

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: June 20, 2025

Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff

Location: WebEx and International Institute of Minnesota (Hybrid)

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Shawn Sorrell, Chris Green, Philip Gaye-Bai, Josefina Geronimo, Micaela Schuneman, Joanna Rosa, Angela Fields, Nelly Torori, Farhia Said, Alex Abraha, Paul Slack, Abdi Al-Mumin, Victor Obisakin, Craté Darden, Tonia Lofton, Pachua Vang
- **DHS & DCYF Staff:** Helen Ghebre, Lola Muhammad, Steven Wilson, Hli Vang, Kelly Barnebey, Shavana Talbert, Deputy Commissioner Nikki Farago, De Anna Conover, Nate Carter, Sophia Mai, Ahmed Mussa, Evelyn Witherspoon, Yasmin Yahye, Jewelly Lee, Abdullahi Soyan, Haile Tegegne, Lizzette Banini, Samia Abdulle
- **Public Attendees:** Janeth Nicandro

Agenda

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| 12:00 | Lunch and Community Networking / WebEx Opens |
| 1:00 | Open Public Meeting and Land Acknowledgement |
| 1:05 | Introductions and Welcome |
| 1:20 | Review and Approve Meeting Agenda and Minutes |
| 1:25 | Community Celebrations and Shoutouts |
| 1:35 | Workgroup Updates & Priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legislative Workgroup• Topics & Issues Workgroup• Equitable Outcomes Workgroup |
| | Administrative Updates |
| 3:00 | Legislative Updates |
| 3:15 | Break |
| 3:30 | Retreat Update |
| 4:00 | Adjourn Full Council Meeting |

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Introductions

Shawn Sorrell called the meeting to order. He led the council through a land acknowledgement and introductions. Some time was held for council members and others to express reactions, sympathy, or condolences for the tragic events that occurred this past weekend.

Shawn reminded council members about the Tribal-State Relations Training opportunity to more effectively engage the DHS Office of Indian Policy (OIP) and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) around Tribal Relations and addressing the needs of Urban Indian communities. Please contact Community Relations to register.

The remaining 2025 sessions have been posted.

- **July 23-24, 2025, Cedar Lakes Casino & Hotel in Cass Lake, MN**
 - Hosted by the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
- **August 13-14, 2025, Giminjimendaamin Ezhichigeyang in Redby, MN**
 - Hosted by the Red Lake Nation
- **September 25-26, 2025, Mystic Lake Casino Hotel in Prior Lake, MN**
 - Hosted by the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- **October 22-23, 2025, Shooting Star Casino in Mahnomon, MN**
 - Hosted by White Earth Nation
 - Registration opens on September 3, 2025
- **November 5-6, 2025, Grand Portage Lodge in Grand Portage, MN**
 - Hosted by the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
 - Registration opens on September 3, 2025

Decisions Made

Review and approve May minutes and meeting agenda:

- Motion to approve meeting agenda and May minutes: Paul Slack
- Second: Philip Gaye-Bai
- The motion passed

To postpone the Legislative Meet & Greet to 2026:

- Motion to approve postponement: Shawn Sorrell
- Second: Philip Gaye-Bai
- The motion passed.

Community Celebrations and Shoutouts

Shawn Sorrell opened the floor for members to share.

- Shawn recognized the June observances on the agenda: Father's Day, Pride Month, Refugee Awareness Month, World Refugee Awareness Day, and National Immigrant Heritage Month. He gave a shoutout to DHS Community Relations' efforts to draft communication on behalf of the CECLC to express our support and condolences for the recent tragedies.
- Nate Carter shared the 17th Annual Community Empowerment Through Black Men Healing Conference taking place June 26th, 2025, 9 am – 4:30 pm and June 27th, 2025, 9 am – 12:30 pm
<https://www.brothershealing.com/>
- Angela Fields feels buoyed that Community Health Workers (CHWs) are being integrated into various types of clinical research. She has been invited to be part of an advisory panel and gave an update on her work.
- Hli Vang indicated the [Hmong International Freedom Festival](#) takes place in St. Paul on June 28-29 and invited council members to review the Office of Equity & Inclusion's (OEI) calendar of [Inclusion and Engagement Events](#).
- Janeth Nicandro shared the [Worthington International Festival](#) takes place on Thursday, July 10 from 5:00-9:00 pm, and in Rochester, the Rochester Police Department is hosting [Safe City Nights 2025](#) throughout June, July, and August.

Workgroup Updates

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

The workgroup received a robust update from the DHS Legislative team and worked with them to cross-reference current bills with CECLC priorities and explore opportunities for support and opposition. The workgroup plans to implement a communications cascade to the CECLC by next legislative session in order to receive regular, timely feedback. This work is currently on pause as the session has concluded.

Angela Fields is championing Community Health Worker (CHW) initiatives in the state. There is growing momentum in Minnesota to grow and strengthen that workforce.

Council members are encouraged to contact their lawmakers to advocate these legislative priorities:

- Promote equitable DHS investments in marginalized communities of color and Tribal Governments and people. (Ex. CEMIG, Opioid Epidemic Response Grant (OERAC), etc.)
- Housing and Homelessness
- Disability Waiver Services: Increasing access
- Elderly Waiver Services
- Community Health Workers Systems Navigation
- LGBTQIA+ Community Health Care Access

Work had been underway to reschedule the 2025 Legislative Meet & Greet that was postponed in spring. CECLC leadership and this workgroup coordinated logistics with Senator Hoffman and his staff. However, given the current circumstances, Shawn Sorrell requested to further postpone the event until next year. After brief discussion, a motion was made to postpone until next year. The motion passed unanimously.

Topics and Issues Workgroup

Council members are encouraged to let their respective networks know about this opportunity for the workgroup to partner on community engagement and outreach. There needs to be interest by council members to do intentional community engagement.

At the Crookston Community Listening Session, 20 people attended. The workgroup is still sifting through the information gathered and is weighing how DHS can best interact with that community. More to come. Paul Slack said listening sessions should be generated by council members and do not have to be frequent.

The co-chairs met with Rachele King in RPO to offer immediate feedback following last month's CECLC meeting. There is intention to give a letter of recommendations to RPO after the next workgroup meeting.

Equitable Outcomes Workgroup

The workgroup shared its charter in today's meeting and brought its Program Review Cycle Flowchart for review and input. The workgroup aims to pilot some projects using this flowchart, offering a structured review of metrics.

Administrative Update

There were no updates.

Legislative Update

There were no updates.

Retreat Update

The retreat will be held on September 12-13 at Jackpot Junction Resort and Casino in Morton, MN. Council members are encouraged to attend and will be responsible for booking their own hotel rooms. Mileage, gas, meals, and lodging are reimbursable.

Community Relations is working to gather an estimate for funding approval and will provide more information at a later date. Contact them with any questions.

Meeting adjourned at 3:45 PM