

## Race and Ethnicity Community Input

### Methodology

In an effort to solicit input from the Race and Ethnicity community, a written survey was distributed to two Native American tribes and individuals identified in the region that work with minorities and new immigrant populations, and on diversity issues. The survey asked the following five open ended questions:

- 1) What are the most pressing issues in western Wisconsin facing the minority, ethnic or cultural group you identify or work with?
- 2) Have solutions to any of these issues been identified or are there current efforts underway to address them? Who is leading those efforts?
- 3) Are there changes or trends that are affecting your group? For example: economic or employment conditions, housing availability or cost, or transportation or energy costs.
- 4) Could local units of government play a role to better address the issues facing your group?
- 5) What issues facing your group could be addressed (or better addressed) at a regional level?

West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission distributed the survey by email or mail with postage-paid envelope. Follow up phone calls and emails were made to none respondents. Twelve surveys were distributed, only three were returned. Hence, anecdotal information will be added by WCWRPC staff based on their experience in the region.

### Survey Results

Hmong

- 1)
  - a. Employment: finding suitable work skills, education and experience. Many young and educated Hmong adults eventually move from Western Wisconsin to major urban areas due to the lack of employment.
  - b. Education: many Hmong students are still not graduating from High School or going to college. College remains unaffordable and daunting for a higher than average Hmong population when compared to the general public. The student population in Chippewa Valley area schools has about 15% minorities, while minority attendance at UWEC is only 5%. This ratio needs to be the same, 15%.
  - c. A gradual erosion or loss of Hmong culture among the younger generation of Hmong.
  - d. Mental health (counseling for children and elderly) needs for families.
  - e. Clothing stores that do not carry smaller sizes for Asian people.
  - f. Public schools do not offer Hmong language as a foreign language option.
  - g. There are many low income Hmong families without dental and health care.
- 2)
  - a. The issues have been identified but no plan has been formulated yet to address them.
  - b. UWEC is trying to assess and develop solutions for education concerns.
- 3)

- a. Federal and State funding sources are being cut leaving the Hmong Mutual Assistance Association with little money to carry out its goals of providing employment assistance and family services.
  - b. Everyone is affected by current economic and employment trends. Many more people are seeking food, utility and employment assistance.
- 4)
- a. Government has access to resources that are hard or near impossible for us to obtain. More collaboration is needed to avoid duplication of services and increase penetration of services to needy folks.
  - b. Government, non-profits and business can help secure funding. The public and local schools can influence administrators to offer Hmong language and history courses in middle and high schools.
  - c. Local dental offices, hospitals and clinics should receive tax incentives to provide care to low income families.
- 5)
- a. Need to attract and grow companies in the region to increase employment opportunities.
  - b. Education and health needs of families can be addressed regionally.

#### Hispanic

- 1)
- a. Legalization of Mexican immigrants. Because of their legal status they are unable to conform fully to West Central Wisconsin life.
  - b. Undocumented workers cannot obtain drivers licenses which places them at a disadvantage with local police.
- 2)
- a. There is a Hispanic Task Force that has been in existence for about 5 years. Due to continual problems and few solutions its involvement has dwindled. Sheila Nyberg heads the Task Force.
- 3)
- a. There appears to be little direct impact (employment) on local Hispanic populations from the economic downturn. The industries they work in have been fairly stable.
- 4)
- a. Local government has developed several enhancements to accommodate the Hispanic population. Developed English/Spanish materials. Incorporated ethnic traditions into the community picnic. Developed a soccer field.
- 4)
- a. Legalization issues could be explored regionally to find solutions and influence policy.

#### **Anecdotal Information**

#### Hmong

Somali

African-American

Native American

Amish/Mennonite

Hispanic

**Input Usage**

The results of the survey reinforce some of the issues identified through planning meetings for RIGC and TAG members. The issues cross element lines and will most likely be addressed within multiple components. More specific goals and objectives relating to Race and Ethnicity could be included in the Issues an Opportunities Element.