



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Minnesota Tibetan Oral History Project



In 2005, staff of the Oral History Office at the Minnesota Historical Society implemented a project with the Tibetan-American community in Minnesota. While the Society had worked with many immigrant and cultural groups within the state, a project or partnership between the Society and the Tibetan-American community had not been attempted previously. A

project was developed that would not only collect meaningful interviews for the museum, but would also prove useful to the community. The Society approached the leadership of the Tibetan American Foundation of Minnesota (TAFM) seeking their approval and to establish a partnership for this project.

Today over 1,300 Tibetans live in Minnesota making it the second largest population in North America. As a community project, it was important to have the interviewers come from within this community. By recruiting young college age interviewers, the project not only accomplished this task but also gained the unique perspective of young adults, eager to not just catalogue their history but to discover something new as well.

Working directly with individuals within the community provided an exceptional opportunity when it came to the selection of interviewees. Many days were spent debating who should be interviewed, and which interviewer should conduct each interview. The interviewers were able to interview people of diverse background, age, and experience.

Twenty-two oral history interviews were conducted during the summer and fall of 2005. Each was transcribed and bound as an individual volume. In total, the project collected over twenty-seven hours of tape and transcribed over 650 pages of text. These tapes and transcripts will be publicly available for listening and viewing in the library soon.

Two sets of the twenty-two volumes were prepared for presentation to the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), the Tibetan government in exile, in

Dharamsala, India. One set will be presented to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. A drop-spine box was especially constructed by the Conservation Department at the Minnesota Historical Society to house this set of volumes. It was covered in a red and gold rayon/silk blend bookbinding cloth. The second set of volumes will be presented to the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. For these volumes a box was constructed and covered in a natural colored rayon/linen bookbinding cloth.

We feel privileged to have been able to undertake this project and are grateful for the invaluable assistance provided by the many participants.