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# An In-Depth Socioeconomic Profile of Asian Americans in Spokane County, Washington and Kootenai County, Idaho

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It is with great pleasure that I introduce you to the monograph series of the Institute for Public Policy and Economic Analysis from Eastern Washington University. I hope this research from Eastern faculty sheds new light on a particular aspect of life in the Inland Northwest.

The goal of the Institute is for our highly-qualified faculty to provide analysis and data that are relevant to your lives. The vision of a regional university that our Board of Trustees has adopted speaks directly to the notion of relevance to the Inland Northwest. Without relevance to the communities that make up this dynamic and beautiful corner of our country, our university is not fully living up to its mission.

Of course, our main mission at Eastern Washington University is to educate students to the highest levels possible, for the sake of their own careers, the future of the communities in which they will reside, and ultimately their growth as individuals. An increasingly important mission of Eastern is also to encourage faculty research. Not only does this help keep our faculty professionally current, but makes them better teachers, through the sharing of research opportunities with their students.

However, not all faculty research at Eastern need be written for professional audiences. In this day of increasingly specialization and complexity, I see an imperative for an informed citizenry. What better source can our region find to translate this knowledge into jargon-free, accessible information than a university like Eastern?

Since coming here five years ago, I am convinced there is a level of excellence at Eastern Washington University that is worthy of recognition and support. The university is a catalyst in the progress of the region – its economy, culture and way of life. The Board of Trustees and I regard the Institute for Public Policy and Economic Analysis as a striking example of our commitment to this region. My office and that of the Institute director welcome all comments on how we might better serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. M. Jordan'.

Stephen M. Jordan, Ph.D.



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# I. Executive Summary

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**T**his monograph presents the first research study that specifically investigates the current status of Asian Americans in the Inland Northwest. Using data from the 2000 Census, it provides an in-depth socioeconomic analysis of the seven largest Asian American populations in Spokane County, Washington, and Kootenai County, Idaho. The following are some of the key findings from the research:

## **Spokane County**

- The Asian American population in Spokane County is heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity and socioeconomic characteristics.
- The Asian American population in Spokane County increased by 28% between 1990 and 2000.
- Japanese, Vietnamese, and Chinese, in that order, are the three largest Asian ethnic groups in Spokane County; Vietnamese form the fastest growing ethnic group, with its population doubling between 1990 and 2000.
- About two-thirds of the Asian American population is foreign-born, with nearly half of them having entered the U.S. between 1990 and March 2000.
- A substantial proportion of Asian Americans is new to Spokane County – close to a quarter of the Asian American population lived in a different county in 1995.
- Median incomes of Asian Americans are lower than that of the general population.
- Among the seven Asian ethnic groups, Asian Indians have the highest income level above that of the general population, whereas Hmong have the lowest income level.
- Median household and family incomes of Asian Americans are lower in Spokane County than Asian Americans in the state and in the U.S.
- Asian Americans, on the whole, have a higher individual and family poverty rate than the general population of Spokane County and Asian Americans in Washington and the U.S.
- Asian Americans, ages 16 or above, have a lower labor force participation rate and a higher unemployment rate compared to the general population of Spokane County.
- Among Asian American groups, Hmong and Japanese Americans (age 16 or above) have high unemployment rates, which can be partially explained by the age structure and school enrollment rates of the subpopulations.

- Compared to the general population, a higher percentage of Asian Americans has at least a bachelor's degree, yet a smaller proportion has a high school diploma.
- Chinese and Asian Indians, 25 years or older, have the highest percentage of college degrees, whereas Hmong and Vietnamese have the lowest percentage.
- The share of Asian Americans in managerial and professional occupations is similar to that of the general population, with Asian Indians, Chinese and Japanese Americans showing higher shares than the general population.
- Compared to the general population of Spokane, Asian Americans tend to be more concentrated in service and production-related than in sales and office occupations, especially for Hmong and Vietnamese Americans.
- Income and educational attainment of Asian Americans rose between 1990 and 2000 while unemployment and family poverty rate climbed considerably in the same decade.

## **Kootenai County**

- Although the Asian American population in Kootenai County remains small, it has doubled between 1990 and 2000.
- Filipino, Japanese, and Chinese make up the three largest Asian American groups in Kootenai County.
- Compared to Spokane County, Asian Americans in Kootenai County are more likely to be native-born and speak English only.
- Compared to all of Kootenai County, a higher proportion of Asian Americans has a bachelor's degree, yet a smaller proportion of its adult population has completed a high school education.
- Asian Americans have a higher median family income than Kootenai County's general population, but lower median household and per capita income.
- The poverty rate of Asian American individuals and families is similar to that of Kootenai County's general population.
- Asian Americans have a slightly higher labor force participation rate and lower unemployment rate than Kootenai County's general population.
- Compared to the general population of Kootenai County, Asian Americans are much more concentrated in managerial and professional occupations.
- Between 1990 and 2000, income and educational attainment of Asian Americans rose, while both unemployment and poverty rates dropped.

## II. Introduction

**F**rom the mines along the Columbia River to the farms in the Yakima Valley, Asian Americans have been an integral part of the Inland Northwest's historic landscape. Waves of Asian migration began as early as the mid-1800s when Chinese immigrants came to eastern Washington in search for gold. The story of migration continues, as the Immigration Reform Act of 1965 has provided opportunities for professionals from Asian countries to work in the high-tech industries and for others to reunite with their family members in the U.S. In the 1970s, fleeing from political unrests in their homelands, refugees from Southeast Asia started their new lives in Spokane. More recently, Asian Americans are drawn to the Inland Northwest from other parts of the U.S. by the region's technology and medical sectors<sup>1</sup>.

In short, the history of Asian Americans has manifested itself in the Inland Northwest as much as in other parts of the country. Despite their small numbers, Asian Americans have been, and will continue to be, vital

members of our local communities. Yet, aside from a handful of historical studies, very little research has been devoted to examine systematically the social and economic conditions of Asian Americans in the region. Recently, two monographs published by EWU's Institute for Public Policy and Economic Analyses have called to attention the heterogeneity and complexity of the Asian American populations<sup>2</sup>.

The purpose of this study is to create an in-depth profile of the Asian American population in Spokane and Kootenai Counties through the examination of a range of social and economic indicators. To help identify the social and economic forces that shape the experiences of Asian Americans in the region, this study also includes comparative analyses concerning:

- Asian Americans and the general population in Spokane and Kootenai Counties;
- Asian American sub-populations in Spokane County on selective socioeconomic indicators (parallel analyses are not available for Kootenai County due to its small Asian American population<sup>3</sup>);
- Asian American populations at county and state levels;
- Changes between Census 2000 and Census 1990.

Data presented in this study were collected in the 2000 and 1990 Census. The analysis utilizes 100% population data from Summary Files 1 and 2<sup>4</sup> and 1-in-6 sample data from the Summary Files 3 and 4<sup>5</sup>. All summary file data are available through the American Fact Finder at the official website (<http://factfinder.census.gov>) of the US Census Bureau. Census 2000 defines "Asian" as people having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent<sup>6</sup>. It should be noted that the Census 2000 statistics presented in this study concerning "Asian Americans" include only individuals who reported only "Asian" as their race, labeled as "Asian Alone" by the Census Bureau.

*Yet, aside from a handful of historical studies, very little research has been devoted to examine systematically the social and economic conditions of Asian Americans in the region.*



### III. General Demographic Characteristics

Spokane ranked seventh among all counties in the number of Asian Americans in the State of Washington, with a total of 7,870 Asian Americans<sup>7</sup> in 2000. This total represented an increase of 28% from 6,148<sup>8</sup> in 1990. Following Hispanics, Asian Americans form the second largest racial minority in Spokane County, constituting 1.9% of its population. If multiracial individuals with Asian ancestry are included, the Asian

American population increased substantially, to 10,987, or 2.6%, of the Spokane County. While the Asian American population in Kootenai County remains relatively small, it grew by 115%, to 539 in 2000. Including individuals of multi-racial backgrounds, the 2000 Asian American population of Kootenai County increased to 908, or 0.8% of the population.

**Table 1: Racial Composition of Spokane and Kootenai Counties, Census 2000**

Racial Group	Spokane County		Kootenai County	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
White persons, not of Hispanic/Latino Origin	375,427	89.8%	102,570	94.4%
Black or African American Alone	6,659	1.6%	183	0.2%
American Indian and Alaska Native Alone	5,874	1.4%	1,334	1.2%
<b>Asian Alone</b>	<b>7,870</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>0.5%</b>
<b>Asian Alone or In Combination with One or More Races</b>	<b>10,987</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>908</b>	<b>0.8%</b>
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	666	0.2%	74	0.1%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	11,567	2.8%	2,528	2.3%
Other Race Alone	3,410	0.8%	643	0.6%
Two or More Race	11,553	2.8%	1,744	1.6%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>417,939</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>108,685</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The Asian population in the U.S. is made up of ethnic groups with diverse cultures and histories. In order to have an accurate understanding of Asian Americans in the Inland Northwest, it is important to examine its

subpopulations separately. As Table 2 shows, Vietnamese American has been the fastest growing Asian American group in Spokane County; its population doubled from 730 in 1990 to 1,500 in 2000.

**Table 2: Asian American Population by Ethnicity, Spokane County, 1990-2000**

Ethnicity	2000		Spokane County 1990		Change '90-'00	Washington 2000
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage		
Asian Indian	403	5.1%	332	5.4%	21.4%	7.4%
Chinese	1,102	14.0%	805	13.1%	36.9%	18.6%
Filipino	1,042	13.2%	602	9.8%	73.1%	20.3%
Hmong	337	4.3%	443	7.2%	-23.9%	0.5%
Japanese	1,686	21.4%	1,814	29.5%	-7.1%	11.2%
Korean	946	12.0%	716	11.6%	32.1%	14.5%
Laotian	196	2.5%	291	4.7%	-32.6%	2.5%
Vietnamese	1,500	19.1%	730	11.9%	105.5%	14.3%
Thai	150	1.9%	213	3.5%	-29.6%	1.2%
Other Asians*	508	6.5%	202	3.3%	151.5%	9.08%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>7,870</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>6,148</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>28.0%</b>	<b>322,335</b>

\*“Other Asians” include individuals who belong to an Asian ethnic group not included in the categories above as well as individuals who identified more than one Asian ethnicity (e.g. Chinese and Japanese).

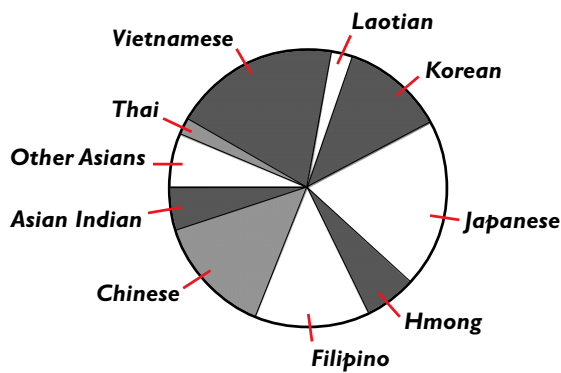
The second and third fastest growing groups have been Filipino Americans, with a 73% increase, and Chinese Americans, with a 37% increase. On the other hand, the Japanese American population experienced a 7% decline from 1,814 to 1,686 within the same decade, although it remains to be the largest Asian American group in Spokane County. Over the decade, three smaller Asian American subpopulations – Hmong, Laotian, and Thai – decreased by 24%, 33% and 30%, respectively.

Despite its small population, Asian Americans in Kootenai County are diverse, as Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese are all present in the area. The largest group is Filipinos, who made up 28.2% of the Asian American population in the county, followed by Japanese, at 19.5%, and Chinese, at 14.7%. Furthermore, as Table 3 shows, all of these Asian American subpopulations grew substantially between 1990 and 2000, ranging from a 75% increase for Japanese Americans to a 200% growth for Asian Indians.

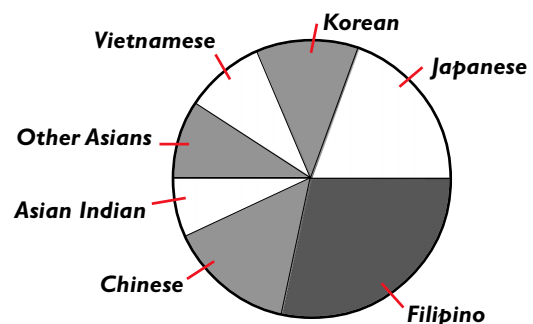
**Table 3: Asian American Population by Ethnicity: Kootenai County, 1990-2000**

	2000		Kootenai County 1990		Change '90-'00	Idaho 2000
	Count	%	Count	%		
Asian Indian	37	6.9%	12	4.8%	208.3%	10.8%
Chinese	79	14.7%	39	15.5%	102.6%	18.7%
Filipino	152	28.2%	67	26.7%	126.9%	13.6%
Japanese	105	19.5%	60	23.9%	75.0%	22.2%
Korean	65	12.1%	29	11.6%	124.1%	10.5%
Vietnamese	51	9.5%	0	0.0%	—	11.1%
Other Asians	50	9.3%	44	17.5%	13.6%	13.0%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>114.7%</b>	<b>11,889</b>

**Figure 1: Asian American Population Shares by Ethnicity: Spokane County, 2000**



**Figure 2: Asian American Population Shares by Ethnicity: Kootenai County, 2000**



## Age

For Spokane County, the median age in 2000 for Asian Americans was 29.5 years, six years younger than the median age for its general population. The same characteristic is found at the national level: Asian Americans tend to be younger than the total U.S. population. In contrast, the median age of Asian Americans in Kootenai County, at 36.2 years, is almost identical to the median age of the general population, at 36.1 years.

A look at the median ages of the subpopulations in 2000 reveals considerable variation among Asian American groups in Spokane County. Hmong was the youngest Asian American group, with a median age of 16.9, whereas Japanese was the oldest, with a median age of 35.2. For both groups, there were substantial differences in age – about 11 years – between men and women. Table 4 shows a median age of 12.3 years in Hmong men in 2000, compared to 23.3 years for Hmong women, while Japanese men had a median age of 28.0 years, compared to 39.6 years for Japanese women.

**Table 4: Median Age by Ethnicity, Spokane County, State of Washington and the U.S.: 2000**

	Spokane County			Washington	U.S.
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Total
Asian Indian	28.3	28.6	27.8	29.8	30.3
Chinese	29	35.3	28.3	35.3	35.5
Filipino	33.2	27.3	36.1	34.9	35.5
Hmong	16.9	12.3	23.3	15.9	16.3
Japanese	35.2	28.0	39.6	41.6	42.6
Korean	24.9	22.0	27.9	34.2	32.7
Vietnamese	34.4	31.7	35.5	30.5	30.5
<b>All Asians</b>	<b>29.5</b>	—	—	<b>33.2</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>General Population</b>	<b>35.5</b>	—	—	<b>35.4</b>	<b>35.4</b>

On the whole, as Table 4 shows, the Asian American population in Spokane County, with a median age of 29.5, was younger than the Asian American population in the state, at 33.2 years, and in the U.S., at 33 years. The median ages for Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans are more than six years lower than the median ages of their respective ethnic groups at both the state and national levels. The median age for Korean Americans in Spokane County was, in fact, more than 10 years lower than median age for Korean Americans in Washington and in the U.S. By contrast, compared to the state and the U.S., the Vietnamese American population in Spokane County was older.

*For Spokane County, the median age in 2000 for Asian Americans was 29.5 years, six years younger than the median age for its general population.*

## Migration

Migration – both transnational and domestic – has contributed to the steady growth of the Asian American population in the Inland Northwest. In 2000, about 32.5% of the foreign-born in Spokane County were natives of Asia – making them the second largest immigrant group in the area after the European

immigrants. Out of a total population of 7,444, about 63.5% of Asian Americans in Spokane County were foreign-born<sup>9</sup>. About half of these immigrants entered the U.S. between 1990 and 2000. By comparison, Asian Americans in Kootenai County were less likely to be foreign-born, at 55.2%, and to be recent arrivals to the US. Asian immigrants only made up 14.8% of the foreign-born population in that county.

**Table 5: Place of Birth for Asian American Population: Spokane and Kootenai Counties, 2000**

	Spokane County		Washington	Kootenai County		Idaho
<b>Native*</b>	<b>2715</b>	<b>36.5%</b>	<b>32.8%</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>44.8%</b>	<b>39.4%</b>
Born in the U.S.	2453	33.0%	30.8%	237	40.8%	36.6%
State of residence	1336	17.9%	19.5%	59	10.2%	18.1%
Different state	1117	15.0%	11.2%	178	30.6%	18.5%
Born outside the U.S.	262	3.5%	2.1%	23	4.0%	2.8%
<b>Foreign Born</b>	<b>4729</b>	<b>63.5%</b>	<b>67.2%</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>55.2%</b>	<b>60.6%</b>
Entered 1990 to March 2000	2277	30.6%	28.2%	86	14.8%	29.8%
Naturalized citizen	2493	33.5%	36.5%	204	35.1%	28.9%
Not a Citizen	2236	30.0%	30.7%	117	20.1%	31.7%
<b>Total population**</b>	<b>7,444</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>320,979</b>	<b>581</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>11,321</b>

\* People born in either the U.S., Puerto Rico, or a U.S. Island Area such as Guam or the U.S. Virgin Islands, or people born in a foreign country to a U.S. citizen parent(s).

\*\* Total populations were calculated from the sample sizes for the 1-in-6 sample where the long-form questionnaire was administered. Therefore, the numbers are slightly different from the actual population sizes.

The state and Spokane County were similar in terms of the share of foreign-born in its Asian American population, 67.2% in Washington versus 65.5% in Spokane County. In both the state and Spokane County, about 30% of the total Asian American population were foreign-born who entered the U.S. between 1990 and 2000. By contrast, Asian Americans in Kootenai County were somewhat more likely to be native-born, at 44.8%, than their counterparts in the state, at 39.4%. Only 14.8% of the Asian American population in Kootenai County are foreign-born who entered the U.S. between 1990 and 2000, compared with 29.8% in the state.

Besides transnational migration, a considerable proportion of Asian Americans in Spokane County were transplants from out of state – 1,117 out of the 2,715 native-born Asian Americans were born outside of the State of Washington (Table 5). Similarly, 178 out of the 260 native-born Asian Americans in Kootenai County were born outside of the State of Idaho. As Table 6 shows, 14.9% of Asian Americans in Spokane County and 25.7% of Asian Americans in Kootenai County lived in a different state in 1995.

**Table 6: Place of Residence for Asian Americans 5 Years & Older: 2000**

	Spokane County		Kootenai County	
<b>Same house in 1995</b>	<b>2,824</b>	<b>39.8%</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>46.2%</b>
<b>Different house in the US in 1995</b>	<b>4,273</b>	<b>60.2%</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>53.8%</b>
Same County	1,747	24.6%	89	16.8%
Different County	1,630	23.0%	155	29.2%
Same state	542	7.6%	19	3.6%
Different state	1,061	14.9%	136	25.7%
Elsewhere in 1995	923	13.0%	41	7.7%
<b>Total population</b>	<b>7,097</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

As Table 7 reveals, the Vietnamese population displayed the highest percentage, at 86.9%, of foreign-born, followed by Koreans, at 81%, and Asian Indians, at 74.4%. Conversely, only 33.7% of Japanese were foreign-born. Within the foreign-born population, Vietnamese tend to be recent immigrants, as 62.6% of its foreign-born entered the U.S. between 1990 and March 2000. Filipino and Korean immigrants were more likely to have entered

the U.S. prior to 1990. Among the immigrants, Asian Indians showed the highest share of naturalized citizens, at 66.7%, followed by Korean and Filipino immigrants, at 62.9% and 60.4%, respectively. On the other hand, only a quarter, or 25.8%, of the foreign-born from Japan were naturalized citizens. This is likely due to the inclusion of international students in Spokane colleges<sup>10</sup>.

**Table 7. Place of Birth, Year of Entry and Citizenship Status by Ethnicity: Spokane County, 2000**

	Asian Indian	Chinese	Filipino	Hmong	Japanese	Korean	Vietnamese	ALL ASIANS
% Foreign-Born	74.4	68.2	63.4	66.8	33.7	81.0	86.9	63.5
% Entered 1990 to March 2000*	51.9	56.7	34.1	45.2	57.7	32.7	62.7	48.1
% Naturalized Citizens**	66.7	48.9	60.4	43.4	25.8	62.9	55.7	52.7
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>954</b>	<b>975</b>	<b>533</b>	<b>1668</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>1244</b>	<b>7444</b>

\* Percent of Foreign-Born who entered the US between 1990 and March 2000.

\*\* Percent of Foreign-Born who are naturalized citizens

*Among the immigrants, Asian Indians showed the highest share of naturalized citizens, at 66.7%, followed by Korean and Filipino immigrants, at 62.9% and 60.4%, respectively.*

## Language

Not surprisingly, language patterns among Asian Americans correspond closely to the migration patterns of its various ethnic groups. In 2000, about 35.3% of Asian Americans in Spokane County spoke English only, compared to 54.5% in Kootenai County. Among those who spoke a language other than English (4,592), about 46% of them claimed to speak English “very well,” while close to 21% of them reported that they speak English

“not well” or “not at all.” Table 8 reveals that about a quarter of all Asian American households in Spokane County were considered “linguistically isolated” by Census definition. Yet, compared to their counterparts in their respective states, Asian Americans in both Spokane and Kootenai Counties were more likely to speak English only, and less likely to speak English “not well” or “not at all.”

**Table 8: Language Spoken at Home for Asian Americans 5 years or Older: 2000**

	Spokane County		Washington	Kootenai County		Idaho
<b>Speak English Only</b>	<b>2505</b>	<b>35.3%</b>	<b>25.2%</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>54.5%</b>	<b>39.9%</b>
<b>Speak Other Languages</b>	<b>4592</b>	<b>64.7%</b>	<b>74.8%</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>45.5%</b>	<b>60.1%</b>
Speak English “very well”	2126	30.0%	35.3%	137	25.8%	30.4%
Speak English “well”	1502	21.2%	22.6%	57	10.8%	18.6%
Speak English “not well” or “not at all”	964	13.6%	16.9%	47	8.9%	11.1%
Total population	7,097	100.0%	27,957	530	100.0%	10,655
<b>Linguistically Isolated Households*</b>	<b>537</b>	<b>25.10%</b>	<b>27.7%</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>42.60%</b>	<b>34.8%</b>

\*A linguistically isolated household is one in which no member 14 years old and over (1) speaks only English or (2) speaks a non-English language and speaks English “very well.” In other words, all members 14 years old and over have at least some difficulty with English.

Among all Asian American groups, Japanese had the highest proportion of individuals who speak only English, followed by Koreans, at 56.6%, and Filipinos, at 44.6%. In contrast, only 7.7% of Vietnamese and 3.2% of Hmong spoke English only, as Table 9 shows. These two groups also contained the highest proportions of individuals – 41.7% and 24.2% respectively – who speak English “not well” or “not at all.” In 2000, 55.7% of Vietnamese

households were “linguistically isolated,” the highest among Asian American subpopulations. Asian Indians, despite their high proportion of foreign-born, seem to have the least difficulty with the English language. Only 3.6% of its population spoke English “not well” or “not at all” and none of its households were considered “linguistically isolated” in 2000.

**Table 9. Language by Ethnicity: Spokane County 2000**

Language Ability	Asian Indian	Chinese	Filipino	Hmong	Japanese	Korean	Vietnamese	ALL ASIANS
<b>Individuals 5 years and older</b>								
% Speaks English Only	32.6	23.0	44.6	3.2	59.4	56.6	7.7	35.3
% Speaks English “not well” or “not at all”	3.6	9.0	3.6	24.2	4.8	10.9	41.7	13.6
<b>Households</b>								
% Linguistically isolated	0.0	33.5	3.5	23.3	17.4	40.6	55.7	25.1

## Marital Status and Households

For both Spokane and Kootenai Counties, the percentage of Asian Americans who were divorced, at 5.4%, was much lower than that of the general

population, at 12.3%, as shown in Table 10. At the same time, Asian Americans were more likely to have never married — 29.9% in Spokane County and 26.6% in Kootenai County.

**Table 10. Marital Status for People 15 Years and Older, Spokane and Kootenai Counties: 2000**

Marital Status (%)	Spokane County		Washington	Kootenai County		Idaho
	Asian Americans	All	Asian Americans	Asian Americans	All	Asian Americans
Never married	29.9	25.3	30.2	26.6	20.4	26.6
Now married, except separated	59.8	54.6	58.7	64.7	61	61.8
Separated	1.4	1.6	1.4	2.0	1.2	0.9
Widowed	3.6	6.2	4.4	4.7	5.5	3.8
Divorced	5.4	12.3	5.3	2.0	11.9	6.8
<b>Total population (15 and over)</b>	6,211	330,034	258,613	402	84,414	9,289

In the Census, a *household* includes all the people who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence. A householder is the person, or one of the people, in whose name the home is owned or rented. A *family* is defined as a group of two or more people who reside together and are related by birth, marriage or adoption. Not all households contain families since a household may comprise a group of unrelated individuals or one person living alone.

In 2000, Asian Americans were similar to the general population of Spokane County in the terms of the share of family, at 64.7%, and non-family, at 35.3%, households. The majority of Asian American households, 52.1%, was maintained by married couples. Compared to the 11% of households in Spokane County, a smaller proportion, 7.9%, of Asian American households was headed by a female.

Kootenai County, however, revealed more female-headed households among Asian Americans, at 17.7%, than the general population, at 9.2%. Asian Americans did not differ from the general population in terms of household size, at 2.65, but on average they supported somewhat larger families, at 3.32 persons. Asian Americans in Kootenai County also had slightly larger households, at 2.65, and families, at 3.32 persons, than the general population.

*In 2000, Asian Americans were similar to the general population of Spokane County in the terms of the share of family, at 64.7%, and non-family, at 35.3%, households.*

**Table 11. Household by Type: 2000**

Household Type (%)	Spokane County		Washington		Kootenai County		Idaho
	Asian Americans	All	Asian Americans	Asian Americans	All	Asian Americans	
<b>Family households*</b>	<b>64.7</b>	<b>64.8</b>	<b>71.9%</b>	<b>61.0</b>	<b>71.8</b>	<b>65.5%</b>	
With own children under 18 years	33.6	32.4	40.3%	44.0	34.9	36.4%	
Married-couple family	52.1	49.9	57.2%	43.3	58.6	54.2%	
With own children under 18 years	25.4	22.5	33.2%	34.8	26	29.3%	
Female householder, no husband present	7.9	11.0	10.1%	17.7	9.2	7.1%	
With own children under 18 years	5.0	7.4	5.3%	9.2	6.2	4.8%	
<b>Nonfamily households*</b>	<b>35.3</b>	<b>35.2</b>	<b>28.1%</b>	<b>39.0</b>	<b>28.2</b>	<b>29.9%</b>	
Householder living alone	28.7	28.1	21.9%	33.3	21.9	27.9%	
Householder 65 years and over	6.0	9.6	4.4%	9.2	8.3	5.6%	
<b>Average Household Size**</b>	<b>2.75</b>	<b>2.46</b>	<b>2.95</b>	<b>2.59</b>	<b>2.60</b>	<b>2.69</b>	
<b>Average Family Size**</b>	<b>3.47</b>	<b>3.02</b>	<b>3.51</b>	<b>3.84</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>3.19</b>	
<b>Total Households</b>	2,137	163,611	100,789	141	41,308	3,621	

\* Summary Data File 3 - 1-6 Data. \*\* Summary Data File 2 100-% Data.

**Note:** The Census Bureau classifies households and families by the race of the householder -Asian households are households in which the householder identified himself or herself as “Asian alone,” and they can include any non-Asian members besides the householder.

The comparison of the Asian American ethnic groups in Table 12 shows Chinese had the highest percentage, at 89.3%, of married-couple families, followed by Japanese, at 85.3%. On the other hand, Filipinos showed the

highest share of female-headed households with no husband present, at 21.9%, and the highest percentage of male-headed households with no wife present, at 12.5%.

**Table 12. Family Type by Ethnicity: Spokane County 2000**

Family Type	Asian Indian		Chinese		Filipino		Hmong	
Married-Couple Families	115	89.1%	201	89.3%	105	65.6%	61	80.3%
With own children under 18 years	60	52.2%	84	41.8%	43	41.0%	55	90.2%
Male householder, no wife present	14	10.9%	18	8.0%	20	12.5%	6	7.9%
With own children under 18 years	10	71.4%	13	72.2%	20	100.0%	0	0.0%
Female householder, no husband present	0	0.0%	6	2.7%	35	21.9%	9	11.8%
With own children under 18 years	0	0.0%	2	33.3%	31	88.6%	9	100.0%
<b>Total family households</b>	129	100.0%	225	100.0%	160	100.0%	76	100.0%
Average Household Size	2.71		2.66		2.86		5.29	
Average Family Size	3.43		3.22		3.34		5.67	

Family Type	Japanese		Korean		Vietnamese		All Asians	
Married-Couple Families	233	85.3%	57	100.0%	238	77.8%	1,114	80.5%
With own children under 18 years	71	30.5%	16	28.1%	129	54.2%	543	48.7%
Male householder, no wife present	4	1.5%	0	0.0%	31	10.1%	101	7.3%
With own children under 18 years	0	0.0%	—	—	17	54.8%	68	67.3%
Female householder, no husband present	36	13.2%	0	0.0%	37	12.1%	168	12.1%
With own children under 18 years	13	36.1%	—	—	7	18.9%	107	63.7%
<b>Total family households</b>	273	100.0%	57	100.0%	306	100.0%	1383	100.0%
Average Household Size	1.95		2.41		3.70		2.75	
Average Family Size	2.77		3.20		3.97		3.47	



## IV. Socioeconomic Status of Asian Americans in Spokane and Kootenai Counties

### Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is often used as a benchmark for a racial or ethnic group’s successful integration into American society. The “Model Minority Myth” is heavily rooted in the *perceived* success of Asian Americans in the U.S. education system (Fong, 1998). Such a “myth” masks the heterogeneity of the Asian American population and overlooks the struggles many still face.

Indeed, a picture more complex than the one projected by the “Model Minority Myth” is also found in Spokane and Kootenai Counties. Table 13 shows that Asian Americans tend to concentrate at opposite ends of the educational attainment spectrum. Overall, Asian

Americans were more likely than the general population in 2000 to have finished college: 28.4% in Spokane County and 34.7% in Kootenai County. Paradoxically, Asian Americans were also more likely to have less than a high school education than the general population. In Spokane County, 77.4% of Asian Americans had graduated from high school, compared to 89.1% of the general population. In Kootenai County, 79.3% of Asian Americans had graduated from high school, compared to the 87.3% of the general population. In particular, a substantial proportion of Asian Americans, 11% in Spokane County and 7.9% in Kootenai County, were in the lowest educational attainment category — less than a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education.

**Table 13. Educational Attainment for People 25 Years and Older: 2000**

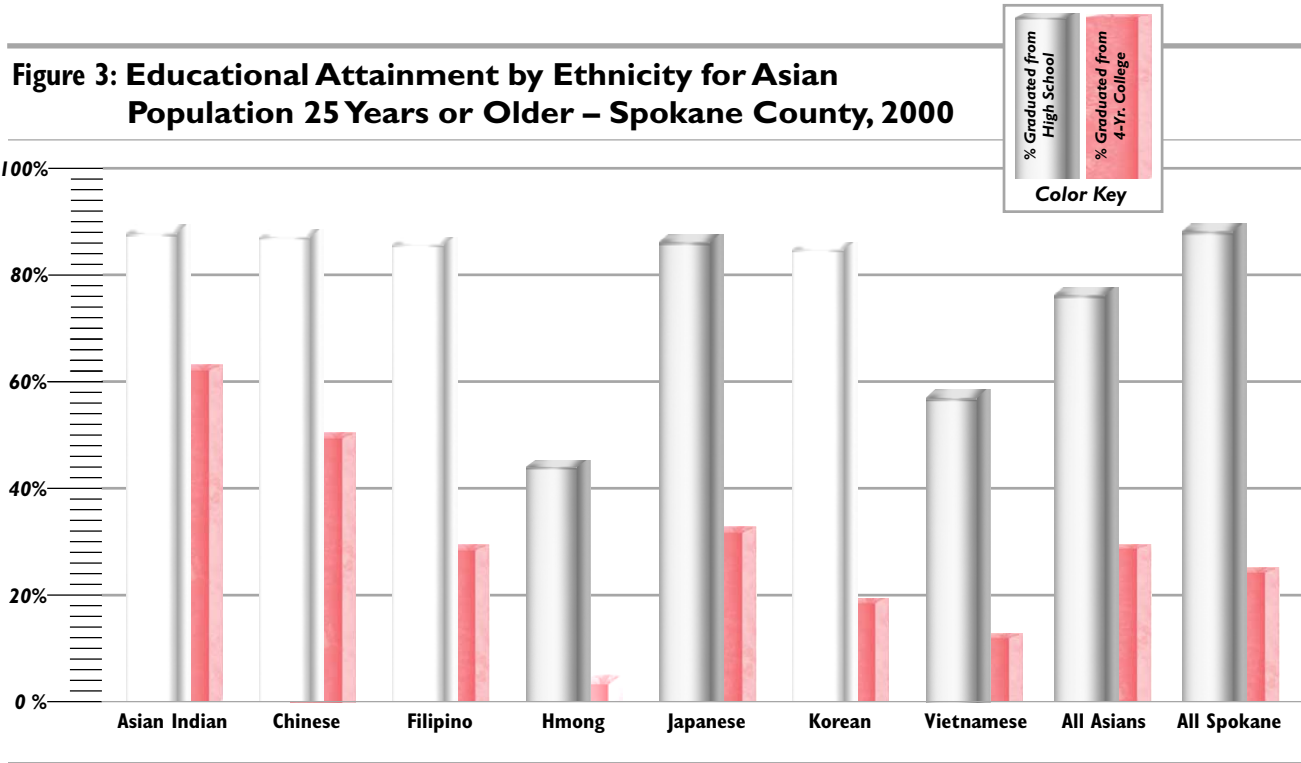
Education (%)	Spokane County		Washington	Kootenai County		Idaho
	Asian Americans	All	Asian Americans	Asian Americans	All	Asian Americans
Less than 9th grade	11.1	2.9	10.6	7.9	3.1	9.4
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	11.5	8.0	8.8	12.8	9.6	8.5
High school graduate (includes GED)	19.6	26.8	18.2	21.6	30.3	20.9
Some college, no degree	18.7	27.2	17.5	20.7	29.6	17.5
Associate degree	10.7	10.1	8.1	2.3	8.3	5.3
Bachelor’s degree	17.6	16.3	24.9	26.2	13.0	23.6
Graduate or professional degree	10.8	8.7	11.9	8.5	6.0	14.8
<b>% High school graduate or higher</b>	<b>77.4</b>	<b>89.1</b>	<b>80.5</b>	<b>79.3</b>	<b>87.3</b>	<b>82.0</b>
<b>% Bachelor’s degree or higher</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>25.0</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>34.7</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>38.3</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>4,488</b>	<b>266,829</b>	<b>209,271</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>69,872</b>	<b>7,654</b>

The Asian American population of Washington, on the whole, was more educated than that of Spokane County in 2000. About 37% of Asian Americans in the state, compared to 25% in Spokane County, had at least a bachelor’s degree. The Asian American population in Kootenai County, however, tended to fall at the ends of the educational spectrum. While Asian Americans in that county were more likely to have a college degree than the general population, they were also more likely to have received less than a high school education.

Among the Asian American groups in Spokane County, Asian Indians appeared the most highly educated group, with almost 63% of its population holding at least a bachelor’s degree. Three other groups – Chinese, at 50.4%, Japanese at 30.8%, and Filipino at 29.4% – also had higher proportions of college graduates than the general population. In the remaining groups, 19% of Korean Americans graduated from a 4-year college, whereas only 5.4% of Hmong and 12% of Vietnamese held college degrees.

The lower percentage of college graduates among Hmong and Vietnamese could be due to their recent arrival in the U.S. If they arrived as adults, they might not come with a higher education, as in the case of Indian or

Korean immigrants. If they came as teenagers, they might have a difficult time learning English and adjusting to the educational system in the U.S.



*Among the Asian American groups in Spokane County, Asian Indians appeared the most highly educated group, with almost 63% of its population holding at least a bachelor's degree.*

## Income

As a group, Asian Americans in Spokane County earned less than the general population by measures of median *household* income, median *family* income, and income *per capita*, as indicated by Table 15. For instance, Asian Americans had a median family income of \$39,583 in 1999, almost \$7,000 below the median family income of the total population of Spokane County. Moreover, by all three measures, the income of Spokane Asian Americans was lower than the incomes of Asian Americans in Washington and in the U.S.

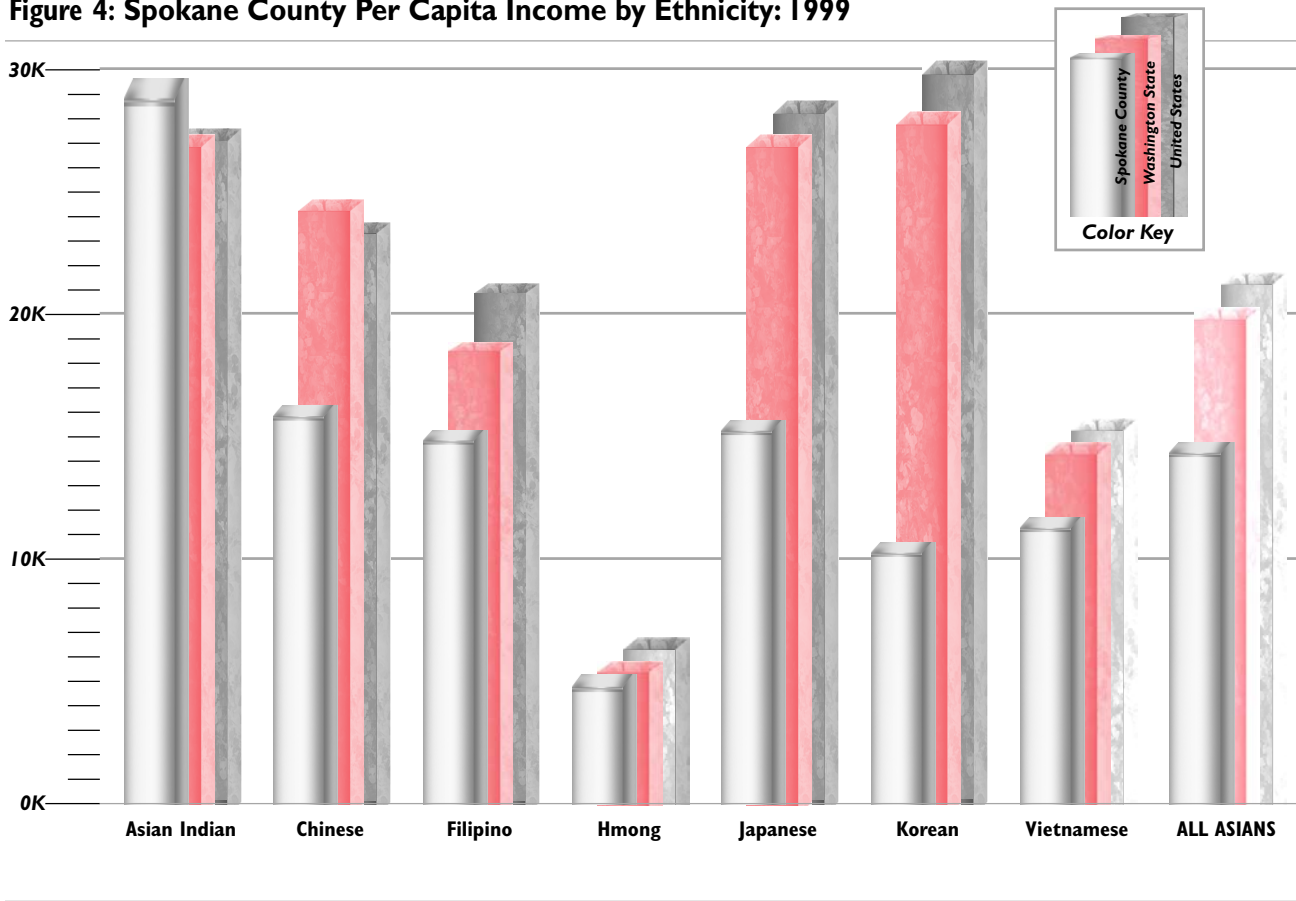
When we look at the Asian ethnic groups separately, a much more complicated picture emerges. First, a substantial variation among the income levels of the Asian American subpopulations exists. By all three measures, Asian Indians displayed the highest median income of all Asian American groups and median incomes higher than the general population. For instance, the median family income for Asian Indians was \$68,250, about 47% higher than the median income for Spokane County on the whole. Hmong, on the other hand, ranked last, with a median family income of \$19,375, almost 50% below the median income of the general population. These median incomes seem to correspond with the overall educational attainment of the subpopulations. Nevertheless, median incomes for Hmong in Spokane County were substantially lower than the median incomes for Hmong in the state and in the U.S.

**Table 15: Income by Ethnicity: 1999**

	Median Household	Median Family	Per Capita*
	\$		
<b>Asian Indian</b>			
Spokane County	53,295	68,250	29,727
Washington State	60,846	62,699	27,282
U.S.	63,669	70,708	27,514
<b>Chinese</b>			
Spokane County	32,656	45,313	16,279
Washington State	52,431	62,386	24,682
U.S.	51,444	60,058	23,756
<b>Filipino</b>			
Spokane County	44,000	45,769	15,358
Washington State	52,393	56,781	18,930
U.S.	60,570	65,189	21,267
<b>Hmong</b>			
Spokane County	14,904	19,375	5,209
Washington State	29,375	27,955	6,445
U.S.	32,076	32,384	6,600
<b>Japanese</b>			
Spokane County	23,565	54,750	15,778
Washington State	47,438	67,608	17,349
U.S.	52,060	70,849	18,805
<b>Korean</b>			
Spokane County	21,607	58,750	10,422
Washington State	36,670	43,793	28,307
U.S.	40,037	47,624	30,075
<b>Vietnamese</b>			
Spokane County	37,627	38,559	11,817
Washington State	40,113	42,846	14,553
U.S.	45,085	47,103	15,655
<b>ALL ASIANS</b>			
Spokane County	32,427	39,583	14,518
— % of total population	86.9%	85.2%	75.5%
ALL SPOKANE	37,308	46,463	19,233
Washington State	47,517	54,611	20,141
— % of total population	103.8%	101.6%	87.7%
ALL WASHINGTON	45,776	53,760	22,973
U.S.	51,908	59,324	21,823
— % of total population	123.6%	118.5%	101.1%
ALL U.S.	41,994	50,046	21,587

\* Per capita income is the average obtained by dividing aggregated income of a group by its total population.

**Figure 4: Spokane County Per Capita Income by Ethnicity: 1999**



Second, the relative standing of groups varies with different income measures. For both Japanese and Korean Americans, their median *household* incomes are lower, yet their median *family* incomes higher than that of the general population. This might be due to the higher shares of one-person households in the two groups (see Table 16). In addition, both groups' per capita income still ranked lower than Spokane County's per capita income. The high rate of the one-person households, which might have deflated the household incomes for the Japanese and Korean populations, is possibly due to the inclusion of international students in the Census mentioned earlier.

On the other hand, Vietnamese Americans' median *household* income was higher than Spokane County's, but its median *family* income and *per capita* income were lower. Such variations could be due to the complexity of household and family structures in the Vietnamese

American population not captured by the Census definitions. For instance, the Census definition of family is based on the nuclear family norm in the U.S., and therefore some extended families might be defined as "households" but not "families." As a result, it complicates the interpretation of "household" and "family" incomes.

Table 16 offers similar data for Kootenai County. Here, both the median *household* income, \$33,482, and *per capita* income, \$17,851, of Asian Americans were lower than those of the county, \$37,754 and \$18,430 respectively. At the same time, they showed higher median *family* income, as well as *median earnings* for full-time female and male workers. At the state level, Idaho Asian Americans had, in contrast, higher income and earnings compared to the general population by all measures.

**Table 16: Income and Earnings in Kootenai County and Idaho State 1999**

	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	Per Capita Income		Median Earnings*	
<b>Kootenai County</b>				<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Gender Ratio</u>
<b>Asian Americans</b>	<b>33,482</b>	<b>50,938</b>	<b>17,851</b>	<b>23,500</b>	<b>36,250</b>	<b>64.8%</b>
— % of total population	88.7%	118.7%	96.9%	—	—	—
All Kootenai County	37,754	42,905	18,430	22,939	32,603	70.4%
<b>Idaho</b>						
<b>Asian Americans</b>	<b>45,746</b>	<b>51,473</b>	<b>20,143</b>	<b>26,000</b>	<b>39,738</b>	<b>65.4%</b>
— % of total population	122.1%	118.4%	112.9%	—	—	—
All Idaho	37,472	43,490	17,841	22,113	33,661	65.7%

\* Full-time year-round workers (age 16 or above) only.

Considering the ambiguous outcomes discussed above, median earnings might be a better yardstick of the economic well-being of the different Asian ethnic groups. Among individuals who worked full-time year-round in 1999, Asian American men, at \$29,028, and women, at \$23,091, earned less than their counterparts in the general population of Spokane County. Furthermore, the median earnings for full-time working Asian Americans were lower in Spokane County than in the state — \$38,007 for males and \$28,425 for females.

Yet, among the subgroups, substantial variation existed. As indicated in Table 17, median earnings of Asian Indian, Chinese, and Japanese men and women were higher than the county’s median earnings for their respective sex. On the other hand, the median earnings of Filipino, Korean and Vietnamese full-time year-round workers were lower than those of the county.

**Table 17. Median Earnings of Full-Time Year-Round Workers by Sex: Spokane County in 1999**

	Asian Indian	Chinese	Filipino	Hmong*	Japanese	Korean	Vietnamese	ALL ASIANS	ALL SPOKANE
Male	56,750	36,500	29,583	—	40,365	30,313	21,588	29,028	35,097
Female	36,250	27,989	22,212	18,026	33,162	15,938	14,970	21,250	25,526

**Women’s Earnings as % of Men’s**

	63.9	76.7	75.1	—	82.2	52.6	69.3	73.2	72.7
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Note: \*None of the Hmong men in the sample worked full-time year-round in 1999.

Among Asian Americans in Spokane County, there was considerable difference in earnings between men and women who worked full-time year-round in 1999. The degree of gender disparity, nevertheless, is comparable to that of the general population. Among the Asian ethnic groups, a gender gap in earnings was the smallest

for Japanese, where women’s earnings were 82.2 % of men’s. Chinese had the second smallest gender gap in earnings, at 76.7% of men’s, followed by Filipinas, at 75.1%. On the other hand, Koreans had the largest gender gap in earnings among full-time workers, where women earned only 52.6% that of men.

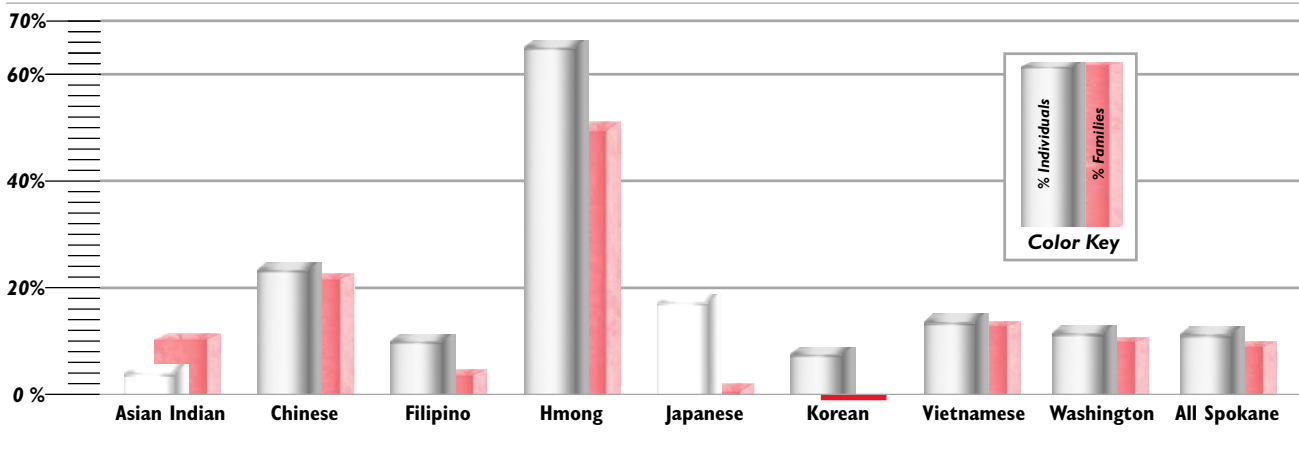
## Poverty Status

A complicated picture emerges from the poverty data on local Asian Americans. At the family level, Census statistics show that the proportion of Asian American families in poverty was 15.8%, almost double that of the general population of Spokane County, 8.3% for 1999. The difference was also considerable in *individual* poverty rates: 19.8% of Asian Americans, versus 12.3% of the total population. In addition, Spokane County's Asian Americans displayed a noticeably higher poverty rate at

both individual and family levels, compared to their counterparts in the state and in the U.S.

In contrast, the difference in poverty rate between Asian Americans and the general population was very small in Kootenai County. The proportion of Asian American families with income below poverty level, 7.0%, was similar to the general population's 7.7%. At the individual level, about 11.7% of Asian Americans, compared to 10.5% of the total population, lived in poverty in 1999.

**Figure 5: Shares of Asian American Incomes below Poverty Level, Spokane County, 1999**



Among the Asian groups, Hmong consistently had the highest poverty rates – with almost 31% of families and about 68% of individuals below the official poverty level. Chinese ranked second by both measures. In addition, Vietnamese also displayed higher poverty rates than the general population, with 15.1% of individuals and 13.4% of families with income below poverty. By both measures, Filipinos and Koreans were the only two groups with consistently lower poverty rates than the total population. In particular, only 8% of Korean Americans reported income under the poverty level and none of the Korean American families in Spokane County fell below the official poverty line.

For the Japanese population, the *individual* poverty rate was much higher than the *family* poverty rate. This difference is due to the high percentage of non-family households – 182 out of the 235 Japanese households – with income below the federal poverty line. These inconsistent findings, as mentioned elsewhere in this monograph, were likely caused by the Census's inclusion

of international students (and perhaps a number of Japanese American college students) attending local colleges.

## Labor Force Participation

Obviously, income and poverty patterns are directly linked to labor force participation. As Table 19 indicates, close to 60% of Asian Americans in Spokane County were in the labor force in 2000, 5% lower than for the general population. In addition, Asian Americans in Spokane County also revealed a lower labor force participation rate than in the state, at 64.1%. This may be due to the higher percentage of the local Asian population 16 years and over who were still in school. In fact, about 21% of the Asian American population three years or older were enrolled in college or graduate/professional school, much higher than the 7.6% in Spokane County overall.

**Table 19. Employment Status for People 16 Years or Older: 2000**

Employment Status	Spokane County				Washington
	Asian Americans		All		Asian Americans
In labor force	3,607	59.1%	210,968	65.1%	64.1%
Civilian labor force	3,529	57.8%	207,865	64.2%	63.3%
Employed	2,934	48.1%	191,295	59.0%	59.6%
Unemployed	595	9.8%	16,570	5.1%	3.7%
<b>% of unemployed in civilian labor force</b>	--	<b>16.9%</b>	--	<b>8.0%</b>	<b>5.8%</b>
Armed forces	78.0	1.3%	3,103	1.0%	0.8%
Not in labor force	2,490	40.8%	113,012	34.9%	35.9%
Total Population	6,101	100.0%	323,980	100.0%	91,148

Employment Status	Kootenai County				Idaho
	Asian Americans		All		Asian Americans
In labor force	276	68.7%	54,471	65.9%	65.7%
Civilian labor force	276	68.7%	54,379	65.8%	64.8%
Employed	266	66.2%	50,162	60.7%	61.0%
Unemployed	10	2.5%	4,217	5.1%	3.7%
<b>% of unemployed in civilian labor force</b>	--	<b>3.6%</b>	--	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>5.8%</b>
Armed forces	0	0.0%	92	10.0%	0.9%
Not in labor force	126	31.3%	28,203	34.1%	34.3%
Total Population	402	100.0%	82,674	100.0%	3,132

Of the Asian Americans in the civilian labor force, 16.9% was unemployed – a level much higher than Spokane County on the whole, 8% in 2000, and higher than the rate for the Asian American population in Washington, 5.8%. Among the employed, 36.6% of Asian American men and 21% of Asian American women in Spokane County worked full-time year-round in 1999, a rate much lower than the County’s general population, 45.5% for men and 28.1% for women. In Kootenai County, Asian Americans showed a higher labor force participation rate, 68.7%, and a lower unemployment rate, 3.6%, than the total population and the Asian American population in Idaho. Moreover, both Asian American men and women were more likely to have

worked full-time year-round in 1999 than their counterparts in Kootenai County’s general population.

Table 20 shows that for Spokane County, Chinese, Japanese, Hmong, and Korean all reported labor force participation rates lower than 60 % in 2000. In contrast, Filipinos showed a labor force participation rate close to 80%. For Chinese and Japanese, to some extent, the low labor participation rate was due to college enrollment. Among those who were not in the labor force, nearly 50% of Chinese, and more than 25% of Japanese were between 20 and 30 years old. On the other hand, Hmong individuals out of the labor force were more evenly spread across age groups.

**Table 20. Employment Status for People 16 Years or Older: Spokane County, 2000**

	Asian Indian	Chinese	Filipino	Hmong	Japanese	Korean	Vietnamese	All Asians
<b>% Not in Labor Force</b>	<b>35.5</b>	<b>49.3</b>	<b>22.3</b>	<b>46.5</b>	<b>46.3</b>	<b>47.5</b>	<b>37.8</b>	<b>40.8</b>
<b>% in Labor Force:</b>	<b>64.5</b>	<b>50.7</b>	<b>77.7</b>	<b>53.5</b>	<b>53.7</b>	<b>52.5</b>	<b>62.2</b>	<b>59.1</b>
% of Unemployed in Civilian Labor Force	6.5	10.4	11.8	23.8	39.4	3.6	3.8	16.9
<b>Total Population (16 years or older)</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>762</b>	<b>846</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>1,563</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>1,098</b>	<b>6,101</b>

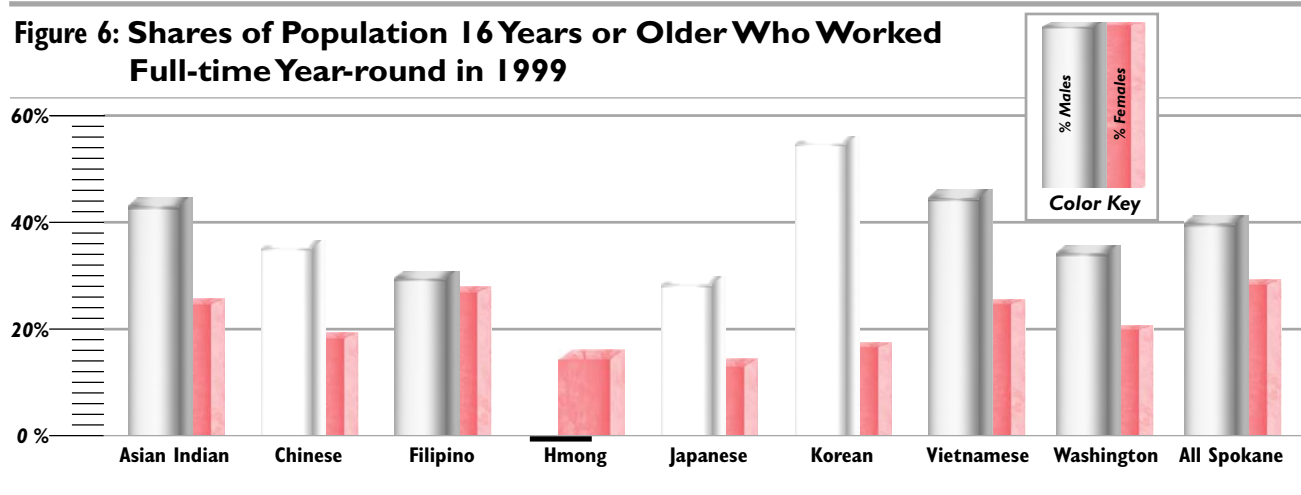
Furthermore, Table 20 indicates that unemployment rates varied considerably across Asian subpopulations in Spokane County, from a low of 3.6% for Koreans and 3.8% for Vietnamese to a high of 39.4 % for Japanese and 23.8 % for Hmong. In the case for the Japanese, the majority, 72%, of unemployed individuals are between 16 and 19 years old. For Hmong, the majority of unemployed individuals – 22 out of 35 – are between 35 and 44 years old.

As Figure 6 illustrates, 36.6% of Asian American males in Spokane County worked full-time year-round in 1999, compared to 21% of Asian American females. In comparison, a much higher proportion of Kootenai County Asian Americans – 67.3% of men and 34.8% of

women – worked full-time, year-round. Among Asian Americans in Spokane County, Vietnamese displayed the highest proportion, at 46.6%, of males 16 years or older who worked full-time, year-round in 1999; Asian Indians ranked second, with 44.7 %, and Chinese ranked third with 36.4%.

On the other hand, none of the Hmong men in the sample worked full-time year-round in 1999. For Asian American women, Filipinas, at 33.3%, were most likely to have worked full-time year-round in 1999, followed by Asian Indians, in 26.5%, and Vietnamese, in 25.6%. Japanese women, in contrast, were least likely to have worked full-time year-round in the same year.

**Figure 6: Shares of Population 16 Years or Older Who Worked Full-time Year-round in 1999**



## Occupations

To understand the socioeconomic conditions of Asian Americans in the Inland Northwest, one needs to examine the group’s occupational structure, since access to high-paying occupations is obviously an important factor for a group’s economic success. In the case of occupational structure, the bifurcation of Asian American population observed in other studies (e.g. Lai and Arguelles 2003) seems to be evident in the Inland Northwest, as Asian Americans tend to concentrate both in managerial and professional occupations and in service occupations.

As Table 22 shows, the proportion of Spokane Asian Americans in the category of *Managerial, Professional and Related Occupations*, 33.3%, was about equal to the proportion found in the county’s total population in 2000. A higher percentage of Asian Americans than that of the general population could be found in *Service*

*Occupations*, at 22.9%, and in *Production, Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations*, at 19.8%. Compared to the state, the percentage of Asian Americans in the *Managerial, Professional, and Related Occupations* category was slightly lower in Spokane County, while the percentages in *Service Occupations* and *Production, Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations* were higher.

In Kootenai County, by comparison, a higher percentage of Asian Americans, 39.5%, were represented in *Managerial, Professional and Related Occupations*, more than 10% above that of the county’s total population, at 27.8%. In addition, Asian Americans were almost twice as likely, at 32.7%, to be in *Service Occupations* as the general population of Kootenai County, at 16.7%. In both Spokane and Kootenai Counties, Asian Americans were less likely than the general population to be in *Sales and Office Occupations*.



In Idaho, Asian Americans were heavily concentrated in the occupation category of *Management, Professional, and Related Occupations* in 2000. The percentage at the state level, 43.1%, is somewhat higher than that of Kootenai

County, 39.5%. At the same time, Asian Americans in Kootenai County were much more concentrated in *Service Occupations* than the state's Asian American population, with 32.7% versus 19.8%.

**Table 22: Occupation for Employed Civilian Population 16 Years and Older: 2000**

Occupation (%)	Spokane County		Kootenai County	
	Asian Americans	All	Asian Americans	All
Management, professional, and related occupations	33.3	33.0	39.5	27.8
Service occupations	22.9	16.9	32.7	16.7
Sales and office occupations	20.8	28.4	13.5	27.5
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	0.9	0.4	0.0	1.1
Construction, extraction and maintenance occupations	2.3	8.6	0.8	13.4
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	19.8	12.7	13.5	13.5
Total population	<b>2,934</b>	<b>191,295</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>50,162</b>

Among Asian American groups, a great deal of variation existed in Spokane County, as Table 23 lays out. Asian Indians had the highest representation, at 60%, of their workforce in *Managerial, Professional and Related Occupations*, followed by Japanese, at 50%, and Chinese, at 47%. By comparison, Hmong and Vietnamese were concentrated in *Production, Transportation, and Material*

*Moving Occupations*, at 66% and 43%, respectively. The largest percentage of Koreans, at 38%, was employed in *Service Occupations*. Filipinos were quite evenly spread across three categories – *Managerial, Professional and Related Occupations*, at 29%, *Service Occupations*, at 28%, and *Sales and Office Occupations*, at 32%.

**Table 23. Occupation: Spokane County Employed Civilian Population 16 Years and Over: 2000**

Occupation	Asian Indian		Chinese		Filipino	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Management, professional, and related occupations	158	61%	161	47%	154	29%
Service occupations	11	4%	78	23%	151	28%
Sales and office occupations	71	28%	76	22%	168	32%
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Construction, extraction and maintenance occupations	5	2%	11	3%	5	1%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	13	5%	20	6%	52	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>100%</b>

Occupation	Hmong		Japanese		Korean		Vietnamese	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Management, professional, and related occupations	20	18%	255	50%	77	29%	80	12%
Service occupations	18	16%	61	12%	100	38%	195	30%
Sales and office occupations	0	0%	117	23%	61	23%	88	13%
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	6	1%
Construction, extraction and maintenance occupations	0	0%	16	3%	0	0%	7	1%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	74	66%	56	11%	28	11%	280	43%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>100%</b>

## V. Changes between 1990 and 2000 in the Asian American Population<sup>11</sup>

The Asian American populations in both counties increased substantially between 1990 and 2000. In addition to size, notable changes in their social and economic characteristics took place. The population became older in general. For Spokane County, the proportion of individuals under 18 dropped by almost 10%, from 31.4% to 21.2% in 2000. At the same time, the

proportion of 65 years or older increased from 7.7% to 9.6%. The distribution of household types, however, is quite similar between 1990 and 2000, as shown in Table 24. For Kootenai County, the proportion of family households jumped from 37.7% to 61%, while the proportion of married-couple family climbed from 24.5% to 43.3%.

**Table 24. Asian American Households by Type: Spokane County 1990 and 2000**

	2000		1990	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
<b>Family households</b>	<b>1,383</b>	<b>64.7%</b>	<b>1,367</b>	<b>65.7%</b>
With own children under 18 years	718	33.6%	641	30.8%
Married-couple family	1,114	52.1%	941	45.2%
With own children under 18 years	543	25.4%	521	25.0%
Female householder, no husband present	168	7.9%	172	8.3%
With own children under 18 years	107	5.0%	107	5.1%
<b>Nonfamily households</b>	<b>754</b>	<b>35.3%</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>34.3%</b>
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>2,137</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2,081</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Table 25. Asian American Households by Type: Kootenai County 1990 and 2000**

	2000		1990	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
<b>Family households</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>61.0%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>37.7%</b>
With own children under 18 years	62	44.0%	11	20.8%
Married-couple family	61	43.3%	13	24.5%
With own children under 18 years	49	34.8%	11	20.8%
Female householder, no husband present	25	17.7%	0	0.0%
With own children under 18 years	13	9.2%	0	0.0%
<b>Nonfamily households</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>39.0%</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>62.3%</b>
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The educational level of Asian Americans rose considerably between 1990 and 2000. Tables 26 and 27 illustrate this. The share of Asian Americans in Spokane County with at least a bachelor's degree increased from 20.2% in 1990 to 28.4% in 2000. The percentage of high

school graduates also increased slightly, from 73.6% to 77.4%. For Kootenai County, the percentage of college graduates jumped from 24.1% to 34.7%, and the percentage of high school graduates from 72.9% to 79.3%.

**Table 26: Educational Attainment for Asian Americans 25 Years and Older:  
Spokane County 1990 and 2000**

	2000		1990	
Less than 9th grade	498	11.1%	407	12.6%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	518	11.5%	445	13.8%
High school graduate (includes GED)	880	19.6%	780	24.1%
Some college, no degree	838	18.7%	584	18.1%
Associate degree	479	10.7%	362	11.2%
Bachelor's degree	790	17.6%	462	14.3%
Graduate or professional degree	485	10.8%	192	5.9%
<b>High school graduate or higher</b>	<b>3,472</b>	<b>77.4%</b>	<b>2,380</b>	<b>73.6%</b>
<b>Bachelor's degree or higher</b>	<b>1,275</b>	<b>28.4%</b>	<b>654</b>	<b>20.2%</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>4,488</b>		<b>3,232</b>	

**Table 27: Educational Attainment for Asian Americans 25 Years and Older:  
Kootenai County 1990 and 2000**

	2000		1990	
Less than 9th grade	27	7.9%	8	4.8%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	44	12.8%	37	22.3%
High school graduate (includes GED)	74	21.6%	41	24.7%
Some college, no degree	71	20.7%	36	21.7%
Associate degree	8	2.3%	4	2.4%
Bachelor's degree	90	26.2%	38	22.9%
Graduate or professional degree	29	8.5%	2	1.2%
<b>High school graduate or higher</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>79.3%</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>72.9%</b>
<b>Bachelor's degree or higher</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>34.7%</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>24.1%</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>343</b>		<b>166</b>	

For both counties, the 2000 labor force participation rate for Asian Americans was about the same as 1990, as Tables 28 and 29 reveal. Spokane County showed a considerably higher proportion, or 16.9%, of the civilian labor force unemployed in 2000, an increase from 11.1% in 1990. In contrast, the unemployment rate for Asian Americans in Kootenai County dropped to 3.6% from 6.9% over the same period.

*The share of Asian Americans in Spokane County with at least a bachelor's degree increased from 20.2% in 1990 to 28.4% in 2000.*

**Table 28: Employment Status for Asian Americans 16 Years or Older: Spokane County 1990 and 2000**

	2000		1990	
<b>In labor force</b>	<b>3,607</b>	<b>59.1%</b>	<b>2,836</b>	<b>58.7%</b>
Civilian labor force	3,529	57.8%	2,738	56.6%
Employed	2,934	48.1%	2,434	50.3%
Unemployed	595	9.8%	304	6.3%
<b>% of unemployed in civilian labor force</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>16.9%</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>11.1%</b>
Armed forces	78.0	1.3%	98	2.0%
<b>Not in labor force</b>	<b>2,490</b>	<b>40.8%</b>	<b>1,999</b>	<b>41.3%</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>6,101</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>4,835</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Table 29. Employment Status for Asian Americans 16 Years or Older: Kootenai County 1990 and 2000**

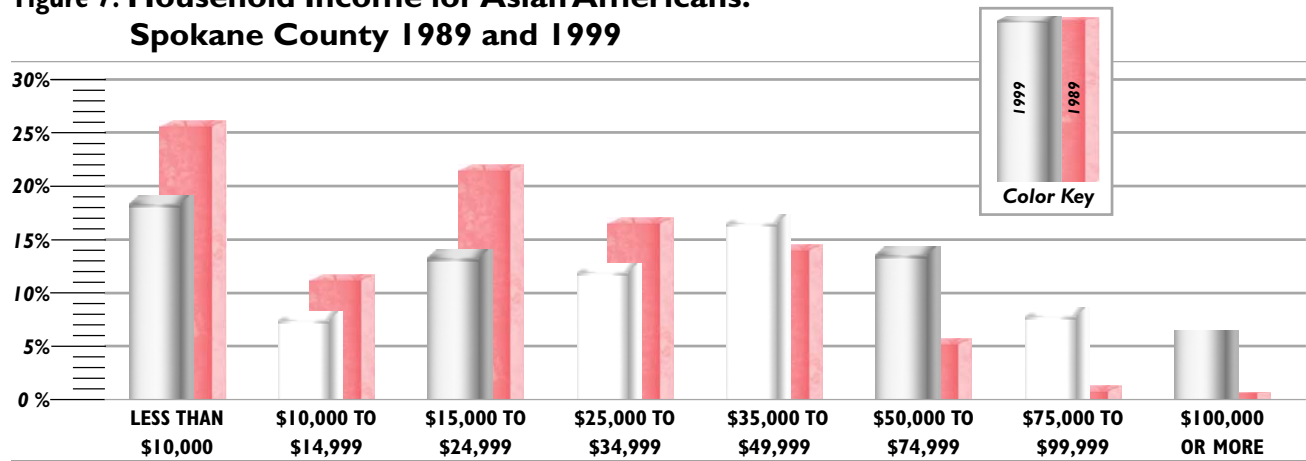
	2000		1990	
<b>In labor force</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>68.7%</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>67.5%</b>
Civilian labor force	276	68.7%	131	67.5%
Employed	266	66.2%	122	62.9%
Unemployed	10	2.5%	9	4.6%
<b>% of unemployed in civilian labor force</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>3.6%</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>6.9%</b>
Armed forces	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
<b>Not in labor force</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>31.3%</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>32.5%</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*On the whole, household income for Asian Americans increased substantially over the decade.*

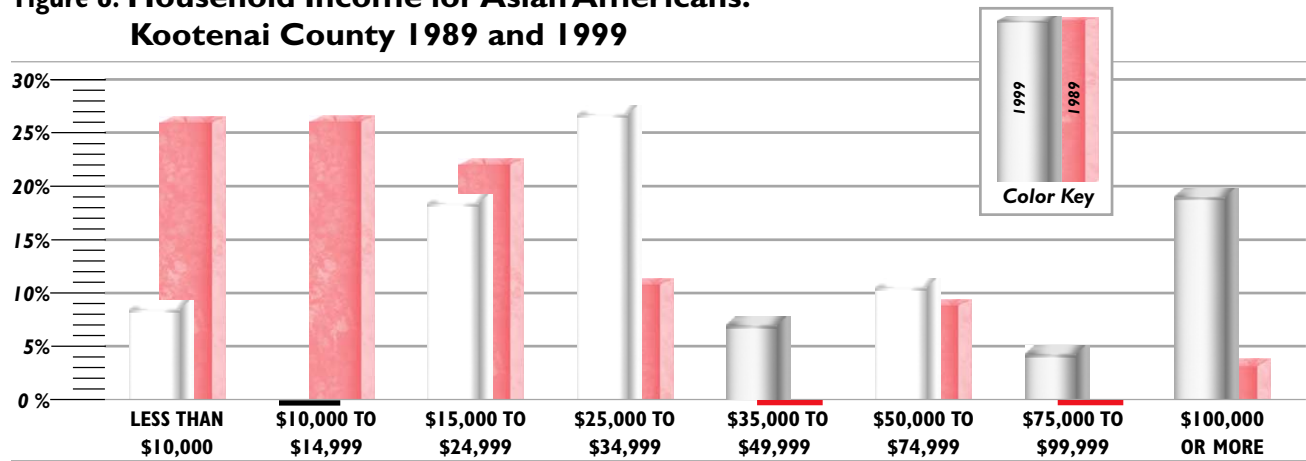
On the whole, household income for Asian Americans increased substantially over the decade, as Figures 7 and 8 show. In Spokane County, the proportion of households with an income of \$100,000 or more climbed from 0.7% in 1989 to 6.1% in 1999, while the proportion of households with an income less than \$10,000 decreased from 26.1%. Per capita income for Asian Americans increased from \$7,943 to \$14,518, or 83%, between 1989 and 1999, while per capita income for the general population rose from \$12,840 to \$19,233, or 50%, over the same period.

A similar pattern is observed for Kootenai County – 19.9% of Asian Americans households reported an income of \$100,000 or more in 1999, compared to 3.8% in 1989. Only 9.2% had an income below \$10,000 in 1999, a substantial decline from 26.4% in 1989. Between 1989 and 1999, per capita income for Asian Americans increased from \$5,349 to \$17,851 in Kootenai County, while per capita income for the general population increased from \$12,330 to \$17,841.

**Figure 7: Household Income for Asian Americans:  
Spokane County 1989 and 1999**



**Figure 8: Household Income for Asian Americans:  
Kootenai County 1989 and 1999**



Changes in poverty rates for Spokane County are more difficult to interpret. While the *family* poverty rate increased from 11.7% to 15.8% in 2000, the *individual* poverty rate declined from 23.2% to 19.8% in the same decade. For Kootenai County, the *individual* poverty rate dropped from 20.8 % to 11.7 %.<sup>12</sup>

discouraged new immigrants with less education and lower English skills from relocating to the Inland Northwest.

Besides changes in the local economy, the observed changes in economic characteristics of Asian American population in Spokane and Kootenai Counties could be due to migration from both out of state or overseas. As mentioned earlier, the majority of Spokane and Kootenai Counties' Asian Americans were not native residents of their respective counties or states in 2000. Perhaps the job opportunities available in the area, such as medicine and technology, attracted Asian Americans with primarily higher education and professional skills. At the same time, the lack of ethnic enclaves, and therefore an ethnically-based internal economy, might have

*For Kootenai County, the individual poverty rate dropped from 20.8 % to 11.7 %.*

## VI. Asian American Organizations in Spokane County<sup>13</sup>

**E**thnic organizations are a vital part of the Asian American communities in Spokane County. As their counterparts in other parts of the U.S., these Asian American organizations serve many important functions, such as facilitating social support among members, celebrating and passing on to the next generation their ethnic heritage, educating those outside of their ethnic community about the history and experiences of Asian Americans, and building bridges with other racial and ethnic groups in the community. This section provides a brief description of some of the local Asian American organizations, based on the information provided by their own members.

The **Filipino American Association** and the **Hmong American Association** are two of the largest Asian American associations in the Spokane Area. The **Filipino American Association** has over 350 families in their mailing list and about 110 due-paying members. A majority of the members are in the medical industry—doctors, nurses, pharmacists, senior-care, and research, etc., and they also have several members who are engineers and journalists. One of the main goals of the association is to act as a support group by offering friendship to fellow Filipino Americans in Spokane and those who are new to the area and helping new immigrants adjust to Spokane or living in the U.S.. In order to strengthen the relationship among its members, the association hosts monthly get-togethers, annual events and other activities. It publishes a quarterly newsletter which includes inside tidbits about the members, upcoming events and educational articles about the Philippine culture. Another goal of the association is to preserve and celebrate the Filipino cultural heritage by offering free dance and singing lessons to members, while at the same time, providing the opportunity for non-Filipinos to know about the Filipino community and culture. To achieve the latter goal, the association has a dance troupe for cultural presentations and a traveling exhibit available for schools and other events.

In a close-knit community, the **Hmong American Association** serves essentially the entire Hmong population in the Spokane Area. On average, over 200 people attended their major events, such as the celebration of the Hmong New Year in the Fall. The Hmong Association was created in 1988 out of the restructuring of a former Hmong organization in Spokane. The Hmong American Association participates

actively in community-wide events such as the Martin Luther King Jr. memorial celebration, the Lilac Festival, and the First Night of Spokane. They participate in the annual celebration of the Asian American and Pacific Islander month at the Fairchild Air Force Base. The Hmong American Association in Spokane has maintained ties with other Hmong associations in the Pacific Northwest and other parts of the U.S. Its members are present at the Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Day in Olympia where they have the opportunity to network with leaders from other Asian American organizations in the State of Washington. As an Asian ethnic group that is often misrepresented in the mass media or academic research, the group feels that one of their main goals is to change people's assumption about the Hmong people and clarify any misunderstanding about Hmong culture.

There are two Chinese American organizations in Spokane – the **Spokane Chinese Association** and the **Chinese Students and Scholars Association**; both of them are relatively new to the area. Both associations focus primarily on cultural and social activities. The Spokane Chinese Association organizes events such as picnics, Moon Festival celebration, Spring Festival celebration, and a fashion show for the celebration of the Asian American and Pacific Islander month.

Another new Asian American organization in Spokane is the **Thai Fellowship Group**. Founded by Pum Horobiowski and F. K. Loskot in 2002, the main objectives of the association are to provide a support network among Thai immigrants in the community and to preserve their cultures among the second generation. There are about 15 active members in the group, most of whom are women. A few of the members were international students attending local colleges. The association holds a monthly potluck. While Thai immigrants who are long-time residents of Spokane are less active in the group as they have become well adapted to their life in the U.S., some of them do attend the celebrations of the major holidays. At their monthly gatherings, the women practice Thai dance along with their children. The group wants to use Thai dances as a way to promote Thai cultures to the larger Spokane Community, and they performed at the 2004 First Night celebration in Spokane. There are also future plans for Thai language classes. Due to the small size of the Thai population in Spokane, the group's main challenge is to reach out and recruit members from the local community.

Despite the size of the Asian American population, there are a number of thriving religious organizations in Spokane County. These organizations represent a wide variety of faiths from both Christian and Asian religious traditions. In the Korean American Protestant community alone, there are several churches representing a variety of denominations, including the **Korean Presbyterian Church**, the largest Korean American church in the Spokane Area. Like their secular counterparts, these religious groups perform important social and cultural functions in the Asian American communities in Spokane.

One of the oldest Asian American religious organizations in Spokane is the **Highland Park United Methodist Church**, a Japanese-American church which celebrated its centennial anniversary in 2002. Currently, about eight percent of the three hundreds members of the Highland Park Church are of 100% Japanese descent – most of them are 2nd and 3rd generation Japanese Americans. Of the children, most are third and fourth generation, including children of mixed marriages. Its members also include about ten to fifteen young Japanese-born women married to American servicemen.

In 1902, seven young men from Japan began attending Central Methodist Episcopal Church in Spokane, and soon after, a Bible class was created for them. In October, the Japanese Methodist Church was officially formed. The Japanese Methodist Church moved to a rented three-story house on Post Street in 1903, and a year later, the church moved again to a house on Second Avenue between Howard and Stevens Streets. In 1910, Mrs. John Ellis began her work with the women and children. The church organized Americanization classes for adults, kindergarten for children, Epworth League and Japanese language classes for the youth. Through the efforts of Rev. Taro Goto and the Japanese community, the first permanent home, the Grant Street Church was purchased. In 1946 the Nisei Women's Society of Christian Service (WSCS) was initiated. During the war years, Mrs. Alfred Butler and Rev. John Cobb provided strength to the Japanese in Spokane. In 1949 the Pacific Northwest Conference WSCS presented stained glass windows honoring Nisei soldiers who served in World War II.

The Japanese Methodist Church celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1952. During these years, a new church building was erected under the leadership of Rev. Shigeo Shimada. The new church became known as Highland Park Methodist Church. Following the consecration service, the Pacific Japanese Provisional Annual

Conference was held in the new building in June 1958. The church building was dedicated in May 1965.

The Highland Park Methodist Church hosts a variety of activities, including New Year's celebration, rummage sale, Sukiyaki dinner (as part of Spokane's Japan Week celebration), church picnic, mini-bazaar, and mochi making party. Besides these public events, Highland Park Methodist Church participates in the local community in many other ways. The church is an active member institution of the Spokane Alliance, an organization of churches, labor unions and civic groups working together for the common good. Many of the church's members are also active in the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) and the Nishinomiya sister city program.

Furthermore, Highland Park is part of the Pacific Northwest Annual Conference of the United Methodist Churches of Washington and North Idaho. It joins with four other historically Japanese American UM congregations in Washington and Oregon for a Youth Conference and a Nikkei Conference. Highland Park will host the Nikkei Conference in 2004.

Founded in 1974, the **Spokane Chinese Baptist Church** is the only Chinese Christian Church in the Inland Northwest. Attendance at church activities varies from about 35 at Sunday services during in the summer to about 100 at special occasions. Its membership is diverse in age and occupations – consisting of college students, young professionals, business people, teachers, professors, and retired seniors. Most of the Chinese Baptist Church's members are first-generation ethnic-Chinese coming from all over the world – India, Burma, Indonesia, Vietnam, China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Brought to the Spokane area by their jobs or education, many of the members of the Spokane Chinese Baptist Church moved away after a few years. Some of the former members are now residing in Seattle, Portland, Texas, California and Florida, while international students have returned to their home countries such as Thailand, Taiwan, Japan, China, Hong Kong, Canada, and Indonesia.

The Spokane Chinese Baptist Church began in 1974 as a Chinese Christian Fellowship that met once a month. At the time, Pastor Paul Seto of Seattle Chinese Baptist Church was studying for his doctoral degree at Fuller Theological Seminary and was looking for a project for his dissertation research on church planting. After looking at eleven cities in the Northwest, he found that Spokane had the second largest Chinese population, after Seattle. Gathering all known Chinese Christians in the city, he met with them at the home of one of the

Christians for a monthly potluck and gathering. Later, Pastor Seto recruited Reverend Peter Tow to be pastor of the fellowship. Soon, the home was not large enough as more and more of the local Chinese came to the monthly meetings. The fellowship then moved its gatherings to the basement of Grace Baptist Church. In 1981, the Chinese Christian Fellowship officially became the Spokane Chinese Baptist Church.

Two years later, Pastor Peter Tow left and the church was without a pastor for 20 months. Membership dropped as a result. In June of 1985, Pastor Y. S. Lai was called to serve as the pastor of the church. Soon after Pastor Lai assumed the new position, Grace Baptist Church asked the Chinese Church to find a new location. Although there were only a handful of members (most of them were new converts) at the time, the church was able to raise, from its own members and Chinese Christians in Seattle and other places, more than \$40,000 for down payment on a new church building. They paid off the mortgage sooner than the expected 5 years.

Besides worship and Sunday school, members of the church gather for prayer meeting, Bible study and youth fellowship on Friday evenings. The church organizes a monthly potluck and game night when members of the church will play volleyball, basketball or go bowling. In addition, the church hosts an evangelical gathering regularly to reach out to the Chinese community. The church celebrates both religious and secular holidays including Chinese New Year, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Mothers' Day, Fathers' Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas. During these celebrations, adult and youth members set up programs such as musicals and plays for the audience. Moreover, the church has sponsored Chinese language classes, campus bible classes, picnics, and camping. It reaches out to Chinese students at local community colleges and universities. Furthermore, the church supports missionaries of the American Baptist Churches in many parts of the World as well as mission work through Chinese Christian Mission, CA, and Partners International, WA.

While its mission is primarily spiritual, the Spokane Chinese Baptist Church participates in community services such as the donation of canned food to the Union Gospel Mission. Members of the church also maintain a stock of used furniture and utensils for others in the Chinese community and share with one another produce from their gardens. The church organized a fundraiser a few years ago for members of a visiting dance troupe from China who were injured in an auto

accident on their way to Spokane for a performance.

The history of the **Spokane Buddhist Temple**, a Jodo Shinshu Temple providing Buddhist teachings to all people, began following the Japanese American Internment Camps in WWII. It was founded in September 1945 by Reverend Eiyu Terao and his family, who moved here from Minidoka Relocation Center in Idaho in September 1945. The members of the temple met in an apartment until the temple purchased its present location on Perry Street. The members of the Japanese Buddhist Temple were primarily Issei (first generation) at the very beginning. As the Issei aged and the Nisei (second) generation grew up, membership had been on the decline. At present, the Temple has approximately fifty members – about 40 of them are second and third generation Japanese Americans, ranging from 50s to 80s in age, and 10 are Caucasians in their 30-50s. The temple has been struggling with its changing identity as the local Japanese American population shrinks while some have converted to other religions. Nevertheless, while all newcomers are welcomed regardless of their background, the root of the temple will remain in Japan as it is where the Jodo Shin Shu sect of Buddhism began. It maintains its official tie to the headquarters of the sect and continues to honor elements of the Japanese tradition, such as celebrating Japanese holidays like Obon in August and selling Japanese food at fundraisers. Moreover, it celebrates with the community the Perry Street Fair in July.

Thirteen years ago, the **Vietnamese Buddhist Temple** was founded by about ten charter members under the auspices of a Buddhist monk. Besides serving as a place of worship, the Temple also functions as a mutual aid association for members of the Vietnamese community. Currently, the temple maintains a membership of a few hundred that is representative of the larger Vietnamese community in age, sex, and socioeconomic status. Many of its second generation members have grown up and become adult members. Most of the immigrant generation have experienced upward social mobility since they arrived at the U.S. a few decades ago.

Responding to the demographic changes in the Asian American populations in Spokane, new organizations are formed while old ones have gradually dissolved or transformed themselves to fulfill other functions or serve a wider community. These Asian American organizations, religious or secular, have contributed tremendously to the lives of Asian Americans in Spokane.



## VII. Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Research

The data presented in this study illustrate a marked heterogeneity within the Asian American populations of the two counties. Not only is there a great deal of diversity within and across Asian American groups in Spokane County, there are also differences between the Asian American populations in the counties and their respective states.

The socioeconomic diversity of the Asian American population observed in this study has also been documented elsewhere (e.g., Fong 1998, Ng, 1998). Specifically, it is observed that Asian Americans tend to cluster at the ends of the economic hierarchy, forming an “hour-glass” shaped class structure. Evidently, the time and manner of entrance affects a group’s degree of assimilation to American society and therefore its position in the stratification system. For example, due to their long history in the U.S., Japanese Americans are highly assimilated and enjoy a relatively high degree of economic success. Furthermore, the specific economic and political circumstances leading to immigration affect the amount of human and social capital that a group brings with them, and therefore, their readiness to adjust to their new lives in the U.S.. Hmong, who came to this country recently as refugees with little formal education, economic resources, and prior exposure to Western culture, face tremendous difficulties as they try to rebuild their lives in Spokane.

Some recent research suggests that despite their relative educational and occupational success, many Asian American professionals still face the “glass ceiling” problem (e.g., Wong, 2000). In addition, other studies suggest that while Asian Americans, due to their higher percentage of college graduates, have high median income, they actually earn less than their White counterparts at the same educational level (e.g. Segal, Kilty, and Kim 2002). A more in-depth analysis of employment in the Inland Northwest will be needed to investigate whether local Asian American professionals experience “glass ceiling” or other forms of employment issues as documented in these studies.

While Asian American youth are often assumed to be academically successful, there is a great deal of variation in academic achievement by ethnicity and socioeconomic background. Two recent studies have examined the multifaceted educational experience of Hmong (Lee 2001) and Chinese American students (Louie 2001).

Further studies will be essential for us to go beyond the “Model Minority Myth” and examine the actual experiences of local Asian American youth in the education system.

Besides each group’s unique history, it is important to also recognize that the economy of the region shapes the demographic and socioeconomic makeup of its Asian American population. For instance, the local economy shapes which segments of the population are drawn to an area, which in turn may alter the class structure of the Asian American community. By the same token, the lack of job opportunities in the local area might propel some segments of the Asian American population to leave the area, while those with limited economic resources remain.

There was a substantial increase in unemployment rate for Asian Americans in Spokane County between 1990 and 2000. It is essential to investigate what has caused the climb in unemployment and how it impacts specific Asian American communities. While local economic conditions affect all residents of the Inland Northwest, the impacts might be felt more strongly by the Asian American communities due to their small sizes. The local labor market, furthermore, might help explain the economic disparity found between Asian Americans in Spokane County and the State of Washington. Similarly, the differences found between Spokane and Kootenai Counties also suggest local economic conditions shape their Asian American populations. Future research is needed to examine how local economic changes have influenced the demographic and socioeconomic structures of the Asian American population in the Inland Northwest.

In addition to the economy, the degree of racial diversity is another factor that influences an area’s attractiveness. For example, Asian American professionals might not be willing to relocate to the Inland Northwest and leave behind the quality of life of a more racially and culturally diverse area unless great career opportunities arise. This selective process of migration might explain the existence of a group of high-income Asian American professionals in Spokane County. By the same token, the lack of racial diversity might encourage Asian Americans who grew up in the Inland Northwest to move elsewhere to seek education or career opportunities. Future research should examine the migration pattern of

Asian Americans, specifically, how it is shaped by labor markets in and outside of the region.

Furthermore, the lack of racial diversity and the absence of a sizable Asian American community can provide additional obstacles to new immigrant groups integrating into mainstream American society. For instance, without a sizable ethnic community of their own, refugees from Southeast Asia who came to Spokane as their point of entry to the U.S. might face more difficulties than those who settled in the Seattle or Tacoma area. The small population might affect the amount of institutional resources and informal social support available from the community. Prior studies have pointed to the importance of ethnic economies and social networks in job placements, especially for the recently-arrived immigrants (e.g. Sanders, Nee, and Sernau, 2002, Zhou 1992). Moreover, the relative lack of racial diversity in the region on the whole might create a less than hospitable environment for individuals who are still struggling to learn the English language and the American way of life. It is essential to examine more closely the employment patterns of the Asian American communities in the Inland Northwest and compare them with other places such as the greater Seattle area, that have sizable Asian American ethnic enclaves.

Another area for further research is local Asian American participation in small business and self-employment, which has been credited as an important means for economic advancement among Asian Americans (Sanders and Nee, 1996). Despite its small Asian American population, Spokane County is the home of 430 Asian American-owned firms. Of these, 163 have paid employees with a total payroll overall of \$33 million. An examination of the experiences of these business owners in the Inland Northwest would be worthwhile.

Moreover, this monograph has only touched on the significance of local Asian American organizations. While most prior research on contemporary Asian American organizations focuses primarily on organizations in areas with sizable Asian American populations, the exploratory research in this study<sup>14</sup> suggests that many of the smaller ethnic organizations are as vital to the lives of their members as their counterparts in metropolitan areas with a more visible presence of Asian Americans. Yet very little, if any, academic research on contemporary Asian American communities has examined the role of ethnically-based organizations in communities such as Spokane, with smaller Asian American populations.

In conclusion, the complexity and heterogeneity of the Asian American population defy simple generalizations. This study has only scratched the surface by examining a number of socioeconomic indicators of Asian Americans in Spokane and Kootenai counties. Due to a number of constraints discussed earlier in this report, available Census data do not allow for a more thorough analysis of every local Asian American group. Some of the ethnic groups, such as Laotians and Thais, were excluded altogether from the analysis since data were not available due to their small populations. It would be worthwhile to examine the experience of members in these smaller Asian American communities, especially as both groups have experienced substantial population declines between 1990 and 2000. Insights from research on areas with larger concentrations of these Asian Americans might not apply to the experience of Asian Americans in the Inland Northwest. Further local research will be necessary to have a better understanding of the experience of Asian Americans in the Inland Northwest in its unique social, economic, and historical contexts.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> For a brief introduction of Asian American history in the Pacific Northwest, see “Continental Divide” by Dan Hansen. *The Spokesman Review*, January 5, 2003, and “A History Bursting With Telling: Asian Americans in Washington State” by Matthew W. Klinge, Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest, at University of Washington, <http://www.washington.edu/uwired/outreach/cspn/curaaw/main.html>.

<sup>2</sup> See the Institute for Public Policy and Economic Analysis’s reports, *Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Spokane County, Washington and Kootenai County, Idaho* and *Racial and Ethnic Inequality in Spokane County, Washington and Kootenai County, Idaho* by Steven Neufeld.

<sup>3</sup> For confidentiality protection, Census Bureau does not release tabulations for any population groups with fewer than 100 people in a specific geographic area.

<sup>4</sup> Summary File 1 presents counts and information on seven characteristics – age, sex, race, Hispanic/Latino origin, household relationship, tenure, and vacancy status – collected from all people and housing units. Summary File 2 contains the same 100-% population and housing characteristics, but the tables in this file are iterated for a selected list of detailed race and Hispanic- or Latino-origin groups, as well as American Indian and Alaska Native tribes. Details about the summary files can be found at the American Fact Finder homepage at [www.factfinder.census.gov](http://www.factfinder.census.gov).

<sup>5</sup> Summary File 3 and Summary File 4 contain information derived from the “long form” census questionnaire, which was sent to approximately one in six households. The “long form” contains all questions on the short form, as well as additional detailed questions relating to the social, economic and housing characteristics of each individual and household. The data collected from the 1-in-6 sample are weighted to represent the total population. Summary File 4 contains tabulations of population and housing characteristics down to the census tract level for 336 race, Hispanic or Latino, American Indian and Alaska Native, and ancestry categories. Since the statistics presented in Summary File 3 and Summary File 4 are calculated from sample data, the estimates are subject to sampling error as well as non-sampling error.

<sup>6</sup> Barnes, Jessica and Claudette Bennett, 2002. *The Asian Population: 2000*, Census 2000 Brief. C2KBR/01-16. US Census Bureau, Washington D.C.

<sup>7</sup> Includes only individuals who identify themselves as “Asian alone.”

<sup>8</sup> Does not include Pacific Islanders.

<sup>10</sup> Interpretation of the statistics on citizenship status and nativity must take into account the inclusion of foreigners who are in the U.S. temporarily for work or school in the Census. For details on the Census residence rules, please refer to “Plans and Rules for Taking the Census” at [http://www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/resid\\_rules.html#foreign](http://www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/resid_rules.html#foreign). Due to the small Asian American population in Spokane County, the presence of international students at local colleges and universities has inflated the proportion of foreign-born Asians. For instance, Eastern Washington University alone enrolled about 280 international students in 2000, 99 of whom come from Japan. These 99 Japanese students would be counted in the population of 1,668 Japanese Americans in Spokane County if they were present during Census 2000 and completed a census questionnaire. (Statistics from “Higher Education Enrollment Reports” published by Office of Financial Management, State of Washington. <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/hied/heer/2000/ewu150f00.htm>.)

<sup>11</sup> Changes were made to the question on race for Census 2000. Therefore, cautions must be used when interpreting changes between 1990 and 2000. The 1990 Census combined Asian Americans and Pacific Islander into one category “Asian and Pacific Islanders.” In addition, individuals were allowed to choose only one racial identifier, and so the category “Asian and Pacific Islanders” includes biracial and multiracial individuals as well.

<sup>12</sup> Household poverty rate is not calculated due to the small number of households included in the data.

<sup>13</sup> I would like to thank Susan Rui from the Spokane Chinese Association, Charity Doyl from the Filipino American Association of the Inland Empire, Rev. John Coleman from the Highland Park Methodist Church, Christine Marr from the Spokane Buddhist Temple, Rev. Peter Lai, from the Spokane Chinese Baptist Church, Vang Xiong from the Spokane Hmong Association, Toi Mulligan from the Vietnamese Buddhist Community of Spokane and Pum Horobiowski from the Thai Fellowship Group for providing information about their organizations.



\*From One to Z\* artist: Ms. Claudia Borroskin



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Eastern Washington University's mission is to prepare broadly educated, technologically proficient and highly productive citizens to obtain meaningful careers, to enjoy enriched lives and to make contributions to a culturally diverse society. The University's foundation is based on career preparation, underpinned by a strong liberal arts education.

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Eastern is emerging with fresh, dynamic leadership and campus-wide enthusiasm for its future. As of fall quarter 2002, Eastern's enrollment numbers were 9,093 full-time equivalent students.

## Accreditations

The university is accredited by the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges and many discipline-specific associations, such as the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, the National Association of Schools of Music, the Computing Sciences Accreditation Board, the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education, the Planning Accreditation Board and many more.

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