



**Northern Marianas
Humanities Council**

Navigating the Human Experience



Strategic Master Plan 2021-2025

Beyond the Reef | Gi Hiyong i Mamati | Mwirilóol Woosch

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Strategic Master Plan Theme

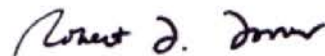
- Beyond the Reef (English)**
- Gi Hiyong i Mamati (Chamorro)**
- Mwirilóól Woosch (Carolinian)**

“Beyond the Reef” is a metaphor for the Council’s plans for its future and approach to the context in which it operates. Navigating the human experience involves exploring beyond the confines of one’s knowledge and worldview. The Northern Marianas Humanities Council’s 2021-2025 Strategic Master Plan maps our organization’s values and goals in preparation of voyaging “Beyond the Reef”, planning for an unpredictable future and grounding our intentions as we sail into the unknown.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

I suppose that our traditional navigators were the first to conceptualize the idea of a strategic plan. One would need to figure out, months ahead of time, the construction of the vessel, training the crew, ensuring provisions and planning the journey. Similarly, every five years we on the NMI Humanities Council engage in this exercise to plan our direction and set our course to reach our “destination” in Humanities programming, compliance, administration and development. The product today before you are the culmination of months of discussions, meetings, review and critical reflection on who we are as a Council and the direction we would like to go. As with all plans it is not etched in stone but it is forged from a firm commitment to excellence through our mission statement, vision and ultimately our goals and objectives.

On behalf of our Council and Staff, I wish to express our appreciation to Dr. Troy McVey from the University of Guam who has guided us patiently through this process. We also give thanks to the members of our focus groups and stakeholders whose input and comments have provided us with critical feedback on where we can improve, what more we can do and how we can do better as a Council. Lastly, I extend my appreciation to our Executive Director Leo Pangelinan and our staff for their efforts with the drafting and coordination of meetings in what at times may be akin to guiding several proa vessels heading in different directions. We hope that you will receive our Strategic Master Plan for 2021-2025 with the expectation that we have aimed high in our goals and hope to reach our stated destinations with this plan.



Robert T. Torres
Council Chairman



THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Council began its strategic planning activities in earnest when it appointed Dr. Troy McVey on July 17, 2019 to serve as a process facilitator with responsibilities for facilitating meetings with staff, board members, and community stakeholders, organizing work flow, and preparing relevant documents to assist the Council in developing and adopting a 5-year strategic plan. The Council conducted meetings to engage its members and stakeholders in critical dialogue which resulted in (1) a refined mission statement; (2) an expanded vision statement; (3) external stakeholder engagement on the Council's role in the community, humanities programs, visibility, accessibility, strengths, opportunities, and areas for improvement; (4) five achievable goals and nineteen measurable objectives; (5) strategies and activities to support achievement of stated goals and; (6) a framework for evaluating and operationalizing goals.

The Council's strategic planning process was oriented toward gathering significant community input through focus group discussions with community members on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. The board and staff studied the transcripts from these discussions and met to identify salient themes and transform these themes into actionable goals with the Council's new vision, mission, and values as guide posts.

A small team comprised of the Council's Executive Director, Strategic Planning & Evaluation Committee Chair, and Strategic Planning Facilitator met weekly over the course of six weeks to refine goal and objective statements, identify supporting activities and strategies, identify measurable outputs, and establish timelines for implementation.

On October 10, 2020, the Strategic Planning & Evaluation Committee met to review and further revise the draft plan with staff and circulate changes for input by the full board. On October 24, 2020, the full board adopted the document herein as the Council's 2021-2025 Strategic Master Plan.



Strategic Planning Focus Group Sessions

Saipan Participants: Eric Abragan, Ajani Burrell, John Palacios, Jovannalyn Mafnas, Vivian Nogis, John Tagabuel, Tayna Belyeu-Camacho, Maureen Sebangiol, Emma Perez, Catherine Attao-Torres, Dr. Alfred Ada, Chris Ogo, Roman Tudela Jr., Catherine Perry, and Donald Mendiola

Tinian Participants: Jan Barcinas, Reina Cing-Cabrera, Dora San Nicolas, Japie Cruz, Rose Lazaro, Monika Diaz, Joseph San Nicolas, and Milissa Aquiningoc

Rota Participants: Christine Cabrera, Lynne Michael, Lucy Mangloña, Ivan Mereb, Guadalupe Flores, and Dean Mangloña

The Council held seven focus group sessions across Saipan (January 10-11, 2020), Tinian (February 10, 2020), and Rota (March 6-7, 2020). A total of 29 people participated in these sessions and were recruited from among a pool of local humanities scholars, practitioners, and participants that have had some exposure to the Council's programs. Dr. Troy McVey and Leo Pangelinan facilitated these meetings using a digital recorder and a written note-taker to record input from participants.

The participants were asked a variation of the following questions:

- What is the most recent or memorable humanities council event that you participated in?
- What is the Council doing very well right now?
- Do you think the Council is doing enough?
- How do you find out about the Council's programs?
- What is a project that you want to work on with the Council?
- What role does the Council have in connecting the islands?
- What should the Council be focused on?
- What types of community and cultural events are on island?
- What does the humanities mean to you?

Strengths

The Council's events are well-designed, well-managed, and engaging. Events that promote culture and the indigenous people inspire youth and encourage elders to give back. The Council engages the community in topics presented by a variety of experts. The staff are good to work with and able to share their own relevant experiences to help the community. The Council shares their resources (money). The Council offers a variety of programs that address the intellectual interests and needs of people as it relates to the humanities. The Council provides individuals with opportunities to contribute to published work through oral history interviews.

Opportunities for Improvement and Impact

The Council should do more to engage people in cultural and historical spaces like the park and museum. The Council can serve the role as a convener of different groups and programs to help people share their work and develop cultural and language programs that produce cultural practitioners, ambassadors, or guides, and result in mastery. The Council can model approaches used by local health organizations. The Council can do more to promote awareness of the humanities and its programs through presentations and exhibits in schools and linking activities sponsored outside of schools to the school's curriculum. The Council should sponsor exhibits in high traffic areas, including the airport and hotels. The Council should document and preserve the history of our islands in a way that helps us understand how people work on issues together using cultural methods. The Council should have a representative work with other cultural groups to promote their activities and provide needed support. The Council should build capacity among youth to facilitate programs and share their experiences. The Council can help ensure that programs and events that promote awareness of Carolinian culture, language, history, and people are shared with Rota and Tinian. The Council should focus on oral history and put more effort into promoting the archives of oral history interviews and projects. The Council should create a space to support the transition needs of students/parents who travel to Saipan for events.

Community Needs and Interests

Focus groups were interested on seeing more of the following: Projects that allow cultural leaders to go on fact-finding missions to gather information about the history and culture of the NMI; Projects that document the genealogy and life of cultural leaders and heroes; Programs that engage the youth with the humanities, the environment, outdoor activities, and mental health issues; Programs that engage elders in sharing their history and storytelling in schools; Consistency in facilitating events on Tinian and Rota (at least once a year); Support groups for managing stress and self-advocacy; Wellness and physical activity spaces and programs; Programs that help the community understand and appreciate the issues and contributions of non-indigenous groups; Capturing the memories and stories of the man'amko; Documenting the history of the municipal governments; Publishing a book written by and of local artists, musicians, poets, and craftsmen that can inspire the continuation of traditions or a trade; Concerts that feature artists from the CNMI; Programs that engage youth in public-speaking, drama (re-enactment of historical events), and the arts; Projects that identify and promote that which is unique to the indigenous cultures of the NMI; Cultural and cooking demonstrations through festivals or small gatherings. A conference to showcase indigenous songs, plays, and presentations; A space (like Chamorro Village on Guam) for people to showcase the culture and sell their crafts; Journalistic coverage of events and activities on Rota.

An overarching theme across all focus groups on all three islands centered on the loss of language, culture, traditions, folklore, and other elements that define the indigenous Chamorro people. A sense of urgency, anxiety, loss and shame was expressed for the rapid decline in the use of the Chamorro language, awareness of the islands' history, and traditional cultural practices.

Ways to Improve Engagement, Program Visibility and Reach

Sponsor an information booth at festivals and cultural events. Develop a community-friendly brochure. Conduct a survey to find out what people know about the Council. Post information about services and opportunities on social media and share to government pages. Meet with key partners to discuss Chamorro language issues. Post event flyers on store windows. Partner with schools and the Mayors of Tinian and Rota to promote events. Mail out event cards or calendars to all post office boxes. Erect billboard signs or banners that run across streets. Place pop-up ads on social media and videos. Schedule time to meet personally with key people and influencers. Run radio ads year-round. Conduct info sessions and present your strategic plan.



VISION

Navigating the Human Experience:

to advance the humanities, to understand our history, to explore our world today, to discover the marketplace of ideas, to protect the value of language and culture, to celebrate our human identity, and to shape our future through the power of discourse.

MISSION

It is the Northern Marianas Humanities Council's mission to navigate and explore the human experiences of the indigenous and diverse peoples of the Commonwealth by enriching their lives through research, dialogue, programs, and publications.



VALUES WE RESPECT

OBJECTIVITY / NEUTRALITY

Removing and checking our biases
Creating safe spaces for dialogue sharing and challenging conversations
Understanding and open-mindedness
Compassion, empathy, kindness, and sensitivity for other's experiences and to new ideas
Seeking the truth and a way of understanding

QUALITY

Of scholarship and research

IDENTITY

Of the history of place
Of the fluidity of culture and language

DIVERSITY OF OPINIONS

INTEGRITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Being trustworthy
Taking fiscal responsibility
Representing communities in the best light
Meeting standards and goals

PASSION

For the work we do and having fun while doing it

CREATIVITY

Using creative solutions to problems

COLLABORATION

Breaking down silos
Exchanging of Ideas

FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

Recognizing the need to change
Taking action

Goal 1

The Chamorro people were the first inhabitants of the Mariana Islands. They lived together, in relative isolation from the rest of the world, attached to these islands and surrounding ocean for more than a millennium, speaking a common language and bounded by a culture embodying a unique set of customs, beliefs, and values. The Carolinian or Refaluwasch people of the Mariana Islands are descendants of people who immigrated from the Caroline Islands. Intermittent waves of people from the Caroline Islands sailed to the Mariana Islands beginning in the early nineteenth century and brought with them their own unique languages and cultures.

The Chamorros and Carolinians were subject to centuries of foreign colonial and religious policies and practices that systematically deprived these groups of the right to their own languages and heritage. “The indigenous peoples’ languages derive and are also crucial to identity, culture, health, governance, socio-economic well-being, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies” (Derived from a UN statement). For the indigenous people of the Northern Mariana Islands, the legacy of past colonial practices and the enduring influence of Western culture ever-present in their homeland remain as imminent threats to the survival of their languages and cultures.

Preserve and promote the indigenous languages and cultures of the Northern Mariana Islands (NMI).

Objectives and Strategies

1.1 Increase the practice and use of NMI indigenous cultures and languages in the public sphere.

- 1.1.1 Publish photos and biographical profiles of indigenous cultural practitioners and language instructors.
- 1.1.2 Capture and distribute video footage documenting the PSS Chamorro Carolinian Language Competition (CCLC).
- 1.1.3 Promote the results of PSS CCLC.
- 1.1.4 Publish profiles of individuals and organizations whose activities, services, or support increase public awareness or the practice of indigenous languages and cultures.
- 1.1.5 Install interpretive signs, in the indigenous languages, at cultural and historic sites.
- 1.1.6 Conduct a needs assessment to determine learning resource needs for CCHLS language instructors.
- 1.1.7 Distribute Chamorro and Carolinian language and cultural learning resource materials to instructors, students, and parents.
- 1.1.8 Provide a stipend to indigenous cultural leaders and practitioners for educational workshops, presentations and demonstrations conducted in a school setting.
- 1.1.9 Support community-led projects that immerse NMI youth in the use of the NMI indigenous languages.
- 1.1.10 Examine public policies and legislation affecting NMI indigenous language preservation and use.
- 1.1.11 Support oral history projects that document the NMI indigenous cultures and languages.

Preserve and promote the indigenous languages and cultures of the Northern Mariana Islands (NMI).

1.2 Develop activities that celebrate the arts, music, history, and language of the indigenous people.

- 1.2.1 Sponsor a spoken word, choral reading, stand-up comedy, or storytelling event in the NMI indigenous languages at the annual Flame Tree Festival.
- 1.2.2 Conduct the Marianas History Conference.
- 1.2.3 Conduct the Valentine N. Sengebau Poetry Competition.
- 1.2.4 Host social activities that engage the public in conversations with local artists, musicians, historians, indigenous language speakers and cultural practitioners.
- 1.2.5 Promote culturally-relevant musical practices as a form of cultural and language transmission.

1.3 Increase the exhibition and interpretation of NMI indigenous cultural assets.

- 1.3.1 Install interpretive signs, in the indigenous languages, at cultural and historic sites.
- 1.3.2 Support a travelling exhibit of infographics and artifacts that promote awareness of NMI indigenous cultures.
- 1.3.3 Sponsor indigenous cultural demonstrations and exhibits at the Indigenous Cultural Expo.
- 1.3.4 Facilitate activities that demonstrate traditional cultural practices for a public audience.
- 1.3.5 Publish interviews with traditional healers (yo'amti) describing traditional medicinal plants and healing practices.
- 1.3.6 Recognize an individual annually for their efforts to preserve traditional cultural practices.

1.4 Develop programs that compare indigenous and non-indigenous accounts of NMI customs, traditions, heritage, and language.

- 1.4.1 Facilitate public conversations featuring a panel of both indigenous and non-indigenous individuals with differing views on NMI customs, traditions, heritage and language.
- 1.4.2 Distribute grant funds for projects that showcase oral history accounts and scholarly research of NMI customs, traditions, heritage, and language.

Goal 2

Literacy and language are essential to a community's ability to develop and empower itself. These communication tools help develop shared knowledge and critical thinking. The Council supports the reflection of our individual and shared values and beliefs that lead to constructive discourse. By supporting the development of literacy and language, we are directly helping the community navigate their own experiences.

The Council has invested significantly to improve family literacy in which adults and children interact through storytelling, reading, and writing. The Council is committed to evaluating its current projects and providing more educational opportunities that support effective literacy and language programs.

Develop and improve educational programs in literacy and language.

Objectives and Strategies

- 2.1 Create and promote a theme under the Community Grant Program to encourage sustainable educational projects that improve literacy and language.**
- 2.2 Support the development of a Pacific Literature course.**
- 2.3 Evaluate and improve existing council projects that promote literacy.**
 - 2.3.1 Evaluate and Improve Motheread/Fatheread CNMI.
 - 2.3.2 Evaluate and Improve Sengebau Poetry Competition.
- 2.4 Support the resource needs of the PSS Chamorro Carolinian Heritage Studies program.**
 - 2.4.1 Conduct a needs assessment to determine learning resource needs for CCHLS language instructors. *[Ref. 1.]*
 - 2.4.2 Distribute Chamorro and Carolinian language and cultural learning resource materials to instructors, students, and parents. *[Ref. 1.]*
 - 2.4.2 Utilize social media to promote indigenous language learning activities.
- 2.5 Conduct writing workshops**

Goal 3

Studying and documenting who we are leads to greater understanding and awareness of our contemporary issues and the world in which we live. Through the humanities, the Council is in a unique position to lead efforts to interpret human documents and artifacts and translate their value to society.

Objectives and Strategies

3.1 Increase the research capacity among humanities practitioners and emerging scholars.

- 3.1.1 Provide a fellowship (monetary award) for CNMI residents pursuing advanced study in the humanities.
- 3.1.2 Provide administrative support (i.e. serve as fiscal or local agent) for individuals who have a scholarly interest in humanities topics relevant to the NMI.
- 3.1.3 Increase NMI resident participation as humanities topical presenters or speakers in regional and national conferences (i.e. Marianas History Conference).
- 3.1.4 Conduct research design and evaluation protocols workshops.
- 3.1.5 Support the capacity of indigenous scholars and the study of indigenous topics by the indigenous community.
- 3.1.6 Support the public display of works produced by NMI resident authors, poets, musicians, and journalists.

3.2 Examine contemporary issues in the humanities.

- 3.2.1 Create a community forum to identify and clarify local issues across the humanities.
- 3.2.2 Publish interviews of community views on contemporary issues in the humanities.

Increase
publications
and
scholarship
in the
humanities.



Goal 4

We live in a world filled with diverse groups of people, each with their own unique experiences and perspectives. As a neutral broker, the Council seeks opportunities to discover the marketplace of ideas and various expressions of identity that define us, empowering us to celebrate our differences.

Objectives and Strategies

4.1 Introduce NMI indigenous languages and cultures to non-indigenous communities.

- 4.1.1 Facilitate intercultural dialogue between indigenous and non-indigenous residents.
- 4.1.2 Provide opportunities for the public to experience or be immersed in indigenous cultural practices.
- 4.1.3 Facilitate storytelling activities for cultural leaders and elders to impart their knowledge of the culture and history of the NMI.
- 4.1.4 Publish articles and infographics that describe the NMI indigenous languages and cultures.

Promote the diversity of experiences and perspectives within the NMI.

4.2 Relate the humanities to all cultures and perspectives represented in the NMI.

- 4.2.1 Conduct a writing contest to showcase how different cultural groups in the CNMI relate to the humanities.
- 4.2.2 Create an activity for the schools to promote awareness of cultural traditions and dates celebrated by non-indigenous groups in the NMI (i.e., Chu-seok, Chinese New Year).
- 4.2.3 Support humanities projects that are relevant to the communities on Tinian & Rota.
- 4.2.4 Create activities that demonstrate how different cultures express their relationship to the four elements: water, earth, wind, and fire.
- 4.2.5 Exhibit poetry/spoken word that showcase the diverse lived experiences of people in the NMI.

4.3 Promote the historical and cultural aspects of identity development in the NMI

- 4.3.1 Establish partnerships with individuals and groups to promote the history and stories of people, geo-objects, and events within their neighborhoods.
- 4.3.2 Provide experiential learning activities that feature our relationship to the NMI's natural environment.
- 4.3.3 Expand the display of historic sites on Google maps

Promote the diversity of experiences and perspectives within the NMI.

Goal 5

Provide capacity-building activities for individuals to acquire the skills and tools to create their own humanities content and programs.

The humanities ignite our imagination and help us to understand our experiences and our relationships with other people and the environment. The Council endeavors to seize the moment and the tools available in this digital age to support emergent critical thinkers in their quests to cultivate new knowledge and new ways of thinking about our humanity. In order to discover the marketplace of ideas, the Council is committed to building the capacity for future generations to be active participants in the humanities.

Provide capacity-building activities for individuals to acquire the skills and tools to create their own humanities content and programs.

Objectives and Strategies

5.1 Provide training in the use of modern technology to deliver humanities content.

5.2 Increase the research capacity among humanities practitioners and emerging scholars. *[Ref. 3.1]*

- 5.2.1 Provide a fellowship (monetary award) for CNMI residents pursuing advanced study in the humanities. *[Ref. 3.1]*
- 5.2.2 Provide administrative support (i.e. serve as fiscal or local agent) for individuals who have a scholarly interest in humanities topics relevant to the NMI. *[Ref. 3.1]*
- 5.2.3 Increase NMI resident participation as humanities topical presenters or speakers in regional and national conferences (i.e. Marianas History Conference). *[Ref. 3.1]*
- 5.2.4 Conduct research design and evaluation protocols workshops. *[Ref. 3.1]*
- 5.2.5 Support the capacity of indigenous scholars and the study of indigenous topics by the indigenous community. *[Ref. 3.1]*

5.3 Develop a sustainable plan for designing, building, and operating a humanities complex.

- 5.3.1 Establish a facility advisory group comprised of public and private sector partners.

Provide capacity-building activities for individuals to acquire the skills and tools to create their own humanities content and programs.

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PHOTO CREDITS

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The Humanities

The Northern Marianas Humanities Council was established in 1991 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation to support a broad range of humanistic activities undertaken by nonprofit community or citizen groups, educational institutions, museums, libraries, scholarly societies, public broadcasting stations, cultural and civic organizations, or groups of scholars through selected grants and awards of funds for projects, programs, exhibits, conferences, or other activities which support the understanding, growth, development, and appreciation of the humanities.

The Council's operational budget is funded primarily through General Support Grants to State Humanities Councils provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act, 1965, as amended, established NEH and defines the term 'humanities' as including, but not limited to, "the study and interpretation of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archaeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism and theory of the arts; those aspects of social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods; and the study and application of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to reflecting our diverse heritage, traditions, and history and to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life."

Council activities are overseen by a 13-member board of directors comprised of individuals with academic, professional, or general interest in the humanities. Three of these members are appointed by the governor, all others are elected by the Council.

