

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: September 19, 2025

Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff

Location: WebEx and International Institute of Minnesota (Hybrid)

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Chris Green, Shawn Sorrell, Philip Gaye-Bai, Josefina Geronimo, Micaela Schuneman, Joanna Rosa, Angela Fields, Farhia Said, Alex Abraha, Paul Slack, Victor Obisakin, Tonia Lofton, Lolita Davis Carter
- **State Agency Staff:** Helen Ghebre, Lola Muhammad, Deputy Commissioner Nikki Farago, Hli Vang, Yvette Kanzler, De Anna Conover, Sophia Mai, Yasmin Yahye, Jewelly Lee, Leigh Grauman, Kristy Graume, Micah Tran, Bahea Manasra, Julia Stumpf, Bilqis Amatus-Salaam, Haile Tegegne
- **Public Attendees:** Keemarr McKinney-Van Buren, Lisa Xiong, Farhiya Ali, Ahmed Mussa, Imaan Hassan

Agenda

- 12:00 Lunch & Community Networking / WebEx Opens**
- 1:00 Open Public Meeting and Land Acknowledgement**
- 1:05 Introductions, Welcome & Check-in Activity [Breakout Sessions]**
 - Introduce new community members and guests
 - How have you lived one of the Guiding Principles this week?
 - What do you and your communities do to prepare for fall?
- 1:20 Review and Approve Meeting Agenda and Minutes**
- 1:25 Community Celebrations & Shout Outs**
- 1:35 Reflections on CECLC Retreat**
 - Member Experiences/Takeaways
- 2:05 Break**
- 2:20 Workgroup Updates & Priorities**
 - Equitable Outcomes Workgroup**
 - Present new day/time of meeting
 - Discuss possible current/ongoing programs
 - Topics and Issues Workgroup**
 - RPO Recommendation Memo Vote
 - Legislative Workgroup**
 - Legislative Summit
- 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.

Shawn Sorrell 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.

- **September 25-26, 2025, Mystic Lake Casino Hotel in Prior Lake, MN (*waitlist*)**
 - 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
- **January 28-29, 2026, Black Bear Casino Resort in Carlton, MN**
 - Hosted by the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
 - Registration is open.

Decisions Made

Review and approve July minutes and meeting agenda:

- Motion to approve meeting agenda and August minutes: Shawn Sorrell
- Second: Tonia Lofton
- The motion passed

Community Celebrations and Shoutouts

Shawn Sorrell opened the floor for members to share.

- Angela Fields introduced Dr. Ivan Woo and Rashad Ahmed. <https://mydiversioncenter.org/>
- Equity Week - https://mn.gov/dhs/assets/Equity-Week_2025_Interactive-Guide_tcm1053-706415.docx
- Inclusion – Engagement Weeks <https://mn.gov/dhs/inclusion-engagement-events/>
- Immigrants - <https://www2.minneapolismn.gov/government/departments/ncr/immigrants-refugees/meetings-events/welcoming-week/>
- Project Shine - <https://www.projectshineumn.com/>
- October 4, 2025 - Northpoint Health & Wellness Center to discuss bridging the gap uniting African Immigrants and African Americans in MN
- Program to increase cancer prevention capacity among East African CHWs
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bmlRHy-sVrbYUX0PTjkAo2hftj9zu2b/view?usp=sharing>
- One Woodbury Event – 9/27 – 11 – 2:30 – Ojibway Park

Reflections on CECLC Retreat

- Members share their experiences/takeaways.
 - Ability to come together
 - Opportunity to interact
 - Skills & diversity of the council members
 - More time for breakout sessions
 - Ability to network with other members
 - Ability to learn more of the history
 - Examine Change Management
 - Fabulous Tour
 - Our process & purpose of the Council and Committee
- One powerful takeaway from the CECLC retreat was the opportunity to deeply examine change management—not just as a technical process, but as a human-centered journey. I was reminded that regardless of our professional roles or titles, we are all fundamentally human. Building authentic relationships is not optional; it's essential. We must move beyond transactional interactions and intentionally cultivate connections that honor the lived experiences of individuals. This retreat reinforced that if we truly want to impact lives through our work—especially within government systems and their outputs—we must meet people where they are. That means listening, engaging, and valuing their humanity throughout the process. Change doesn't happen in isolation; it happens through relationships. And that's the work I'm committed to doing.
- Possibly present Pressing Issue Statements
- We do not fully understand the impact to Medicare/Medicaid accountability to include but not limited to: Federal Changes, Access, Equitable Outcomes, Eligibility, Disparities Reduction, Fraud.
- Budget cuts that will impact communities and program compliance.
- Educating our communities.
- Share the 3-page report from retreat from last year's executive summary

Workgroup Updates

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

Working on rescheduling the subgroup; working on a bill tracker and the legislative summit. Oct 21 - 12 – 4 at North Point for the summit; DHS Legislative team, Kristy Graume, Elyse Bailey. Working with the workgroup and subgroup as to how this summit will go. Bill tracking items that align with the committee.

Topics and Issues Workgroup

- The workgroup presented the memo of recommendation to the committee.
- Motion to move forward: Shawn Sorrell; 2nd Joanna Rosa
- Discussion: Recommendations; Shawn read the memo to the committee.
- Motion passed to move forward with the letter. Letter will be sent

This workgroup meets the first Wednesday of the month from 12 - 1

Equitable Outcomes Workgroup

The workgroup did find a new date and time; First Monday of the month 12 – 1 beginning in October. Newer members if you want more information regarding this workgroup, please reach out. Requesting those that were at the retreat to provide information or ideas that may have come up at the retreat that pertain with this workgroup. Action items came out of the retreat, which will be discussed at the meeting in October

Administrative Update

Recent executive order directing agencies combating fraud. Helen will share that with the committee later today or Monday.

DHS is currently seeking nominations for 2 co-chairs for the Council. Please reach out to Helen if you have any question or nominations.

- Legislative Summit: October 21, 2025, 12pm – 4pm at NorthPoint
- Next CECLC Meeting on October 24th

Meeting adjourned at 2:52 PM