



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Asian American and Pacific Islanders Commission

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Massachusetts Asian American & Pacific Islanders (AAPI) Commission

First-Ever Cape Cod Listening Session

Meeting Notes

[Full Meeting Recording](https://youtu.be/l1ap7yfZMjU)

youtu.be/l1ap7yfZMjU

Date & Time: Saturday, August 2, 2025; 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM EST

Location: Eastham Public Library – Greg Turner Meeting Room

Address: 190 Samoset Rd, Eastham, MA 02642

The Massachusetts AAPI Commission held its first listening session on Cape Cod to hear directly from local Asian American and Pacific Islander residents and allies. Participants included community leaders, educators, artists, librarians, advocates, and residents with diverse backgrounds and connections to the Cape. The session aimed to understand unique community challenges, celebrate cultural contributions, and explore opportunities for stronger representation and support. Overall, the meeting served as a platform for sharing experiences, identifying challenges and strengths, and brainstorming actionable steps to support the AAPI community and broader diversity on Cape Cod.

Attendees:

Community Organizations & Nonprofits

- Erica Tso Haidas – Founder & Owner of Belonging Books (co-creator of *Un erased*)
- Tara Vargas Wallace – Founder, Amplified POC
- Leo Blandford – Director of Health Equity & Community Impact at Outer Cape Health Services
- Leslie Dominguez-Santos – Human Rights Coordinator for the Barnstable County Human Rights Advisory Commission
- Sarah Korjeff – Historic Preservation Specialist/Planner at the Cape Cod Commission
- Terry Gallagher – Eastham Delegate for Barnstable County Assembly, Freelance Japanese Translator
- Peggy Chan – Public health professional (retired)



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Media & Arts

- Parker Mumford – Journalist, Provincetown Independent
- Indira Ganesan – DJ/Novelist with WOMR
- MiYoung Sohn – Visual Artist, Fine Arts Work Center Fellow & Coordinator
- Manx Taiki Magyar – Owner of Big Tree Video Productions (co-creator of *Un erased*)

Education

- Kathy Bent – Chair, Barnstable Public Schools Committee; Business Dept. Chair, Cape Cod Community College
- Devon Evans – Assistant Library Director at Brewster Ladies' Library

AAPIC

- Shubhecchha Dhaurali – Program & Research Director
- Meena Bharath – Interim Executive Director
- Jennifer Rubin – Commissioner

Meeting Notes:

Introductions:

- Attendees shared their backgrounds, cultural traditions, and connections to Cape Cod, highlighting the diversity within the AAPIC and broader community.

Key Themes Discussed:

- **Isolation and Belonging** – Many participants described feelings of isolation and being perceived as outsiders, especially in a predominantly white, rural area. Building intentional community spaces, such as Belonging Books and Amplify POC, was seen as crucial for fostering connection and resilience.
- **Representation and Narrative Change** – Cape Cod's dominant colonial narrative overlooks Indigenous and immigrant histories. Participants stressed the need to highlight AAPIC contributions and broaden the community narrative.
- **Systemic Challenges:** The group discussed issues such as racism, microaggressions, lack of representation in leadership roles, and the burden placed on individuals (including children) to address discrimination. There was consensus that these are systemic issues requiring broader, community-based solutions.
- **Health and Social Equity** – Data shows poorer health outcomes for non-white residents. Attendees called for more inclusive definitions of health, culturally competent services, and equity-focused policymaking.
- **Housing and Economic Barriers** – Affordable housing shortages and tourism-driven economies make it difficult for AAPIC families, artists, and workers to stay and thrive.
- **Data and Visibility:** Challenges in collecting accurate racial and ethnic data were highlighted, including distrust of government surveys and the limitations of census



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categories. This impacts the ability to advocate for resources and understand community needs.

- **Funding and Sustainability:** Participants noted the lack of funding for grassroots and volunteer-led initiatives, the difficulty in accessing grants, and the need for more equitable compensation for community work, especially in the arts and nonprofit sectors.
- **Community Resources and Strengths:** Despite challenges, the group identified sources of strength such as local organizations, cultural events (e.g., Lunar New Year), and emerging networks. Libraries and bookstores were recognized as important community hubs.

Future, Next Steps, & Opportunities

- **Ideas for the Future:** Suggestions included regular, rotating community gatherings, educational events to increase cultural awareness, forming student groups, and leveraging existing networks for outreach. The importance of consistency, inclusivity, and collaboration with local institutions and legislators was emphasized.
- **Stay Engaged with AAPIC:** The AAPIC Commission will summarize and share the outcomes of this session with legislators and on social media. There is interest in building ongoing, regionally-focused programming and increasing AAPIC visibility and infrastructure on Cape Cod. Participants are encouraged to stay engaged through the Commission's website, monthly meetings, and local initiatives.
 - **Newsletter Sign Up:** aapicommission.org/newsletter
 - **Instagram:** @aapicommission
 - **Facebook:** facebook.com/aapicommission
 - **2025 APIA Community Survey Report:**
aapicommission.org/home/programs-and-advocacy/2025-apia-community-survey
 - **Overall Website:** aapicommission.org

Questions?

Contact Event Organizer & Facilitator

Shubhecchha Dhaurali (*pronounced Sue-betcha Dur-all-e*)

Program & Research Director

AAPIC Commission of MA

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