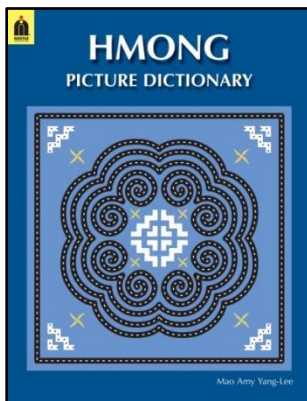




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**For Immediate Release**

## **Building cultural and language awareness improves lives of Hmong Refugees**



### **Hmong Picture Dictionary**

The only Hmong-English picture dictionary title arrives October 5, 2015 from Master Communications

Cincinnati, OH (September 21, 2015) – Master Communications’ Hmong Picture Dictionary promotes the key life skill of speaking English while addressing the need of the Hmong families to help young Hmong Americans learn their heritage language and be able to communicate with their elders.

Hmong Picture Dictionary is specially created for use in the Hmong home and in the educational setting. Hmong Picture Dictionary is designed to facilitate inter-generational communication, family relationship development and greater understanding of the Hmong culture through:

- English learning among first-generation Hmong people in America
- Hmong language learning among second-generation Hmong Americans

- Self-learning by non-Hmong of the Hmong language

The dictionary features about 1,000 words and phrases, organized by themes and supported by illustrations. The preface includes a brief history of the Hmong, an introduction to tone markers, Hmong names and comprehensive indices.

This valuable resource is more than a simple dictionary as it can also be used in teaching languages to children and adults. It is an excellent resource for schools and libraries.

The author, Mao Lee, and her husband, wanted their children to be literate in Hmong. She started looking for resources to help their children who were fluent in English but knew only a handful of Hmong words. The existing materials consisted of a few dictionaries that were meant for Hmong adult speakers. Lee also found that many in Hmong communities were also having the same needs for Hmong resources. Lee saw the gap in resource for non-Hmong speakers and created her own lessons to teach Hmong to her children and for the Hmong communities. This resource has been developed over many years, and has been refined through extensive use to provide the most essential words for children.

Hmong refugees settled in the US after Vietnam War starting late 1975. According to 2010 US Census, there are over 260,000 (+40% vs. 2000) Hmong people, in every US State including Alaska and Hawaii.

Top 5 Hmong population by States:

California	91,224
Minnesota	66,181
Wisconsin	49,240
North Carolina	10,864
Michigan	5,924

Largest metropolitan/urban population:

Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota	64,422
Fresno, California	31,771
Sacramento-Yolo, California	26,996
Milwaukee-Racine, Wisconsin	11,904
Merced, California	7,254

42% are foreign born and over 50% of K-12 school Hmong students are classified as ELL (English Language Learners) in California.

About Mao Amy Yang-Lee:

While the author's journey to America is similar to most Hmong refugees, her educational upbringing is unusual because of her father's focus on education in the Hmong language at an early age. As background, Hmong people were hill tribes who lived in the highlands of Laos and Vietnam and practiced farming and hunting in the tropical forests.

Mao Lee was 7 years old when her family had to suddenly leave their home in Laos. Her father was one of the Hmong recruited and trained by United States CIA to fight against the communist forces. Mao Lee's parents were tending to their rice farm and Mao and her sibling were looking for goose eggs down the stream when one of her relatives came running to inform them that they must leave Laos right away. For Mao, it is like a bad dream. She remembers her entire family running in their flip flops back home and her mother packing only the necessities - one piece of clothing for Mao. They needed to board a boat to cross the Mekong River at night very quietly. Her family was separated into two small boats and Mao Lee who had never been on a boat held onto it tightly until it arrived in Thailand. She remembers everyone was in shock and spoke very little for days in their first refugee camp. After two years in a refugee camp, her family was resettled in the US.

In America, Mao Lee and her sister had to learn English quickly and attended school. Her father, who was a teacher before the war, taught them to read and write Hmong in the evenings. He would cut out pictures and recite words for Mao. Soon there was a collection of pictures which he dreamed of making into a book.

When Mao Lee had her own children and she could not find the resources to teach her own children, she began thinking of her late father's picture collection to teach her the Hmong language. Mao Lee contacted Selina Yoon at Master Communications

and Asia for Kids and Ms. Yoon agreed to work with Mao Lee to make her dream a reality. Now they have published the Hmong Picture Dictionary which Mao Lee knew would help her Hmong community. Mao Lee is today a licensed K-12 school counselor in Wisconsin.

Master Communications, founded in 1994, is an independent publisher and distributor of multicultural resource in books and videos. Master Communications, Inc. is best known for its Asia for Kids and Culture for Kids catalogs among educators and librarians. *A Free People: Tracing Our Hmong Roots* (ISBN: 978-1-888194-42-5) compiled by Dave Moore was previously published by Master Communications and is available for purchase as a print book and ebook through Amazon Kindle and Apple iBook.

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