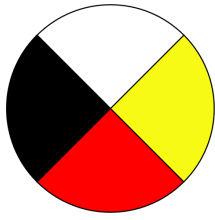


# VOICES IN THE GARDEN— 9 ART STONES AT LIU MING YUAN



The **9 Art Stones** work of public art is made possible by a generous grant from the Minnesota Humanities Center (Clean Water Land & Legacy Amendment) to the Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society in the of Summer 2021.

**Vision.** Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society (MCFGs) views the China Garden site as an opportunity to gather thousands of visitors into a broader understanding of Chinese and Hmong culture on honored Dakota land, providing a venue for the public to witness a unique collaboration of cultures in public art. The MCFGs Board envisioned this project as a means to amplify Chinese, Hmong, and Dakota voices in a way that could advance cultural understanding, pride, and healing. Representatives from the Chinese, Hmong, and Dakota communities generously advised MCFGs to ensure accuracy and authenticity.

**Significance of the Number 9.** The number of stones - 9 - was specifically chosen because the number 9 has great significance in Chinese culture. The number 9 (九) sounds just like 久 (jiǔ), which means “long lasting” or “forever,” and represents longevity. This number is also associated with the Chinese Emperor, representing strength. 9, as the highest single digit, is also a multiple of 3 and represents the culmination of a cycle that reaches a pinnacle. The number 9 can be found in many aspects of Chinese life.

## Dakota Stone

The Dakota Stone is placed in a prominent location to welcome all visitors to this part of the Dakota homeland, on which Phalen Regional Park and the China Friendship Garden are situated. Minnesota is the birthplace of the Dakota. Through this stone, MCFGs expresses its gratitude to the Dakota and recognizes the Dakota as the original stewards of this land.

## 5 Chinese Art Stones

China has a long history of using stones, calligraphy, and poetry in classical China Gardens; stones with features that represent mountains and landscapes, or become poetic tablets, or are chosen to reproduce a particular painting. These 5 Chinese Art Stones carry additional symbolic cultural meaning in the number 5: 5 elements (water, wood, fire, earth, metal), 5 directions (North, South, East, West, Center), 5 sacred mountains (Mount Heng in Shanxi Province -North, Mount Heng in Hunan Province - South, Mount Tai -East, Mount Hua -West, Mount Song -central).

## 3 Hmong Stones

The Hmong stones (in Hmong Green & Hmong White dialects) are placed in this China Garden because this is a sister-city project created in collaboration with St. Paul's sister city Changsha, Hunan Province, China. This China Garden recognizes that St. Paul is home to the largest urban Hmong population in the United States. and that the Hmong trace their ancestral roots to the sister city Changsha and Hunan Province, where the Hmong population numbers nearly 2 million.

**MCFGs Project Manager:** Linda Mealey-Lohmann.

**Art Stones Committee:** Ali Van, Pa Thao, Carol Brash, Haoyu Zhao, Meichun Jia, Caroline Van, Mary Warpeha, Dona Yang, Professor Zou Zhen, Romi Slowiak, Christina Deng Morrison, Ping Wang, Jijun He.

**Project Advisors:** Jennifer Junfang Fan (Changsha), Carole Hyder, Tom & Laura LaBlanc, Ying Chuyangheu, Bill Pesek, Bill Zajicek.

**Project Installation Company:** Semple Excavating



"This work is funded in part by the Minnesota Humanities Center with money from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund that was created with the vote of the people of Minnesota on November 4, 2008."

## THE DAKOTA ART STONE



### Dakota TaMakoce Imnija Ska Otunwe

The first line translates: “Dakota Homelands” or “Lands of the Dakota”  
The second line is: “Village along the White Cliffs” or “St. Paul”

*Dakota translations by Redwing Thomas*

The Dakota stone is a local deeply weathered Limestone weighing about 1 ton. This stone is extraordinary in that, if you look carefully, you can see a fossil embedded on the front side, representing longevity and the 10,000 year history of the Dakota.

Facing East, this stone honors the Dakota tradition of placing the opening of the tipis facing East to catch the first rays of the sunrise — symbolizing a new day and hope. Minnesota was viewed as the “Eastern Door” for the Dakota. Amongst the cottonwoods along the shore of the lake, this stone is at home. Look and listen for the Bluejays in the trees overhead, a Dakota symbol of good luck.

This stone recognizes that this area of Phalen Park is on Dakota homelands and served as a corridor for the Dakota who camped along Phalen Lake and made their way up the chain of lakes by foot and canoes

to White Bear Lake to gather and hunt. This Limestone is the same stone as the white cliffs along the Mississippi River, one of the major Dakota water ways. The limestone cave, Wakan Tipi or House of the Spirits, and the mounds above were places of villages and burial less than a mile from downtown St. Paul. A spring near the cave that is connected to all the water in Minnesota creates a habitat for all that is living. The characters on the Dakota stone were engraved by Brian Rosen, Stone & Steel Design, St. Louis Park, MN.

## THE 5 CHINESE ART STONES THE WEIMING LU ART STONE

shān shuǐ yǒu qīng yīn      xīn yǔ yuè jù jìng

山水有清音      心与月俱静



This is a composite of two Chinese poems: the first line from a poem by Zuo Si 左思 (250-305), translates as “Mountains and waters are making pure music.” The second line from a poem by Li Tiaoyuan 李调元 (1734-1803), translates as “My heart and the moon are listening in peace.”

Weighing nearly 3,000 pounds, this stone is a local deeply weathered Limestone. It is reminiscent of a Chinese landscape painting with layers of mountain ranges and beautiful calligraphy and poetry to enhance one’s enjoyment of this work of art and one’s connection to nature. Two of the necessary elements of a China garden are mountains and water. Here, one can imagine oneself as traveler starting in the foothills and wandering on the cloudy path up the mountain, listening to the peaceful music of the mountain streams and waterfalls.

This stone is engraved with a poem in Chinese brush calligraphy by past MCFG board member and current Advisor **Weiming Lu**. Weiming is a retired Urban Planner instrumental in designing Lowertown St. Paul, a world-renowned calligrapher, and a leader of the sister-city relationship. He traveled in 1988 to Changsha with then-Mayor Latimer for the official creation of the St. Paul-Changsha Sister-City Relationship. This Chinese immigrant has worked for decades promoting friendship and understanding between Minnesota and China and furthering art on the board of Public Art Saint Paul. The characters on the Weiming Lu stone were engraved by Brian Rosen, Stone & Steel Design, St. Louis Park, MN. This stone is from Hedberg’s Landscape, Plymouth, MN.



## THE HSIAO ART STONES



美

The character *mei* means “Beautiful” and is also the first character in the word *Meiguo* 美國 meaning “America”



中

*Zhong* means “Middle” and is also the first character in the word *Zhongguo* 中國 meaning “China”

MCFGs received four beautiful pieces of original Chinese brush calligraphy created by the late **Dr. C.C. Hsiao**. Taken together, these four characters form the phrase “Mei Zhong Ming Yuan,” which translates as “US-China-Minnesota Garden.” Each Chinese character carries an individual literal and symbolic meaning. The characters were hand-carved on by Minnesota artist **Peter Morales**, Balam Studios, St. Paul, MN. **Morales** also hand-carved the elegant characters on the granite West Entrance Archway.

The *Mei* and *Zhong* stones are dedicated to **Dr. CC Hsiao and Joyce Hsiao** to symbolize their life of being born in China and moving to the US and raising a family in Minnesota, and to honor them for their decades of work in building bridges between China and the U.S. Dr. Hsiao was one of the founders of the Minnesota Chapter of the USCPFA (the US-China Peoples Friendship Association) in 1974 and one of the Co-Founders of the Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society in 2005. His wife Joyce Hsiao is one of the founding MCFGs Board members (served for 17 years) and is currently on the MCFGs Honorary Advisory Council. Their daughter Caroline Hsiao Van is also a MCFGs Advisor and granddaughter Ali Van is a MCFGs Board member. Joyce has continued to work to promote cultural understanding and friendship between the US and China and between Chinese Americans and Hmong Americans.

The Hsiao stones are granite basalt, weighing approximately 1 ton each, from Hedberg’s Landscape, Plymouth, MN.



明

*Ming* means “Bright” and is also the first character in the word *Mingzhou* 明州 meaning “Minnesota” meaning “Minnesota”



苑

*Yuan* means “Garden” or “Park” and has been the logo for the Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society, since created by Dr. C.C. Hsiao in 2005.

These two stones are dedicated to two other individuals who had a significant impact on US-China relations over many decades and who were instrumental in the creation of the China Friendship Garden.

The *Ming* stone is dedicated to **Mary Warpeha** who was the President of the US-China Peoples Friendship Association-Minnesota Chapter at the time when the idea for a China Garden first arose in 2000. In her capacity as President, Mary supported the creation of the China Garden Committee and became one of its founding board members when MCFGs was incorporated in 2005. Mary continues to actively serve on the Board after 17 years. Mary’s interests have centered around friendship, cooperation and embracing global cultural traditions.

The *Yuan* stone is dedicated to **Linda Mealey-Lohmann**, who with Dr. C.C. Hsiao first came up with the idea to build a China Garden in Minnesota based on sister-city relationships and co-founded the Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society in 2005. Linda served as the MCFGs President for 16 years, from 2005 to 2016. During this time, under Linda’s leadership, MCFGs raised \$1.2 million to fund and construct Phase I of the St. Paul-Changsha China Friendship Garden of Whispering Willows and Flowing Waters at Phalen Regional Park, St. Paul, Minnesota. She was the lead for coordinating the sister-city gifts, artists, and Changsha architects and artisans through 2019, and the Project Manager for the 9 Art Stones in 2021.

## THE 3 HMONG ART STONES

**Significance of the number 3.** There are three Hmong stones to represent the significance of the number 3 in Hmong culture, which begins with the three legs of the metal stoves used by families not only to cook food, but also to provide warmth and light in the cold and darkness. The word *peb* is “three” in Hmong, which is also a homophone for the word “we/us.” This signifies how individuals, like the three legs of a stove, need each other to support and uphold the community.



### Moob Minnesota txais tog koj

“Hmong Minnesotans welcome you”

The text for the first stone (Green Hmong dialect) was chosen by the Hmong Advisory Committee to express the sentiment of Hmong Minnesotans to welcome all communities from near and far into our home of St. Paul. It reflects the caring and open nature of the Hmong people, as well as their gracious hospitality. This stone is the largest of the 9 Art Stones, and represents the importance of cultivating a welcoming nature in Hmong culture.

The head of the stone represents the peak of the Mountain, and is a visual connection to the geographical history of the Hmong people and their former lives in the mountains of Laos. The engraved text is located at the “heart” of the stone, symbolizing the Hmong Minnesotan community opening their heart to all visitors. The natural formation on the back of the stone curves and portrays a seat on the stone, representing how the Hmong people are ready to support anyone and how villages are willing to open up their own homes to help those in need. Weighing 7,100 pounds, this stone is local granite from Rivard Stone, Houlton, WI, engraved by Steve Martens.

### Kev kawm txuj, kawm ci yog kev tsim nuj, tsim nqi; Kev sib pab, sib txhawb yog kev vam meej

“Education is knowledge, knowledge is wisdom;  
The path to success is by helping and supporting each other.”

The text for the second stone (White Hmong dialect) emphasizes that education is the foundation of successful communities. This quote reflects the goals and dreams of immigrants and how immigrant communities flourish when they come together and support one another. This text also serves as a reminder to future generations to appreciate their roots, culture, and community as they harvest the fruits and successes of generations that came before them. The shape of the stone is similar to that of a large seed, which relates to planting seeds of life, as well as planting seeds of knowledge for the next generation. The shape of the stone at the bottom represents two feet firmly rooted in the ground and again symbolizes the importance of education as the foundation. Weighing 3 tons, this stone is local granite from Rivard Stone, Houlton, WI, engraved by Steve Martens.



### Yog thaaj chaw nuav tsi muaj yaam koj nyam, los thov koj nyam yaam koj muaj

“If this place does not have what you like, please like what you have”

The third Hmong stone (Green Hmong dialect) has a proverb translated into Hmong that has been passed down orally for many generations. This quote is found at the Royal Garden of the King of Northern Laos and at the Northern Resort of Chiang Mai in Thailand. This proverb serves as a remembrance to all the Hmong people of their history, how far they have come and the resilience they possess.

On the side opposite the engraving, the composites in the stone formation resemble the shape and flow of a river from the mountain tops to the valleys. This flowing river represents the three major rivers that are significant to each culture involved in this project: the Mekong River (dividing Laos and Thailand), the Xiang River (through the heart of Changsha), and the Mississippi River (through the heart of the Twin Cities). Weighing 2 tons, this stone is local granite from Rivard Stone, Houlton, WI, engraved by Steve Martens.