



Utah Multicultural Commission
Meeting Minutes
August 11, 2026 | 11–12:30 p.m.
Utah State Capitol - Elk Room | Google Meet
Unapproved

Members: Tyler Clancy, Emmie Gardner, Rhiana Medina, Shawn Newell, Kevin Nguyen, Nune Phillips, Trhas Tafere, Sydney Jorgeson, Rich Nye.

Absent: Luna Banuri, Meredith Lam, Lita Sagato

Guests: Katrice Jensen, Colton Judd, Lily Ward, Hannah Revis.

Staff: Eddy Thompson, Igor Limansky, Dustin Khong, Kat Potter, Heidi Tak.

Call to Order / Welcome: Nuna Phillips and Rihanna Medina

Call for a review of the March meeting minutes.

Roll Call Vote motioned by Commissioner Newell and seconded by Commissioner Gardner

Yeas – 9

Emmie Gardner
Rhiana Medina
Shawn Newell
Kevin Nguyen
Tyler Clancy
Nune Phillips
Trhas Tafere
Sydney Jorgeson
Van Nguyen

Nays – 0

Absent – 4

Luna Banuri
Meredith Lam
Rich Nye
Lita Sagato

Call for a review of the June meeting minutes.

Roll Call Vote motioned by Commissioner Gardner and seconded by Commissioner Newell.

Yeas – 9

Emmie Gardner
Rhiana Medina
Shawn Newell
Kevin Nguyen
Tyler Clancy
Nune Phillips
Trhas Tafere
Sydney Jorgeson
Van Nguyen

Nays – 0

Absent – 4

Luna Banuri
Meredith Lam
Rich Nye
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Commissioner Highlight :

- Commissioner Newell: Shared his personal background as part of the school desegregation efforts in Southern California during the 1960s, noting how that lived experience serves as the catalyst and mission for the community work he does today.

Utah Department of Multicultural Affairs Update:

- Director Limansky thanked our Commissioners for their presence, participation, and commitment to the Multicultural Commission. Kat Potter was introduced as the new commissioner for the department, and Heidi was named the new deputy commissioner.
- **Magnify Utah Community Quest:** Dustin Kong shared updates on this passport program designed to introduce people to multicultural communities, local businesses, museums, and organizations across Utah. The initial print run of 7,500 copies sold out completely. A digital PDF version is accessible online, featuring QR codes that link to curated collections of local businesses in partnership with Yelp.

Co-Chair Update

- Governor Cox officially approved Commissioners Nuna Phillips and Rihanna Medina as the new co-chairs of the commission.
- **Criminal Justice Representation:** Van Nguyen was appointed to replace Tom Ross on the commission following structural changes that formed the new Department of Criminal Justice.

Literacy Initiative & Key Presentations

- **Reach Out and Read:** Katrina Jensen presented on this evidence-based pediatric literacy program that utilizes regular well-child visits (from ages six months to five years) to distribute free books to families. Backed by an Intermountain healthcare grant, the program distributed books to 105,714 children across 111 clinics last year. Providers use the books as clinical tools to evaluate developmental milestones and encourage screen-free family engagement.

Subcommittee Breakouts and Next Steps

- **Data Subcommittee:**
 - Commissioner Nye shared widening performance gaps among student subgroups. While statewide student reading benchmarks hover around 70%, multilingual learners and students with disabilities lag roughly 30 points behind.
 - **Community Trust & Strategy:** Commission members debated the challenges of building systemic trust in underserved communities. The discussion emphasized that public schools cannot resolve these complex disparities alone; instead, it requires collective community outreach, direct relationship-building, and targeted academic toolkits, such as multilingual learning endorsements for educators.
- **Programs Subcommittee:**
 - Commissioner Newell shared that the storytelling subcommittee has created a contact list of various community leaders and partners to start building relationships and collaboration.
 - The Trust Barrier: He emphasized that the greatest challenge for the subcommittee is a deep degree of mistrust toward institutional systems within many diverse communities. For example, he noted that at

- Title I schools, it is common for only one or two parents to show up for parent-teacher nights due to this lack of trust.
- Engaging Key Leaders: He stated that the most impactful strategy to break through this barrier is to intentionally pull in key local community leaders, build their trust first, and have them pass information along to their respective community members.
 - Grassroots Power: He highlighted that the true power for expanding engagement lies within organic community settings, such as local churches, community clubs, or smaller group meetings.
- **Storytelling Subcommittee:**
 - Commissioner Gardner shared the subcommittee has been working to amass a comprehensive list of different community players and partners.
 - **Collaborative Focus:** They are focused on identifying literacy-adjacent initiatives—such as Katrina Jensen's healthcare-based work with Intermountain Health—and exploring how a nonprofit structure can help build a collaborative bridge between schools, families, and kids.
 - **Call to Action for Commissioners:** She directed the commission to a shared spreadsheet in their Google Docs, noting that the current list was generated from the subcommittee's existing contacts. She requested that all commissioners review the document and directly add any outside contacts or successful community programs they know of to avoid recreating the wheel and better leverage proven experiences.

Future Planning

- **Next Meeting:** The commission scheduled its next full meeting for October 6th at 11:00 AM. Subcommittees will continue their work independently during the alternating off-months.