The Karen People

By Pa Naw Dee
This presentation will give a general overview of the Karen people, background, issues and how do we overcome the problem to get well integrated into Nebraska society
Pronounced
Ka-REN
When I wear a "Happy Karen New Year T-Shirt" my English speaking friends ask me “What is the Karen New Year Event? Is it a family event or an organization event?”
Karen People are

LADY’S NAME

POLITICAL PARTY

NOT
When we go to the Doctor’s office they ask "What language do you speak?" We say "We speak Karen."
Different Language and Culture
• Even though we have big refugee numbers in this area, if we compare to the local community, we are a relatively small group, few people know about us.

• So if a police officer, health care officer and local community members know us they can choose the right language and serve us better.
Brief History of the Karen People
Karen People In Burma
Karen People In Thailand

Location

Second Largest ethnic group in Burma and Thailand
1949 – Culver War Started
1975 – Refugees began to escape
2005
KRC, IDP – Internally Displaced People
450,000
UNHCR, Refugee – 150,000
USA – 75,000 People in 41 States in USA
NE – 6500 People
Health Issues
Health Issues - TB (tuberculosis)
Arthritis

Joint inflammation causes pain and stiffness
Health Issues - Hepatitis B
• We do have those kinds of diseases in Burma but not any more in the USA.

• We don't have a lot of food in our villages but we have a lot of food here so we need to know the difference between good and bad food. Junk food, Pop, and meat can effect our health.

• We can buy a lot of alcohol and if we drink too much of it we get a problem.
Health Issues - Mental Health
Health Issues - Mental Health

• In Burma - torture, rape, war and injuries can cause mental health problems.

• In USA - better life, safe life, but unfamiliar with English language, western culture, urban life, rules and laws. The reality in the USA is harder than we think. Stresses could give us depression, and mental health problems.
Life Difference - Village and City

Our village

Our city
Life Difference – Fishing & Hunting

- No hunting license
- No fishing license
- Unfamiliar with laws on driving, hunting/fishing
The Difference between house in my village and house in Lincoln

- No rent (everyone has a house)
- No Mortgage payment
- No Electricity (no bill)
- No Telephone (no bill- personal visits)
Life Difference - Job for Living

Farming

Factory
In our village the family works together and we don't see family break up or divorce. But in Nebraska many families are struggling with their new life: the husband and wife go to their jobs at different times and the children go to school at a different time. We could see many families get break up and many families struggling to be have a happy and healthy family life. Stresses could give us depression and mental health problems.
How to overcome

With our local community support, and our Karen community and office support we can all achieve a better life.
The Karen Society of Nebraska

- Omaha
- Lincoln
- Crete
- Grand Island
- Norfolk
- Madison
- Cozad
The Karen Society of Nebraska Board and Committee Members
Karen Society of Nebraska's Mission

• The Karen Society of Nebraska's mission is to help refugees and immigrants from Burma build and sustain a high quality of life and to achieve self-sufficiency in the state of Nebraska.

• www.karenksn.org
Three Main Events

The Karen Society of Nebraska celebrate three events to promote family unity, preserve our culture.
KAREN NEW YEAR EVENT
Martyr's Day
Karen Wrist Tying Ceremony
Activities in Event
Local agency and business tables
Special guest speakers and cultural show
Graduation Ceremony
Participate in local events
Participate in government activities
We work together to help immigrants achieve "The Good Life" in Nebraska.
KSN Office

A place that brings our community together and serves as a meeting point is our community offices. They are the hub where we support each other and lead our community forward toward achieving ultimate self-sufficiency.
KSN office?
Troy, 4/8/2017
OMAHA OFFICE

• 816 N 44th St, #3
  Omaha, NE, 68131
  Phone: 402 505 3482
  Fax: 402 505 4674

• donated by

Landmark Group
YOUR INTELLIGENT REAL ESTATE EXPERT
LINCOLN OFFICE

- 1527 S 20th St, #13
  LINCOLN, NE, 68502
  Phone: 402 261 6614

- donated by
Services in the Office

- Many refugees visit the offices for help reading and understanding the wide variety of letters they receive in the mail, filling out application forms, setting up appointments, finding employment, receiving immigration services and using the computer lab. We serve all refugees and immigrants from Burma (Myanmar) who now call Nebraska their home.
Volunteer 11- 3 (Mon –Fri)

• Monday – Martha & Mu Hser
• Tuesday - Susan H.
• Wednesday - Abby
• Thursday – Cheryl
• Friday – Martha

• Lon provides transportation
Agency also come and serve.

- CFPIN 9 AM-11 AM (Mon – Thu)
  - ESL Class
  - Social adjustment class.
- People's Health Center (Fri)
Nebraska Wesleyan University Students volunteer every quarter to teach basic computer
UNL – Nursing Student Volunteers every quarter
Invited DHHS for training
Invited police to speak
Fundraising twice a year
KSN Office

The KSN is a bridge between the refugee community, resources, community organizations and agencies. The office is our Home and belongs to us. People in our community are not afraid to come. Our **office is small** but represents our community support and how our community can become well integrated into Nebraska Society.
In conclusion

• We have a better life and better health care system if we compare to our villages in Burma. But the language barrier and social issues can limit our personal ability to have a healthy family life. Because of the refugee experience we have learned to be patient, work hard, be satisfied with what we have.
• If you want to be a part of the our community integration and learn more about our community, please come to our office.
• We do our best to help. Assist anybody from the Karen community to be able to learn and understand the values and the laws of this country in order to integrate into Nebraska Society.
Thank You