

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: May 16, 2025

Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff

Location: WebEx and NorthPoint Conference Center (Hybrid)

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Shawn Sorrell, Chris Green, Philip Gaye-Bai, Manuel Zuniga, Josefina Geronimo, Micaela Schuneman, Victor Obisakin, Craté Darden, Joanna Rosa, Angela Fields, Nelly Torori, Rosa Tock, Farhia Said, Nina Vongpheth, Makram El-Amin, Tonia Lofton, Alex Abraha
- **DHS & DCYF Staff:** Helen Ghebre, Lola Muhammad, Steven Wilson, Keziah Mbogo, Kelly Barnebey, Angie DeLille, Micah Tran, Deputy Commissioner Nikki Farago, Nicole Juan, Sean McMoore, Rachele King, Marissa Hill-Dongre, Nate Carter
- **Public Attendees:** Janeth Nicandro, Laurissa

Agenda

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
2:15	Legislative Updates
2:30	Break
2:45	Follow-up on CECLC Strategic Planning Retreat (Location)
3:10	Immigration Basics and Current Resettlement Landscape Presentation by DHS Resettlement Program Office
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.

Rosa Tock from the Minnesota Council of Latino Affairs (MCLA) is retiring after 32 years of public service. Council members expressed gratitude for her service and participation in the CECLC. In addition, Shawn welcomed staff from the Department of Public Safety to today's meeting.

He 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
 - Registration opens on June 3, 2025
- **August 13-14, 2025, Giminjimendaamin Ezhichigeyang in Redby, MN**
 - Hosted by the Red Lake Nation
 - Registration opens on June 3, 2025
- **September 25-26, 2025, Mystic Lake Casino Hotel in Prior Lake, MN**
 - Hosted by the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
 - Registration opens on June 3, 2025
- **October 22-23, 2025, Shooting Star Casino in Mahanomen, 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 April minutes and meeting agenda:

- Motion to approve meeting agenda and April minutes: Manuel Zuniga
- Second: Shawn Sorrell
- The motion passed

Community Celebrations and Shoutouts

Shawn Sorrell opened the floor for members to share.

- Shawn recognized the May observances on the agenda: Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, Red Dress Day, African World Heritage Day, Mother's Day, Jewish American Heritage Month, and Mental Health Awareness Month.
- Manuel Zuniga is excited to celebrate Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month and in honor of that, both the Lowry Avenue Bridge in Minneapolis and the I-35W Saint Anthony Falls Bridge will be lit in the colors of the AANHPI Unity, Resilience, and Resistance Flag on the evening of May 21. This will be the first time in 33 years that AANHPI Heritage Month will not be recognized at the federal level. Also, May 14 is Hmong American Day, and May 10 is National AANHPI Mental Health Day.
- Keziah Mbogo shared a health and research fair that takes place Saturday, May 17 from 10am-3pm.
- Nina Vongpheth shared the City of Minneapolis and the State of Minnesota honor May as American Indian Month. There is typically a kickoff parade on May 1, but it was postponed due to recent violence in the community. It will now take place on Friday, May 30 instead. The Indian Health Board will have a groundbreaking for its new center, and there will be a celebration powwow. Look for details in the post-meeting email update.
- Rosa Tock thanked the CECLC for signing the Minnesota Council of Latino Affairs (MCLA) Letter of Support to preserve the MinnesotaCare Expansion Program.

Workgroup Updates

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

At its last meeting, the workgroup debriefed and talked about next steps for legislative advocacy participation; reviewed its list of legislative champions; and determined best options for meeting in the future. Those interested in advocacy will identify their respective legislators and reach out to them.

The workgroup identified a need for clear legislative priorities. It wishes to understand the difference between policy and budget years, to discuss its timeline concerns, and find alternative ways to engage with local legislators when there are timeline constraints.

Topics and Issues Workgroup

The workgroup remains focused on outreach to Greater Minnesota and on collaborating with partners in immigrant and diaspora communities. It will reevaluate if there are additional projects or topic areas to focus on.

More information about an upcoming community meet & greet session on Thursday, June 5 will be shared in the post-meeting email update.

Equitable Outcomes Workgroup

The workgroup started to create a program review cycle which is the bulk of its current focus. It intends to bring the program review cycle to the full council for review and input, when ready.

DHS Equity Directors attended the meeting to discuss the equity analysis toolkit and how the workgroup can be supportive. Nelly Torori encouraged council members to attend workgroup meetings and lend their voice on these important topics.

Administrative Update

There were no updates.

DHS Legislative Update

Shawn Sorrell welcomed Nicole Juan, DHS Legislative Coordinator, who provided a legislative update.

Health & Human Services Budget Bill Advances

The Health and Human Services (HHS) omnibus bill has passed the Senate. The Human Services Policy Conference Committee has finalized its work and adopted a Conference Committee Report, which will now return to both the House and Senate floors for final approval.

Budget Negotiations Underway

On May 15, Governor Walz and legislative leaders reached an agreement on budget targets, setting the stage for final negotiations across all major finance bills. A brief special session is likely next week to finalize the state budget.

MinnesotaCare Update

As part of the negotiations, leaders agreed to roll back the expansion of MinnesotaCare coverage for undocumented adults. However, coverage will be preserved for undocumented children, maintaining access to essential health care services for the youngest Minnesotans.

It was asked how many undocumented residents will be impacted by that. Nicole said she would need to double check the data.

Follow-up on CECLC Strategic Planning Retreat (Location)

Prior to today's meeting, the council voted via email on potential venues for its retreat on September 12-13. Jackpot Junction Casino garnered the most votes. DHS staff and leadership, including the Office of Indian Policy, are invited to participate.

Immigration Basics and Current Resettlement Landscape Presentation by DHS Resettlement Program Office

Helen Ghebre introduced Rachele King, Director for the DHS Resettlement Program Office (RPO), who provided brief background on RPO and an overview of immigration and resettlement. Rachele's colleague Marissa Hill-

Dongre, Immigration Law Lead, presented on Immigration Hotel, a concept created by Professor Victor Wiebe. It graphically describes the current system of immigration laws and policies in the US.

RPO staff are available to provide this presentation to interested organizations. Several council members suggested that RPO gather input from immigrant communities and vet the content with those who have lived experience, then rework its presentation.

Meeting adjourned at 4:08 PM