Northern Marianas Humanities Council
Illuminating the Human Experience

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

DID YOU KNOW?

The Council has an archive of film products, including interviews available on its social media channels

- Northern Marianas Humanities Council
- @670humanities
- @670humanities

Rheem finne – a giant taro leaf traditional navigators use to transport water from Santa Lourdes Shrine Ramon Guiwen.

PARTNERSHIP **SPOTLIGHT**

The Council works collaboratively with the Office of the Mayor of Tinian and Aguiguan (MOT) to implement humanities activities for the Tinian community. The annual Gineptin Ha'anen Taga Festival. or 'Taga Fest' is the largest gathering on Tinian in celebration of the island's history and cultural heritage. This past year's event featured a tribute to the legendary Chamorro Chief Taga. In 2021, the Council led efforts to document and promote this event and the experiences of both participants and onlookers. The Council published several videos featuring the event and its participants online. In May 2022, the Council signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Tinian Mayor Edwin Aldan to coordinate and support project activities in support of the Council's "Expanding & Interpreting the Tinian North Field National Historic Landmark with major funding support provided by the U.S. National Park Service, Battlefield Protection Program. This project will attempt to expand the boundaries of the Tinian NHL and feature interpretive signs at important historic sites, a project web site, and a supplemental curriculum for students to learn more about these sites and the history of Tinian as a major airfield, major WWII battle ground, and site for manufacturing and deploying nuclear bombs.

PROGRAM **PARTNERS**

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CNMI Public School System
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Guam Preservation Trust
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Marianas Variety Views & News
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at www.nmhcouncil.org/give

MESSAGE **FROM THE CHAIR**

This past year has been a significant milestone for our community as we celebrated our 32 anniversary and charted a new path for greater diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural sensitivity to promote the humanities through research, publications, dialogue, and programs on a variety of topics. Our efforts are all designed to examine the texture of our community and how we interact as human beings across time and space and between languages and cultures, which demands more of our understanding, imagination, and hope for charting our future in the context of an interconnected and rapidly changing world.

We are in the business of storytelling. And while that work may seem inconsequential to some, storytelling profoundly challenges our understanding of history, shapes our present identity and values, and influences the decisions we make today that have immediate and long standing implications for our future. The reverence in which we tell these stories is quintessential as it gives voice, visibility, and validation to our unique home islands and all who call them home. The council is committed to sharing the experiences of these diverse groups and individuals who shape our moral and civic character and social norms. We especially aim to capture a range of cultural expressions from individuals who are differently situated regarding their identity, history, and culture and look to capture the voices and stories of those who come from marginalized groups. With this, we aim to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the humanities and gain intercultural awareness and fluency with the people we share our home with.

As we move into a new era of technology experience and digital citizenship, we must ensure that tenets and values like family, respect, and social reciprocity remain a part of our cultural fabric. We must think about the future and ensure that our ancestry, customs, traditions, and values remain sacrosanct as we leverage the power of technology. And, as we grapple with and look to reconcile these challenges, we must also think about cultural stewardship and our identity and its significance within a global context. Our collective Pacific Island heritage needs a strong coalition for more voice and visibility. The world would benefit significantly from what we, the diverse and indigenous population of the Marianas, have to offer.

We do this work with respest. In Chamorro, "gof imputtånti na ta baba i hinasso-ta yan i kurason-ta ya ta ekkunguk i estorian i tåotåo siha. Espesiåt para ayu siha i ti man parehu na hinengge," which translates to it's vital that we open our hearts and listen to the stories of others, especially those who have different beliefs than our own.

As we continue to navigate the human experience of the people of the Marianas, we remain committed to our indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian values of inafa' maolek and tipiyeew - that is, to resolve conflict by caring for one another for the common good of all. I thank you all for your dedication and hard work in furthering the mission of the Humanities Council, and I look forward to another year of meaningful exploration of the human experience.

Yu'us ma'asi' and ghilisow,

Bobby Cruz
Dr. Bobby Cruz, Ed.D
Chair

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November 1, 2021 – October 31, 2022

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ACTIVITIES & **OUTCOMES**

Annual Progress Toward Achieving Strategic Goals

Santa Lourdes Shrine/Ranun Giuwen, As Teo, Saipan. Site of the 2022 CNMI Humanities Month Proclamation Signing Ceremon.

PRESERVING AND PROMOTING THE INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES AND CULTURES OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

■ Island Time is a children's show that teaches the Chamorro language through local actors, puppets, music, animations, and cultural demonstrations. The 40-minute film was first released on October 24, 2022 through a public film screening event at the American Memorial Park Visitors Theater.

■ On June 2, 2022, Languages of Pride in the Marianas featured a public panel discussion to examine Chamorro and Carolinian words and phrases that reflect the identity and experiences within the LGBTQA+ community. Presenters: Donald Mendiola, K'nilismer'fifi Tuhuweitae, Frankie Eliptico, and Christine Tudela.

■ The Council filmed interviews, presentations, and performances during the 2022 Gineptin Ha'ånen Taga Festival (October 21-23, 2022) to document and promote the significance of this annual event on Tinian. This year's festival featured a community procession to Taga Park with Chamorro chants and dance to celebrate the installation of a 20-foot statue of Chief Taga on the edge of the Taga House ruins.

■ The Council featured the work of the Tinian Cattlemen's Association as a last installment of its CNMI Cultural Icons series. Large posters and social media infographics featuring the significance of raising cattle on Tinian today were distributed to schools, libraries, and cultural organizations.

■ The 2022 Governor's Humanities Awards recognized community members for their efforts to promote and preserve the Chamorro and Carolinian languages and cultures. Señora Frances M. Sablan received a Lifetime Achievement Award in the Humanities for her lifelong commitment to advancing the Chamorro language and culture. She was a techa'n (prayer leader) i Nobenan Niño, a co-host for Prograåman i Taotao-ta Talk Show, a fino' Chamorro newspaper columnist, a contributer to the Chamorro Dictionary Revision Group, and a fa'fana'gui (teacher) of Chamorro dance and chants. Master Navigator Mario Benito of Pulowat received the Preservation of Traditional Cultural Practices Award for establishing "Sunday Sails" for the community and sharing his traditional navigational and sailing knowledge as an instructor for the 500 Sails Cultural Maritime Training Center. Sofina Q. Tomokane received the Preservation of Traditional Cultural Practices Award for continuing the tradition of labatoriu and for sharing her knowledge of weaving traditional Carolininan mwáár and lighatútúúr to mark special occasions within her family. April Q. Repeki received the Outstanding Humanities Teacher (In a Non-Classroom Setting) Award for choreographing and teaching Chamorro dance and sharing her passion and knowledge for traditional sailing. Gloria S. Rasiang received the Outstanding Humanities Teacher (In a Classroom Setting) for her commitment to excellence in teaching the Carolinian language and culture at Francisco M. Sablan Middle School.

■ The Council sponsored 11 events during CNMI Humanities Month beginning with a public proclamation signing ceremony featuring readings in the Chamorro and Carolinian languages by middle school students. Keynote speakers: Manny F. Borja and Cecilio Raiukiulipy explained the significance of the Santa Lourdes Shrine/ Ranun Giuwen to the Chamorro and Carolinian people.

■ The Rope of Tradition Program provided stipends for Chamorro and Carolinian cultural practitioners to demonstrate their knowledge of the language and culture in PSS Chamorro and Carolinian Language and Heritage Studies courses.

DEVELOPING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN LITERACY AND LANGUAGE

■ Motheread/Fatheread CNMI implemented new goals and an evaluation plan to mark its 23-year mission to help families create a literacy rich home environment. The program conducted adult courses and story exploring sessions with children in a curriculum designed to achieve this mission. By all measures, the program met goals focused on improving reading skills among both adults and children and; strengthening family bonds and promoting the CNMI's diverse cultural heritage through reading and storytelling.

■ My Marianas Writing Contest provided opportunities for high school students to write a personal narrative essay on this year's theme: food and family. Among the 63 essay submissions, *My First Love* by Aleia Hofschneider Santos placed first; Picky Eater by Lemusu Kit A. To'omata placed second and; *The Story of an Egg* by Honey J. Satur placed third.

INCREASING PUBLICATIONS AND SCHOLARSHIP IN THE HUMANITIES

■ My Marianas Writing Contest winning essays were published in a booklet online at www.nmhcouncil.org with print copies distributed to schools. These essays also appear as special features in print newspapers and online through the Marianas Variety News & Views *(https://www.saipantribune.com/index.php/the-story-of-an-egg/).*

■ The Council conducted a study to examine media literacy, media use and perceptions, and civic attitudes among CNMI residents with Dr. Francis Dalisay of the University of Guam. The results of this study are published in I Minagåhet – Ellet: Reporting the Truth in the Northern Mariana Islands report (https://www.nmhcouncil.org/mediasurvey2022/).

■ *Latte in the Marianas: by the community for the community*, a book that examines contemporary interpretations and expressions of the ancient latte stones of the Marianas, was distributed at a public launch event on April 23, 2022 at the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library. This work is a product of a grant awarded to Kelly G. Marsh (Taitano) and Jolie Liston.

■ Council Board Chair Dr. Bobby Cruz, Ex-Officio Chair Tracy Guerrero, and Executive Director Leo Pangelinan presented information about the history and impact of colonialism in the Marianas during a session at the 2022 National Humanities Conference in Los Angeles, California entitled, *Fakmåta: The Awakening of Pacific Islander Perspectives on the Impact of Colonialism on Culture.*

■ Dr. Beylul Solomon received a 2022 Governor's Humanities Award for Research and Publications in the Humanities for *Indigenous Rights: A Vehicle to Address Mental Health and Academic Outcomes in the CNMI a chapter published in a book entitled Learning and Reconciliation Through Indigenous Education in Oceania.*

PROMOTING DIVERSE EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES

■ The Council sponsored six weekly conversations with a diverse group of residents in A Part or Apart: Conversations on Belonging in the Marianas to pilot a civic reflection framework to build connections and understanding among participants, reflect on commonalities and differences, and encourage individuals to consider their civic duties.

■ Indigenous human rights lawyer, author, and Pulitzer Prize Finalist Julian Aguon took center stage at the American Memorial Park Theater to deliver the CNMI Humanities Month Keynote Address. Mr. Aguon expounded on excerpts from his newly published book, *The Properties of Perpetual Light*, during his talk to engage the audience with what he describes as "the work of bearing witness wrestling with the questions of one's day, telling the children the truth."

■ Marianas Stories featured Facebook Live interviews of people in The Marianas with extraordinary stories: building the karetan guaka (traditional bullcart) with Eusebio Borja; making coconut rope with Valerio Mality; reviving åchu' atupat (stone slinging) with Keith King-Nabors; a 50-year career as a baker with Ernesto Lineses; the history and features of caves in The Marianas with Fred Camacho; children with extra energy with Andrea Benavente; filing the role of mayor and proxy chief for the island of Poluwat with Mario Benito; working for the Center for Living Independently with Hannah Igisaiar; making papaya turnover and other Chamorro delicacies with Mary Naputi; Participating in the 2022 Pacific Mini Games with Soarin Oh and; news reporting and editing in the CNMI with Zaldy Dandan.

■ Your Humanities Half-hour continues to feature weekly radio shows every Sunday at 11:30am on Power 99-97.9 FM to bring listeners into interviews that examine a wide range of topics. The past year, YHHH featured 63 guests. The YHHH Listener Survey was deployed during the month of October 2022 to obtain data about audiences, topics of interest, and areas for improvement.

■ *Håyi Man Chamorro* a personal narrative by Executive Director Leo Pangelinan featuring elements of contemporary Chamorro culture and the Council's film, *Navigating Cultures: Seafaring Returns to the CNMI*, were displayed in the *BIBA CHAMORU: Cultura e identidad en las islas Marianas* exhibit at the Museo Nacional de Antropologia in Madrid, Spain (November 17, 2021 – March 6, 2022).

■ The Governor proclaimed September 2022 as We Will Never Forget: Field of Heroes Month and the Council participated with a keynote address by the Chair, Dr. Bobby Cruz and Program Coordinator Naomi Tudela as emcee. Proceeds from activities sponsored by the Tan Siu Lin Foundation are donated to the Council for veteran and first responder programs.

■ The annual Sengebau Poetry Competition was held during CNMI Humanities Month with 12 competitors representing 5 schools. Kagman High School seniors, D'anahlei Rodriguez and Juneya Quitano placed first in the senior division for their original poem titled, Woven Within. Francisco M. Sablan Middle school 8th grade student, Yu Rong Jiang, placed first for reciting, Searching, by Valentine N. Sengebau."

BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY FOR HUMANITIES PROJECTS TO THRIVE

■ The Council's "Commonwealth Center for the Humanities" project plan received an award for most innovative project and placed among highest priority programs to receive a grant for architectural and engineering designs and construction of a 5,000 sq. ft. facility.

■ Roberto E. Santos, Archive and Records Manager facilitated Finding Yourself in an Archive at the PIALA conference on December 6, 2022 which featured the Council's Digital Archival Platform and its relevance to the community.

■ The Council subgranted a total of $203,935 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to help nonprofit organizations prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from the coronavirus.

■ The Council collaborated with Humanities Guåhan to engage members of the CNMI community in Civic Reflections Facilitator Training to build local capacity for facilitating community dialogue which use reflective reading and conversations to open up important questions, expand imagination about future action, and build bridges of understanding in the midst of differences. Participants: Beth Demapan, Bryan Manabat, Catherine Perry, and Leo Pangelinan.

■ The Council was awarded a CNMI ARPA grant ($225,000) to support public access to digital media, increase capacity for outdoor humanities events and exhibits, and provide staff training and resources to adapt to the coronavirus pandemic."

2022 NEH SELF-ASSESSMENT SITE VISIT

The Council engages in a 5-year self-assessment cycle in partnership with the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Upon submission of a self-assessment report, the Council hosted an on-site evaluation visit between October 24-26, 2023 by Karen Kenton, Director of NEH Federal/State Partnerships; Mark Longo, Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives and Development Administrative Management at the California Institute of Technology; and Dr. James Viernes, Deputy Director of the Pacific Islands Development Program.

FINANCIAL DATA

FY 2022 Revenue ($856,398)

PRIVATE CASH DONATIONS	$62,626
COMMUNITY GRANT IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS	$238,893
ALL OTHER IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS	$31,948
PROGRAM INCOME	$1,522
CNMI ARPA GRANT	$100,000

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

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