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2010 INTERIM REPORT



SOCIETY FOR SOUTH EAST ASIAN COMMUNITIES, INC.

OUR BEGINNINGS

The Society for Southeast Communities, Inc. (also known as SSEAC), started through an informal meeting of a few people (Victor Diem, Matilde Tayawa, Tien Vu, Lonie Martin & Farib Sos) from the Vietnamese, Filipino and Cambodian communities, which was facilitated by Murali Kumar of the Ministry of Social Development. This meeting was brought about by Murali's work at MSD on capacity-building, social inclusion and collaboration to empower communities. The success of the South East Asian Night Market held in 2008 also provided an impetus to collaborate with the Southeast Asian communities.

The first meeting was held on 29th of May, 2009. Then in the second meeting held in July 2009, the group agreed to form what was called a 'Reference Group' to brainstorm on the future engagement mechanism for the Southeast Asian communities, particularly in Wellington.

The 'Reference Group' undertook an environmental scan on the issues, needs and opportunities for the Southeast Asian communities and came up with the following observations:

- There was a disconnect between those who have been in New Zealand for quite a long time and the newly arrived migrants; therefore, a need to assess how the gap can be addressed and how the resources and connections of the well-established migrants can be utilised to put forth the issues of the unheard voices and of the newly arrived migrants;
- Different Southeast communities were hesitant to intermingle with other communities and would keep to themselves due to religious differences, cultural differences and language barrier;
- Southeast Asian culture is very rich, which needs to be shared to the wider NZ community. This was exemplified by the positive comments about the performances during the ASEAN Night Market;
- There is an increasing number of ethnic communities from the Southeast Asian nations within the Wellington region, which is estimated to be about 15-20%, and that they are seen to be contributing positively to Wellington's culturally diverse image; and,
- There is not much understanding and knowledge about the Southeast Asian culture, and their presence not acknowledged within the wider Wellington community.

With these observations, the 'Reference Group' agreed that there is value in making the presence of the ethnic communities from Southeast Asia within the Wellington region known; that there should be one Southeast Asian voice; that a critical mass is important for that voice to be heard; and that a more formal group of nations/communities will provide a forum for discussion of issues, showcasing and promoting of the diverse cultures, addressing the gap between those who are well established migrants and the newly arrived ones, and promoting capacity and capability-building of ethnic communities.

After six meetings, the small group grew in number, from 6 to 19 now, representing most of the Southeast Asian communities in Wellington. And on 27 November 2009, the group was formally incorporated.

MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

The agreed mission of the organisation is to facilitate and build capacity of Southeast Asian communities so that they can make optimal contribution to New Zealand.

There are six objectives identified and the numbering indicates the prioritisation accorded to each of the objectives. These are:

1. To foster interrelationship and better understanding among Southeast Asian communities;
2. To advocate for social, cultural and economic issues of Southeast Asian communities;

3. To raise the profile of Southeast Asian communities in New Zealand through facilitating dialogues and cultural events;
4. To collaborate with other communities and organisations to contribute to NZ diversity;
5. To educate and assist Southeast Asian communities better integrate within the New Zealand society; and,
6. To assist in humanitarian efforts in Southeast Asia.

INTERIM OFFICERS

On 23 February 2010, we elected our interim officers to keep the Society up and running. The interim members of the Executive Committee were Victor Diem (Chairman), Chris Folkes (Vice-Chairman), Matilde Tayawa (Secretary), Lonie Martin (Asst. Secretary), Ngoc Nguyen (Treasurer), Michael Mathieson (Asst. Treasurer), Ana Rolls and Nino Triono (Cultural Committee) and Pauline Cheah (Youth Development). The interim officers met to further the Society's plans and programmes.

PAST ACTIVITIES

Since the SEA Society's incorporation, we have done the following:

- Opened our bank account with the ASB Bank;
- Raised our profile at the ASEAN Cultural Night held on 8 May 2010 at the Little Theatre, Lower Hutt;
- Submitted our application for charitable status with the Charities Commission; and
- Submitted a grant application with the Settling-In fund of the Ministry of Social Development.

FUTURE PLANS AND ACTIVITIES

Some of the planned activities in the next six months are the following:

- Election of Executive Committee members and changes in the Constitution;
- Southeast Asian youth get-together;
- Emergency preparedness seminar;
- Marae visit;
- Fund-raising activities (e.g. film showing); and,
- Cultural night (to include Ms. Southeast Asia beauty pageant).

With the formal setting up of the Executive Committee, we hope to move forward and work on the realisation of our mission and objectives.

Victor Diem
Interim Chairman

Matilde Tayawa
Interim Secretary