



**m** COUNCIL ON  
ASIAN PACIFIC MINNESOTANS  
A STATE AGENCY SINCE 1985



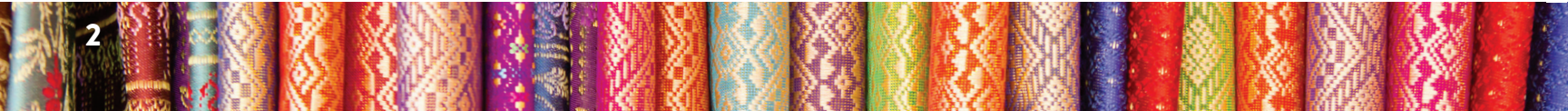
# Where We Are Headed

## 2023 Annual Report

A report to the Legislature as requested by Minn. Stat. § 15.0145, subd. 8

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# Welcome Letter from the Chair



Dear Community,

Welcome to the 2023 annual report presented by the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans! I am honored to address you as the elected Chair of the Council's Board. I was first appointed to the Board by Governor Walz in 2020 as a representative of the Asian Indian community. In my previous Board roles as Treasurer, Vice Chair, and now Chair, my responsibilities have grown to advocate on behalf of the 313,000 Asians and Pacific Islanders in Minnesota. In addition to my role as Chair, I am a prosecutor handling criminal

trials in Ramsey County that include working with victims and witnesses of crimes.

We present this report in the spirit of looking forward to where we are headed. After years of focusing inward to ensure our survival, our community has the strength to come together and move ahead, to forge new paths and pursue new beginnings. I want to take this opportunity to thank those whose shoulders we stood on to get here—the leaders who created spaces that allowed for community-building opportunities we so desperately needed over the past few years. While it is simple to refer to the umbrella of our state's Asian and Pacific Islander (API) community, we know this community in fact consists of more than 45 groups with linguistic, ethnic, geographic, geopolitical, and historical experiences unique to them. However, if we, as API Minnesotans (APMs), exist within 45 silos, we can no longer unite under one unified front, undertaking meaningful systemic change that uplifts and enriches us all.

Our state is undergoing a great deal of change. This brings benefits and risks to us all. The Council is statutorily mandated to maintain a nonpartisan stance while advocating for each of our unique APM communities to ensure that a rising tide lifts all ships. I, along with the Council, look forward to leading by example in joining hands with leaders, movers, and shakers to guarantee we accomplish this goal and uplift every community that falls under our umbrella.

Looking forward, I see a future where APMs are uniformly committed to the common good and eagerly work together to make that happen. As I conclude my welcome, I especially want to thank outgoing Chair Dave Hoang for his leadership, mentorship, guidance, and blessings as he retires from the Board and I begin my time as Chair.

Thank you for joining me to learn about the hard work the Council has undertaken in 2023. We see much work and much reward ahead.

Respectfully,

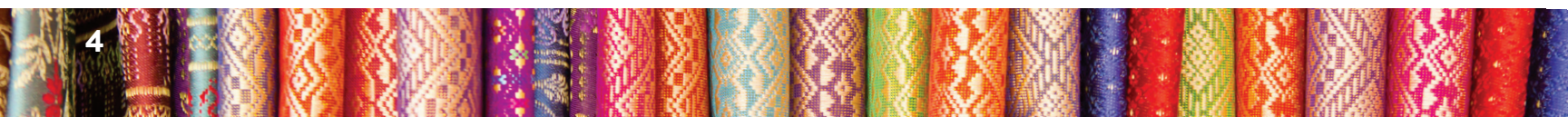
Saraswati Singh





# LEGISLATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS

*The 2023 legislative session was one of the most active and productive in memory, with the Legislature adopting a record \$71.5 billion budget for fiscal years 2024 through 2025. This work was accomplished thanks to an unexpected \$17.5 billion surplus, including unspent funds carried over from the previous biennium, and the first unified control of state government in a decade. These factors allowed a faster pace of action on legislative proposals, even as the Legislature worked until the very end to complete the final touches on the state's budget.*





**Increase Teachers of Color Act – H.F. 320 (Rep. Hassan)/S.F. 619 (Sen. Kunesh) and H.F. 381 (Rep. Kozlowski)/S.F. 267 (Sen. Fateh)**

Since 2017, the Council has served as one of the chief champions of the Increase Teachers of Color Act alongside the other state ethnic councils and the Indian Affairs Council. This year, the Legislature built off past successes and provided significantly increased funding to recruit and retain teachers of color, including \$72.4 million in investments to support teachers of color and students in E12 education and \$5.85 million to support aspiring teachers of color as they pursue

higher education. This year the state codified into law a goal to increase the number of teachers of color. It also took action to reduce restrictive teacher licensing requirements and adopt policies to promote a safe and supportive environment for teachers and students.

The Legislature also continued investments to support the recruitment and retention of aspiring teachers of color. Specifically, \$2 million was dedicated within the Teacher Shortage Loan Repayment Program for aspiring teachers of color, with an additional \$3.85 million appropriated to recruit new teachers in shortage areas.

**English Language Learner Funding – H.F. 22 (Rep. Her)/S.F. 21 (Sen. Oumou Verbeten) and H.F. 1773 (Rep. Clardy)/S.F. 1906 (Sen. Kunesh)**

Pandemic learning loss is a well-recognized consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, impacting students from all walks of life with lasting consequences. One group that bore the worst impact was English language learner (ELL) students, who were already underserved prior to the pandemic. The Council supported multiple proposals to address this funding gap, including a proposal that was incorporated

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into the House omnibus E12 Education bill (H.F. 2497, Rep. Youakim/S.F. 2684, Sen. Kunesh) and passed by the full House to gradually increase English learner funding each year to more than double the current amount allocated per student by 2027. Additionally, this new legislation will establish new professional development opportunities for teachers of English learners and new programmatic opportunities for English learners.

**Anti-Asian Hate – H.F. 181 (Rep. Vang)/S.F. 691 (Sen. Mohamed) and H.F. 368 (Rep. Hanson)/S.F. 366 (Sen. Boldon)**

Since the onset of the pandemic, the Council has supported comprehensive efforts to address the dramatic rise in acts of anti-Asian hate, recognizing that these incidents occur not just in the public safety sphere, but in schools, businesses, and nearly every aspect of daily life. The Council continued to support multiple proposals to address discrimination, including proposals to provide resources to address discriminatory and hateful behavior in schools (H.F. 368, Rep. Hanson/S.F. 366, Sen. Boldon) and increase measures for law enforcement to track, report, respond to, and

prevent acts of hate, bias, and discrimination (H.F. 181, Rep. Vang/S.F. 691, Sen. Mohamed). Even as these important policies are adopted and implemented, the Council will continue to focus on preventing hateful acts and providing our community members with the safety and sense of belonging that they deserve.

**Ethnic Studies Curriculum – H.F. 1502 (Rep. Sencer-Mura)/S.F. 1476 (Sen. Kunesh)**

As the demographic composition of Minnesota's student body changes, it is important for curriculum options to adapt correspondingly to changes in our communities. This session saw the passage of a bill requiring the availability of ethnic studies courses in all high schools by 2026. The Council supported this proposal, which was adopted in the omnibus Education bill, as a means to both improve educational opportunities and outcomes of Minnesota's diversifying student body and also to promote civic participation by future leaders who can more fully see themselves in the history of our state and communities through curriculum that reflects their community's background and contributions.

**Legacy and Cultural Preservation – H.F. 1999 (Rep. Lillie)/S.F. 1682 (Sen. Hawj)**

This legislative session saw significant investments made to preserve and celebrate the cultural legacy of diverse communities. This included over \$2 million directly appropriated to API-led organizations, including \$50,000 over the biennium to the Tibetan American Foundation of Minnesota for cultural preservation (H.F. 3041, Rep. Sencer-Mura/S.F. 2803, Sen. Kunesh), \$450,000 for Phase II construction at the Changsha Friendship Garden (H.F. 2977, Rep. L. Lee/S.F. 2875, Sen. Pha), \$300,000 for the Hmong Cultural Center (H.F. 709, Rep. Xiong/S.F. 533, Sen. Pappas), and \$600,000 over the biennium for grants to preserve Hmong culture. These new appropriations were made in addition to broader, competitive funding for cultural and civic purposes totaling more than \$18 million. These investments will contribute to the understanding of our communities across the state by promoting the preservation of our cultural, linguistic, and historical uniqueness.





**Workforce Development and Supporting Nonprofits – H.F. 3028 (Rep. Hassan)/S.F. 3035 (Sen. Champion)**

Statewide, community-based nonprofits often provide frontline assistance to help meet community needs. Once again, the Council continued to take an active role in supporting and providing advice to our nonprofits that provide important workforce development programs. Several direct appropriations that came out of this session included \$2 million for Hmong American Partnership, \$1 million for the Hmong Chamber of Commerce, \$2 million to continue the Southeast Asian community development grant program, and \$1 million for the Asian Economic Development Association. Additionally, another \$2 million was provided to Propel Nonprofits to make capacity-building grants to smaller organizations.

The Council also assisted with convening stakeholders throughout the session to improve language to permanently establish the Office of New Americans within the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), which will connect immigrants of all backgrounds with employers throughout

the state. This office will serve immigrants arriving in Minnesota from all backgrounds, and the ethnic councils will serve in an advisory capacity for our constituent communities.

**Council Budget – H.F. 1830 (Rep. Klevorn)/S.F. 1426 (Sen. Murphy)**

The Council received an 18% increase in its base appropriation during the 2023 session. While this increase provided much-needed support for the Council’s existing operations, the Legislature chose not to adopt a provision included in the Senate’s position to increase the Council’s staff by one to a total of 5 FTEs. As a result of this decision by the Legislature, there is now a larger-than-ever-before disparity between our Council’s budget and the other two ethnic councils that serve similarly sized populations. Closing the parity gap between the ethnic councils has been a longstanding area of concern for our Council and our communities, and we look forward to continuing to work with the Governor and the Legislature to address this continuing area of concern.

As evidenced in the pages of this report, the work we do at the Capitol cannot be the

only work we do throughout the year. That is why we proactively reach out to community leaders, legislative leaders, judicial leaders, and constitutional officers throughout the year to ensure our community has access to its government and is aware of the situations and factors that are affecting them. As we have seen over the last few years, waiting to engage our community in shared goals or to inform our government of the challenges faced by our community until dangerous scenarios arise is not an option. Our priorities don’t always align with legislative leaders and their calendars, but this is the reality of advocacy.

Looking ahead, the 2024 session will be focused primarily on bonding and policy issues following the adoption of the state budget in 2023. With the Legislature facing a smaller projected surplus of \$2.4 billion for the current biennium, the Council intends to focus its legislative work on the priorities identified in the Council’s 2022 Community Priorities Survey and will continue its work to ensure the voices of all our communities are heard, understood, and reflected in state government’s decisions.



# Research Achievements

2023 represented a time of multitudinous changes for the Council, impacting our research capacity more than any other arena. The departure of the Council's long-time research director paused the Council's standard timeline of progress on several existing and unique research projects. Despite this, we are proud to report on the Council's impact this year both with and without the monumental contributions of our former team member.

## Community Priorities Survey Report

At the beginning of each legislative biennium, the Council conducts a Community Priorities Survey to identify the policy issues of greatest concern to the APM population. The results of the survey are used to inform the Council's Legislative Agenda for the subsequent biennium. The survey was designed and administered online and at community events by Council research staff, and survey design, content, and dissemination were developed using previous biennial survey responses. The survey is used in addition to reviewing the Council's prior legislative work, evaluating the needs of Asian Pacific communities through legislative listening sessions, and discussions between the Council's Board, staff, community leaders, and community members.

The 2022 Community Priorities Survey informed the Council's 2023-2024 Legislative Agenda, including distilling community experiences into 5 legislative priorities. A report on the survey's scope, methodology, and results can be found in full on the Council's website.

## Highlights from community conversations that supplemented the legislative priorities survey

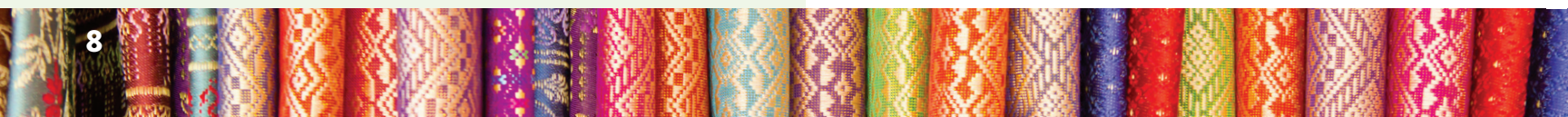
In 2022, the Council supplemented findings from the Community Priorities Survey with a series of targeted conversations with community leaders to enhance our understanding of the most critical issues facing community members across the state. To provide more nuanced perspectives on the needs and priorities of harder-to-reach communities, we extended invitations to targeted communities. These conversations allowed the Council to update community leaders on the latest happenings in state government to prepare them for their own advocacy during the new biennium. Topics discussed included healthcare, housing, employment, and public safety, and highlighted both areas of consensus and difference between our diverse communities.

The Council plans to continue to use listening sessions as an important complement to its research to inform and advocate on behalf of our diverse communities.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



*Events are the heart and soul of Minnesota's API communities. In the past several years, community events and celebrations have become the new Times Square—opportunities to see, be seen, connect within and across ethnic enclaves and cultures, and celebrate the highs and lows of our shared existence in this world. Particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic hit and shuttered our celebrations for many months, these events demonstrate the degree to which our communities are flourishing. One need look no further than an APM festival or celebration to see a snapshot of the diversity, vitality, and character found within our great state. This is a sample of the signature Council events and other community-hosted events the Council hosted or supported this year.*







## Council-Sponsored Events

### API Day at the Capitol

In April, the Council and API-led nonprofit organizations co-hosted the 2023 API Day at the Capitol. API Day is an annual Council event designed to bring together Minnesotans of API descent to rally together, increase their knowledge of the state policymaking process, and directly connect with legislators about the issues that matter most to them. This year's API Day at the Capitol centered around the theme of Moving Forward in recognition of our community's collective ability to move out of survival mode in a post-COVID world and continue to engage in the process of policymaking at the state level.

Each year, API Day at the Capitol features some of the most prominent community and political figures to guide our state. This year, speakers included Governor Tim Walz, Major General Shawn Manke, 2022 Minnesota Teacher of the Year Sarah Lancaster, Rep. Samantha Sencer-Mura, and SEWA Co-Executive Director Mubina Qureshi. More than 400 community members attended. This gathering included leaders from our culturally and linguistically diverse communities and nonprofit organizations such as Vietnamese Social Services, Hmong 18 Council, Karen Organization of Minnesota, Tibetan American Foundation of Minnesota, and others.

### 190th Anniversary Recognition Ceremony

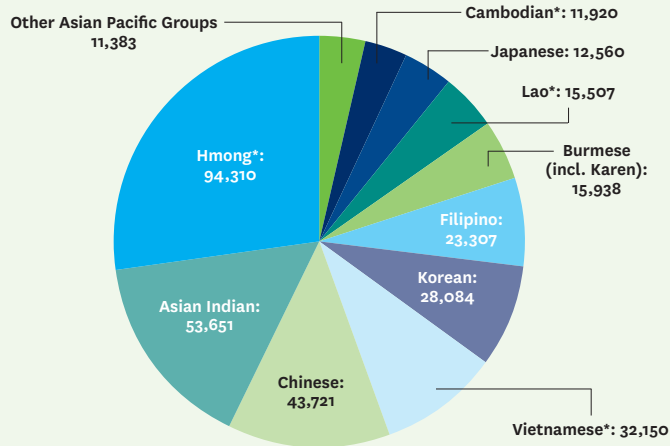
In partnership with the Thai Cultural Council of Minnesota and the Minnesota Humanities Center, the Council hosted a reception at the Capitol to welcome Thailand's Ambassador, the Honorable Tanee Sangrat, to Minnesota and to celebrate the 190th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the United States and Thailand. The program included a blessing dance and remarks from Council Chair Saraswati Singh, Humanities Center CEO Kevin Lindsey, Thailand's Ambassador Sangrat, and Wat Promwachirayan President Dee Noree. The Council was honored to be joined by the Minnesota National Guard and

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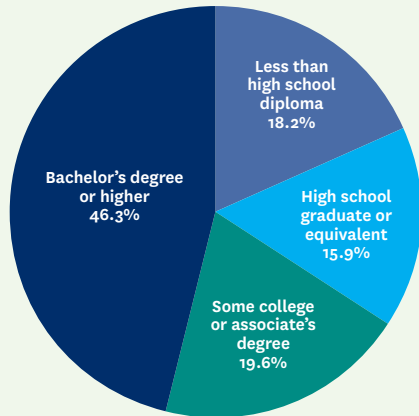
# Total Population of Asian Pacific Minnesotans: 313,223<sup>1</sup>

## I. POPULATION, BY COMMUNITY.<sup>1</sup>

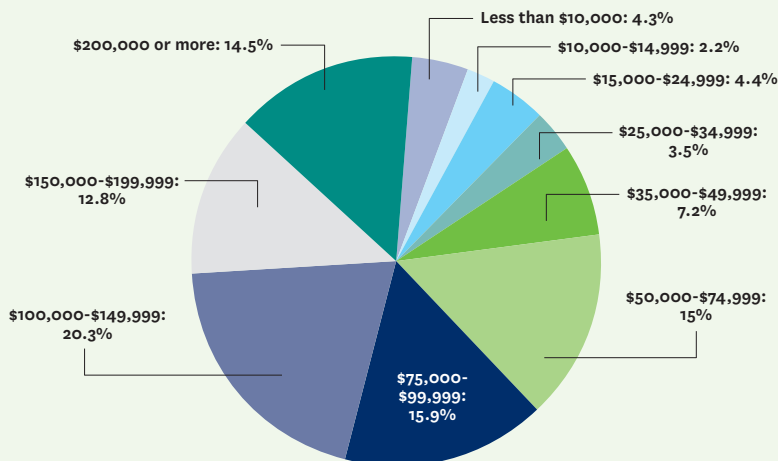


\*Designates refugee-experienced communities inclusive to some other Asian Pacific ethnic groups. Total for the refugee-experienced community is 159,092.

## II. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, ADULTS OVER AGE 25.<sup>1</sup>



## III. HOUSEHOLD INCOME, IN 2020 DOLLARS.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> US Census 2022, American Community Survey 2022, and MN Compass Data 2022

## INTERESTING FACTS

- **Over 54%** of Minnesota's API population is from refugee-experienced communities.
- **72%** of Minnesota's API population are age 44 or younger. For the state as a whole, **58%** of Minnesotans are age 44 or younger.

Sources: US Census, 2020; American Community Survey, 2022; MN Compass, 2022.



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Hmong American Partnership at the event.

### Songkran Gala and Festival

The Council joined the Thai Cultural Council of Minnesota and Watt Prom to help organize the 2023 Songkran gala at the Union Depot as well as the 2-day Songkran Festival held on the Capitol lawn. Council staff assisted in planning and executing these events, welcoming several high-profile local and international guests including St. Louis Park Mayor Jake Spano, Ambassador Tanee Sangrat, Thai Cultural Council Executive Director Yin Muangmode, and Muay Thai kickboxing legend Buakaw Banchamek from Thailand. The Songkran Festival brought an estimated 30,000 visitors from Minnesota and neighboring states to the Capitol over Memorial Day weekend.

### Cambodian Heritage Day

This year the Council was excited and energized to partner with Minnesota's Cambodian community



and the Minnesota Humanities Center to organize and execute the state's first-ever Cambodian Heritage Day celebration. With support from the Humanities Center made possible through funding from Minnesota's Legacy Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund, the event celebrated the rich heritage of Cambodian Minnesotans—an often-overlooked community when compared to larger, established APM communities—through performances, music, food, art, and speakers. The celebration boasted an unexpected turnout of approximately 1,000 attendees. The success of this first annual Heritage Day means that Minnesota's Cambodian community looks forward to continuing the momentum of this event into the future, promising a greater understanding of their role in our state's unfolding narrative.

### **Community-Hosted Events**

In addition to dozens of events sponsored, co-sponsored, and hosted by the Council, scores of other API-centered events take place across the state every year. Among these are high-profile events organized by our impressive APM communities and supported in varying ways with Council expertise, staffing, and logistics. The following events are just a taste of APM-facing events supported by the Council in 2023.

- **Minnesota National Guard Breakfast with Southeast Asian Veterans of the Vietnam War**  
 In a first-of-its-kind event, the Minnesota National Guard hosted a private breakfast for veterans from the Lao, Vietnamese, and Hmong communities who fought alongside U.S. servicemembers during the Southeast Asian conflict. Colonel James Cleet, Commander of the 133rd Airlift Wing, along with members of the Army and Air National Guard honored these

veterans whose service during the conflict has largely been overlooked. Held at Fort Snelling, the breakfast also included a tour of the C-130 aircraft. For the Southeast Asian veterans, this aircraft is a poignant reminder of their valor and sacrifices.

- **Governor Walz's Visit with Temple Munisotaram**  
 This year, Governor Walz became the first sitting governor to visit the nation's largest Cambodian Buddhist Temple—Wat Munisotaram (Temple Minnesota)—in Hampton, Minnesota since it was consecrated in 2007. The formal program included an address by Governor Walz, followed by the presentation of gifts from the Temple's head monk, the Venerable Moeng Sang. The Governor then joined community leaders in an alms-offering ceremony during which they give rice to temple monks. Thereafter, Governor Walz and community leaders toured the land surrounding the temple.



# Farewell Letter from Former Chair, Dave Hoang

Dear Friends,

This is perhaps the most challenging letter I will write to you in my tenure on the Council's Board—because per the enabling statute that outlines the operations of the state's ethnic councils, I have served for the maximum number of years possible and will now retire from the Board.

The past 8 years have not only comprised the entirety of my tenure on the Board, but have historically been some of the most difficult years in the history of the Council. From navigating the restructuring of the ethnic councils, to efforts to repeal the All Kids Count Act (data disaggregation), to helping our community survive during the COVID-19 pandemic, to now ensuring that our elected and appointed officials truly understand the Council's statutory requirements and limitations, there has never been a point at which the Board members could take their feet off the gas pedal. However, this urgency and passion demonstrated by my colleagues indicates the strength of the moral compass that guides our Council's work on behalf of our state's diverse and vibrant APM community.

Truthfully, this is a difficult time for me to step down from the Council. As a member of Minnesota's small but strong Vietnamese community, I am excited about the conversations the Council is having regarding commemorating the 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War and the beginning of the Vietnamese diaspora. This milestone is important not only because of the sacrifices made during the war, but because of how extreme those sacrifices were. And as we have seen with veterans of countless wars before, that sacrifice can all too easily slip into obscurity if the surviving community lacks a cohesive voice, or if that sacrifice is no longer remembered by the society that benefited from it. Politically, the Vietnamese community in Minnesota is all but invisible. I applaud the work the Council does to uplift our state's Vietnamese community, to showcase the sacrifices it has made to survive, and to clear a path for our community to continue to be a player in the future of our state.

However, as I bid farewell to the Council, I am incredibly assured by the competency this small but mighty agency boasts. The Board represents not just the vast diversity found within our APM community, but some of our state's best and brightest minds who have agreed to come together and guide this Council. I am deeply convinced that the Council's future will be one of continued integrity, ingenuity, compassion, strength, and longevity—for as the Council moves closer to the 40th anniversary of its founding in 1985, our state grows ever more diverse, and its residents represent ever more lived experience requiring the Council's nuanced, expert touch.

The Council's enabling charge should energize every one of us APMs to strive for a future of greater representation, understanding, empowerment, and peace. It has been my utmost pleasure to serve the community in this capacity since 2015. With respect, excitement, and anticipation, I move into 2024 as a member of the general public—just like the other 313,000 APMs whose interests the Council diligently strives to advance.

Yours,

*Dave Hoang*  
Dave Hoang



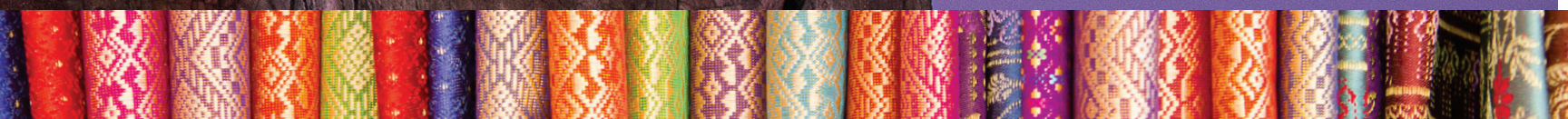


EXCLUSIVE:

# Council 10-year Retrospective

*Having passed the 10th year mark as executive director of the Council, Sia Her has stories to tell. Hired in 2013, Ms. Her quickly learned that this role requires energy, empathy, experience, endless patience, and an exquisite understanding of the legislation that calls the Council into existence.*

*The following is a retrospective interview with Ms. Her about the 10 years she's served, guided, and grown the Council. For readers who are new to the Council's work, this interview provides an overview of major accomplishments and challenges faced by the Council as outlined in previous annual reports.*





**What has changed about the community since you were hired as executive director?**

First and foremost, community expectations have changed in the past 10 years. The community has become much more activist-oriented, which brings benefits and detriments: although community members are more likely to respond to our requests to show up at the Capitol and engage with legislators, at times these same community members' expectations do not fall within the purview of a state agency.

Additionally, the political environment has become much more polarized than ever before. For a nonpartisan agency such as ours that serves more than 40 unique APM communities, there are inevitably people for whom this nonpartisan status can feel very partisan in certain contexts. This has, at times, left policy makers and community members wanting more from the Council—even following what we at the Council consider to be great accomplishments.

**What has changed about the Legislature/executive branch of state government?**

For one, there have been seasons of political control on both sides. Every biennium, one or the other party is in the majority; that changes how we talk about our priorities and requires us to prepare our communities to engage in a manner that—to the greatest extent possible—does not alienate either of the parties.

Second, the Legislature has become more diverse. For example, when I came on board, Sen. Hawj was the sole elected official of Asian ancestry in the Legislature. Since then, we've added 9 more legislators of Asian ancestry.

Third, the executive branch has been DFL-controlled in all the

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2013 Sakya Trizin Dinner



2014 Leadership Awards Dinner



2014 Session Recap



2017 API Day



2015 Community Forum



2016 Session Recap

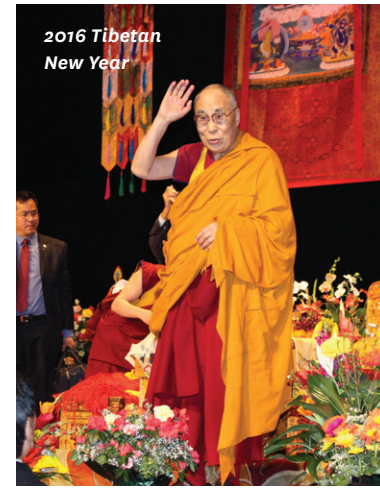


2016 Leadership Awards Dinner





2014 HHTDL  
(His Holiness the  
14th Dalai Lama)  
Reception



2016 Tibetan  
New Year



2015 Vietnamese  
New Year



2015 Leadership  
Awards Dinner



2017 API Day



2015 Vietnamese  
New Year



2015 Session Recap

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years I've held this role. That has influenced countless decisions within state government that have allowed the Council to carry out its statutory duties in unanticipated ways.

I should also add that we've seen some of the fiercest advocates for the Council retire from the Legislature over the past decade. These advocates championed the statutory charge that the ethnic councils remain nonpartisan and positioned the councils to make decisions in the interest of the common good, as opposed to the interest of the party in control and/or large communities with more political sway. The work of the councils

is complicated enough by the very essence of who their constituents are—undermining the statutory charge of a state agency such as ours only serves to muddle the important work that must take place.

**In reflecting on the past decade, what moments or accomplishments are you most proud of?**

There are so many to choose from—choosing just a few key accomplishments from the past 10 years of the Council's monumental work is truly a challenge!

- I'm proud of the breadth and depth of relationships we have established with leaders in our very diverse communities across the state. We can't get people to the Capitol or to enter into conversations with us about business and education concerns if we're not in their communities, engaging with them, and thereby demonstrating that we are sincere in our desire to understand their realities. Policy advocacy is the tip of the iceberg, but the other 85% of the iceberg is community engagement.

- I'm proud of our track record of maintaining focus on communities that have historically





*“I’m proud of the breadth and depth of relationships we have established with leaders in our very diverse communities across the state.”*

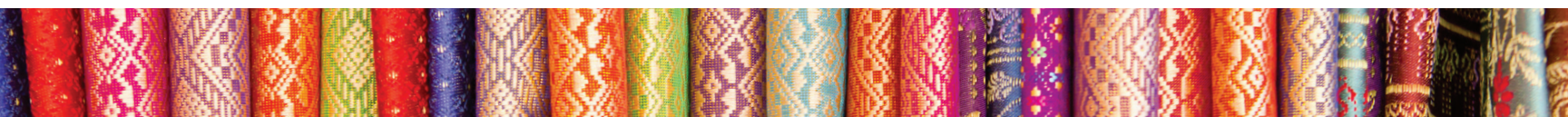


been absent from government eyes—whether these are ancestry groups that have remained largely invisible to politicians due to their small sizes, or ancestry groups that have been lost amidst the model minority expectations of Asian Americans. We have been able to achieve this focus by frequently and consistently being present in our various APM communities, by acting on information community leaders have entrusted us with, and by producing quality research and policy work in a manner that represents the best of and reflects the needs of our communities.

- I’m proud that the Council has not shied away from any duty. Our ability to address issues and government leaders at every level—from volunteer community leaders up to ambassadors—has been a privilege and an honor. Additionally, during my tenure, the Council has repeatedly been required to strike the balance between telling legislators what they want to hear versus telling them what they need to hear. The challenge for us is that—because of the incredible diversity of our APM communities—we frequently have advice that legislators may not understand or want to hear.

- I’m proud of the working relationships the Council has with executive branch agencies, such as the Department of Public Safety, the Department of Education, DEED, and so on. Our work together allows all of us to be better positioned to succeed in serving Minnesotans, and therefore promotes healthier, more robust communities.

- I’m proud of several pieces of legislation we’ve helped pass on one of the most complex issues facing our community: violence against Asian Pacific women and children. These successful legislative





initiatives include the Working Group on Violence Against Asian Pacific Women and Girls bill (passed in 2015), the Exploited Families Rental Assistance Pilot Program bill (passed in 2016), and the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention Pilot Program bill (passed in 2017).

- I'm proud of the level of legitimacy, competency, and credibility our office has. My team and I have worked tirelessly to embody the ethics and integrity set forth in our enabling statute, and I believe others have come to expect as much from our office.
- I'm proud to have had the opportunity to redefine what an ethnic council can do. What we do is so diverse: on a given day we may be asked to write a letter of reference, compile an agenda for a visiting dignitary, liaise with law enforcement on issues of public safety, host community conversations on incredibly complex issues such as international trade, advise the Governor on cultural matters such as funeral practices, and so on. The nature of the work we do on any given day is fascinating; it expands our imagination of what an ethnic council could be.

#### **What imagery do you think best describes the past 10 years at the Council?**

The imagery that comes to my mind regarding the Council's work is an iceberg. What the public sees—community events, floor testimony during legislative sessions, even this annual report—doesn't come close to accurately reflecting the complexity, conversations, compassion, or anticipation that it takes to successfully position this Council to meet the needs of our community and the legislative and executive branches of state government.

#### **Public service can be unforgiving and unappreciated. What keeps you going?**

I'm motivated by the trust that community members have in me—both as a daughter of the community and as a person who happens to wear the hat of the executive director. When you come from a refugee-experienced community, you feel a deep sense of loyalty to the most vulnerable. If anyone knows what it's like to have gotten the short end of the stick in life, it's people who have known life as refugees. That's my baseline for how I deliver on my responsibilities as executive director—I always think about the dignity of those most vulnerable among us.

# Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Community,



From the perspective of a member of our APM community, this year was a mixed bag. When test scores were released this summer, we saw significant gaps between the achievement scores of APM students compared to other students. We also continue to maintain vigilance regarding instances of Asian hate in our community. And considering that the state began the year with the largest budget surplus in history, we are cautiously optimistic yet attentive to how those funds are being implemented.

The event perhaps most immediately impactful to my role as the executive director was the departure of our long-time research director, Anjuli Cameron. Anjuli served as a team member and my right hand for 7 years. Her thoughtful approach to her work, her research expertise, and her breadth and depth of knowledge about our communities were invaluable to our small team. I have felt her absence acutely. Although we will move forward to fill her role and her shoes, and even while she continues her work parallel to the Council at the helm of one of our community nonprofits, Anjuli has left an indelible imprint on the Council. I thank her for her steadfast companionship during the most difficult years of my tenure and look forward to continuing our work with her in pursuit of a more vibrant community and state.

Earlier in this report, we were forthright in highlighting that our Council received an 18% increase in our base budget. However, the goodwill intended with this increase dissipates when contextualized with the Council's pre-existing status as the lowest-funded ethnic council, followed by significantly larger budgetary increases allotted to the state's other ethnic councils which serve populations of comparable size during the 2023 legislative session. This said, I am pleased to share that since the conclusion of the session, and in consultation with the Governor's office, the Council has been invited to submit a supplemental budget request to bring our budget closer to parity with the other ethnic councils. We look forward to working with Governor Walz and legislative leaders on this request.

We conclude 2023 by looking ahead to several exciting benchmarks. We look forward to filling our open research director position, to the 2024 Songkran Festival which is anticipated to be bigger and better than ever, to continuing to celebrate Cambodian Heritage Day, to hosting the next Leadership Awards Dinner, and finally, to moving one year closer to the monumental 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War in 2025. The end of the war meant the beginning of the Hmong, Lao, Cambodian, and Vietnamese American experiences. The founding charge of the Council positions us, and in fact expects us, to uplift the stories of our diverse communities—including those that are often not told.

Though our challenges are at times formidable, we stand at the precipice of 2024 and look at where we are headed with energy, commitment, and perseverance. Despite the ups and downs in our work and in our lives, we at the Council know that our work has and will continue to make a difference in the lives of APMs by influencing the trajectory of our state. I look forward to continuing to do my part to help build our community's capacity to engage with and hold its government accountable.

As always, I encourage you to reach out to me with your aspirations, concerns, and ideas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sia Her".

Sia Her



# COUNCIL BOARD MEMBERS

## Minn. Stat. § 15.0145

### Subd. 2. Membership.

- (a) Each council has 15 voting members. Eleven members of each council are public members appointed by the governor. Four members of each council are legislators.
- (b) The governor shall appoint 11 members of each council as follows:
  - (b)(3) the Council on Asian-Pacific

Minnesotans must include one member from each of the five ancestries with the state's highest percentages of Asian-Pacific populations, as determined by the state demographer. The other six members must be broadly representative of the rest of the Asian-Pacific population, with no more than one council member from any one ancestry.

The council must include at least five women. For purposes of this clause, ancestry refers to heritage that is commonly accepted in Minnesota as a unique population.

- (c) Four legislators are voting members of each council. The speaker of the house and the house minority leader shall each appoint one member to each council. The

Subcommittee on Committees of the senate Committee on Rules and Administration shall appoint one member of the majority caucus and one member of the minority caucus to each council.

- (d) The governor may appoint a commissioner of a state agency or a designee of that commissioner to serve as an ex-officio, nonvoting member of a council.



**SARASWATI SINGH**  
*Chair*  
Term start: 5/2020  
Term expire: 1/2024  
Ancestry representing:  
Asian Indian



**CHANG WANG**  
*Vice Chair*  
Term start: 1/2021  
Term expire: 1/2025  
Ancestry representing:  
Chinese



**DAVE HOANG**  
*Treasurer*  
Term start: 5/2020  
Term expire: 1/2024  
Ancestry representing:  
Polynesian/Samoan



**NGAWANG DOLKER**  
Term start: 6/2021  
Term expire: 1/2025  
Ancestry representing:  
Tibetan



**ELIZABETH ECKMAN**  
Term start: 1/2023  
Term expire: 1/2027  
Ancestry representing:  
Korean



**KHENDUM GYABAK**  
Term start: 6/2021  
Term expire: 1/2025  
Ancestry representing:  
Bhutanese



**PIA PUENTESPINA**  
Term start: 6/2023  
Term expire: 1/2027  
Ancestry representing:  
Filipino



**BRYAN THAO WORRA**  
Term start: 2/2022  
Term expire: 1/2026  
Ancestry representing:  
Lao



**MA XIONG**  
Term start: 12/2020  
Term expire: 1/2024  
Ancestry representing:  
Hmong



**HSAKUSHEE DAISY ZAN**  
Term start: 6/2021  
Term expire: 1/2025  
Ancestry representing:  
Karen



**TO BE APPOINTED**  
Term start: TBD  
Term expire: TBD  
Ancestry representing:  
Community At-Large



**SENATOR ERIC PRATT (R)**  
Term start: 3/2019  
Term expire: N/A  
Caucus representing:  
Senate GOP



**SENATOR SUSAN PHA (D)**  
Term start: 3/2023  
Term expire: N/A  
Caucus representing:  
Senate DFL



**REPRESENTATIVE JIM NASH (R)**  
Term start: 2/2021  
Term expire: N/A  
Caucus representing:  
House GOP



**REPRESENTATIVE LIZ LEE (D)**  
Term start: 1/2023  
Term expire: N/A  
Caucus representing:  
House DFL

# Council Staff Members

## Subd. 7. Duties of council members.

A council member shall:

- (1) attend and participate in scheduled meetings and be prepared by reviewing meeting notes;
- (2) maintain and build communication with the community represented;
- (3) collaborate with the council and executive director in carrying out the council's duties; and
- (4) participate in activities the council or executive director deem appropriate and necessary to facilitate the goals and duties of the council.



**Sia Her, Executive Director**

Sia has been executive director of the Council since 2013. Before joining the Council, Sia served as campaign manager for the successful Saint Paul Public Schools' "Strong Schools, Strong Communities" levy referendum. She has 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. *Sia manages all operations and projects, and develops and implements strategic and well-informed plans to ensure that the Council delivers on its statutory duties. Contact: [sia.her@state.mn.us](mailto:sia.her@state.mn.us)*



**Mai Tong Vang, Office Manager/Executive Assistant**

Mai Tong joined the Council in June of 2021. Prior to her work at the Council, Mai Tong's past experiences include working with community-based organizations on a number of critical issues, including providing support to survivors of gender-based violence and producing community-centered artwork and messages. She has been in the professional creative field for over a decade since completing her degree in visual communication. *Mai Tong manages the office of the Council, administers and monitors the Council budget, assists with supervision of the Council's staff, and performs and coordinates numerous administrative functions as the assistant to the executive director. Contact: [maitong.vang@state.mn.us](mailto:maitong.vang@state.mn.us)*



**Andrew Morris, Legislative and Public Affairs Liaison**

Andrew (Andy) Morris joined the Council in December 2019. A native of Minneapolis, Andy has lived and worked in Minneapolis; Washington, DC; and Tokyo, Japan across the non-profit, higher education, government, and private sectors in international exchange, government affairs, and policy analysis roles prior to joining the Council. He has a master's degree in Asian studies from Georgetown University's Graduate School of Foreign Service and a bachelor's degree in Asian studies from Saint John's University. *Andrew educates, informs, and engages Asian Pacific Minnesotans on issues of importance to these communities; assists in developing the Council's policy positions and legislative initiatives; and maintains close connection between the Council and its stakeholders. Contact: [andrew.morris@mn.state.us](mailto:andrew.morris@mn.state.us)*






FY23 RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES	
<b>General Fund</b>	<b>\$ 523,219.59</b>
<b>Revenue Funds</b>	
(Annual Dinner Registration Fees)	\$ 0.00
	<b>\$ 523,219.59</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>	
Full-Time	\$ 391,609.49
Part-Time	\$ 0.00
Over-Time and Premium Pay	\$ 14,662.06
Other Employee Cost	\$ 497.23
Space Rental, Maintenance, and Utility	\$ 22,577.84
Repairs, Alterations, and Maintenance	\$ 1,248.44
Printing and Advertising	\$ 9,139.43
Prof/Tech Services Outside Vendor	\$ 36,799.00
Communications	\$ 1,174.57
Travel and Subsistence-INST	\$ 2,307.81
Travel and Subsistence-Out of State	\$ 0.00
Supplies	\$ 7,669.67
Employee Development	\$ 1,990.00
Other Operating Costs	\$ 9,934.48
Equipment-Non Capital	\$ 0.00
Equipment	\$ 2,044.89
Centralized IT Services	\$ 17,689.97
Agency-Specific MNIT Services	\$ 2,444.86
State Agency Other Services	\$ 0.00
Annual Dinner Expenses	\$ 0.00
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$ 521,789.74</b>
<b>Net Balance</b>	<b>\$ 1,429.85</b>



## **STATUTORY PURPOSE**

The Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans was created by the Minnesota Legislature in 1985 to advise the governor and the legislators on issues pertaining to Asian Pacific Minnesotans, to advocate on behalf of this community, and to act as a broker between the Asian Pacific community and the rest of Minnesota. Minn. Stat. § 15.0145 provides the legal authority for the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans, a non-cabinet executive branch state agency.



“I am deeply convinced that the Council’s future will be one of continued integrity, ingenuity, compassion, strength, and longevity – for as the Council moves closer to the 40th anniversary of its founding in 1985, our state grows ever more diverse, and its residents represent ever more lived experience requiring the Council’s nuanced, expert touch.”

**DAVE HOANG, OUTGOING BOARD CHAIR AND 8-YEAR MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL’S BOARD**



**mi** COUNCIL ON  
ASIAN PACIFIC MINNESOTANS

A STATE AGENCY SINCE 1985

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PHONE 651.757.1740 • CAPM@STATE.MN.US • WWW.MN.GOV/CAPM • @CAPMNews



# 2023-2024 Biennial Legislative Agenda

Pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 15.0145, the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans is a state agency created to advise the Legislature and the Governor on issues of importance to Asian Pacific Minnesotans, advocate on behalf of this community on these issues, and serve as a bridge between state government and Minnesotans of Asian and Pacific Islander ancestries.

## Priority Issues\*

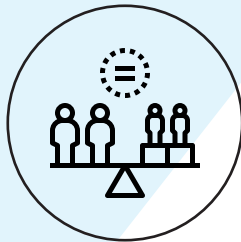
*The Council will actively track and pursue legislation in the following areas:*



**MENTAL HEALTH  
AND/OR  
SUBSTANCE ABUSE**



**HIGHER  
EDUCATION**



**EQUITY**



**ACHIEVEMENT  
GAP**



**HEALTHCARE  
ACCESS**

## Ongoing Positions

*In addition to the above legislative priorities derived from community input, the Council will actively advocate for legislation that achieves the following:*

- Programs and services that are respectful of and responsive to the linguistically and culturally diverse communities of Minnesota, including Asian Pacific Minnesotans.
- Collection of disaggregated data to better inform policymaking on issues of importance to Asian Pacific Minnesotans.
- Increased understanding of violence against Minnesota's Asian Pacific women and children.

\*These issues were identified as high priorities by participants of the 2022 Legislative Priorities Survey.

Approved by the Board on November 17, 2022

# Strategic Plan

## “Shaping Our Shared Future”

### Mission

The Council works toward economic, social, legal, and political equality for Minnesotans of Asian and Pacific Islander (API) heritage.

### Goals

1. Minnesota’s API communities benefit from the Council’s work. *The Council is charged with advocating on behalf of Minnesota’s API communities, so the Council’s decisions and actions must meaningfully contribute to their well-being.* Key strategies for this goal include the following:
  - A. Advocate for the needs of API communities.
  - B. Engage with diverse API communities, from newly arrived to long established, to understand their evolving needs.
  - C. Build and maintain strong and diverse partnerships.
2. Minnesota’s API communities trust the Council. *A key function of the Council is as a liaison between state government and Minnesota’s API communities, which requires mutual trust.* Key strategies for this goal include the following:
  - A. Participate strategically in community settings.
  - B. Build intentional and relevant partnerships.
  - C. Actively engage with diverse API communities.
3. The Council is an agent of change in State government. *As an advisory body to the Legislature and the Governor, the Council is uniquely positioned to collaboratively shape public policy.* Key strategies for this goal include the following:
  - A. Build API communities’ capacity to inform and influence public policy.
  - B. Help policy makers understand the nature of issues facing Minnesota’s API communities.
  - C. Broaden and deepen the Council’s ability to successfully influence public policy.
4. The Council leads dynamically and effectively. *Minnesota’s API community is diverse across educational, economic, and ethnic boundaries. In response, the Council must practice adaptive and community-centered leadership.* Key strategies for this goal include the following:
  - A. Anticipate emerging trends and issues, and lead relevant public policy initiatives.
  - B. Actively build community leadership.
  - C. Ensure an inclusive and vibrant Council culture.
  - D. Enhance Council infrastructure to improve the Council’s capacity to carry out its mission.

*Adopted by the Council Board on January 18, 2018.*