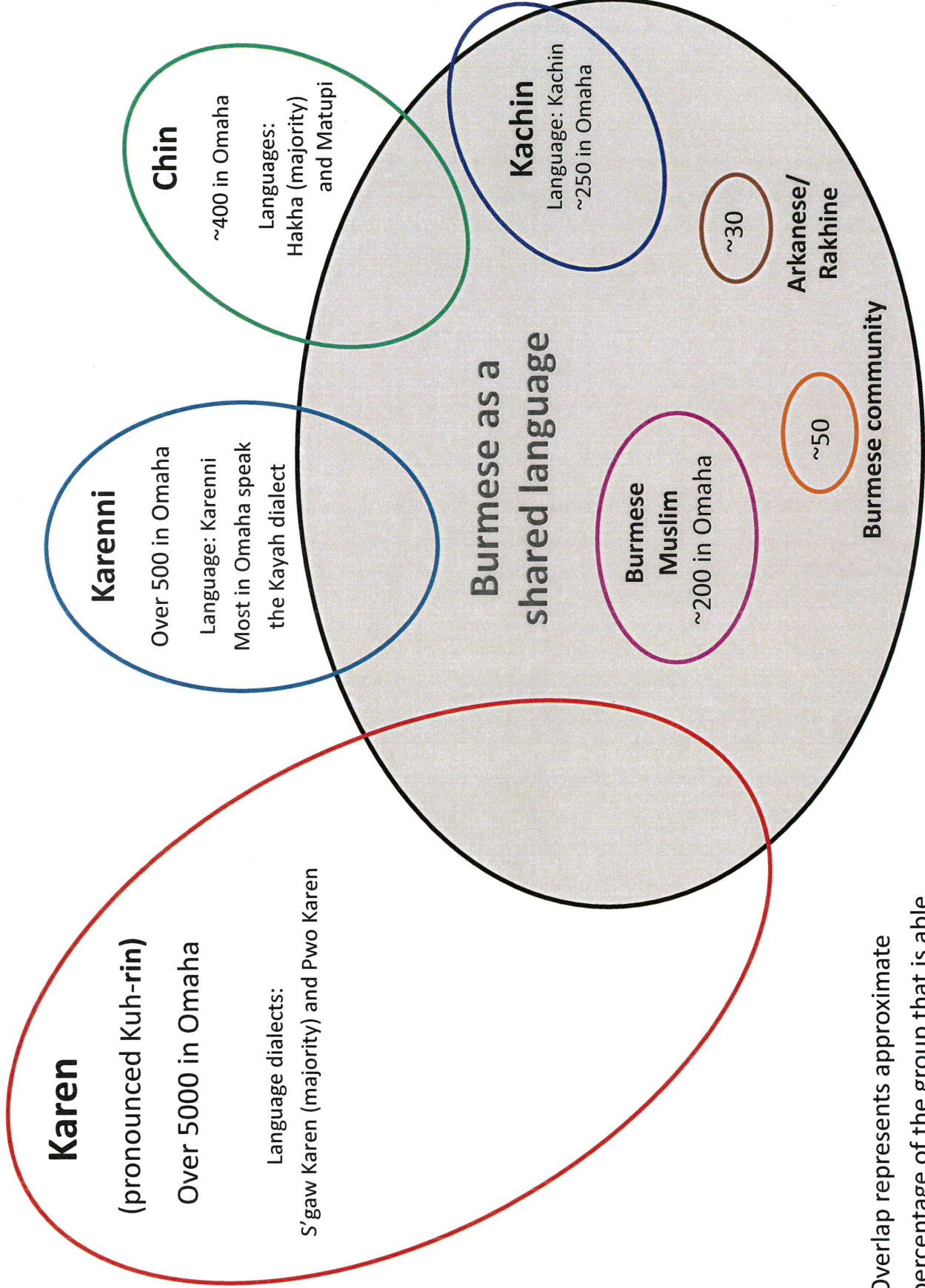


Ethnic Groups from Burma/Myanmar who live in Omaha



Overlap represents approximate percentage of the group that is able to speak Burmese well enough to conduct appointments accurately.

Refugees from Burma (Myanmar) began arriving in Omaha in 2006 with an estimated 7,000 total living here as of 2015. It's important to understand the differences in ethnicities and languages in order to best serve them. Almost all refugees from Burma speak their native/ethnic language. Some also speak Burmese but this varies widely by their education, age, and life experience. Even if they speak some Burmese, they may not be fluent and it is risky to force appointments to be conducted in a person's second language. It is possible to have several people from Burma in one room who couldn't communicate with each other. In accordance with the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health Care (CLAS) issued by the Office of Minority Health, every effort should be made to accommodate Interpretation using on-site interpreters in the native language.

It is important to use correct ethnic terms to refer to people from Burma. The majority of them do not want to be called "Burmese" since that typically is used to refer to the Burmese army who persecuted them and forced them to flee. Each ethnic group had their own state, national anthem, and flag in Burma. However, there is a small group of Burmese in Omaha as described in the last category below.

Karen (pronounced Kuh-rin): The Karen are the largest ethnic group from Burma in Omaha. The major dialects are S'gaw Karen and Pwo (Po/Poe) Karen. S'gaw is the majority dialect and normally what people refer to as just "Karen". Many Pwo Karen also speak S'gaw Karen but not always and this can cause difficulty with accurate interpretation.

Karenni (pronounced Kuh-rinee): Despite the similar name, Karen and Karenni are completely different languages. There are several subgroup/dialects of Karenni, including Kayah and Kayan. Most of the Karenni in Omaha are Kayah and can communicate clearly with each other. If a man has the last name Reh or a woman has the last name Meh, there is a 99% chance they are Karenni.

Chin: There are many dialects of Chin but the main two in Omaha are Hakha Chin (majority) and Matupi Chin. Hakha and Matupi speakers cannot understand each other. Matupi speakers are very likely to be proficient in Burmese.

Kachin: About 90% of Kachin in Omaha speak Burmese well and interpretation hasn't usually been a problem for them.

Burmese Muslim: This can be confusing since a religion is also used to denote an ethnic group. Burmese Muslims always speak Burmese as a primary language.

Burmese— There are a small group of refugees in Omaha who were persecuted based on political beliefs and activity rather than ethnicity. They speak Burmese and this is the only group that would correctly be called "Burmese".

Arkanese/Rakhine— Arkanese and Rakhine are used interchangeably to refer to the same group. Their language is very similar to Burmese therefore they communicate using Burmese interpreters.