | |
| Net Balance | \$ 16,761.62 |
| | |

*“Happy 40th to our Hmong, Vietnamese, Lao, and Cambodian communities in Minnesota. Forty years after the Southeast Asian conflict came to an end; forty years of the story of our valor, resiliency, tears, and triumphs. Let us continue moving forward together as we were meant to:
Out of Many, One.”*

– 2015 Council Board Chair, Tran Nhon



COUNCIL ON ASIAN PACIFIC MINNESOTANS
A STATE AGENCY SINCE 1985

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