



# What Would Love Do?

Amelia Franck Meyer (BF'15)  
is transforming the child welfare  
system by putting families first

Julie Garreau (BF'16) and her community build  
hope with the Cheyenne River Youth Project



Creating a more inclusive environment  
for Twin Cities professionals of color

THE MAGAZINE OF THE  
BUSH FOUNDATION 2019

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**ON THE COVER:** Amelia Franck Meyer (BF'15) is the founder of Alia Innovations, a nonprofit consulting team working to transform the child welfare system nationwide

Photograph by **DAVID ELLIS**

ABOVE KRISTINA BARKER

ABOVE FROM LEFT: REBECCA JEAN LAWRENCE PHOTOGRAPHY (2), TARGET STUDIO, DAN KOECK  
ON COVER: AMELIA'S MAKEUP PROVIDED BY AMBER YOUNG BACK COVER: REBECCA JEAN LAWRENCE PHOTOGRAPHY

# Welcome

## Reflecting on Goals for a Decade

We generally try to focus bMag less on the Bush Foundation itself and more on showcasing the great work of people we've supported throughout our region. In this issue, we've included a story that is squarely about us. It's a reflection I wrote with June Noronha on our Goals for a Decade strategy, which we launched in 2008 and operated under until 2013.

Those of you who have been watching the Bush Foundation for a while know that Goals for a Decade was a huge strategic shift for us. It was a disruption for us and a disruption for many others who had come to count on Bush Foundation funding for their issue or their organization.

Overall, our experience with Goals for a Decade was mixed. We had some successes and some things that didn't go as we had hoped. It made us wrestle with big questions about impact and our role in the region. We've incorporated the lessons of our experience into the way we operate today. We think we are stronger because of it.

And—we've also included lots and lots of stories showcasing the great work of people we've supported throughout the region. I hope you will find them as inspiring as we do! 

**Jen Ford Reedy**  
President



"Assemble the Landscape" displayed at the Bush Foundation  
**ARTIST:** Roger Cummings, Juxtaposition Arts (2013 Bush Prize Winner)



The Bush Foundation invests in great ideas and the people who power them in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and the 23 Native nations that share the same geography.

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The pages between the covers of bMagazine (except for any inserted material) are printed on paper made from wood fiber that was procured from forests that are sustainably managed to remain healthy, productive and biologically diverse. Printed at LSC Communications, Pontiac, Illinois.

PHOTO BRUCE SILCOX



## Apply for a Community Innovation Grant

Grants for organizations to work with their communities to find breakthrough solutions to tough problems.

Applications accepted throughout the year.

[bfdn.org/ci](http://bfdn.org/ci)

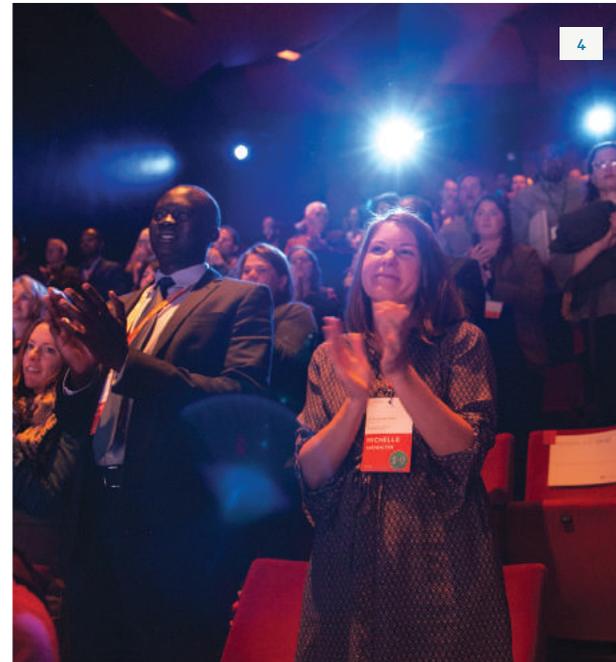
Building and strengthening connections between people working to make the region better for everyone.

## bushCONNECT

The Bush Foundation hosted more than 1,000 participants at bushCONNECT on Oct. 1, 2018, at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis. About 40 partner organizations brought a diverse network of people together and created inspiring programming around a theme of working across difference, and Michele Norris gave the keynote address.



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ALL PHOTOS EXCEPT 6-9: REBECCA JEAN LAWRENCE PHOTOGRAPHY (TOM BAKER, ANGELA JIMENEZ, REBECCA JEAN LAWRENCE, NANCY MUSINGUZI, ANNA RAJDL, CAROLINE YANG)

**1 •** Michele Norris, a Peabody Award-winning journalist, founder of The Race Card Project and executive director of The Bridge, The Aspen Institute's new program on race, identity, connectivity and inclusion, gives the keynote address at bushCON 2018.

**2 •** Attendees could opt into pre-event walking tours around Minneapolis the day before bushCON. Here, Tane Danger (BF'14) leads a crew toward the Finnegans Brew Co. and Finnovation Lab.

**3 •** Bush Foundation board member Curt Johnson introduces the Giant Steps panel in the main theater at bushCON.

**4 •** bushCON attendees, a diverse group from around the region, are fired up to start the day.

**5 •** Green Card Voices highlights the stories of immigrants in our region and invites participants to explore their own similarities and differences through a new card game they developed, called Story Stitch.

**6 •** Attendees pose for the camera at the bushCON photo booth.

**7, 8, 11 •** Bush Foundation board members Mary Brainerd and Kevin Goodno and local artist Seitu Jones (BF'92,'04) host intimate salon conversations with bushCON participants.

**9 •** bushCON is made possible thanks to our numerous recruitment and programming partners who help build the day's audience and sessions. The group met to kick off planning at the Guthrie Theater, which hosts bushCON.

**10 •** Ready Go artists host creative activities throughout the building to spark people's thinking and facilitate connections. They included the Really Big Table, Streetcorner Letterpress (pictured on back cover) and more.

## Event Sponsorship

The Bush Foundation sponsors events across the region where people can share ideas and build stronger networks.



**1+8 • BLOCK X BLOCK**  
Twin Cities LISC brought together over 200 community leaders at their Block x Block summit to share ideas and learn from one another in order to push the edge of what's possible in our neighborhoods, cities and communities. As part of the event, St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey share their thoughts on creating a more inclusive economy and helping people stay in the places they love (1). Bush Foundation board member and Juxtaposition Arts CEO DeAnna Cummings (BF'07) was a featured speaker (8).

**2 • GAMECHANGER IDEAS FESTIVAL**  
Andrew Solomon speaks with the crowd at the GameChanger Ideas Festival in Bismarck, North Dakota, which is billed as "a rock concert for your mind."

**3 • COMMUNITY SKILLS-BASED CHALLENGE**  
HandsOn Twin Cities hosted a Community Skills-Based Challenge in partnership with Northside Achievement Zone to bring together corporate and nonprofit leaders to brainstorm and solve challenges together. Pictured here, Anne Kvinge facilitates.

**4 • GROW OUR OWN SUMMIT**  
Southwest Initiative Foundation board member Abdurizak "Zack" Mahboub (BF'10) of Willmar, Minnesota, poses a question at the Grow Our Own Summit.

**5 • TEDXBEMIDJI**  
TEDxBemidji speaker Eric Carlson shares his talk about the democratizing power of creative technologies in design, manufacturing, education and play-based learning through his experience running Kelliher Public School's award-winning Fab Lab.

**6 • POLLEN'S CROSS POLLINATION DINNER**  
Pollen's Cross Pollination Dinner mixes up various networks and groups to facilitate relationship building and discussions. This group includes Nausheena Hussain (BF'16) and Rabbi Michael Adam Latz.

**7 • EQUITY SUMMIT**  
Alex West Steinman (BF'19) and Bethany Iverson, co-founders of The Coven, speak at the St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce Equity Summit.



PHOTO 1-8 JOSH OLSON/POLLEN PHOTO 2 MAX PATZNER PHOTO 3 LAUREN ENGFER PHOTOGRAPHY PHOTO 4 MANDY BOUCEK PHOTO 5 JOHN LATOURELLE PHOTOGRAPHY

PHOTO 6 EMILY BARRERA KLEINOW PHOTO 7 SPOT PHOTO 9 BRUCE SILCOX PHOTO 10 LIZ GILLES PHOTO 11 JILL GREER/AUGEO MARKETING



**9 • MINNESOTA COUNCIL ON FOUNDATIONS**  
Leaders in philanthropy build connections at the annual Minnesota Council on Foundations conference.

**10 • MORNING FILL UP**  
Artist Kevin Pourier (BF'06) and Matt Ehlman, Ph.D. (BF'15) of The Numad Group discuss the artistic journey that led Kevin to be awarded Best of Show at the Santa Fe Indian Market, the world's largest and most prestigious Indian art market, as part of the monthly Morning Fill Up conversation series at The Garage in Rapid City, South Dakota.

**11 • TWIN CITIES STARTUP WEEK**  
Sharon Kennedy Vickers (BF'18), a leader in the "tech for good" social entrepreneurship movement, speaks at Twin Cities Startup Week.

## Bush Foundation Events

Bush Foundation staff and board members travel and host events to build connections with our grantees and others doing important work to make our region better for everyone. In 2018, we sent cohorts to national conferences; connected with Bush Fellows, educators and arts and culture leaders; and hosted gatherings in Owatonna, Minnesota; Rapid City, South Dakota; northeast Minnesota and Leech Lake tribal communities.



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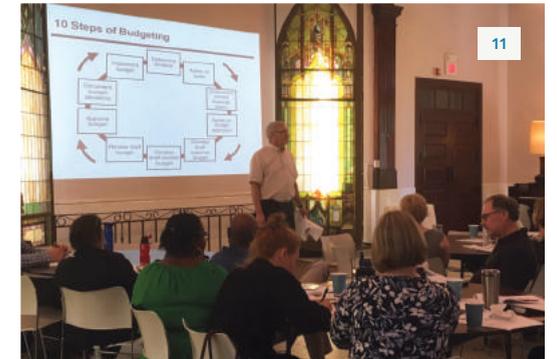
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PHOTO 5-7 REBECCA JEAN LAWRENCE PHOTOGRAPHY

PHOTO 8 BRUCE SILCOX PHOTO 10 ACKERMAN + GRUBER

### 1+2 • BUSHCON ON THE ROAD

The Bush Foundation funded scholarships for people from our region to attend SOCAP in San Francisco to build skills around social entrepreneurship (1), and Upswell in Los Angeles, Independent Sector's national conference that brings leaders together from across sectors (2).

### 3+4 • NATIVE ED ADVISORY GROUP

As part of the Bush Foundation's work to support individualized learning in schools, we gathered a Native Education Advisory Group to connect with tribal education leaders.

### 5-7 • SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PROJECT

The Bush Foundation hosted our third summit on individualized learning in partnership with The School Leadership Project. Speakers included students (5), Bush Foundation board member Jen Alstad (6) and Caroline Hill of DC Equity Lab, who gave the keynote address (7).

### 8 • FELLOWS RETREAT

The 2018 Bush Fellows kicked off their Fellowships with a launch retreat.

### 9 • ARCHIBALD BUSH SCHOLARS

The inaugural group of Archibald Bush Scholars, pictured with Bush Foundation

staff, received college scholarships in honor of Archie Bush and his lifelong commitment to St. Paul and Granite Falls. Wallin Education Partners was supported by the Bush Foundation to direct the program.

### 10 • COMMUNITY CREATIVITY COHORT

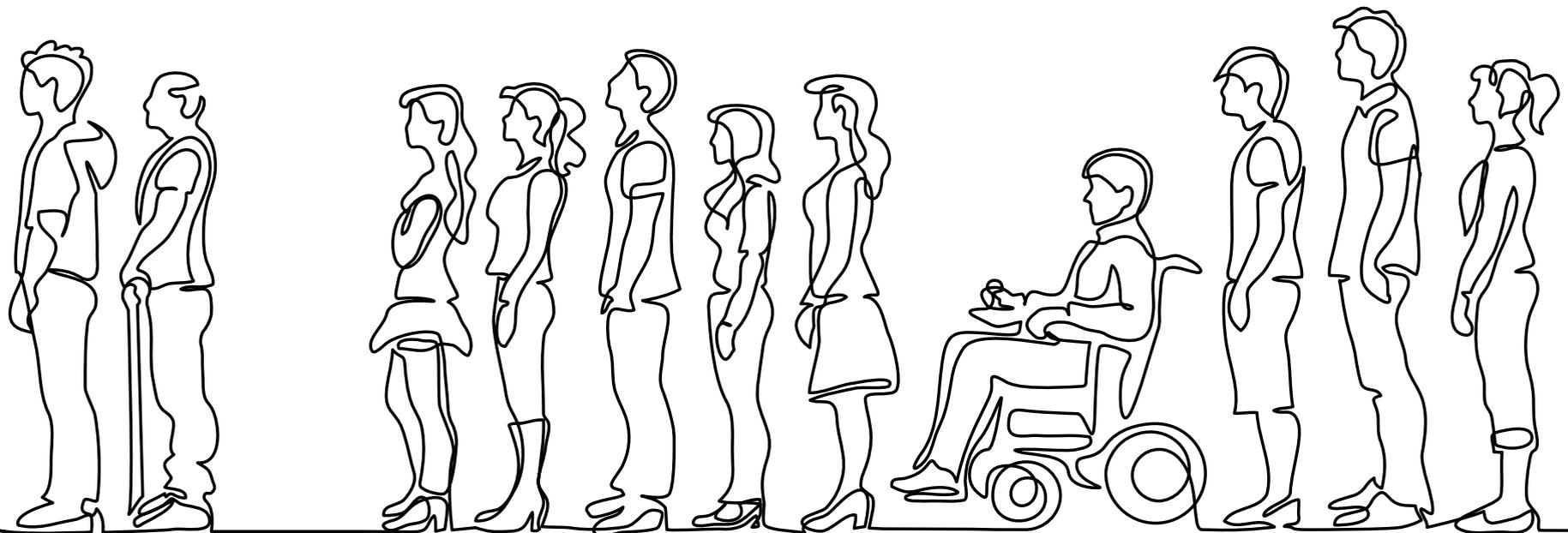
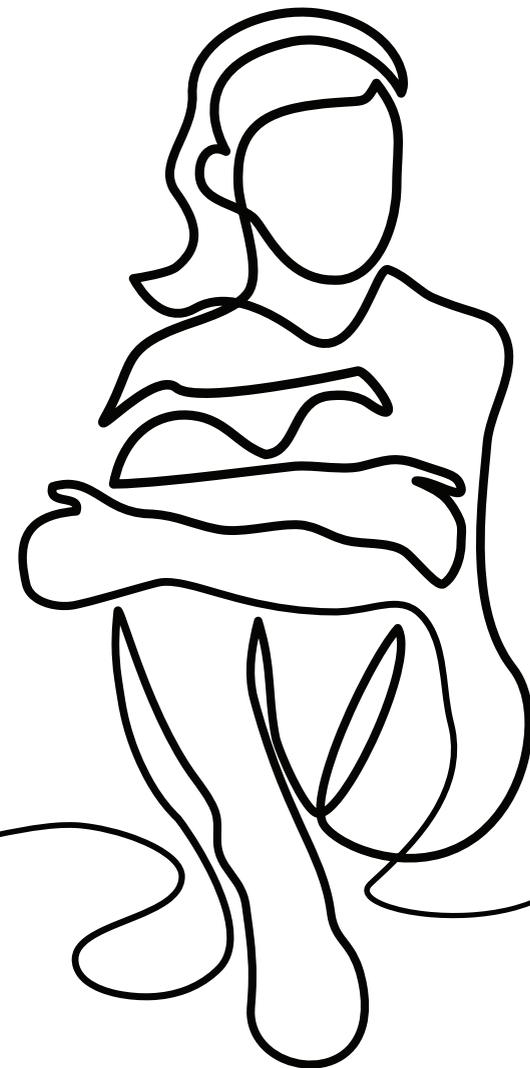
The Community Creativity Cohort 2 grantees, all from organizations led by rural leaders or leaders who identify as people of color or Indigenous people, gathered together in the fall.

### 11 • OPEN HOUSE

The Bush Foundation partnered with other foundations and Propel Nonprofits to host conversations and financial training in Owatonna, Minnesota, and Rapid City, South Dakota.

### 12+13 • BUSH FOUNDATION BOARD RETREAT

Bush Foundation board members and management team spent time during their annual retreat learning about the Natural Resources Research Institute in northeast Minnesota (12) and about education innovations in tribal communities during a gathering with Leech Lake tribal leaders (13).



# Strength in Numbers

South Dakota organizations join forces to empower sexual violence survivors who have disabilities

by ANGELA TEWALT

*Warning: This story includes graphic details from a survivor of abuse that may trigger a strong emotional response from some readers. If you are experiencing violence, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-7233.*

**M**ary (not her real name) met her abuser in the year 2000. She was 25 years old. They met at work in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and started dating, but it was never a good relationship. His anger showed quickly. He threw sandwiches at her if she didn't make them right, and he threw soda cans her way if she wouldn't have sex with him. He'd force her anyway.

"Being paralyzed, I was happy I even had a boyfriend," she says. "He was always apologetic or would buy me things after he did something, and then it would be good for a while. But the abuse never went away."

He would hit Mary while they were drunk and even push her out of her wheelchair. There were times he pushed her into the wall so hard that it would leave a hole. One time, he hit her hard enough that the rods in her spine shifted and she

had to have surgery. She still stayed. "Everything about me changed," Mary says. "I chopped my hair off, I gained a lot of weight, I started wearing baggy 'guy' clothes to work, and I wasn't allowed to go out with any of my friends. I was scared all the time, and I became such a lonely person. He made me believe that I didn't deserve any better, and the abuse made me have the lowest self-esteem I've ever had."

Even in despair, she tried to stay positive. "There'd be times when I would leave work, that I would psych myself up during the drive home. 'You're going to smile,' I'd say to myself. 'You're going to be happy when you get home.' But as soon as I came in the door, he'd be there, and I wasn't happy anymore. I would wish for one good night, and it never happened."

## Establishing a Foundation

Unfortunately, Mary's story has disturbingly familiar traits: 90% of people with disabilities can expect to endure some kind of abuse, "and that is a horrendous statistic," says Shelly Pfaff, the executive director of the South Dakota Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities.

And the violence is almost always recurring, she adds. It is seven times more likely for people with disabilities to be sexually assaulted than those without disabilities, and nearly half of all people with disabilities will experience 10 or more incidents of sexual abuse in their lifetime, according to the Center for Disabilities at the University of South Dakota. And yet, Pfaff says that in the nearly 50 years she has been in this field, she does not recall ever seeing—in public service announcements, public speeches or advocacy against



**“WE BUILT A REALLY STRONG CONNECTION WITH ONE ANOTHER. WE COMMITTED TO MAKING LONG-TERM CHANGE THAT WOULD HELP VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE WHO HAVE DISABILITIES.”**

*—Krista Heeren-Graber, executive director, The Network*

sexual violence—any references to persons with disabilities.

“Disability isn’t even part of the conversation,” Pfaff says. “What is happening when public entities encounter persons with disabilities? How are they being responded to, if at all? This is not a matter of saying one group or another is not doing their job. It’s a matter of realizing that none of us is doing as well as we could be, and asking how we can come together to do a better job.”

There are statewide organizations to help victims of abuse and to help individuals with disabilities, but the intersection of the two has been limited in South Dakota. In 2013, the South Dakota Communication Service for the Deaf (CSD) learned of deaf victims who weren’t receiving assistance, so they connected them to the South Dakota Network Against Family Violence and Sexual Assault (known as The Network). Then, in 2014, The Network received a federal grant from the Office of Violence Against Women to prepare an infrastructure of services for crime victims with disabilities and deaf individuals in South Dakota.

“It was a very structured grant seeking sustainable change,” says Krista Heeren-Graber, executive

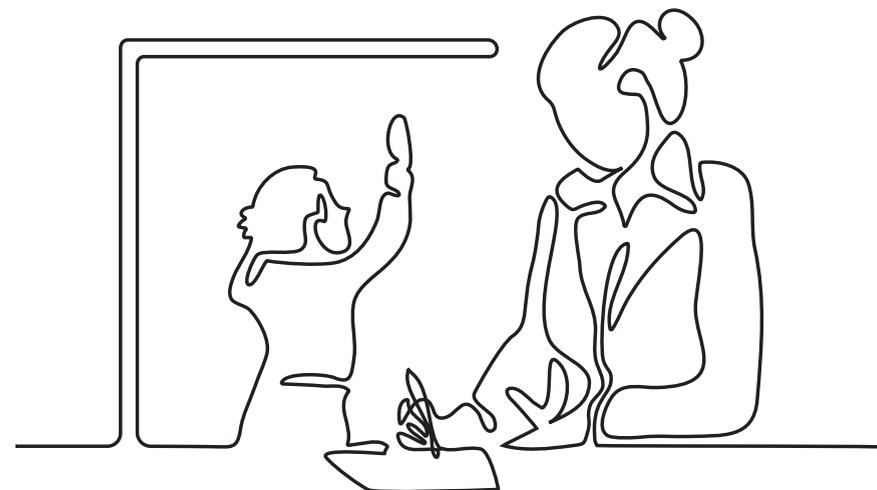
director of The Network. But as they were nearing the end of the grant, they were concerned. “We had spent a lot of time on planning but weren’t really able to move ahead with the implementation,” she says. “When we learned about the Community Innovation grant program, it seemed like a really good fit for us to finally move forward.”

In 2017, The Network received a Bush Foundation Community Innovation grant that gave the team time to test and learn from the plan they had developed to improve services for sexual assault victims with disabilities. It expanded the previous work from the federal grant and added two community allies in the state—the

Coalition, a disability advocacy organization, and CSD. For the past two years, these three South Dakota organizations have come together to better protect Mary and others facing similar challenges.

“We all recognized right away that there was a silent epidemic—an unspoken issue of sexual violence against people with disabilities,” says Pfaff. “So our relationship was a natural coming together and an opportunity to try and bring this to the light.”

“We built a really strong connection with one another,” Heeren-Graber adds. “We committed to making long-term change that would help victims of sexual violence who have disabilities.”



ILLUSTRATIONS VALENTY - ADOBE STOCK

## Creating a Better Understanding

The Network was formed in 1991 in Sioux Falls as a coalition dedicated to the empowerment of those victimized by domestic abuse or sexual violence. Their programs are rooted in the belief that those victimized by crime have the right to assume power in their own lives. Today, they serve 60 agencies and have statewide partnerships with many state, tribal and nonprofit entities to collaborate on grant projects.

When Heeren-Graber came on board in 1999, she was their first full-time employee, “but I was greeted with open arms by people across the state,” she says. “They wanted to work on issues and see change. Even in the legislative process, I felt welcomed.”

Rural communities across the state embraced her vision, too. “South Dakota is so focused on community and local control,” Heeren-Graber says. “We need to meet communities where they are and support their own local efforts. That is what builds networking and collaboration.”

Over the past two years, The Network, the Coalition and CSD have piloted a number of innovations developed through their Community Innovation grant. They’ve hosted work retreats, presented in front of doctors and teachers and sponsored speakers at maltreatment conferences. They’ve discussed rape kits and policy with legislators, and they’ve hosted significant trainings with law enforcement.

But Heeren-Graber says that to truly address the problem of violence against people with disabilities, a mindset shift is necessary. No matter the field, most people don’t have a

comprehensive understanding of disability. So, all trainings start with that as their foundation.

“Our trainings with law enforcement have not yet been specific to victims of sexual assault or victims of violence,” Heeren-Graber says. “They have been specifically for law enforcement to understand disabilities. We have to start there. We want to ensure that people with disabilities are receiving the resources and services they need not only when they come forward, but just in general. That is the bigger picture.”

This work includes offering disability-services training at the Law Enforcement Training Academy in Pierre and a presentation about improving education and awareness around sexual assault victims with disabilities at the biggest law enforcement conference in South Dakota. “To us, that’s a huge accomplishment,” says Heeren-Graber, “because we’re finally getting out there to say, ‘It is your responsibility to understand how to respond to individuals with disabilities and have accommodations for them.’”

They’ve also worked with South Dakota women’s shelters to help them better respond to the needs of people with disabilities, such as by setting up video phones for the deaf and hard of hearing to aid communication with staff. “Many deaf and hard of hearing people do not feel comfortable going to shelters, because there is no communication access and nobody who is really familiar with deaf culture,” says Lance Sigdestad, a community support specialist who has worked for CSD for over 25 years.

Sigdestad says he sees a lack of communication resources everywhere,

including hotels, schools and hospitals—which makes it difficult for a person with a disability to feel comfortable or that they can trust the business. “If the hearing community knows more about the barriers that exist, they can help us make our communities more accessible to people with disabilities,” he says.

## Not a Victim, but a Survivor

Four years into Mary’s relationship with her abuser, she got pregnant. The physical abuse stopped during that time, but the verbal and mental abuse escalated, she says. “Bruises go away, but the words don’t.”

There were many nights he did not come home and, when she was eight months pregnant, he left her. “I should have been happy, but I wasn’t. I was so scared of how I was going to raise a child alone that, two weeks later, I took him back.”





**“WE WANT TO ENSURE THAT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ARE RECEIVING THE RESOURCES AND SERVICES THEY NEED NOT ONLY WHEN THEY COME FORWARD, BUT JUST IN GENERAL. THAT IS THE BIGGER PICTURE.”**

*—Krista Heeren-Graber*

After she had their son, the physical abuse returned. One night, he was holding the baby and swung at her so hard that the baby flew out of his arms and landed on the floor.

On a Sunday night in the spring of 2007, Mary and her abuser were in town and got into a fight. She was scared and started wheeling herself home. He put their three-year-old son in the backseat of his truck and started driving recklessly toward her, forcing her into a ditch.

He then got out, forced Mary into the back of the truck and drove home. Once there, he brought their son inside the house, came back outside, grabbed Mary’s wheelchair from the back and started throwing it against the garage until it was destroyed.

He came back to Mary, helpless in the back of the truck, and hit her. Then he called her parents and told them if they weren’t at the house in 30 minutes, “she’ll be dead.” But her parents lived 45 minutes away.

As her abuser went inside to get their son, Mary crawled out of the back of the truck and into the house, where she found her phone and called 911. Police arrived 10 minutes later. Her abuser became irate with the police, leading them to shock him with a taser and take him away. Her son witnessed all of it.

After seven years of abuse, no support, no one in her life even realizing the extent of her pain and not enough resources, Mary found the courage to leave her abuser for good.

### Risk Factors

It took Mary 11 years to talk about the abuse. Not only was she embarrassed, ashamed and scared, she did not know where to go. Pfaff says only 3% of victims report their abuse.

But in the fall of 2018, Mary built enough emotional distance to speak in detail about her experience at a show featuring art by survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse. The Purple Purse Event was hosted by Un-Defined, a Sioux Falls nonprofit offering peer support for domestic abuse survivors. Heeren-Graber also spoke at the event, on behalf of The Network. “I was blown away by Mary’s story,” says Heeren-Graber.

Pfaff says a risk factor that makes people with disabilities vulnerable is a lack of education on sexual development and anatomy. “They may not have age-appropriate friends, healthy relationship education or know what constitutes acceptable behavior,” she says.

Pfaff also says that people with disabilities often experience sexual violence at the hands of somebody they know—a caregiver, a family member, a bus driver, even a person who works at the agency that is serving them. “Frankly, it is somebody they rely upon for their needs,” she says. “And they are often threatened that if they report, they will no longer get the help they need.”

Heeren-Graber notes that there are many barriers to people getting the services they need, beyond disability. “We want to figure out how to have inclusive services so all our voices are heard. We need to stop racism, ableism and sexism and remember that every single person matters. We can no longer justify violence.”

### Progress is Progress

Five years ago, Mary wed a kind, supportive man, but her journey hasn’t been easy. Just last winter, more than a decade removed from her abuse, Mary texted her husband to say she was going to kill herself. She had been bottling up feelings of insecurity, shame and depression for years.

“I felt so low about myself for so long that it became part of my identity,” she says. “I believed that my son and everyone in my life deserved better. I had turned into the most angry, negative person ever, and I truly wanted to die. I got so depressed that I shut people out and I would cause fights with my son for no reason. I absolutely hit rock bottom.”

But once again, she found the strength within herself to seek help. She spoke with her doctor and began medication and counseling that has changed her life. “I want to be happy,” Mary says. “I have a great life. Today, I have a great marriage, I have so much to be thankful for, and I do not want to lose that. I know I cannot be angry anymore.”

Mary encourages other survivors to speak out and not to be afraid to share their story, as she once was. “It is so much easier to be taken advantage of when you have a disability, but if we become advocates for one another, people will be more willing to seek the help they need and live a better life.”

Heeren-Graber is the mother of a son with a disability, so it is empowering for her to hear survivors like Mary speak up, because she knows firsthand how difficult it is to be an advocate when you are personally involved.

“This work gets really hard at times,” she says. “It’s challenging. But my mom said to me years ago, ‘It doesn’t matter how small the progress is, as long as there is progress,’ and I think about that often. We have to stay focused, and we have to remember why we are doing this.”

It’s for people like Mary, who deserve equality in relationships and in life.

“I want to be an inspiration because I help people, not because I’m in a wheelchair,” Mary says. “There is more to me than just being in a wheelchair, and I am ready to share my voice.”

### COMMUNITY INNOVATION

The Bush Foundation’s Community Innovation (CI) grant program funds problem-solving projects that make the region better for everyone. The CI program doesn’t focus on any particular issue, subject or population. It supports organizations that are working collaboratively to develop, test and implement solutions for urgent community needs.

To learn more, visit [bfdn.org/ci](http://bfdn.org/ci)





# What Would Love Do?

Amelia Franck Meyer (BF'15) is transforming the child welfare system by healing trauma and putting families first

by MO PERRY

PHOTOGRAPHY DAVID ELLIS



**“AMELIA WAS SENT TO CHANGE THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM. WITH GREAT PEOPLE, HISTORY CHOOSES THEM. THEY DON’T CHOOSE THEIR DREAM; THE DREAM CHOOSES THEM, BECAUSE THEY’RE THE ONE EQUIPPED TO BRING IT TO REALITY. THAT’S WHAT SHE IS GOING TO OFFER THE WORLD.”**

*—Trudy Bourgeois,  
leadership strategist  
and coach*

**A**melia Franck Meyer (BF’15) radiates an unwavering clarity of purpose: She knows in her bones that she was born to be a social worker. From working in individual group homes to leading regional agencies, her entire working life has been dedicated to improving the well-being of children in foster care. As her leadership journey has evolved, so has the scope of her ambition. Her goal now is nothing less than a total reinvention of the American child welfare system, which she believes will in turn positively impact societal challenges ranging from incarceration to homelessness to health care. In Meyer’s view, mitigating and healing childhood trauma is the first critical step to transforming the world.

Those who know her are placing their bets on Meyer achieving her goal, describing her as a uniquely driven, passionate and visionary leader. Even *People Magazine* has taken note of her work, naming her one of *People’s 25 Women Changing the World* in November 2018. As her

friend and mentor Trudy Bourgeois, a leadership strategist and coach, says, “Amelia was sent to change the child welfare system. With great people, history chooses them. They don’t choose their dream; the dream chooses them, because they’re the one equipped to bring it to reality. That’s what she is going to offer the world.”

#### **Family as Protective Charm**

Meyer’s path to becoming a system-rocking social worker began in her childhood home in a troubled neighborhood outside of Chicago. Meyer grew up with her parents and four siblings in an upstairs two-bedroom apartment; her paternal grandparents lived downstairs. “We were taught never to be alone with my grandpa,” Meyer says. “We didn’t know it at the time, but my grandpa was a pedophile and had horrifically abused my dad, who was bipolar. My dad suffered from depressive episodes and was unemployed a lot. He had been so traumatized, he had trouble functioning and couldn’t move out of the house. His abuser lived right downstairs.”

Outside Meyer’s childhood home, the neighborhood teemed with violence, gang activity, drugs and alcohol. But amidst the dangers just outside the family’s small apartment, Meyer’s parents provided a safe, warm and loving home for her and her brothers and sisters. “Our house was the house everyone came to,” says Meyer. She and her family spent weekends camping and playing games around the fire. Her maternal grandparents made sure they always had food in the house, dropping off groceries on a regular basis.

Her father volunteered at a local Catholic school running bingo and serving as school board president, which allowed Meyer and her siblings to attend the school for reduced tuition. She became the only one of her neighborhood friends to graduate from high school (ranking third in

her class) and the only one who didn’t have a child before her 18th birthday.

“My siblings and I were very tight, very close with our family. That was protective for me against everything else that was going on in the community,” says Meyer. She thinks of her parents as having been “closet social workers,” who instilled in her a mindset that there is always someone worse off than you are. Despite her dad’s lowered capacity to work, both parents modeled a regular practice of volunteering, donating and caring for others in the community. All these things, combined with the poverty and mental health-related challenges she witnessed in her own home and neighborhood, added up to Meyer’s sense of her future calling. “I was destined to be a social worker,” she says.

At Illinois State University (ISU), Meyer majored in psychology with a

minor in human biology, a combination that gave her an understanding of people both inside and out. This passion for understanding and empathizing with people has informed and motivated her work ever since. “I am in love with the human race,” she says. “There are loveable things about every single human. I sometimes sit on an airplane as people are boarding and watch people coming on and think, ‘What would your mother love about you?’ Look at that smile, or how he helped that lady. Or: He’s in pain, but he’s still showing up.”

#### **A Calling is Born**

After getting her degree in psychology, Meyer worked as an admissions counselor at ISU for a couple of years before entering the master’s program there in sociology/marriage and family. During her time in

#### **TACKLING THE CHALLENGES OF SYSTEMIC CHANGE**

There are some universal challenges faced by individuals trying to drive bold systemic change—challenges that the Bush Fellowship program is designed to help grantees confront. “We look for how we can help people get outside their current mental models,” explains Anita Patel, leadership programs director at the Bush Foundation. “We ask Fellows what might feel scary that they know they need to reach for, or what they need to heal within themselves to open up to new ideas. Part of our work in helping these leaders who are already doing amazing things is to look at what it would take for them to create change for all people in our region.”

Fellows are also encouraged to examine their own stories and heritage in order to strengthen their ability to interact across differences, and to consider how others experience their leadership. “Systems are made of people,” says Patel. “When we think about systems change, we’re fundamentally talking about human interaction.”

Every Fellow has a leadership coach who, in addition to challenging the Fellow to grow, helps them celebrate their existing skills and accomplishments as a leader. Coaches also nurture balance and self-care in Fellows, coaxing them to hold responsibility and possibility in ways that drive them but also help them stay healthy.

The Fellowship also fosters connections among the Fellows themselves. “These connections with each other help them to think differently and get outside of their particular expertise or usual way of being,” says Patel. “Maybe someone working to transform education needs to connect with someone in the arts or the business community to spark new ideas and connections.”

Ultimately, the Bush Fellowship provides a unique combination of important resources for leaders to grow. “It’s money, yes, but it’s also time, connection and confidence,” adds Patel. “And it’s not prescriptive. Grants are often predicated on a need for a specific outcome. The Bush Fellowship is about who are you, how you want to grow, the change you want to make in yourself and the community, and giving you what you need to make that happen.”

Learn more at [bfdn.org/bfp](https://bfdn.org/bfp)



The 2017 Ten of Ten for Kids Conference was a four-day event assembling 100 child welfare innovators and thought leaders. It yielded 30 prototypes for a radically different child welfare system, sparked thousands of new ideas and created countless new connections.

admissions, she shared a small office with Steve Smith, now CEO of the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine. Smith and Meyer have remained friends. In recent years, they've formalized their professional relationship, coaching and supporting one another. "I describe Amelia as a force of nature," says Smith. "She's always been highly intelligent, compassionate, driven and resourceful. She's also a learner."

After completing her first master's degree at ISU, Meyer began working in group homes for children in Illinois, where she was confronted for the first time with the plight and challenges faced by kids in the American foster care system. "I was finding that these kids were untethered; they belonged to no one," she remembers. Disturbed

by the institutional atmosphere of the homes and the rules and regulations that governed them, Meyer did her best to create a warm and supportive environment in the homes where she worked, rather than one of punishment and control. "A mentor at the time told me, 'If you treat people like animals, they'll act like animals. We need to create environments that are human.'"

So, Meyer organized movie nights with popcorn, made special treats and recipes that her mom used to cook for her and her siblings, hung art on the walls, took the kids on trips into the community that she dubbed "family vacations" and tried to nurture a sense of belonging among all the home's residents.

"Humans don't do well when they're untethered," says Meyer. "I come

from a sociobiological perspective that asks, 'What do humans need to thrive?' I'm so clear on that: You need a single nurturing protector for your whole life. Someone who has your back. When we remove kids from their families, we untether them. When that happens to you, you push everyone away because you don't know who to trust."

When the agency that Meyer was working for in Illinois went through a challenging merger, she decided to move. After visiting a friend in Minneapolis and interviewing with a few organizations, she moved to Minnesota in 1998 to work in deaf-blind services and pursue a Master of Social Work at the University of Minnesota. In 2001, she was offered a position leading PATH Wisconsin (now Anu Family Services), a child welfare agency that serves Wisconsin and Minnesota. In her interview with the board, she told them, "If you're hiring me to put more kids in more foster homes, you have the wrong person. But if you want someone to transform the system, then hire me."

Between her time working in group homes and her extensive academic studies into the physical and emotional requirements for human thriving, Meyer had developed a clear view of the broken aspects of the child welfare system, as well as what was needed to fix it. She was ready to get to work.

### "Impact is my middle name"

When Meyer started at Anu in 2001, she launched a national research project to determine the permanency rates achieved by top-performing agencies in the country (the rates at which foster children are placed with legally permanent families, whether

through reunification with birth families, adoption or guardianship by relatives). The research showed that, nationwide, only 30% to 40% of children were placed in permanent homes after being in foster care, with top-performing agencies maxing out at around 45%.

About 650,000 children spend time in foster care each year and approximately half of them are placed with strangers. Once within the foster care system, children are moved from family to family an average of once to twice every year. According to Meyer, this separation of children from the only family they know (even if that family is abusive or neglectful) and the subsequent pattern of being whisked from home to home represents a psychological trauma. "We must be part of a human family, part of a tribe, in order to feel safe and protected," she explains. "When children don't feel claimed, they go into survival mode. They're hyper-aroused, looking at everything and everyone as a threat. They lose the ability to relax, to think, to learn. And they lose the ability to connect and trust other people because they're so profoundly consumed with their own survival."

This foundational attachment trauma is predictive of future problems ranging from addiction to depression to chronic disease. "The pain of not belonging, that profound loneliness, is so significant that people will use drugs and alcohol to numb it," says Meyer. "They may fall into despair or become so completely numb that they disconnect from all humans and become capable of the kind of violence we witness on the news every night." And this kind of trauma is cyclical, spiraling down through

generations. Young women in foster care are more than twice as likely as their peers to get pregnant before the age of 19, while also facing a greater likelihood of homelessness, incarceration, PTSD, depression, anxiety and addiction, all of which set them and their offspring up to repeat the cycle of entering the child welfare system.

"Every child on the planet needs their mom in order to be OK, and if not mom then dad, and if not dad then a single nurturing caregiver," says Meyer. "But we do nothing to help the mamas. We punish them." Meyer contends that this cycle of punishment and removal perpetuates the same traumas that lead caregivers to abuse and neglect kids in the first place. Those who suffer the childhood trauma of being abused, neglected and removed from their families grow up unable to connect. When they become parents themselves, they don't have the emotional and psychological resources to parent well. And the pattern repeats: The system steps in to remove the child and punish, blame and shame the parent. "At that point it's almost impossible to fix the situation because the parent has received the mortal wound of having their kid removed," says Meyer. "Odds are good they're going to have another kid to fill that hole."

A difficult truth: Children left in abusive and neglected environments tend to fare better than those who enter foster care. Studies have shown that maltreated youth who are left in their own homes are far less likely to become pregnant as teenagers, less likely to wind up in the juvenile justice system and more likely to hold a job for at least three months than comparably maltreated children

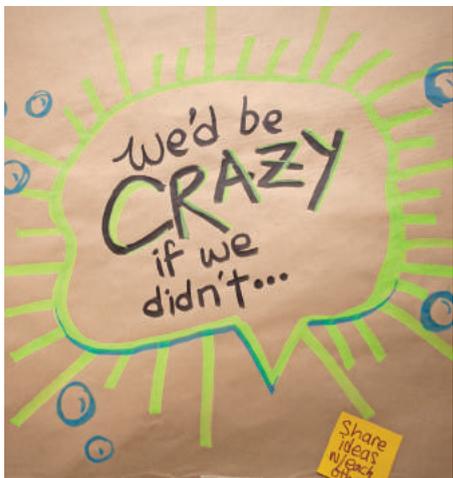
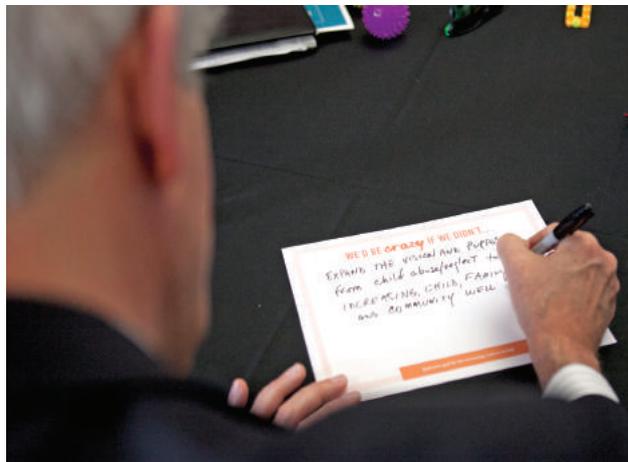
**"IF YOU'RE HIRING ME TO PUT MORE KIDS IN MORE FOSTER HOMES, YOU HAVE THE WRONG PERSON. BUT IF YOU WANT SOMEONE TO TRANSFORM THE SYSTEM, THEN HIRE ME."**

—Amelia Franck Meyer



Amelia Franck Meyer's work to preserve and strengthen family connections includes meeting with Alia Innovations' UnSystem Innovation Cohort, which is comprised of five teams of four leaders and guides working to transform public child welfare and human service departments in four states and 14 counties.

TEN OF TEN FOR KIDS PHOTOS: DOUG KNUTSON



TEN OF TEN FOR KIDS PHOTOS DOUG KNUTSON

placed in foster care. “The cure is worse than the disease,” says Meyer. “We can’t leave kids alone to fend for themselves, but what we’re doing is making it worse.”

At Anu Family Services, Meyer and her staff set an audacious goal of achieving a 90% permanency rate. “We believe that all youth deserve and can have permanent families, but we know some kids have such significant relational trauma that they might initially need more restrictive care [such as group homes or residential treatment facilities] to keep them safe while working to heal that trauma,” says Meyer, explaining that she and her team estimated that 90% of the time, emotional and logistical support for families could make permanent placement safely possible. With this goal in mind, they set out to form partnerships and consult with field experts and authors whose models they wanted to put into practice.

In 2008, Anu partnered with the University of Minnesota on a pilot program that utilized a model of family search and engagement to identify loved ones with whom foster youth had lost contact. Though the agency approached the pilot with great clinical practice and preparation, it was not a success.

Meyer tells the story of one child from the pilot who had been in eight foster homes over the course of five years. “We found his uncle in less than a month of searching,” remembers Meyer. “He was wealthy and he wanted this child. He had called the county but couldn’t find any information.” Anu hosted a family reunion for the child and his uncle at the farm where the child was staying. After his

**“I DESCRIBE AMELIA AS A FORCE OF NATURE. SHE’S ALWAYS BEEN HIGHLY INTELLIGENT, COMPASSIONATE, DRIVEN AND RESOURCEFUL. SHE’S ALSO A LEARNER.”**

*—Steve Smith, American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine CEO*

uncle left the party, the celebratory vibe quickly faded when the boy went out back and gutted a cow wide open. “The child was enraged and rightfully so,” says Meyer. “If his uncle wanted him, why hadn’t he found him? If we knew how to find his uncle in a month, why had he gone through five years of foster care?”

Other youth in the pilot program lashed out in similarly violent ways following positive reunions with their lost relatives. This pilot program, disappointing as it was, yielded a key insight that became Anu’s “golden nugget of truth”: A normal, natural response to being disconnected is a diminished capacity to connect. “If you went home and found your spouse in bed with your best friend, you’re not going to approach your next partner with a lot of trust,” says Meyer. “That’s a normal response, to disengage the part of yourself that openly and freely gives and receives love.”

This insight led to innovations that held the key to greater success. By late 2012, Anu had increased its permanency rate to 70%, nearly double the 38% rate when Meyer joined the agency. This impressive gain came through the implementation of transformative innovations such as Intensive Permanent

Services, in which specialists worked one-to-one with youth over the course of 9 to 24 months to build trust, and the 3-5-7 Model, a practice based in knowledge of how trauma works, to help youth understand their past, grieve losses and prepare for permanence. Through Anu’s family search and engagement efforts, staff were able to find connections that were lost as a result of multiple foster placements, including family members, relatives, former foster parents, teachers and coaches, who were then enlisted to become a concrete support network for the youth.

By 2013, all of the youth who participated in Anu’s Intensive Permanence Services for 10 months or longer showed an increase in the quantity and quality of their connections. “We used to think that kids who were attachment disordered would be that way for the rest of their lives,” says Meyer. “I knew we had to find a way to heal that. The part that’s magical about the model we used is the continuity of relationship—someone standing with you and saying, ‘I’m going to walk with you through this until you come out the other side. Your pain doesn’t scare me. You are worthy of my time and I will persist with you until you feel better.’”



Ten of Ten for Kids Conference

This novel approach to disrupting the child welfare system earned Anu Family Services a Bush Prize for Community Innovation in 2013. But Meyer knew that it couldn't be just the kids lucky enough to be referred to Anu who got to reap the benefits of their methods. She began thinking bigger. "I felt like we had the cure for cancer, but we couldn't get it to the kids," she remembers. "I wanted to change the whole system."

### Reimagining the Child Welfare System

In addition to her work at Anu Family Services, Meyer began looking for trailblazers, disruptors and innovators across the child welfare system. In 2015, she partnered with Chuck Price, director of health and human services for Waupaca County in central Wisconsin, to help him and his team radically overhaul the county's child welfare services. "Amelia causes you to question everything you're doing, while also validating the steps you're taking," says Price. "She helped us focus on the notion that no child should be placed with a stranger and that our whole lens should be on how we can mitigate further traumas. She also helped us establish a culture and environment where people want to work, so we have less turnover. Amelia is infectious—you can't help but want to go do something after spending time with her."

Today, Waupaca County has decreased the number of children in out-of-home care (whether group homes, foster placement, detention or shelter facilities) by 17%, has moved 25% of its budget into prevention services, has trained 100% of

its staff in trauma-informed care and has a turnover rate of less than 6% (compared to a national average of 30% in the child welfare system). Like Meyer, Price is committed to not just tweaking the system as it currently exists, but fundamentally reinventing it. "We didn't get the light bulb by continuously tweaking the candle," he notes. "It's going to take too long to fix the system as we know it today. We are going to come up with a different way that makes this archaic system obsolete."

Meyer's burgeoning efforts to fundamentally change the child welfare system put her on the radar of Jen Aspengren, at the time a member of the Venture and Fellowship team at Ashoka United States. Ashoka is a community of social entrepreneurs that supports changemakers, and in 2014, they awarded Meyer an Ashoka Fellowship. "Amelia had taken some of the most innovative ideas across the country and put them together to put kids at the center," Aspengren says. "But one area where she needed to grow was in understanding that she can't do it alone. She's since grown to be able to think large-scale about how to bring a whole system along in wanting to change itself."

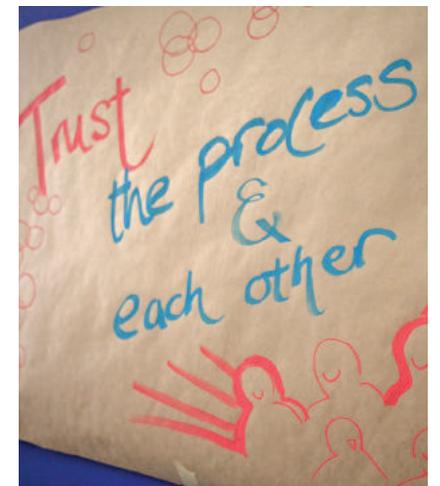
By 2015, Meyer had grown increasingly restless leading a direct service organization. In her application for a Bush Fellowship, she wrote, "It is time to make the system my client. I have never been more sure of my life's purpose." She was awarded the Fellowship in May 2015, around the same time she began convening think tank sessions with her "personal board of directors," 15 to 20 people from across the child welfare space

who were interested in seeing—and driving—a change. The outcome of these sessions was Alia Innovations, a nonprofit consulting team which Meyer founded in December 2015 with a goal of transforming all organizations across the country that are entrusted with the welfare and well-being of children. In July 2016, Meyer left Anu Family Services to focus on running Alia Innovations full time.

"It was really the connection with other Bush Fellows that helped me be brave enough to do that," says Meyer. "I resigned from my job of 15 years to start something that I didn't know if I could fund, while I was getting my doctorate. Launching a new organization, pursuing the Fellowship and the doctoral program all at once—that was quite a year."

Meyer started thinking deeply about what she needed in order to sustain herself for the long haul in tackling these substantial challenges. "A big focus of the Bush Fellowship is on helping you take care of yourself," she says. "I started a daily practice of keeping a gratitude journal, which helps reframe the way you think about things. Bad things happen every day and so do good things, so what's your mindset? I started really focusing on relationships and dug in deep with the people close to me. I sustained myself on the love of that inner circle while doing these hard things."

In order to fulfill Alia's transformative mission, Meyer knew she needed additional expertise in organizational development and change processes. The Bush Fellowship allowed her to enroll in a doctorate program in organizational change and leadership at the University of Southern



TEN OF TEN FOR KIDS PHOTOS DOUG KNUTSON



Ten of Ten for Kids conference: Graphic harvesters Jen Mein (top left) and Sook Jin Ong (not pictured), from the University of Minnesota's Future Services Institute at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, captured a group process in images and key words to elevate participants' designs for child welfare change. It was a way to keep children (bottom) front and center during the decision-making process.

California. The program led her to connect with Annette Diefenthaler of IDEO, a global design company committed to creating a positive impact. Meyer had a vision for bringing together leaders, movers and shakers from child welfare and human services to imagine a different future together. She knew IDEO could help.

"Amelia first called in October 2016," says Diefenthaler. "What stuck out was her clear vision of what she wanted to achieve. She had such an unwavering commitment to making change and we found that impressive." Diefenthaler and her colleagues at IDEO worked with Meyer over the course of several months to design an event called Ten of Ten for Kids, a three-and-a-half-day conference at which 10 groups of 10 people from every facet of the child welfare sector came together to apply design-thinking principles and imagine new ways forward.

"Going into the event, we knew we weren't going to reinvent child welfare in a few days," says Diefenthaler. "But what we learned was the wishes and aspirations that people had and what ideas were already out there that could be built on. The principles we established at that event became the foundation of what Alia Innovations now does."

Of the 100 participants at Ten of Ten for Kids, 30% had lived experience of being a child in the foster care system. Among them was Shenandoah Chefalo, author of *Garbage Bag Suitcase*, a powerfully written memoir of Chefalo's childhood with abusive and neglectful parents and her ensuing journey through the

child welfare system. For Chefalo, the introduction to Meyer and Alia Innovations through Ten of Ten for Kids felt providential. "I've been with them ever since," says Chefalo, who now works as a guide with Alia's UnSystem Innovation Cohort—a team of innovative individuals committed to leading six agencies through a three-year cultural transformation.

"We can't simply tweak things and expect it to get better," stresses Chefalo. "But these six agencies around the country are trying to be innovators and they're getting pushback." A fear of kids getting hurt is at the core of the child welfare system, driving nearly everything it does. "People within the system are looking for solutions, but they're risk averse," explains Aspengren, who now serves on Alia's board of directors. "No one wants a child to be hurt or killed on their watch, so the tendency is to move kids the moment there's any potential for harm—which ends up doing absolute harm, by severing those ties and retraumatizing them. You're trading large potential harm for finite absolute harm. Shifting that is the biggest challenge."

For Chefalo, the need for change is visceral and personal. "At 13, I couldn't see my mom's pain. I didn't understand why she was using drugs and had disappeared," says Chefalo. "No one helped her; she was just deemed a bad mom. What if she had been given tools to heal her own trauma instead of separating us? I'm now in my 40s and I'm still trying to deal with the stuff that happened to me as a kid and grapple with how it's affected my own parenting."

### Do What Love Would Do

The need for healing—for grace, forgiveness and tenderness—persists throughout the child welfare system, from parents and caregivers to children, to the caseworkers and administrators tasked with managing care and placement. "We have an ethical responsibility to ensure that our child welfare system is well enough to heal, or it will propagate further damage and unhealth," says Meyer, who has made stabilizing the emotional well-being of those who work in child welfare a cornerstone of Alia's work. "Our nation's youth can only heal if their healers are well. Getting them to a place of stability allows them to help others."

She points to the fact that the greatest predictor of whether a child achieves permanency or not is the number of different caseworkers they

have over the course of their time in the system. As caseworkers burn out and leave the field, the kids left behind fare worse and worse. Practicing self-care allows those working within the system to stay engaged.

"Alia does an amazing job of modeling the self-care they're promoting across the system," says Aspengren. "They know they're doing hard work and they need balance in order to do it." Meyer has an absolute commitment to getting enough sleep, and she says she's given up baking for her kids' school fundraisers (as well as the guilt that comes with saying no). "I've given up feeling bad," she says. "I've given up shame. I focus on good enough." She also credits her husband Mark with being an amazing source of emotional and spiritual support for her and their five kids. Staff at Alia are encouraged

to take "well days"—days when they can practice self-care in advance of getting sick in order to keep themselves balanced and healthy. They foster a culture of deep listening and support and create a caring environment where people feel connected and work to sustain themselves and each other.

For Meyer, it all comes down to a core commitment to love. One of the guiding tenets at Alia is nurturing the capacity for joy, with the understanding that the ability to express and experience joy is a fundamental measure of well-being. "When in doubt, do what love would do," says Meyer, pointing to the sign hanging in Alia's office where that phrase dominates the list of Alia's organizational principles. "Do what you do for someone you love. It's not that hard." 



"WE HAVE AN ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT OUR CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM IS WELL ENOUGH TO HEAL, OR IT WILL PROPAGATE FURTHER DAMAGE AND UNHEALTH."

—Amelia Franck Meyer

TEN OF TEN FOR KIDS PHOTOS DOUG KNUTSON



# Change You Can See

Julie Garreau (BF'16) and her community build hope  
with the Cheyenne River Youth Project

by TJ TURNER

PHOTOGRAPHY KRISTINA BARKER



RedCan 2018, held in Wanipetu Wowapi ("Winter Count") Art Park



Each summer, a vibrant public art space materializes on the windy rural plains of the Cheyenne River Reservation. Eye-popping murals—ranging from abstract street art to cultural murals to political commentary pieces—come to life on cinderblock walls, shipping containers and more as part of the RedCan Graffiti Jam.

Put on by the Cheyenne River Youth Project (CRYP) in Eagle Butte, South Dakota, a town of about 1,350, the four-years-strong RedCan event is one way the organization is using art and culture to advance its goals of providing engagement, inspiration, new skills and quality of life for one of the country's most poverty-stricken regions. Like CRYP's many other initiatives, the event also emphasizes breaking the cycle of historical trauma for the Lakota people and instilling cultural pride. According to CRYP, about 3,600 people were directly and indirectly impacted during RedCan 2017.

"It's really the one-and-only Indigenous graffiti jam in the country," says CRYP founder and executive director Julie Garreau (BF'16).

"It's an innovative way to give back to the community and create culturally relevant art."

Art is one of many visions of hope CRYP seeks to create in a community where many homes are falling apart, both structurally and interpersonally. Eagle Butte is in Ziebach County, where the poverty rate is 39%—almost three times the national rate, according to 2016 census data. For about 10,000 local tribal members, nearly half of whom are under 18, the poverty rate is 59%.

"Graffiti is an art that was born from the youth in communities that were struggling," says Tyler "Siamese" Read (BF'17), a Rapid City artist who participated in the 2018 RedCan event.

RedCan is one of many participant-led CRYP collaborations serving a primarily Indigenous, small-town population. Responding to the needs of the community, CRYP's programs span intramural sports, cooking, art, crafts, creative writing, web design, first aid, leadership, gang awareness and much more. CRYP's tireless, innovative approach to problem solving has earned the organization consistent support from the Bush

Foundation, including a 2015 Bush Prize and membership in the second Community Creativity Cohort in 2018.

Each day of RedCan starts and ends in a prayer circle. During one circle in 2018, a volunteer offered a quote by Aboriginal Australian artist, activist and academic Lilla Watson: "If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us walk together." This sense of interdependence rather than charity has been a guiding principle for CRYP volunteers and instructors for the past three decades.

### The Founding Mother's Vision

The Eagle Butte of Julie Garreau's youth had few creative and social outlets—no movie theater or bowling alley, and very few after-school activities. A member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, she saw her classmates being robbed of their childhoods, some turning to drugs and taking their own lives.

After graduating from Huron College in South Dakota—studying political science and criminal justice, with a minor in history—Garreau

"IT'S AN INNOVATIVE WAY TO GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY AND CREATE CULTURALLY RELEVANT ART."

—Julie Garreau, Cheyenne River Youth Project executive director

REDCAN EVENT COURTESY CHEYENNE RIVER YOUTH PROJECT



returned to Eagle Butte and decided to look for more ways to lift up the next generation of Lakota youth. She began a 15-year stint as the Cheyenne River Tribe's education services specialist.

With support from the Tribal Council and volunteers from the community, she founded CRYP in 1988, and was a volunteer in the role for the first 12 years.

"I didn't have this big, grandiose plan. I just didn't," Garreau says. "I just thought it was a good thing for kids to have a place to go, and I could do it. I had the energy, I had the time, I had the interest and I was raised to serve my community. That's what I'm supposed to do. What they are absolutely guaranteed when they come here is that they will be loved, honored and respected. And they will be allowed to be kids."

CRYP serves participants like Dawnelle Gartner, a 16-year-old sophomore in high school, who has to watch her two younger brothers while her father picks up extra work. "It's kind of hard to find people that are cool without doing drugs," she says, noting that some fellow students are using drugs regularly.

"Kids grow up a little too fast here," Garreau continues. "Sometimes older

kids are taking care of siblings, maybe something is happening with their parents. They taught me so much about myself and they taught me so much about my community through our interactions. I was working with post-secondary education, but somewhere along the line I realized we needed to get kids through 8th grade and high school, and they needed safe spaces, so that became more important to me. That's where I belonged."

Among her goals: tackling community challenges with creative solutions and developing those safe spaces for, and with input from, the youth of Eagle Butte. During Garreau's time working for the Tribe, she also served on the local police commission, including three years as the chairperson, and she worked as a field coordinator for Running Strong for American Indian Youth.

"I wish we could bottle Julie Garreau or do a little cloning, because she has a way with the world that would very much benefit her contemporaries," says Ren Dietel of Dietel & Partners, a philanthropic advisory group that supports quality of life efforts all over the world, including CRYP.

Starting CRYP was also an opportunity to build something based upon

Lakota values: courage, wisdom, generosity and respect. As described in CRYP's 2015 Bush Prize application, the organization embodies "The courage to move forward against daunting odds. The wisdom to listen to our children, families and community so we can develop programs that are culturally relevant and yet embrace contemporary issues. Respect for those we serve, so our programs honor them. Generosity, even when we have little to give."

### Spaces for Youth to See New Possibilities

Today, turning off Highway 212 and heading toward the Cheyenne River Youth Project on the edge of Eagle Butte is like approaching a complex for an alternative-learning school. The first things you'll notice are a newly built playground and the two-and-a-half-acre garden that was originally developed in the mid-1970s by Garreau's mother, Iyonne, who worked as the executive director of the Cheyenne River Elderly Nutrition Center. The garden continues to provide traditional, nutritious foods for adults, and brings Lakota children closer to the earth.

"My mother was a magical woman," Garreau says. "She was vibrant and well-spoken and a force to be reckoned with. She was one of the most kind, compassionate people I'd ever met. She used to say that if there could be community gardens everywhere, it would begin to address all these health issues that we have. Because, of course, working with elderly, you saw all those health issues playing out."

The garden is now named after Iyonne's Lakota name, Winyan Toka

Win, which means "Leading Lady." CRYP took over planting, maintaining and harvesting the garden in 2000, two years after moving from downtown to their current facility, affectionately called the "Main." In 2006, it dedicated a second facility, the Teen Center.

The original Main youth center space was in a converted building that used to be a bar in downtown Eagle Butte. Like many initiatives that followed, it was a symbol to show that alternative options beyond alcohol and drugs existed for area youth. "We remind the children who they are and talk about character and our values system instead of putting up signs that say 'don't do this, don't do that,'" says Garreau.

Over the past three decades, CRYP has been able to expand its footprint—with support from the Bush Foundation, a partnership with Running Strong for American Indian Youth and other donations—and it's now based in an enhanced facility built in the late '90s. There's the Main, which includes an activity space for younger children and the kitchen where meals are prepared for CRYP participants. Next door is the Čokata Wičoni ("Center of Life") Teen Center, a programming space that's home to offices, the Keya Café (sourced from the garden) and a gift shop. A hallway leads to a gymnasium covered in graffiti art created by visiting artists, and the wellness center, filled with workout machines and lifting equipment. There's also an art room, a library and a computer lab. Beyond the building is the Waniyetu Wowapi ("Winter Count") Art Park, which features a pictographic record of community history. Dedicated in 2015, it's where



Winyan Toka Win ("Leading Lady") Garden



GARDEN COURTESY CHEYENNE RIVER YOUTH PROJECT



**“IF YOU HAVE  
COME TO HELP ME,  
YOU ARE WASTING  
YOUR TIME.  
BUT IF YOU HAVE  
COME BECAUSE  
YOUR LIBERATION  
IS BOUND UP  
WITH MINE, THEN  
LET US WALK  
TOGETHER.”**

*– Lilla Watson, Aboriginal  
Australian artist, activist  
and academic*

RedCan is held each summer.

Every new CRYP program or feature begins with a discussion among the staff and youth participating in the organization. “Our approach is more organic,” says Anthony Potter, youth programs assistant. “We talk to the kids, and then we find an approach that works for them—not based on a guideline, some set of rules or someone who has never lived here.”

A native of Eagle Butte and a nephew of Garreau, Potter and his siblings grew up spending plenty of time at the original Main building. The son of a single mother, he grew up in one of the tougher neighborhoods of Eagle Butte where poverty, drug use, alcoholism and suicide were common. In his role at CRYP, he can connect with the youth because he lived the day-to-day adversities they endure. After leaving for college to pursue a degree in criminal justice, he has returned to run the CRYP book club and help with other programs and activities.

A glance at the “News” tab on the constantly updating CRYP website illustrates that the spaces are hubs of activity year-round. Youth

participants have a wealth of events to choose from, and many of the initiatives are focused on teaching the value of giving back to the community. The youth and families are not CRYP clients; they are kin.

“It’s not some separate entity that comes from a Washington, D.C., organization,” says Garreau. “We’re grassroots. I always say ‘We’re for Cheyenne River, by Cheyenne River.’ We are lifting ourselves up. We are creating something that helps us and addresses challenges. We’re raised to believe that taking care of your community is important.”

CRYP does a lot with its limited funds and small staff. Dietel considers CRYP as a “best in class” for Indigenous youth programs and has continued to guide funding to the organization since 2012. “When you get to these spaces and meet these people, you see what they are doing is amazing with next to nothing,” Dietel says.

A prime example of the efficiency at play is the garden. The food feeds CRYP participants but is also used for a number of fundraising initiatives. There’s produce for farmers market

sales, canned goods sold in the gift shop, hot meals sold in the Keya Café and, soon, a grant-funded food truck. But the garden is also a teaching aid to help the youth understand food sovereignty, nutrition and how to develop and sell all those products.

“In the very beginning we didn’t have anything,” Garreau recalls. “So if we had a roll of quarters, I had to be really resourceful with that. How could I make it two rolls of quarters, and how could I make that spread as far as I could? So a lot of those things are still very present in how we do business today.”

### **Internships That Show the Big Picture**

In 2017, the mini-documentary “Lakota in America” was released by Square. It details CRYP’s Teen Internship Program through the eyes of Genevieve Iron Lightning, a teenage descendant of Lakota Chief Iron Lightning, who fought in the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Since 2013, the program has helped show young members of the Eagle Butte community firsthand what career options beyond working the local fast food chains look like.

Through her internship, Iron Lightning learned about entrepreneurship through the arts while being able to also weave in her Lakota heritage. She worked with Scape Martinez, a California-based artist and multi-year CRYP volunteer, to create her own spray paint brand and aesthetic that tied back to her cultural identity. “I don’t want their perfection, I want their expression,” Martinez says. “I would like the young people who take my classes to know that whatever they can think of they can execute and put out into the world.”

In addition to paid arts internships, there are positions focusing on wellness, social enterprise, retail skills and horticulture. The internships continue evolving to suit the community’s needs and the times. Combining professional and personal growth, the experiences are meant to provide mentoring and teach skills that participants can apply to both future employment and their emotional well-being. From Rapid City Arts to National Relief Charities to the Black Hills Wannabees, the collaborative energy shared by other organizations has created one-of-a-kind experiences for CRYP participants.

For the Native food sovereignty internship, students learned customer service skills from the Native business Painted Sky Consulting and received gardening training from the Intertribal Agriculture Council. The social enterprise internship included financial literacy courses taught by Four Bands Community Fund (2013 Bush Prize winner). With classes based upon “The Sioux Chef’s Indigenous Kitchen” cookbook by Sean Sherman (BF’18), the Indigenous foods cooking internship taught by Anthony Potter was added in 2018, allowing students to connect to their heritage through the ingredients, methods and recipes.

“He’s quite the chef, and what he’s learned about Indigenous foods is amazing,” Garreau says of Potter. “He teaches them how to make things our ancestors would have eaten. I love that. It’s exciting that our kids are learning that and he’s learning with them. He had to do the research and planning. I like that with all of my staff. Each of them takes an active role in facilitating the different internships.”





More than 600 community members have taken part in internships, and the programming has touched “thousands and thousands” of kids over the past 30 years, according to Garreau. With an annual budget of \$1-1.2 million, continuing the work has long included partnerships with like-minded organizations.

Interns have used their newfound skills to bolster their resumes and college applications as well as to enhance aspects of their daily lives. “CRYP is special because it offers young kids like me the opportunity to create our job and people skills, so we can build a better future for ourselves,” says Mason Arpan, who has participated in food sovereignty and social enterprise internships. Arpan used internship stipend funds to buy a new lawn mower for his local lawn-care business.

“It’s about the kids having more opportunities and expanding their futures for their culture,” says Jerica Widow, youth programs director. “Sometimes it’s about planting seeds,” Garreau adds. “Sometimes it’s a skill you can go and do.”

### Envisioning a Future for CRYP

Julie Garreau’s hope is that the work of the CRYP continues for decades to come. Over the past five years, she has started discussions with her staff about a transition plan for when she retires. Part of the focus of her 2016 Bush Fellowship was to take time to expand her understanding of Lakota culture and language, as well as to learn more about Western leadership. With those tools, she’ll be better equipped to hand off CRYP leadership duties to a new generation. Her journey has led her to the realization that there are tradeoffs: allowing work to be all-consuming can be a deterrent for self-care, and many ways to lead are in conflict with tribal values.

“Most often Western leadership models teach about growing yourself; moving up in your position; and definitely about a hierarchy,” Garreau wrote in a learning log, a monthly reflection from her Fellowship. “In processing what I’ve learned to determine how can I adapt this information and make it relevant in my community,

I’ve come to the conclusion that I have to find balance to be most effective.”

In 2017, CRYP partnered with the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Native American Youth (CNAY) at the Aspen Institute. Garreau traveled to D.C. that year to attend CNAY’s Champions Week event and brought back a new leadership opportunity based upon CNAY’s Champions for Change program, which trains young people to improve the lives of their fellow youth in Native American communities. The Growing Into Wowachinyepi (“one whom the people can depend on”) program teaches CRYP interns Western leadership skills that still pay respect to the Lakota Nation. After a one-year youth pilot project, the two organizations plan to develop a sustainable local program and a larger national technical assistance program.

“It was really successful, at least for the first year,” says Garreau. “We want to find funding to keep developing it. Kids are more capable than we imagine. They are thinking, intelligent, amazing people. They know what’s off-center in their communities. We need to ask their opinion. One day they’ll be taking care of us, running this country or tribal government. Our obligation is to give them skills: leadership, decision making, communication through art, whatever it is.”

“We’re trying to build healthier kids as a whole,” adds Widow. “We need to let them have a voice and get them comfortable to say what they want to say.”

The first five participants entered into a boot camp to learn about advocacy, needs of the community and public speaking. They traveled to Washington, D.C., and met with

staffers for South Dakota Senators John Thune and Kristi Noem (now the state’s newly elected governor), and with Senator Mike Rounds. During these meetings, the CRYP youth were able to discuss topics that affect their community—such as opioid abuse, funding for addiction prevention and tribal advocacy—and they discussed goals for developments in the future.

The Growing Into Wowachinyepi program exemplifies many important investments into a new generation of CRYP, and there will always be more work to be done. Along with cultural growth, there are plans for technological growth at CRYP through a computer lab with programs in programming, coding and graphic design. (Currently, students learn to edit on iPads, and there aren’t enough yet for large classes.)

CRYP’s future, like its past, will grow in the forms that best suit the children who fill its classrooms, hallways and outdoor spaces. “My Bush Fellowship journey is not about me,” Garreau noted in a learning log. “It’s about investing in me so I can help my community. In the end, I simply want to be a Good Ancestor, whose legacy endures in a healthy, strong Lakota Nation.”

Sitting in her office on a fall afternoon, Garreau observes that, “Each of us are community members,” she says, emphasizing that the community is small.

“Believe me,” she adds, laughing, “people have no problem calling us and letting us know if they feel that we’re heading in the wrong direction. We all represent families, clans and groups. We’re having these conversations and talking to people all the time.”

REDCAN EVENT COURTESY CHEYENNE RIVER YOUTH PROJECT



### USING ARTS AND CULTURE FOR PROBLEM SOLVING

The guiding mission of the Bush Foundation’s Community Creativity initiative is to make arts and culture central to problem solving in more communities, on more issues and across more sectors. “For everything, whatever the problem or challenge is, one of the things that needs to be in the toolkit is arts and culture,” says Clay Lord, vice president of local arts advancement for Americans for the Arts.

The Foundation launched its Community Creativity initiative with an initial Community Creativity Cohort grant program in 2015. In 2018, it launched Cohort 2, focused specifically on organizations led by and serving people of color or Indigenous people, as well as those serving rural communities with populations below 50,000 people.

The 40 members of the second Community Creativity Cohort include organizations working in North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota and the 23 Native nations that share that geography. In addition to the Cheyenne River Youth Project (CRYP), the cohort includes 14 other Native-led organizations.

These organizations “help people believe that they have the power to create change in their lives and in their communities,” says Erik Takeshita, Bush Foundation community creativity portfolio director. He adds, “Art and culture are uniquely able to help people forge connections. They can create experiences that bring people together.”

In the case of CRYP, the arts are put to use to recover Lakota culture and heritage. CRYP balances teaching traditional art practices while showing that Native American art doesn’t have to fit any traditional mold. Through events like RedCan Graffiti Jam, the organization shows that Native art is about the people, first and foremost. Art as a means of expression helps youth find their own voices to express their struggles and learn about their past. Art also serves as a gateway for exploring the Cheyenne River Tribe’s culture in other ways, be it cooking traditional dishes, practicing time-honored dances or singing and speaking in ancestral forms.

“For us, art isn’t a standalone concept,” says Julie Garreau, CRYP executive director. “It is a lifeway. The art that you see, the work that’s done by our Native people, and by our kids, too, is a representation of our lives, our history, our pain, our trauma. It’s how we record our stories and tell our stories and leave a legacy for our young people.”

Learn more at [bfdn.org/cc](http://bfdn.org/cc)



MSP Regional Highlights session with Michigan State students



# All Are Welcome Here?

How the BE MSP initiative is working to create a more inclusive environment for professionals of color

by SYL JONES

In many respects, the story of the Twin Cities is a tale of two cities. Not the differences between Minneapolis and St. Paul, but the dramatically different experiences of those who fit in and those who don't. And those divisions, which have huge ethnic and racial undercurrents, are undermining the future of the region's economy.

For decades, many people of color have lived and worked in the Twin Cities only to depart in search of more hospitable climates. Racism, implicit bias, difficulty connecting

PHOTOS BY BETHANY BERNE

with peers after work and unclear or uncertain pathways for career advancement have contributed to thousands of people of color and Indigenous (POCI) professionals exiting the region, despite its high scores for overall livability.

"I've found that the Twin Cities' many job opportunities and high-profile companies attract Asian professionals to the region," says Vivian Chow, director of marketing for Rembrandt Foods. "But once we arrive, we face challenges regarding effective development, advancement, mentorship and understanding how to navigate our organizations. I've sometimes struggled with feeling like I truly fit in with a company's culture, preferred styles and [often white male] senior leaders."

Greater MSP, the Minneapolis Saint Paul Regional Economic Development Partnership, has long been aware of this challenge, and created Make It. MSP. in 2015 to address overall talent attraction and retention goals. Bush Foundation President Jen Ford Reedy served on the cross-sector, multi-generational 2014 Talent Task Force that led Greater MSP to create Make It. MSP. One of the task force's key

findings was that while Minneapolis-St. Paul was among the top metro areas for retaining transplants from other markets, the Twin Cities saw a steep and troubling drop-off when it came to retaining POCI.

The issue is complex—rooted in historic patterns of discrimination and cultural preferences that are difficult to sort out. So, Make It. MSP. made it part of its focus to attract and retain professionals of color specifically, eventually dubbing this initiative BE MSP. It's a network of organizations and individuals with a vested interest in addressing POCI talent retention. The Bush Foundation has financially supported BE MSP's work, along with other efforts to enhance the region's appeal to POCI.

In 2016, BE MSP interviewed and surveyed more than 1,200 POCI in the Twin Cities area. Focus groups and surveys revealed that while this region has much to offer, it lacks the sense of connection needed to help young POCI feel that they belong here.

"When I got here, I had a small group of friends from many different places, and we found a way to make the city work for us," says Courtney Schroeder, diversity and inclusion manager at

General Mills. “But what I discovered is, transplants often leave. In fact, most of the friends I made when I first got here have all left.”

Duchesne Drew, community network vice president at the Bush Foundation, says he did not feel alienated as a transplant to the Twin Cities, but understands why others do. “I missed the diversity of New York—its people, food and cultural offerings—but I had the experience here that I want other people of color to have when they land in the Twin Cities,” says Drew, who is an active member of the BE MSP strategy team. “In addition to a diverse mix of friends, I had eight jobs over 20 years at the Star Tribune, so my hard work and their investments in me paid off for both of us. That’s why I stayed as long as I did. I kept growing and advancing.”

That’s definitely not the experience many POCI have. Before BE MSP, “there was no comprehensive system in place in the Twin Cities for addressing talent migration,” notes Tiffany

Orth, a manager at Greater MSP. “That is the space we decided to step into by developing a shared platform for collaboration. It is an economic and moral imperative that we focus on closing the gap we’re seeing in the retention of professionals of color.”

### Fierce Competition for Retention

Closing the retention gap has become even more urgent because the Twin Cities are in the midst of a growing worker shortage that is projected to reach more than 106,000 positions by 2020, according to Greater MSP. This shortage is already impacting the local economy. One measure of this is the 56,000 job openings listed on Make It. MSP’s jobs portal. Registered nurses, application software developers, marketing managers, computer systems analysts, accountants and auditors were among the positions most in demand in 2018.

The region faces fierce competition from other metro areas across the



“WHEN YOU’RE AT AN MSP MINGLE, YOU CAN FEEL A DIFFERENT ENERGY IN THE ROOM. THERE ARE PEOPLE OF SO MANY DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS MIXING TOGETHER, WHICH ISN’T SOMETHING YOU EXPERIENCE A LOT IN OUR REGION.”

—Tiffany Orth, manager, Greater MSP

country in courting and keeping top-notch talent. National demographic shifts mean there simply won’t be enough talent to go around. The Twin Cities metro area is attractive to potential transplants but needs more of the people who try it out to choose to stay when other cities come calling. The natural beauty, spectacular performing arts scene, and some of the best-known and most-successful companies in American history make the Twin Cities’ livability factor almost unbeatable.

“For professionals of color, the Twin Cities have a lot to offer. But to understand that, you have to spend some time here,” says Schroeder. “People who stay here have found a way to get connected. It’s not like Atlanta. You might have to dig a little to find what you want here.”

One thing is certain: according to survey responses and focus groups, POCI aren’t leaving because of the winters. Only 11% of POCI who indicated they were thinking seriously about leaving the Twin Cities said weather was a contributing factor. But many of them described the cultural climate as emotionally cold, distant and ultimately unengaging.

What exactly does that mean? The data from BE MSP’s 2016 survey shows that POCI face a variety of challenges in the Twin Cities. Survey respondents noted the lack of a sense of community and difficulty finding culturally specific amenities such

as hair stylists and grocery stores. If they move here knowing no one, as many young professionals do, they experience difficulty connecting with people and building friendships outside of the workplace.

POCI in the Twin Cities often encounter bias and discrimination, and witness a lack of diversity in organizational leadership and in the media. This absence of diversity sends a powerful message about who is in charge and seen as a leader in the region.

And while many POCI are drawn to the Twin Cities due to abundant professional opportunities, once they are here, the pathway for advancement—organizationally and financially—becomes unclear. Barriers to promotion often appear out of thin air, and people of color are left behind. What’s more, survey respondents said their employers’ workplace diversity and inclusion programs aren’t robust enough to address the lack of cultural competence in their organizations. An annual 90-minute workshop isn’t enough to change their coworkers’ hearts, minds and behaviors.

BE MSP’s efforts to tackle these challenges are beginning to make a difference, according to Orth, who cites the MSP Mingle series as an example. These quarterly mixers, which started in 2016, typically attract more than 250 professionals of color. They’ve been sponsored and hosted by a long list of corporate partners including Target, US Bank

“I MISSED THE DIVERSITY OF NEW YORK—ITS PEOPLE, FOOD AND CULTURAL OFFERINGS—BUT I HAD THE EXPERIENCE HERE THAT I WANT OTHER PEOPLE OF COLOR TO HAVE WHEN THEY LAND IN THE TWIN CITIES.”

—Duchesne Drew, community network vice president, Bush Foundation

PHOTO: BETHANY BERNIE

Survey results excerpted from Retaining Professionals of Color, Key Insights Preview (read more at: [makeitmsp.org/2017/02/revealing-insights-professionals-color-msp](http://makeitmsp.org/2017/02/revealing-insights-professionals-color-msp))



MSP Mingle hosted by Target



and Securian Financial, and they're run jointly by Make It. MSP., the St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce and the Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce. Those three organizations are also collaborating on a monthly e-newsletter for POCI that lists upcoming events, as well as on websites that help POCI build connections in the Twin Cities.

"When you're at an MSP Mingle, you can feel a different energy in the room," Orth says. "There are people of so many different backgrounds mixing together, which isn't something you experience a lot in our region."

Vivian Chow notes that the initiatives fostered by BE MSP are reaching both new and established POCI, giving them additional opportunities to connect and strengthening ties that might otherwise not exist cross-culturally. "The work that is needed can't be done by one person, one group, one company or one organization," Chow says. "Only a truly region-wide understanding of the challenges, and focus to address them, will shift the experience for people of color."

Chow acknowledges that addressing the anticipated worker shortage is one compelling reason to systematically change behaviors toward POCI. But she stresses that there are other important benefits for the region, too.

"For companies and organizations, this initiative will help them attract and retain great diverse talent, and more diverse organizations are correlated with higher success," she says. "A more supportive community will also bolster small businesses, bring more resources and businesses that serve diverse communities, and enrich the region in general through inclusiveness of all people, not just people of color."

In the last three years, BE MSP staff and volunteers have given scores of presentations to business and community leaders across the metro area, sharing insights from the 2016 survey as well as concrete steps employers can take to create more inclusive environments. For example, they can work on creating workplace cultures that truly value the creativity that diverse teams generate. And they can articulate career paths for all employees rather than making them guess about what it takes to move up. This is especially important in organizations where the senior leadership isn't very diverse and POCI don't have meaningful representation in the C-Suite.

BE MSP is also working with the Forum on Workplace Inclusion, a key partner in all its work, to produce a comprehensive directory of diversity and inclusion practitioners, so organizations interested in working on this aspect of their workplace climate can find a range of consultants in one place. In addition, the BE MSP team created a free online toolkit that organizations can use to foster a more inclusive environment (see sidebar).

Chow says that as she thinks about the future Twin Cities, she sees a different vision than what currently exists. "My vision," notes Chow, "is that professionals of color are represented across all levels, sectors, industries and organization types. And these individuals have the opportunity to learn, develop, advance, contribute and lead through inclusion on teams and in meetings, having an influential voice or decision-making authority, and by having a seat at every table or boardroom." 

PHOTOS: THE LIMEBOOOTH



Clip out this guide and put it to work!

## MAKING YOUR WORKPLACE MORE INCLUSIVE

Right now, the Twin Cities can feel culturally unyielding to some POCI. As Duchesne Drew puts it: "There are plenty of racist people in New York, Chicago and the other places I have lived, but here there's a kind of 'this is the way we've always done things, so conform or leave' vibe in some environments. It's not healthy and it's driving good people away."

The larger issue may go beyond strategic initiatives and straight to the heart. True culture change isn't a fish-out-of-water narrative. Instead, it's about changing the water itself and transforming the way people think. Such change can begin in the workplace by leaders modeling what success looks like and going out of the way to build relationships with and be encouraging to POCI.

Senior leaders and middle managers will need to embrace discomfort in a positive way, sharing power and authority with people who don't look like them. As Drew points out, "Organizations need to be proactive in how they integrate people of color into their workplaces and into the community. Hiring folks and waiting to see if they sink or swim in an environment that is indifferent, or possibly even hostile toward them, isn't an effective way of managing people."

Using some of the tools available through BE MSP, you and your leadership team can help our region retain more talented POCI by doing the following:

1. Bring this article to your next board or senior leadership meeting and openly discuss specific steps you can take to proactively improve your organization's response to people of color and Indigenous people. Do this more than once a year.
2. Think about the POCI in your organization and how you might help them feel more connected. Then follow up and take the action needed.
3. Connect your POCI employees to the BE MSP Initiative, so they can grow and strengthen their networks. They can find out about upcoming events and sign up for newsletters here: [makeitmsp.org/bemsp](https://makeitmsp.org/bemsp)
4. Write a letter to your local newspaper, radio station or TV station asking them to consider hiring, promoting and retaining more people of color as a way of enhancing our community's creative viability and visible diversity.
5. Speak openly and truthfully about racial disparities in this region (among the worst in the nation) and tell your peers that the situation is unacceptable. Hold forums in your workplace to find at least one positive way you can help improve those disparities. Align your improvement efforts with your company's values and business goals.
6. Use BE MSP's free Workplace Toolkit to spark conversations and build an inclusive culture in your workplace: [makeitmsp.teachable.com](https://makeitmsp.teachable.com)

From "All Are Welcome Here?" by Syl Jones in the Bush Foundation's bMagazine 2019.

# Congratulations to the 2019 Bush Fellows

A Bush Fellowship is recognition of extraordinary achievement and a bet on extraordinary potential. Fellows are awarded up to \$100,000 to invest in their leadership growth.



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**Rose McGee**  
Golden Valley, MN



**Ia Xiong**  
White Bear Lake, MN



**Tou Ger Xiong**  
Woodbury, MN



**KaYing Yang**  
Saint Paul, MN

PHOTOS ACKERMAN + GRUBER

Applications accepted September 24 through October 24, 2019.





Prodeo Academy

# One Classroom, Many Paths

Three schools are making individualized learning work for their students

by SARAH CHANDLER

If you're reading this story, you are likely the product of schools similar to the ones where your parents and grandparents learned to read, write and do arithmetic. In classrooms divided by age-based grade levels, teachers lectured to students lined up in rows, each one completing the same homework and exams to earn letter grades in an environment driven by the ringing of school bells.

"Our schools are designed to respond to the Industrial Revolution of 1900, not 2020," says Ben Rayer, founding partner of 2Revolutions,

a national education design lab. "We've been training kids for the wrong future." The organization has partnered with the Bush Foundation to design and implement School Design for Individualized Learning, a grant program and coaching opportunity for K-12 schools in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and the 23 Native nations that share the geography.

"Education needs to change along with the world," echoes Jackie Statum Allen, education portfolio director at the Bush Foundation. By helping educators reimagine and redesign

learning environments, she explains, the program endeavors to put students in the center. This means creating schools that address who students are, how they learn and what they want to do in the future, equipping them with the tools to pursue skill- and passion-driven paths. "It's about making education more relevant for students who are students now," she says.

Read on for a snapshot of three schools in the program that are deep in the trenches of figuring out—day by day, classroom by classroom—how to individualize learning so that every student thrives.

PHOTO AMELIA ANN PHOTO



### Spring Grove School *Spring Grove, Minnesota*

Picture a single teacher instructing a roomful of students ranging from age 6 to 17—a snapshot of public education in 19th-century rural America—and you’ll have a rough idea of the one-room schoolhouse built in 1857 in the southeastern Minnesota town of Spring Grove. While this image may be a blast from the past, the idea that students work best in an environment that’s both collaborative and self-paced extends to the curriculum redesign underway at Spring Grove’s K-12 campus: personalized, self-directed learning in multi-age and multi-level classrooms. It’s a journey that relies on enthusiastic support and input from staff, like math teacher Kelsey Morken, who has come to the conclusion that “teaching to the middle no longer exists.”

As Spring Grove problem-solves its way through the first implementation stage of the redesign process, student-centered learning shines brightest in their Maker’s Space, a daily 40-minute class where students collaborate with an architecture graduate student to design a two-story, three-bedroom family house inspired by Norwegian architecture. The project reflects the small town’s deep cultural roots: Spring Grove was Minnesota’s first Norwegian settlement. When the ground thaws in late spring 2019, students will partner with Habitat for Humanity and community volunteers to build the very house they helped design.

“It was their own idea,” says Maker’s Space teacher Karen Tisthammer. She describes how the house project took root during a community meeting, when officials from the

Spring Grove Economic Development Authority (EDA) asked what the town needed most. “And the kids suggested housing.”

While this kind of ambitious project might never take off in a traditional school setting, an individualized learning environment presents a perfect incubator for student-driven work: a real-world project where students provide the initial creative spark and then execute from start to finish.

In 2015, Spring Grove School began a bold strategic planning process with community stakeholders. No longer a one-room schoolhouse, it had grown into a modern brick building with separate hallways for its 361 elementary, middle and high school students. Their goal? To create an environment in which students could exercise ownership over their learning—and where teachers could innovate and experiment, recalls Superintendent Rachel Udstuen. “Our dream is to create a 21st-century one-room schoolhouse.”

That dream first became tangible with a couch (or three). “One summer, we ordered some new furniture, spurred by the question, ‘How can we make a space more collaborative and flexible?’” Udstuen says. When students returned to school in the fall, they found hallways transformed by couches and bar stool-lined counters, inviting spontaneous collaboration. Such human-scale design, the brain-child of Minneapolis architecture firm Fielding Nair, was an instant hit. Another change: no more warning bell between classes.

“We still have a schedule, though,” Udstuen says, laughing. Before the bells were eliminated, students

rushed from class to locker to restroom to their next class. “We were thinking, ‘Why are we doing this?’” Udstuen admits. “The goal was to reduce stress.”

Yet what about students who struggle to manage the freedom of a less regimented structure? “That’s a teaching moment,” Udstuen says. “If we’ve never given them the chance to fail, what are they going to do when they get to college?”

On a recent day, when Udstuen jumped in as the Maker’s Space substitute teacher, students were so transfixed by their work on the house design project that when it was time to go to the next class, they stayed glued to their seats. Udstuen could see a difference between kids being compliant and kids being engaged.

For Udstuen, this moment served as a reminder of why students need the flexibility of personalized learning environments. “The hope would be if a student’s really engaged in an activity,” she says, “they wouldn’t have to stop just because it’s time to go.”

As the class undertakes a rigorous crash course in architecture, they’ve learned how to balance aesthetic principles, functional design and livable spaces. When students suggested to the supervising architect that the children’s rooms could be larger and more hangout-friendly, the blueprints changed. “We’re teenagers, and that’s where we go,” student Marie says.

For Marie, investing in the community has been the most exciting part of her experience in Maker’s Space. “We’re helping people finally get a place of their own. When we drive by that house, we can think ‘I did that.’”



Prodeo Academy



### Prodeo Academy *Minneapolis and St. Paul*

Inside Prodeo Academy’s redbrick St. Paul campus, students quietly file across polished wooden floors in their navy and white uniforms. The majority of the school’s 77 students are refugees, many of whom have emigrated from Thai refugee camps that shelter Karen and Kayah ethnic minorities from Myanmar.

Down the hall, a peek inside Kathleen Boland’s mixed K-1 classroom reveals a learning environment that feels reassuringly recognizable, yet quietly revolutionary. As she animatedly taps out phonics exercises around a table with five students, a handful of children quietly work on phonics worksheets at a nearby table.

On the bright carpet, another cluster of students does self-paced activities on tablets. Colorful bucket chairs are part of the flexible seating that allows kids choice and variety. In an inviting reading nook called the Peace Corner, where students can choose to take three short breaks per day, a lone boy daydreams in a rocking chair.

While the scene in Boland’s classroom appears almost magical, it’s the fruition of careful research and hard work. Around 75% of Prodeo’s students enter kindergarten before having the opportunity to master certain readiness skills, such as recognizing the difference between letters and numbers. And while individualized learning isn’t a blanket solution to every pedagogical problem, it means that teachers are equipped

SPRING GROVE COURTESY SPRING GROVE

PRODEO TOP: AMELIA ANN PHOTO; PRODEO BELOW (x3): COURTESY PRODEO ACADEMY



Prodeo Academy

**“IN READING, I LIKE THAT I GET TO PICK MY OWN BOOKS. IT MAKES IT SO I REALLY LIKE READING.”**

—Lydia, elementary student

for the delicate balancing act of supporting some students as they forge ahead toward new challenges while helping others catch up on foundational concepts.

Boland, who has integrated individualized learning into her classroom for 14 years, now collaborates with Principal Liz Ferguson and her fellow colleagues on the school’s curriculum development and design. The detailed weekly and daily breakdown of learner-centered activities in Boland’s class is a marvel of highly calibrated precision. That’s especially impressive considering that the campus is in its fledgling year. After implementing small student-centered learning pilot projects at their Minneapolis campus, school leaders drew upon those experiences to design the St. Paul school, which places a more comprehensive focus on individualized learning. At the St. Paul campus, it is “woven into the school design,” co-founder Rick Champion says.

Boland’s intricate breakdown is just one impressive piece of the technology and data-driven culture that helps Prodeo Academy thrive. Creative use of technology in the classroom means that first graders making speedy progress on a phonics unit can jump ahead, and that a struggling student can easily review key concepts before moving on. Creatively harnessing tech also helps them engage students from a variety of cultural backgrounds and native languages.

Ongoing assessment of students’ understanding of the subject matter is integral. For a class to move forward to a new unit, Ferguson explains, “80% need to be mastering 80% of content. If students are struggling, they will back up.”

This data crunching, of course, takes time. Each Prodeo teacher is equipped with a 105-minute daily period for prep, research and grading. There’s also a weekly data analysis meeting

with Ferguson, and, every six weeks, an in-service (read: no classes) “data day” when teachers assess, reflect and rechart their classroom’s course.

This kind of explicit structural design is necessary, Ferguson says, to help teachers make the leap from a more traditional instructional model. Teachers not only carefully structure academic work, she stresses, but also do “the socio-emotional groundwork to prepare students.” To that end, the school teaches science and social studies through play-based curricula, which research suggests can foster confidence, spontaneity and social skills such as cooperation and empathy. Even behavior interventions, Ferguson points out, are movement- and talk-based rather than punitive. For example, a student might be encouraged to discuss their feelings using colors. “We want to keep students engaged and responding to consequences,” Ferguson reflects.

When students talk about their experience at Prodeo, however, it’s not data, tech or structure that pop up in conversation—it’s choice, the freedom of self-paced assignments, and joy. “Math is easier for me to understand because I can go at my own pace,” reflects elementary student Lydia. “In reading, I like that I get to pick my own books. It makes it so I really like reading.”

Ferguson smiles as she recalls one of Prodeo’s students, a boy named Anderson who immigrated from Mexico at age 5. When he was encouraged to set a personal learning goal, his response was particularly enthusiastic and ambitious: He wanted to read his book of choice six times each day. As he worked toward and was held accountable for his goal, his classroom engagement skyrocketed.

PHOTO: AMELIA ANN PHOTO

### Northern Cass School Hunter, North Dakota

When Northern Cass sophomore Silver wanted to compose a symphony for the school’s concert band, her dream became an official part of her class schedule. She now has a weekly three-hour block, supervised by the music teacher, to work on the project.

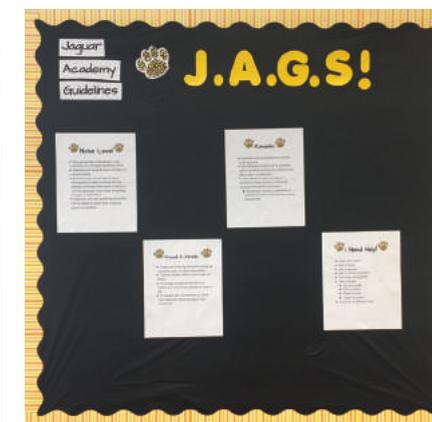
That’s just one success story from Northern Cass’ Jaguar Academy, a student-centered learning program that currently enrolls about 40 students from 8th through 10th grade—or about 8% of the entire PreK-12 student population in this rural agricultural community. Students undertake self-paced, individualized learning projects for at least three core courses each semester. “We’re giving students lots of opportunities to develop their own agency,” Superintendent Cory Steiner says.

While the Jaguar Academy may be the crown jewel of Northern Cass’ instructional redesign, teachers are experimenting with individualized learning across the PreK-12 school. Next year, they’ll take a massive leap: 2019-2020 will mark the beginning of full proficiency-based grading, jettisoning traditional letter grades for a system designed to motivate—and more accurately assess—student progress. Along with encouraging students to focus on mastering meaningful skills rather than receiving As on exams, this style of grading also keeps students from measuring themselves against their peer group, leaving them free to strive instead toward their own interests and potential.

NORTHERN CASS COURTESY NORTHERN CASS SCHOOL



Northern Cass School



Now in his second year at the Jaguar Academy, ninth grader Timothy explains how he demonstrated competency in English, social studies, math and science through a year-end collaborative project. His small group worked on integrating those four subjects to analyze the earth’s fifth mass extinction—otherwise known as the fall of the dinosaurs. “We were asked to show the skills we learned over the year, such as critical thinking, and to show how we learned those skills,” Timothy recalls.

This radical departure from the traditional classroom is not simply a steep learning curve for students,



but for parents as well. While some have expressed concerns about how proficiency-based assessments that eschew the traditional A-F grading system will translate to college applications, Timothy's mother happily reports, like many parents, being "all in." "My son is so focused, and he's taking ownership over his education," she says.

One surprising success of personalized learning has occurred with students who have historically struggled in traditional classrooms. Steiner recalls one elementary school

parent of a student with learning disabilities, who was ecstatic over her child's newfound enthusiasm for school. All students, Steiner says, "have finally been given choices. With little kids, it's A or B; with older kids, they're actually designing some of the choices they have."

Yet fostering student agency is a tricky proposition. Staff cannot expect students to venture outside their comfort zones unless they are supported throughout this unfamiliar process. That's been the clearest piece of feedback from students. "They tell

us," explains Steiner, "if you want us to own our learning, you need to let us fail so we can learn from it."

For a school redesign to be successful, it also pays to consider which tried-and-true methods might not easily be improved upon. Such was the case when teacher Liz Bjerke considered how to individualize teaching safe and correct knife use in her food and restaurant management classes, one of the building blocks of culinary arts. "We realized that we don't want to personalize knife skills," Bjerke says, laughing. **15**

### THREE DIMENSIONS OF INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING

Individualized learning is about putting students at the center, making sure that they have choice and voice in their education and that teachers are prepared to adapt to students' individual abilities and learning styles.

At the core of the Bush Foundation's commitment to student-centered learning is the idea that education should be relevant for all students in these three dimensions:

- Who they are: Create learning environments that welcome and support students from all cultures and backgrounds.
- How they learn: Customize learning to help students learn in a manner and at a pace that meets their individual needs.
- What they want to do: Help students imagine a career and provide them with support to get them where they want to go.

Learn more at [bfdn.org/edu](http://bfdn.org/edu)

**"WITH LITTLE KIDS, IT'S A OR B; WITH OLDER KIDS, THEY'RE ACTUALLY DESIGNING SOME OF THE CHOICES THEY HAVE."**

— Cory Steiner, superintendent, Northern Cass School



PHOTO COURTESY NORTHERN CASS SCHOOL

## Buzz

A showcase for the ongoing work of Bush Fellows, Foundation board members and staff.

**buzz** (bəz/), n. a general sense of excitement about or interest in Bush Fellows throughout the years

**THE BUSH FOUNDATION HAS INVESTED MORE THAN \$1 BILLION IN MYRIAD ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS OVER THE PAST 66 YEARS.**

Over that time, the programs at the core of the Foundation have evolved through multiple iterations.

The prestigious Bush Fellowship is no exception. Since it was first awarded in 1965, Bush Fellows have included artists, government leaders, entrepreneurs, educators and more. One constant, however, is the Foundation's belief in the power of people to make great ideas happen in their communities. And that is the crux of the Bush Fellowship today: personal leadership growth and development.

On the following pages, you'll get a glimpse into the thousands of individuals whose lives—and communities—have been touched by the Bush Fellowship.



### GETTING TO KNOW

- 54** Board Chair  
Tony Heredia
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(BF'12)

PHOTO MONICADO - ADOBE STOCK



a lot of reacting to situations and being the problem solver, which is very different than the role board members play at the Bush Foundation. Our job is really to stay focused on strategy, governance, stewarding the resources that were provided by Archibald and Edyth Bush, and being ambassadors for the purpose and mission of the Foundation and its role and impact in the community. We get the luxury of only thinking about those things all the time.

**WHAT WILL YOU FOCUS ON AS BOARD CHAIR?**

One of the things I'll focus on is making sure we continue to have diverse perspectives and voices around the board table, so that we get the benefit of people's experiences and expertise from all parts of the community. I also think that in the next few years we'll have a big opportunity to increase the ways in which the Bush Foundation can quantify its impact. We'll be able to look at the strategies we have been pursuing, ask ourselves whether they're having the impact we envisioned and what we'd like to do next.

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES AND LESSONS YOU'VE ENCOUNTERED IN YOUR CAREER?**

I've had to learn how to be resilient, realizing that not everything goes right the first time and not everything is meant to be in the way that you hope it will be. But in that I've learned the values of persistence and flexibility. I've also learned the importance of realizing the positive impact other people have on you as a professional and a person, and always remembering to take stock of the people that show up in your life at unanticipated times and have an impact on you.

**WHAT IS ONE THING YOU FEEL PARTICULARLY PROUD OF IN YOUR CAREER AND LIFE?**

There's the stereotypical success; for example, I'm the first one in my family to go to college. I transitioned from a career in law enforcement to management consulting to the corporate world. But I don't think those really describe me as a person. The successes I am most proud of are being able to look back and say that I had a positive impact on every organization I was a part of, every team I had the privilege to work with and, today, the tremendous number of smart, dedicated people I get to work around at the Bush Foundation and other areas of my life. All while raising a family and having three terrific kids who are setting their own paths in the world, none of which would have been possible without my amazing wife of 25 years, Shelley. 

BOARD MEMBER Q&A

*Get to Know  
Bush Foundation Board  
Chair Tony Heredia*

Vice president of compliance, ethics and corporate security at Target Corporation

**WHERE DID YOU GROW UP?**

I'm from the Salinas Valley of California, born and raised in Watsonville. It's on California's central coast, about two hours south of San Francisco. Next time you buy strawberries, look at the bottom—they're probably from Watsonville. We moved to Minnesota in 2005, and consider it home. We've acclimated to winters, but that doesn't make them any easier!

**HOW DOES BOARD SERVICE DIFFER FROM OTHER ROLES YOU'VE HELD?**

The big difference is that in career roles, you're focused on daily activities and priorities. My job at Target involves

FELLOWSHIP: 25 YEARS OUT

*Lori Greene*

Mosaic artist Lori Greene (BF'94, '10) was struggling to balance full-time work and operating her own studio when she received her first Bush Fellowship (today, Fellowships are only offered once per person). With financial support and encouragement from the Foundation, she transitioned from smaller pieces to acclaimed public commissions. Today, she runs Mosaic on a Stick, a community-based creative space for diverse groups in St. Paul, Minnesota.

**What were you doing when you applied for the Fellowship?**

I was pretty young, at the start of graduate school. I was living in Mahtomedi, Minnesota, and I went to live in Mexico for a year after I got the Bush Fellowship. I lived in a little adobe house in the mountains in Oaxaca. I also got a show in New York City, and so I made art for my show—all things that I suddenly could do because I had enough money that it wasn't a day-by-day struggle, which it often is for artists.

**How has the Fellowship helped you get to where you are?**

I built my studio, Mosaic on a Stick, as a specific place for women, for healing. Right now I'm working on a memorial for survivors of sexual assault on Boom Island in Minneapolis. I've been working with several other women for this project to come about. There's been a lot of truth telling. I've heard a lot of people's stories, which are part of the pieces themselves.

**Where do you find inspiration?**

It's in conversation with people. The reason I do community art is that so many conversations occur within that process that I don't believe would occur on their own. When you first meet someone, and you're training them in a process of making art, and then the conversation goes deeper and deeper, and now you've learned their life story—that happens all the time in this process, and it feels like such an incredible gift to me, and their stories become part of the piece itself.



**What advice do you have for current and future Bush Fellows?**

Be as honest and true to yourself as possible. Just try to look, as clear as you can, toward what you're hoping to accomplish. And don't let your ego be a part of it. I am not a very confident writer; I love reading and I love language, but I do not feel like that is one of my skill sets. For me, I had to be really simple and just think from my heart and speak from my heart about what I really wanted to do.

**What aspect of the Fellowship did you find most valuable?**

Honestly, it's the confidence that it's given me. I just keep moving forward. I apply for lots of things, I attempt lots of things, and I don't get stymied by whether they are going to work or not. I do projects whether the money's there or not.

BUSH FELLOW & ALUMNI NEWS



**Mohamed Ahmed** (BF'17) received the 2018 Citizen Diplomat Award from Global Ties U.S. The award celebrates those "motivated by a desire to engage with the rest of the world in a meaningful, mutually beneficial dialogue." Ahmed was selected for his civic activism, creative ideas in teaching counterterrorism and

leadership in State Department professional exchange programs.

**Ta-coumba Aiken** (BF'92) and **Jim Denomie** (BF'08), both artists, participated in Hennepin Theatre Trust's "Avenues: Made Here" exhibit. The work focuses on five blocks of public art and community-inspired activities along Hennepin Avenue in Minneapolis, Minnesota.



**Sylvia Bartley** (BF'14) was honored at the 10th annual Celebrating the Sistas ceremony, hosted by the Twin Cities Steppers Association, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The awards recognize 15 women for exemplary contributions to community life, from business to activism to education.

**Sarah Bellamy** (BF'15), artistic director for Penumbra Theatre in St. Paul, Minnesota, joined with the Children's Theatre Company to produce "The Wiz." Bellamy called "The Wiz" a thoughtful attempt at creating

TONY HEREDIA: TARGET STUDIO

ILLUSTRATION: ALLEGRA LOCKSTADT

FELLOWSHIP: 20 YEARS OUT

## Lee Pao Xiong

For educator and public servant Lee Pao Xiong (BF'99), a Bush Fellowship cleared the way for him to pursue a doctorate in public administration. For more than three decades, he has served in local, state and national roles focusing on housing policy, public transportation and Asian American culture—including being appointed by President Clinton to the President's Advisory Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islanders. He is currently the founding director and an instructor at Concordia University - St. Paul's Center for Hmong Studies.

### How has the Fellowship changed you?

It changed me because it exposed me to a higher level of learning. High school is about memorization of facts. Undergraduate is about critical thinking—now you're challenging the facts. Your master's is about theory. Then when you get to the Ph.D. level, it's about you creating your own theory because you're an expert in that subject area. That's what your contribution to society is.

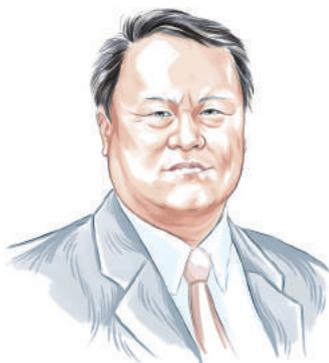
I focused on public administration because it's about management and leadership. We need good managers and good leaders at public institutions. It's really bringing back the "public" in public service. I'm very fascinated by questions like, how do we create better government institutions and better public institutions? How do leaders inspire public servants? People must be the focus.

### What aspect of the Fellowship did you find most valuable?

It allowed me to take a leave of absence and just focus on me for a while. When you're always focused on helping other people, if you've been helping other people all your life, it's so valuable to focus on helping yourself. It's hard to do that when you're a public leader.

### Where do you find inspiration?

I remember having dinner with Elliot Richardson, the U.S. attorney general under President Nixon, and he said, "Thank those who point out your weakness. People may criticize you, but don't take it too personally. Maybe there's some truth to what they're saying. Look at yourself and ask, how can I do better?" Or Bill Wright, the former city coordinator for Minneapolis. We were at a leadership retreat together once, and he said, "You're just starting out in your career. Remember to focus on your family, too. Jobs come and go. Whenever you're sick or down, it's your family that's always there." And as a refugee coming from war-torn Laos, I'm extremely thankful for the opportunity to be in America. For me, having two perspectives—growing up in Laos and living in Asia, and then coming here and living out life in America—is about bringing both together for the better.



FELLOWSHIP: 15 YEARS OUT

## Seitu Jones

Multi-disciplinary artist and community organizer Seitu Jones (BF'92, '04) has built a career around public art commissions that align with causes he believes in. He applied his Bush Fellowship to a liberal studies master's program with a horticulture sciences emphasis at the University of Minnesota. With the educational tools gained there, he co-founded and volunteers regularly at Frogtown Farm, an organic farm in the Frogtown neighborhood of St. Paul, Minnesota.

### How were you hoping to develop through the Fellowship?

I wanted to learn something in graduate school that I could begin to apply to my community, in my neighborhood. So, I looked at this interdisciplinary program of environmental history that explored sociology, anthropology and cosmology. My research focused on the north side of Minneapolis, the area that's now called Heritage Park that was at one time the Sumner Field housing projects, where I was born.

It was an opportunity for me to explore the history of a site that had meaning to me, and then to be able to apply that to a whole slew of other things. I was introduced to ideas of storm water management. That led me into storm water policy and creating artworks where I was able to integrate my work into storm water management best practices. All of that began with research and digging around this community that had long had this relationship with water.

### What were you hoping to accomplish after your Fellowship ended?

Essentially, to change the world. It gave me the chance to do work that was really about changing attitudes, changing values and changing the world. That's what I really wanted to do.

### Where do you find inspiration?

I'm a child of the '60s and '70s, and I'm still inspired by the work of the generation that came before. I read the writings of Martin Luther King, Jr. I read the words of Malcolm X. For the food work that I do, I was really inspired by the Free Breakfast program by the Black Panther Party. And most importantly, my family is where I learned how to love myself, love family, love community. I'm a fourth-generation Minnesotan. My great-grandfather came here and settled in 1877. He was born in slavery and worked at the St. James Hotel in Red Wing, Minnesota as a porter, earning enough money to start a farm in Rochester, where my grandmother was born. Those are the folks that inspire me.

### What advice do you have for current and future Bush Fellows?

Be persistent. Just don't give up. And after you receive the Fellowship, you continue to be persistent, you continue on.



ILLUSTRATIONS ALLEGRA LOCKSTADT

an equitable model and not simply a partnership between artistic directors.

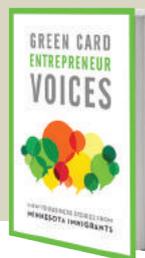
over the age of 50 who have made significant contributions and achievements in their communities.



Conductor **Philip Brunelle** (BF'75), dancer/choreographer **Joe Chvala** (BF'94), nonprofit leader **Gary Cunningham** (BF'91), community leader

**Peter Heegard** (BF'77), therapist **Johara Mohammed** (BF'09) and writer **Diane Wilson** (BF'13) were selected for Pollen's 2018 "50 over 50" list, honoring Minnesotans

**Tea Rozman Clark** (BF'15) and Green Card Voices released the book, "Green Card Entrepreneur Voices: How-To Business Stories From Minnesota Immigrants." Rozman-Clark said she hopes it breaks down stereotypes and myths about immigrant entrepreneurs.

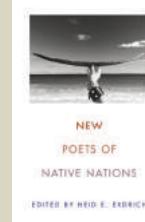


**John Davis** (BF'18) was named a 2018-2020 Senior Policy Fellow by the Rural Policy Research Institute. Davis, who focuses on using the arts and creativity to support thriving rural communities, says, "I am excited for the opportunity to continue my work on a national scale."

**Jim Denomie** (BF'08) and **Heid E. Erdrich** (BF'01) were each awarded a National Artist Fellowship by the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation. The fellowship is designed to support the work of artists in their

communities to explore, develop and experiment with projects.

**Heid E. Erdrich's** (BF'01) acclaimed book "New Poets of Native Nations," an anthology of contemporary Indigenous poetry, debuted in 2018.



Four Bush Fellows were elected to Minnesota public offices in 2018: **Irene Fernando** (BF'15) became Hennepin County commissioner,

**Trista Matascastillo** (BF'16) became Ramsey County commissioner, **Kim Norton** (BF'16) became mayor of Rochester and **Steve Sandell** (BF'74) became a member of the Minnesota House of Representatives.

**Betty Gronneberg** (BF'16) was selected as one of 12 YWCA Cass Clay Women of the Year. The honor, granted to women whose lives, talents and passions have made a meaningful difference for the Fargo, North Dakota, community, recognized her contributions in science and technology.

**Shalini Gupta** (BF'08) received the Loft's Mirrors and Windows Fellowship. The program's focus is to mentor Indigenous writers and writers of color to write picture books, middle-grade and young-adult literature.

**Kathryn Haddad** (BF'04) received the Kay Sexton Award, bestowed by Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library, for her work in changing the literary landscape of Minnesota. The award highlighted Haddad's work to include Arab, Arab-American and Muslim Minnesotans in the literary arts.

FELLOWSHIP: 10 YEARS OUT  
**Duchess Harris**

For Duchess Harris, Ph.D. (BF'09), then a tenured associate professor at Macalester College, a Bush Fellowship gave her support to pursue legal studies and earn her law degree. The current chair of the American studies department at Macalester, Harris is an author and scholar of contemporary African American history and political theory. She is currently on sabbatical, developing several books focusing on law enforcement and the United States' prison system that are expected to be published in fall 2019, after which she will return to Macalester as the elected presiding officer of the faculty.

**How has the Fellowship helped you get to where you are now?**

The Fellowship gave me the ability to advance my education so I could do the things I wanted to do professionally. A perfect example is ABDO Publishing's Duchess Harris Collection and how I'm able to write about the legal issues that are covered in them, and the line of books I'm helping to curate. Even though they're written for 3rd to 12th graders, I'm actually using them to help enhance my curriculum at Macalester, and all of that happened because of the training I got at law school. I feel like I'm doing exactly what I should be doing right now.

**How does the Fellowship continue to influence you?**

It gave me a network of people I could grow with, professionally. The aspects I found to be most valuable from the entire process were the times when we all convened and had workshops together. It was just fantastic. One of the workshops focused on learning your individual leadership style and how to translate that into returning to where you were, which has been extremely helpful when it comes to communicating with the young people I work with at Macalester, and even coworkers.

**Where do you find inspiration?**

My three kids, who all learn differently. I talked about raising them when I applied for the Fellowship. I shared about when I found out my oldest son has nonverbal autism, and how that has been a profound learning experience.

**What advice do you have for current and future Bush Fellows?**

People often do not get it the first time they apply. That doesn't matter! Just learn from the experience and apply again.



FELLOWSHIP: 5 YEARS OUT  
**Tawanna Black**

With a Bush Fellowship, Tawanna Black (BF'14) took part in the executive certificate in transformational leadership program at Georgetown University and deepened her understanding of the social, political and economic factors that affect racial equity in the Twin Cities. Her studies informed her roles as president of the Minneapolis-St. Paul chapter of The Links Inc., which supports young African American women; the owner and chief consultant of Innovations by Design LLC, which works with small businesses and nonprofits; and CEO for the Center for Economic Inclusion, a continuation of her work at the Northside Funders Group that strengthens civic systems and culture for a symbiotic economy.

**What aspect of the Fellowship did you find most valuable?**

There were a few things. I used resources like Georgetown's transformational leadership program, and that was truly transformational to me. Both the education and learning I experienced through that program really challenged me and equipped me with frameworks and tools. It did exactly what I needed it to in order to take work from being place-based to being more regional and to a broader framework.

The other aspect was really the opportunity to think about myself. Not many Fellowships provide the opportunity to pause, to reflect and invest in radical self-care. The Bush

Fellowship allowed me to do so, and in fact required the prioritization through monthly calls with the Bush Foundation staff. It gave me not only the opportunity to do it for myself, but to elevate the necessity of that with funders throughout the region and nation. It reshaped the way I think about my work.

**How has the Fellowship changed you?**

How I lead, how I show up in the work, being able to bring more authenticity to the work. Being in a region that faces so many racial and economic disparities as a woman of color, you're convinced to show less of yourself and to blend in more with white leaders. What makes me most successful is standing out and bringing my full authenticity. It's my experiences with my family and as a mom, as a person of color and someone in the north side of Minneapolis.

**What advice do you have for current and future Bush Fellows?**

Maximize it and get out of your box. Find someone who knows you well and someone who doesn't know you at all, and ask them what you could take on. What could take you on your wildest dreams but would affirm your greatest hopes?



ILLUSTRATIONS ALLEGRA LOCKSTADT



**Alexa Horochowski** (BF'04) had her work displayed at the Nemeth Art Center in Park Rapids, Minnesota. The exhibit, "O, Horizons," explores the relationship between sustainability and modern farm production.

**Wing Young Huie** (BF'96) received the 2018 McKnight Distinguished Artist Award. The award, bestowed on a Minnesota artist who has made a significant contribution to the state's cultural life, recognizes Huie's photography, public art and teaching.



**Chris Larson** (BF'98, '06) received a Guggenheim Fellowship, which recognizes individuals for exceptional

scholarship or creative ability in the arts. This honor includes a grant to spend one year working with as much creative freedom as possible. His most recent works examine specific architectural sites that are deeply connected to history and location.

**Nevada Littlewolf** (BF'16) was named CEO of the Tiwahe Foundation. The foundation grants funds to Native American communities to promote independence and stronger leadership. "I understand firsthand the importance of Indigenous voices

in decision-making spaces," says Littlewolf. "I am passionate about growing resources and building opportunities for Indigenous people."

**Michael Lynch's** (BF'85) artwork was displayed at the Groveland Gallery in Minneapolis, Minnesota. His career retrospective exhibit shows woodcut prints, drawings and lithographs.

**Marcus Owens** (BF'17) was named a "40 under 40" leader by the Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal. Honorees are selected for demonstrating

extraordinary professional achievement while also finding time to give back to their communities.



**Kevin Pourier** (BF'06), Oglala Lakota, received the Best of Show award at the Southwestern

Association for Indian Arts Santa Fe Indian Market. Pourier's acclaimed work consists of wearable sculpture made of buffalo horn and has been purchased by the Smithsonian Institute.

**Nirmala Rajasekar** (BF'06), teacher and performer, released a new album, "Maithree: The Music of Friendship." Rajasekar's acclaimed work features the veena, an instrument that originates from the Indian subcontinent.



# Teaching Trauma Awareness

Heather Simonich (BF'12) used her Bush Fellowship to build a curriculum to bolster mental health outreach in North Dakota school districts.

by MARISA JACKELS

When Heather Simonich first applied for the Bush Fellowship, she had a specific focus: to bring a better understanding of child traumatic stress into public schools. At the time, she was nearing her 15th year as part of the Neuropsychiatric Research Institute in Fargo, North Dakota. There, she studied eating disorders and child trauma and helped strengthen the network of mental health clinicians across the state. Again and again, she saw the crucial importance of recognizing the signs of traumatic stress and providing the proper counseling to at-risk children as soon as possible.

“The trajectory for kids who experience trauma is not good,” Simonich says. “They’re at higher risk for physical and mental health outcomes if we don’t intervene early. We can’t just sit on our hands. We have to figure out how to do this differently.”



PHOTO BRITTA THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Simonich used her Fellowship funding to set aside one day a week from her full-time job to educate Fargo teachers about trauma among students and create trauma-informed interventions. To begin, she met regularly with a team of local teachers to learn about school culture, as well as the teachers’ personal struggles.

“The goal was to increase understanding for teachers about how trauma impacts kids and manifests itself in the classroom, and then to show them how they can support kids with trauma-informed interventions,” she says. “I took a lot of time developing those relationships. And it paid off, because the work got so much bigger because of that.”

Through these conversations, Simonich found that educators she spoke to wanted a better understanding of how to identify and respond to child traumatic stress, and they began discussing a professional development curriculum on the subject. Simonich had used similar aids for years working in foster care training—and yet for educators, there were few to none in North Dakota, and similar resources were only just beginning in Washington and Massachusetts. So, over the next two years, she and the teachers developed one.

When her Fellowship ended, Simonich left her job in research and became the operations director at PATH, a North Dakota foster care organization. From there, she

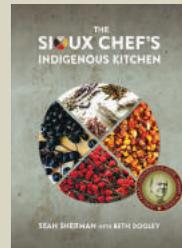
partnered with the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, and 2018 Bush Prize recipient Mid-Dakota Education Cooperative in Minot, to create a team of trainers to bring the curriculum to public schools across the state.

The curriculum gives teachers what Simonich calls “trauma lenses” for students—the ability to recognize when a student is experiencing traumatic stress—and the resources to respond. “If these children have a teacher who shows up to the classroom with trauma lenses on and sees their behavior and their challenges through those lenses... you just can’t put that impact into numbers,” she says.

Today, the training curriculum has been implemented by 6,500-plus teachers in 80 North Dakota school districts. More than 8,000 training participants said they could apply what they learned and believed this training should be mandatory for all educators.

In 2018, Simonich and her PATH team received a \$2.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to strengthen behavioral health services in schools across the state. “The part I could have never dreamt of is watching the ripple effects of that initial Bush Fellowship work get bigger and bigger and bigger,” she says. “Now, to see all that has happened...that has been, by far, the most rewarding part.”

**Sean Sherman** (BF'18), Oglala Lakota, won a James Beard Award for best American cookbook for “The Sioux Chef’s Indigenous Kitchen.” The annual awards honor contributions to food and dining. Sherman focuses on the revitalization of Indigenous food systems in a modern culinary context.



and made significant contributions to the profession early in their careers. In addition, Srivastava’s energy-saving initiative eFargo was awarded the \$5 million Georgetown University Energy Prize for creatively reducing energy consumption.

**Nick Tilsen** (BF'18) launched NDN Collective, a new organization that aims to drive capacity building and advocacy for Indigenous-led organizations. “We need to be resourced in a way that gives us an opportunity to be architects of our future,” Tilsen says. “NDN is building infrastructure for a growing movement of Indigenous people to make that happen.”

**Anton Treuer** (BF'08), author, professor, cultural trainer and one of the leading Ojibwe instructors in the country, was named to the Minnesota State Historical Society’s executive council. In his new role, Treuer will help oversee policy, programs and other aspects of MNHS’s operation.



**Laura Zabel** (BF'14) was named a 2018 BALLE Local Economy Fellow. Fellows are named for demonstrating capacity to “push the boundaries of economic change and champion locally based, regenerative rural enterprise.”

ZABEL MEG WILLSON

## STAFF NEWS



**Carly Bad Heart Bull** joined the board of directors of Native Americans in Philanthropy and was

recognized by the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums for her work on the Bde Maka Ska lake name restoration in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She and **Awale Osman** were named W.K. Kellogg Foundation Leadership Network fellows.

**Eileen Briggs** was selected as a 2018-2019 Humphrey Policy Fellow through the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota.



**Mandy Ellerton** was selected to be a RSF Social Finance Integrated Capital Institute Fellow.

**Elli Haerter** was re-elected to the Edmunds Central School Board and re-appointed as board chair. She was also selected for the South Dakota Agricultural and Rural Leadership Program.

**Scott Labott** joined the board of directors of Community Mediation and Restorative Services.



**Anita Patel** joined the board of Voices for Racial Justice.

**Erik Takeshita** joined the board of trustees of the F.R. Bigelow Foundation.



**GOT NEWS?** Past and present Fellows: Please consider submitting your professional updates to [bmag@bushfoundation.org](mailto:bmag@bushfoundation.org)

# By The Numbers

## A HIGH ENGAGEMENT APPROACH TO GRANTMAKING

We try to make sure that people get value out of our grant application process, even if they don't end up receiving a grant. To that end, the Community Innovation team uses a "high engagement" approach to make our application process easier and more accessible, demystify how selection happens and help applicants have greater impact, whether or not they are funded. Team members regularly talk with potential applicants about their grant ideas, help them assess whether they're a strong fit with the selection criteria and offer one-on-one feedback to declined applicants.

We send surveys to all grant applicants—before they know if they have received a grant—to find out what they think about our process and what we can do better. Survey data from 2018 showed that 84% of respondents were satisfied with the application process, while 95% said that interactions with staff during the application process were helpful.

Survey respondents also shared that going through the application process had a positive impact on their problem-solving efforts. In a recent survey, respondents said the application helped them:

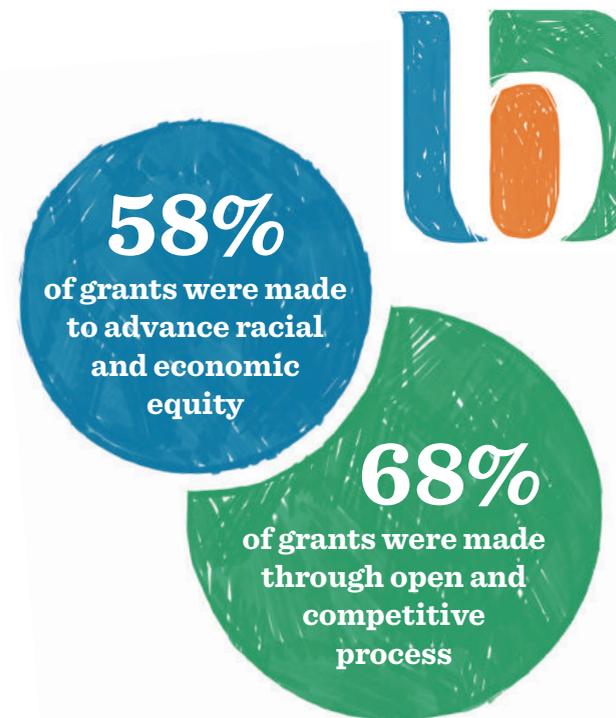
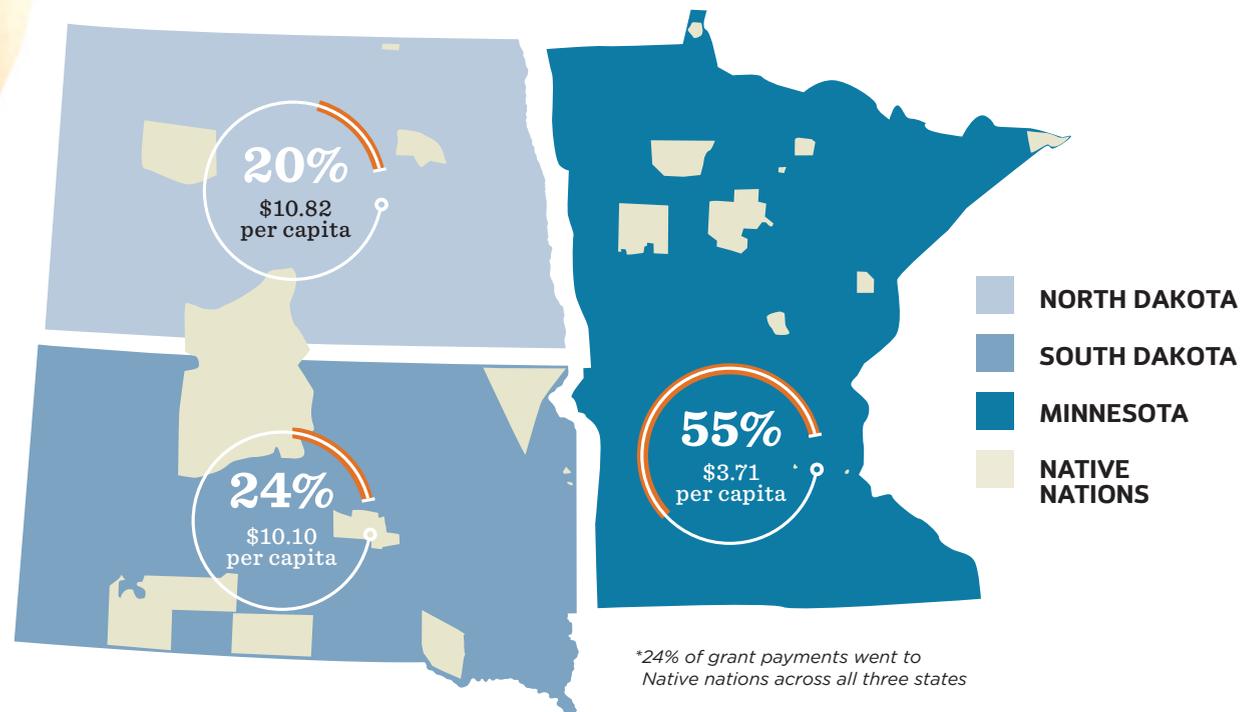
**Bring stakeholders together to work on a community issue: 83%**

**Think differently about how they address issues in their community: 86%**

**Increase their belief in what can be accomplished: 81%**

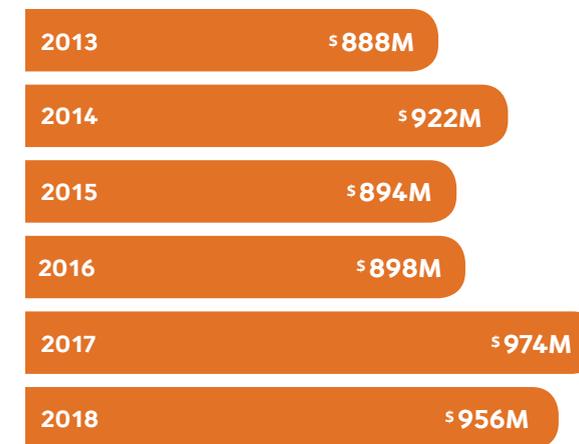
We are always trying to improve, and we'll keep working on our application processes to make them more accessible and useful to all applicants. Learn more and connect with a Community Innovation staff member at [bfdn.org/ci](http://bfdn.org/ci).

## 2018 GRANT PAYMENT BY GEOGRAPHY

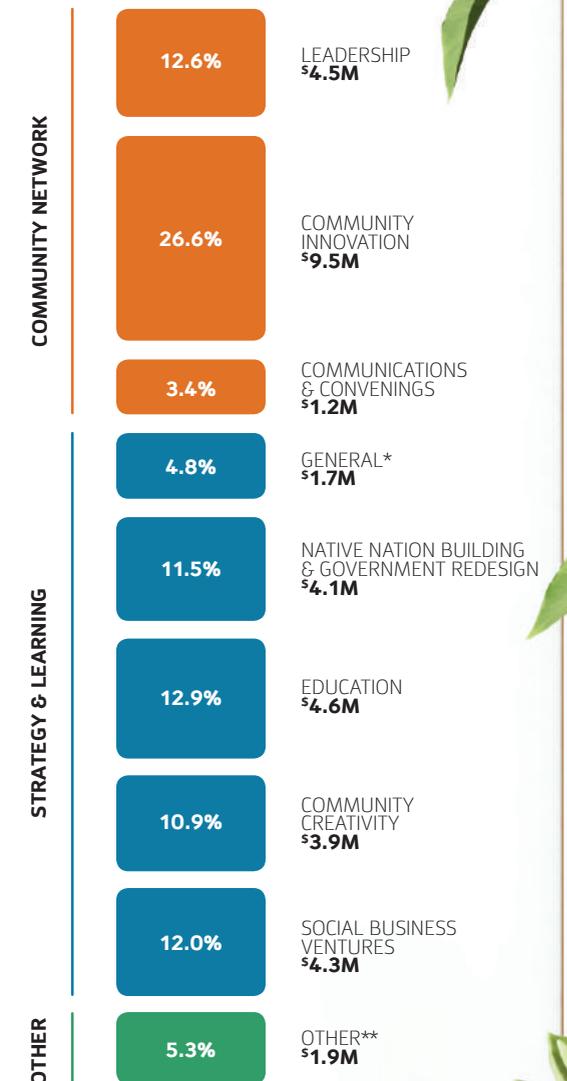


## BUSH FOUNDATION INVESTMENT ASSETS END OF YEAR

\$956 million in assets including investments in equity, fixed income and real assets



## 2018 GRANT PAYMENTS BY PROGRAM



## TOTAL GRANT AND FELLOWSHIP PAYMENTS: \$35.7M

\*Such as data projects that support multiple initiatives.

\*\*Such as funders collaboratives and the President's Innovation and Partnership Fund.



# GOALS — for a — DECADE REVISITED

What happened and what the Bush Foundation learned from 2008's "Goals for a Decade" strategy

by JUNE NORONHA AND JEN FORD REEDY

ILLUSTRATION BILL FERENC

In July 2008, the Bush Foundation announced a major change in strategy. We would shift from funding lots of different issues to focusing narrowly on three goals. To advance those goals, we would shift from being open to proposals to proactively sourcing long-term partnerships. We set our sights on what we could accomplish by 2018 and called it "Goals for a Decade." It was a big change.

It was meant to be a disruption and it was. It was a disruption for us and for others. It was a disruption in ways we intended and ways we didn't intend.

Before launching Goals for a Decade, the Bush Foundation had operated in pretty much the same way for decades. We supported people and organizations working on a broad range of issues. Our primary work was evaluating proposals and making the best decisions we could on which to fund. Staff members prepared, and Bush Foundation board members reviewed, thick binders of funding recommendations.

The people on the board saw other foundations (like the Gates Foundation) operating with clearer strategic agendas and were increasingly asking whether it was time for a change. They were asking whether it was possible for us to have more impact, by focusing more narrowly or by operating in different ways.

Board members recognized that the Bush Foundation is unusual in our independence and flexibility. Because of our endowment, we do not depend on fundraising or government funding. And we have few legal constraints. We have the ability, therefore, to take risks and be creative—and even be controversial—in ways that other organizations cannot.

As the board chair at the time, Kathy Tunheim, puts it, "We saw so many issues in society where we were not making progress. We felt a responsibility to try to do more and to take on more risk, in terms of trying things that might not work."

## THE BUSH FOUNDATION'S GOALS FOR A DECADE AS ANNOUNCED IN JULY 2008

The Bush Foundation will seek partners and pursue strategies in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota to:

**Develop courageous leaders and engage entire communities in solving problems**, with a goal that by 2018, 75% of people in all demographic groups in the three states say their community is effective at solving problems and improving their quality of life.

**Support the self-determination of Native nations**, with the goal that by 2018, all 23 Native nations in the three states are exercising self-determination and actively rebuilding the infrastructure of nationhood.

**Increase educational achievement**, with a goal that by 2018, the percentage of students, from pre-kindergarten through college, who are on track to earn a degree after high school increases by 50% in the three states and disparities among diverse student groups are eliminated.



When the board hired Peter Hutchinson in 2007 as the Bush Foundation's third president, they charged him with making the organization more focused and more bold. Peter recalls, "The board wanted to make a bigger difference. To use a metaphor, they saw all the grants as dots in a pointillist painting but weren't sure they added up to a powerful picture."

The result was the Goals for a Decade strategy.

We announced in July 2008 that we would focus our work on three specific goals. First, developing courageous leaders and engaging communities in solving problems. Second, supporting the self-determination of Native nations. Third, increasing the educational achievement of all students.

We hired leaders for each of these three goals and reorganized ourselves into three dedicated teams. We transformed our internal processes—from how we budgeted to our board governance structure—to fit the new approach. We transitioned our existing programs. (The one program we kept, the Bush Fellows program, was changed significantly, combining multiple programs into a single

program with a new focus.)

It was a whole lot of change. Each of the three goals has its own story. Each initiative developed differently with different successes and challenges. We tell short versions of those three stories in the pages that follow.

There's also an overarching story, with successes and challenges. The Goals for a Decade strategy definitely

changed us. It changed nearly every aspect of how we operate. Foundations are not known for changing easily, so the degree of change is notable. We struggled, however, to manage that change. We struggled to keep the board and staff aligned on what we were doing. We struggled to keep our communities informed and engaged in what we were doing. We struggled to integrate our three very different focus areas into a coherent whole. And we struggled to figure out how to adapt to changing needs and opportunities in the community.

In 2012, we had a presidential transition. In the interim period, we brought in external program reviewers, who confirmed that we had some fundamental issues in how the rollout of our Goals for a Decade strategy was living up to our intentions. They raised concerns both about the goals themselves and how we were pursuing them, in particular the lack of clear

operating principles across all our work. We also knew that people in the community were frustrated with us and not seeing the value of the work we were doing. We took all these concerns seriously.

When Jen Ford Reedy came in as president, her top priority was to resolve those issues in a way that kept the spirit of the goals and kept all the promises the Foundation had made. We shifted our strategic approach significantly, and since 2013 we have not operated under the frame of Goals for a Decade.

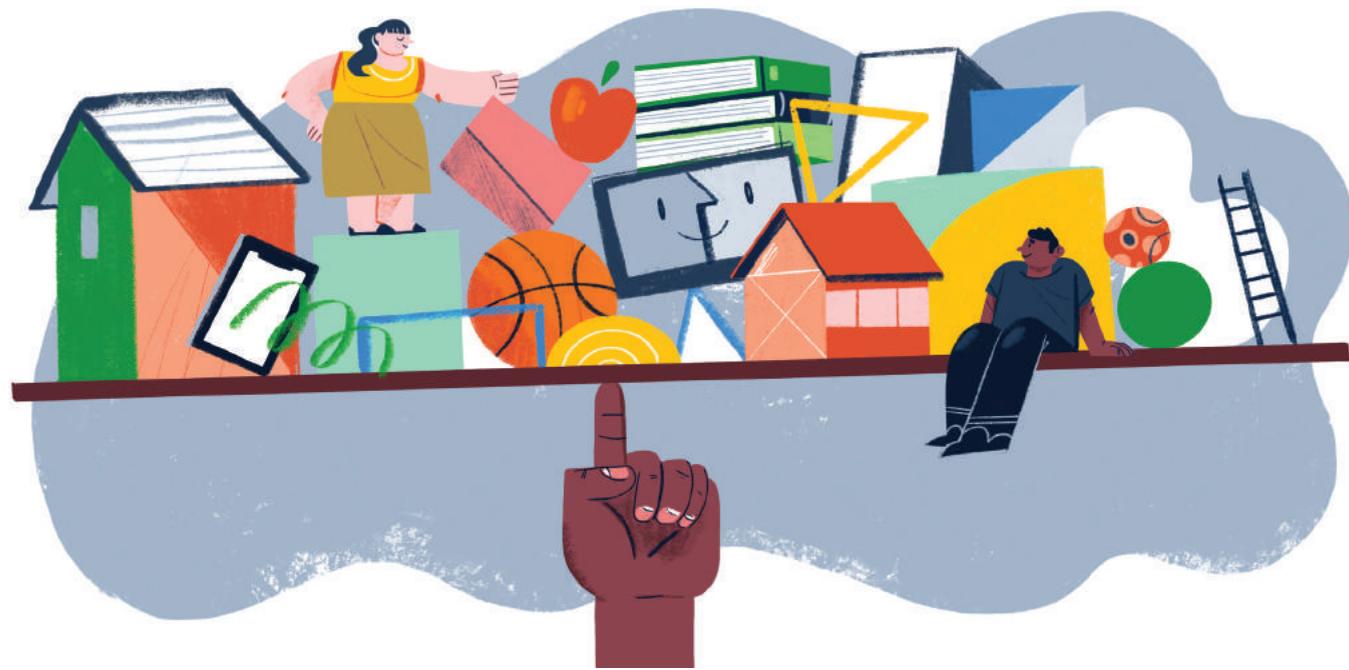
We learned a lot from the risks we took with Goals for a Decade. We learned some tough lessons about how to:

- Set realistic goals.
- Be a good partner.
- Engage people in our work.
- Learn and adapt as we go.

THE GOALS FOR A DECADE STRATEGY CHANGED NEARLY EVERY ASPECT OF HOW WE OPERATE. FOUNDATIONS ARE NOT KNOWN FOR CHANGING EASILY, SO THE DEGREE OF CHANGE IS NOTABLE. WE STRUGGLED, HOWEVER, TO MANAGE THAT CHANGE.



Peter Hutchinson, Bush Foundation President 2007-2012



# GOAL 1

## Developing Courageous Leaders and Engaging Entire Communities in Solving Problems

*By 2018, 75% of people in all demographic groups in the three states say their community is effective at solving problems and improving their quality of life.*

The original direction from the design labs for this goal was pretty abstract. We had a conceptual definition around “community vitality” as a product of communities that are “insightful, engaged and creative, supported by catalytic leaders.”

As we worked to operationalize the concepts, we got lots of affirmation that the concepts were important.

However, in the first few years we struggled to land on an approach that made sense to staff, board and community.

We named the work toward this goal “Advancing Solutions” and developed an initiative called “InCommons” as our cornerstone strategy. InCommons was intended to be an online community to support and connect people working to solve community problems, complemented by real-world events and trainings. We did a lot of our work in this area under the brand of InCommons.

We revamped our leadership programs. The Foundation had been known for its leadership programs for decades and that work moved under this goal. To better fit our new goal, we consolidated three distinct

leadership programs into a single new Bush Fellows Program. The new program was designed to support individuals taking on specific challenges in their communities, a shift away from focusing on leadership development.

We did lots and lots of other stuff. We co-hosted conversations on end-of-life care and funded an infant-toddler home visiting project in Crow Wing County in Minnesota. We sponsored idea challenges and spearheaded the creation of data indicator projects in North Dakota and South Dakota. We trained people on the Art of Hosting leadership approach and sponsored media coverage of great leaders.

Because we organized our staff and strategy around the three goals, and because the other two goals had very defined strategies, Advancing Solutions became the place where any and all other ideas went to live. We were involved with lots and lots of really cool and valuable work, but it was not clear—internally or externally—what and how we were prioritizing.

Between 2008 and 2012, we spent \$47 million on scores of strategies under the banner of Advancing Solutions. When Jen Ford Reedy came in as president, her first order of business was to review all this work and settle on a strategic direction.

In September 2012, we filled all the walls of our boardroom with big Post-it sheets listing all the things we had done within Advancing Solutions. We took a moment to acknowledge all the work and all the impact represented by all those Post-its. We also acknowledged the papered walls as the physical embodiment of our need to prioritize. We lumped the activities into categories, analyzed

We also learned that we can make a real difference in working toward specific goals. This remains a core part of how we do our work through our strategic initiatives.

At the same time, we learned a lot about the value of the kind of open and responsive grantmaking that the Foundation was doing prior to Goals for a Decade. We came to appreciate how open processes can help us:

- Get to know more people and new ideas.
- Overcome the limitations of our own ideas.
- Be relevant to communities.
- Stay relevant as the world changes.
- Build on community passion and energy.
- Make us smarter and better in all our work by engaging with more people on more issues in more communities.
- Do less to enable more.

That’s why today, at least half of our grant dollars go out through open programs that support people and organizations working on whatever issues they believe are important in their communities.

There is no right way to do philanthropy. You can be focused or broad. You can be proactive or responsive. You can be effective in a lot of different ways.

The biggest lessons of the past decade, to us, have less to do with specific strategy decisions and more to do with how we think about the difference we want to make. How we push ourselves to find the best opportunities for impact.

How thoughtfully we balance focus and opportunism and how we manage risk. How we build on our unique assets and engage our communities. And how we align and integrate our efforts to be greater than the sum of their parts.

Goals for a Decade forced us to wrestle with big questions about our impact, which has made us, we believe, a stronger, more adaptable—and more humble—institution.

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Every person involved in Goals for a Decade, internally and externally, has their own story of this time. As the authors of this version of the story, we are informed by our own experiences, internal and external evaluations, and interviews with current and former staff and board members. **June Noronha** was on staff at the Bush Foundation from 2005 to 2016, first as the strategic planning officer and then as part of the Native Nations team. **Jen Ford Reedy** was an external partner and observer for the first few years of the Goals for a Decade era and then joined the Bush Foundation in 2012 as president.

We use “we” throughout the paper to mean all of the Bush Foundation, although the “we” of the Bush Foundation has changed a lot during this time. When our strategic planning process began in early 2008, none of our current board members were serving on our board and just six of our current staff worked at the Foundation. The “we” is a collective, institutional “we.” Even as we have changed throughout the years, we are still the Bush Foundation.



Advancing Solutions convening, 2010

spending and results on each category, and surveyed stakeholders on how they valued the different activities.

With the board, we decided to split Advancing Solutions into two separate program areas, one focused on supporting leaders (Leadership Programs) and one focused on supporting communities to solve problems (Community Innovation). We pulled the plug on InCommons (read about what we learned from the InCommons initiative at [bfdn.org/gfd1](http://bfdn.org/gfd1)) and decided all our future work in this area would be under the Bush Foundation brand to reduce confusion. Rather than focusing on building something to connect people through us, we would support connectedness and community capacity in various ways. One way this is reflected in our current strategy is through our Ecosystem Grants program, which supports other organizations that share our goal of supporting leaders and community problem solving.



Within Leadership, we elevated the Bush Fellows Program as a flagship program and returned it to its roots, a focus on leadership development. In the early part of this strategy we shifted the focus of the Fellowship to investing in projects proposed by individuals, which seemed like a better and more direct fit with the focus on problem solving. However, we found that too few people had time to take on big projects, so the Fellowship became less competitive and less selective and the scope of the projects were necessarily small. In 2013, we refocused the program on the personal development of leaders. Preparing leaders to take on our biggest challenges over the course of their career (versus through a two-year individual project) is, we believe, a better long-term return. We also created other programs to allow us to be useful to more leaders in the region—like event scholarships to send cohorts to national conferences and trainings.

Within Community Innovation,

we created a new flagship grant program, the Bush Prize, complemented by Community Innovation grants. These changes allowed communities to get support to solve problems they thought were most important and allowed us to get money out to communities. This change was, in part, an acknowledgement that our operating preference for designing and leading our own initiatives was not well suited for a goal that was about building community capacity.

Today, the spirit of this goal infuses all our work. We have elevated problem solving to our purpose statement. We have tried to adopt the friendly accessibility of InCommons in all our communications and engagement.

While we kept the spirit of the original goal, we stopped using the goal itself. Problem solving is critically important. However, gauging our success by trying to measure improvement in the public's perception of community problem solving was neither practical nor useful.

**TODAY, THE SPIRIT OF THIS GOAL INFUSES ALL OUR WORK. WE HAVE ELEVATED PROBLEM SOLVING TO OUR PURPOSE STATEMENT.**

## GOAL 2

### Supporting the Self-Determination of Native Nations

*By 2018, all 23 Native nations in the three states are exercising self-determination and actively rebuilding the infrastructure of nationhood.*

During our 2008 planning process, we did lots of data analysis on issues in the region. We were struck by what the data told us about the intensity of issues within Native communities. While the Bush Foundation had been funding individuals and organizations working in Native communities for decades—most notably with our tribal college faculty development program—we did not have an organizational focus on Native issues.

This goal elevated our commitment to Native communities and focused that commitment on a core challenge for tribes: strengthening tribal governance. We were influenced by 25 years of research in Indian country that indicated strong governance is a primary factor in tribes' ability to successfully pursue their own goals. We were convinced that addressing any of the economic and community challenges within Indian country

(e.g., human services, education, economic development) requires strong governing institutions.

Based on this conviction, we focused on supporting tribes to adopt a "Native nation rebuilding approach," characterized by strategic decision making, asserting their sovereign authority and backing up that power with effective governing institutions that matched Indigenous traditions and culture.

We developed strong operating principles for the initiative, including working with and through elected tribal leadership. It took a while to get tribal leaders interested. We have often used the analogy of standing on the dance floor waiting to see if anyone will dance with us to describe the early part of this work. We spent a lot of time getting to know leaders and attending tribal council meetings throughout the region to explain what we were trying to do. Ultimately, the time and effort we put into relationship building and trust building was a key success factor for the work.

Once leaders were willing to dance, we worked directly with tribes in a number of ways. In partnership with the Native Nations Institute (NNI), we provided on-site nation building education as well as cross-tribe trainings and convenings. Also with NNI, we developed a Governance Analysis for Native

### LESSONS FOR PHILANTHROPY

Beyond the importance of good change management, our experience highlights some important challenges in smart philanthropic strategy. Here are our top three:

#### Designing for optimal strategic flexibility

After launching Goals for a Decade, we had new ideas of how we could have an impact. But we had publicly locked ourselves into those three goals and had built our whole staff structure around them—we didn't have any cross-organizational program capacity. At the goal level, we locked ourselves in too tightly in some areas and had too little strategic structure in others. Our experience demonstrates the importance of designing clear, focused organizational and program-level strategies while also allowing room for learning and adapting to changing realities.

#### Matching goals and strategy

Goal setting is a perennial challenge in foundations. Our experience with Goals for a Decade shows why it is so hard. If your goal is too big it can be wholly unrealistic for the resources and influence you have. If it is too focused it can constrain your tactics. If it is too vague you may struggle to prioritize. An emphasis on meeting quantitative targets can affect quality and impact. Relying too heavily on the buy-in of others can slow and limit the process. We struggled with all these goal-related challenges in different parts of the Foundation. We intended the goals to be an accountability measure—for us and our partners. But in reality, we did not set the goals in a way that allowed for internal or external accountability.

#### Being permeable

In the first years of Goals for a Decade, we were essentially operating initiatives in our pursuit of the goals. In doing so we became our own largest strategic constraint. Planning and executing the work at a pace to keep money flowing out to the community (and meet our IRS requirement for spending) was difficult. It was also difficult to be relevant in all corners of the region and to fund the best ideas without having ways to solicit and consider outside ideas. Our website invited people to share ideas that aligned with our strategy, but there was no clear way to do so. While we talked a lot about co-creation, in practice it was hard to develop and nurture true partnerships with organizations given our very specific agenda, the speed at which we were moving and the power dynamics in funding relationships. In the past several years, we have changed both our mindset and our processes to become much more permeable to ensure we are not limited by our own knowledge and capacity. (For more, check out our learning paper "No-Moat Philanthropy" at [bfdn.org/nmp](http://bfdn.org/nmp))

Nations (GANN) tool and provided working sessions with tribal leaders to assess the strength of their current governance practices. We also provided direct grants for nation building projects, ranging from updating legal codes to supporting wholesale constitutional reform.

We created the Native Nations Rebuilders program, which proved to be the most powerful strategy of all. The program was designed to train emerging tribal leaders on the principles of nation building. The program created a cross-tribe corps of people energized to apply nation building principles and support each other in their efforts. The success of the Rebuilders has inspired and informed our strategies that invest in people through other areas of the Foundation, as well.

By our mid-initiative external review, we had lots of interest and demand from tribes. The language of nation building had spread—three tribes had even changed their names to “nation.” The Rebuilders program

had become a true force for change. We were attracting very talented leaders, well-positioned to influence their tribes. We saw evidence of Rebuilders leading dialogue and action in their communities and moving into elected positions. (Read a summary of the evaluation and our response at [bfdn.org/gfd2](http://bfdn.org/gfd2).)

With all this good news, we saw two big challenges. First, how could we meet the demand for technical support from tribes to move from nation building theory to action? Second,

how could we ensure this work—which we recognized would take a generation or more—lived beyond our 2018 goal horizon?

We engaged a consultant to lead a strategy process for us to answer these two questions, guided by an advisory committee of national experts and tribal leaders. Based on the input of stakeholders and exploring models from around the world, the advisory committee recommended the creation of a new, tribal-led entity to provide stronger regional capacity



Native Nation Rebuilders Cohort 2, 2011

### LESSONS IN CHANGE MANAGEMENT

As we launched Goals for a Decade, we struggled to match the strategy’s scale and pace of change with our capacity to manage the change.

We moved fast. Really fast. We went from beginning strategic planning to public announcement of an entirely new strategy in about six months. And the rollout of the new strategy involved changing a lot: We changed all our programs, nearly all our internal processes and most of our people. We had to use new skills and capacities without really having time to develop and practice them. And then we had to move quickly to get the new initiatives up and running to get money out the door.

It is hard to do change quickly and do change well. Sometimes you have no choice but to change quickly, but we did have a choice. We could have been more patient.

If you read a change management textbook, it will lay out a bunch of critical elements for successful change—like careful sequencing and stakeholder communications and establishing clear operating principles and ensuring strong governance processes. We did not do these well. As we look back on the early days of Goals for a Decade, all these critical elements became secondary considerations to getting the work done at the pace we had promised.

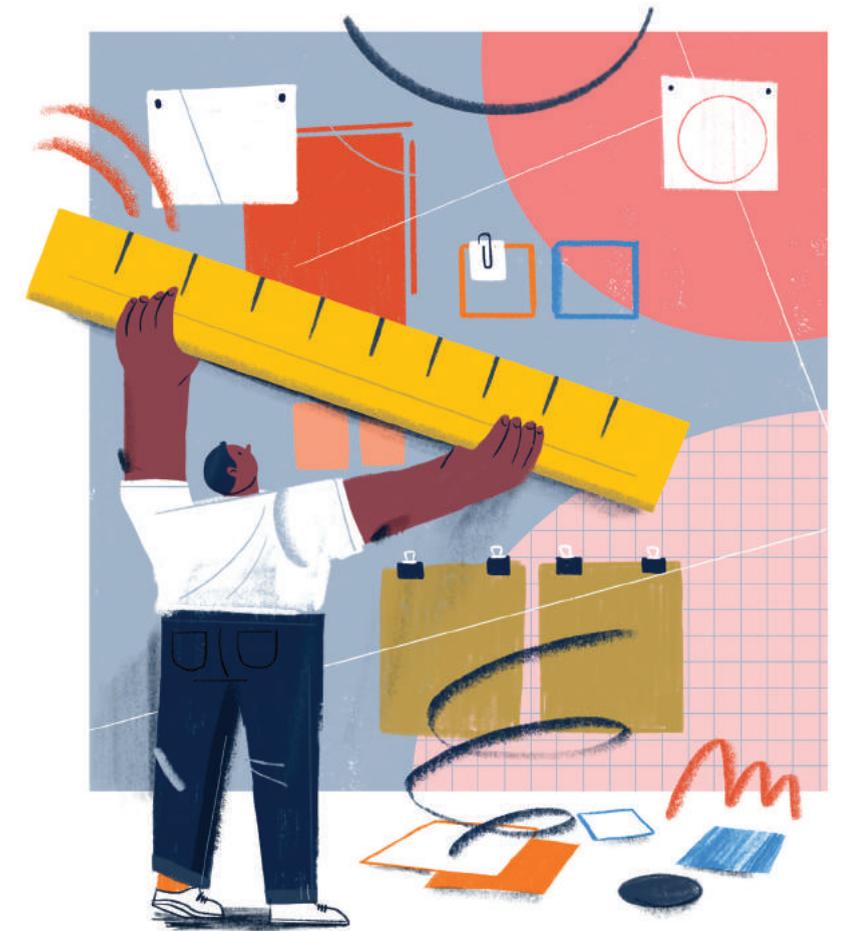
It wasn’t that we didn’t know they were important. If you look at our internal planning documents from that time you will see we knew they were important. Ours is not a lesson on intention. It is a lesson in being realistic and building in the time and the capacity to work the way you mean to work.

to support nation building. The Native Governance Center (NGC) launched in 2015 and is now fully operational as a tribal-led institution. (You can read what we learned while creating NGC in a learning paper at [bfdn.org/ngc](http://bfdn.org/ngc).)

Our tight focus on governance and only working through elected tribal leaders of the 23 nations was a strength of the effort in some ways. It also meant that our investment opportunities were limited, and we frequently were under budget with the effort. In the decade between 2009 and 2018, we made just over \$18 million in grants to support nation building. During the early years of the initiative, this was the only Bush Foundation funding that was supporting Native nations and communities, and people were frustrated that there weren’t other opportunities. Now, while our work on tribal governance and supporting NGC is still a significant commitment for us, we support Native organizations through a variety of programs and initiatives. (See our 2018 report on our funding to Native American people and causes at [bfdn.org/gfd3](http://bfdn.org/gfd3).)

We are also exploring ways to build out from our Native nation building work to have an impact in government more broadly. We are particularly interested in how we can support leaders in state, county and city government to better understand and design for the needs of the people they serve.

We have now worked in some capacity with leaders of all 23 tribes. We cannot say that we have met our stated goal—not all 23 tribes are actively rebuilding the infrastructure of nationhood. We can say that exciting work is happening throughout the region and we remain committed to the spirit of the goal.



## GOAL 3

### Increasing Education Achievement

*By 2018, the percentage of students, from pre-kindergarten through college, who are on track to earn a degree after high school increases by 50% in the three states and disparities among diverse student groups are eliminated.*

Within this big goal we quickly focused on the importance of effective teachers and got to work.

We set a goal-within-the-goal of producing 25,000 new, effective

teachers by 2018 and pledged \$40 million to help make it happen. We called our strategy the Teacher Effectiveness Initiative.

We chose 14 higher education institutions to form what became the Network for Excellence in Teaching (NExT) to transform the way they recruit, prepare, place and support new teachers.

We signed memos of understanding with each NExT partner, in which they agreed to produce a certain number of teachers and to guarantee their effectiveness. The Bush Foundation agreed to provide funding, expert coaching and NExT network support and then to pay a \$1,000 bonus per “effective teacher” produced.

**WE WANT TO WORK TOWARD A BIG VISION  
AND MAKE BOLD INVESTMENTS,  
BUT WE ALSO WANT TO MAKE SURE WE ARE  
LEARNING AND ADJUSTING AS WE GO.**

We defined an effective teacher as a teacher whose students experience at least one year’s academic growth in a year. The Bush Foundation took on the responsibility of assessing effectiveness of the teachers through value-added analysis. This required the ability to assess student growth over time, link those students to teachers and then link those teachers to the school that prepared them.

From the outset, the level of progress varied significantly across partners—with some dreaming big and making truly transformational changes and others changing very little. The level of funding we provided varied a lot across the institutions depending on whether they were funded individually or as part of a consortium, which obviously was a significant factor in their ability to make progress. There were also differences in the culture and structure of partner institutions that affected their ability to make progress. The biggest differentiator, however, was whether the work was championed by strong and committed leaders who

could envision transformative change and who were creative and effective at driving change within complex, often highly political environments.

In 2013, we engaged an external evaluator to assess the work to date. The evaluator noted some real success stories—particularly the introduction of “co-teaching” and the creation of close working partnerships between the institutions and school districts. (You can see their report and our response to it at [bfdn.org/gfd4](http://bfdn.org/gfd4).) We added a competitive funding pool for school district partners to help spread those successes. We also saw some persistent challenges—like the recruitment and support of more racially diverse teacher candidates. We added a competitive funding pool for NExT partners to test new

approaches to diversifying the teacher pipeline, which led to the development of new alternative pathways and other innovative programs.

The big elephant in the room at this point was the fact that the whole initiative was based on a guarantee of teacher effectiveness and, despite considerable effort and funding to develop a value-added teacher measurement system, we were unable to develop one. We acknowledged the frustrating reality that we were not going to be able to get a system in place. We didn’t have a Plan B and we needed one. We then renegotiated bonus payments with the individual institutions and provided funding to develop their own capacity to measure teacher effectiveness. (For more on what we learned about data in teacher effectiveness, see our learning paper at [bfdn.org/gfd5](http://bfdn.org/gfd5).)

It’s interesting to note that, while we viewed this as a failure on our part, our partners reflect on this as a positive, representing a shift in developing real trust and partnership between the Bush Foundation and the institutions. The institutions formed a common metrics work group that created valid and reliable surveys to compare the effectiveness of their graduates. This work, regarded as groundbreaking in the field, has expanded statewide in Minnesota and North Dakota and has sparked interest in other states.

We did not intend for the Teacher Effectiveness Initiative to be the

only education strategy within this goal—we imagined it as a first strategy. However, it was so big and complex to manage that it became all consuming. About halfway into the effort, we began to ratchet back our direct staff support of the initiative and then were able to open up our education work to other ideas and strategies.

In 2015, we held an open call for ideas to advance our original goal around increasing educational achievement. This open process allowed us to explore a lot of ideas and engage with a number of education stakeholders, to refine our thinking on the best way for us to make an impact. (We also invested \$16 million in seven big ideas that came in through the open call.) This learning process led us to our current education guiding goal focused on individualizing education to better meet the needs of all students.

We continued our support of the Teacher Effectiveness Initiative through our decade-long commitment and invested a bit more than the \$40 million we pledged. Grants are still in place until 2020 and there is ongoing collaborative work among the institutions. We certainly did not achieve the goal of eliminating racial disparities in education outcomes. We also did not achieve our goal-within-the-goal of producing 25,000 measurably effective teachers—both in terms of quantity or in terms of our ability to measure value-added effectiveness. This goal was problematic in a number of ways, such as by leading us to focus on scale at the expense of focusing on the highest-need kids. (Read the final report at [bfdn.org/gfd6](http://bfdn.org/gfd6).)



We learned a lot of lessons that inform our current work across the Foundation—like the value of learning cohorts and the power of making targeted investments of additional resources to spread successes and overcome challenges. We saw some of our partners make wonderful and transformative changes. They made the most of our long-term funding commitment and other supports. They defied

conventional wisdom about higher education institutions being change-resistant. We are proud of what we helped to make happen! We also learned the risks of putting all our eggs into one strategic basket and locking ourselves and our partners into contractual agreements. In all our work, we want to work toward a big vision and make bold investments, but we also want to make sure we are learning and adjusting as we go. **15**





**Kathy Aplan**  
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe



**Ben Benoit**  
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe



**Bill Blackwell, Jr.**  
Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa



**Agleska Cohen-Rencountre**  
Lower Brule Sioux Tribe



**Charles Dolson**  
Red Lake Nation



**Natasha Gourd**  
Spirit Lake Nation



**Alicia Gourd-Mackin**  
Spirit Lake Nation



**Valerie Harrington**  
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe



**Blake Johnson**  
Prairie Island Indian Community



**Angela Koenen**  
Oglala Sioux Tribe

## Congratulations to Cohort 10 of Native Nation Rebuilders

The Native Nation Rebuilders Program is a leadership development opportunity for regional tribal citizens who have a passion for learning about innovative governance practices.



**Nicole LaFrinier**  
White Earth Nation



**Mike Laverdure**  
Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians



**Thomasina Mandan**  
Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation



**Dallas Nelson**  
Oglala Sioux Tribe



**Kiva Sam**  
Oglala Sioux Tribe



**Cherilyn Spears**  
Red Lake Nation



**Melinda Stade**  
Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community



**Deanna StandingCloud**  
Red Lake Nation



**Julie Thorstenson**  
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe



**Melanie Ulrich**  
Prairie Island Indian Community



**Justice Wabasha**  
Lower Sioux Community

Applications for Cohort 11 will open July 2019. The Native Nation Rebuilders program is a partnership between the Native Governance Center and the Bush Foundation. Visit [nativegov.org](http://nativegov.org) for more details.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS, NON-BOARD INVESTMENT COMMITTEE, STAFF AS OF 03/01/2019; ALL OTHER LISTS AS OF 12/31/2018

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Malcom Champman 1  
Isabel Chanslor  
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Gary Cunningham 1  
Wayne Ducheneaux 2  
Matt Ehlman, Ph.D. 1  
Wizipan Garriot  
Betty Gronneberg 1  
Ty Hegland 1  
Mukhtar Ibrahim 1  
Cynthia Lindquist, Ph.D. 1  
Sara Russick  
Carolyn Sakstrup  
Lori Saroya 1  
Jane Schuh  
Yuko Taniguchi 1  
Diane Tran  
Matt Varilek  
Jonathan Weinhausen  
Kayla Yang Best

### 2018 Bush Prize Selection Panel - Minnesota

Dr. Kathleen Annette 4  
Sarah Curtiss  
Kevin Goodno 4  
Arlene Jones 1  
Sondra Samuels  
Danielle Steer  
Bruce Thao 1  
Ernesto Velez Bustos 1  
Hamse Warfa 1

### North Dakota Advisory Committee, includes 2018 Bush Prize Selection Panel - North Dakota

Twyla Baker-Demaray 2  
Kristi Hall-Jiran  
Chad Harrison  
Chuck Hoge  
Marshall Johnson  
Deb Nelson  
Robert Pope  
Tom Shorma

### South Dakota Advisory Committee, includes 2018 Bush Prize Selection Panel - South Dakota

Marc Benoist 2  
Taneeza Islam 1  
Lori Pourier  
Jane Rasmussen  
Bob Sutton  
Ross Tschetter  
Sheila Woodward

### Legend

- 1 Bush Fellow
- 2 Native Nation Rebuilder
- 3 Ron McKinley Philanthropy Fellow
- 4 Foundation Board Member
- 5 Consultant

PHOTOS: T.J. TURNER

PHOTO: BRUCE SILCOX



DO THE MOST  
POSSIBLE GOOD  
FOR THE  
COMMUNITY

**A**rchibald and Edyth Bush established the Bush Foundation in 1953. They left few restrictions. It is up to the board and staff to figure out how to use Archie and Edyth's resources to do the most possible good for the community.

Today, the Bush Foundation invests in great ideas and the people who power them in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and the 23 Native nations that share the same geography. We work to inspire and support creative problem solving—within and across sectors—to make our region better for everyone.

Broadly speaking, we do this in a few ways:

We invest in people and organizations working on any issue that is important in their communities. These investments are made through our Community Innovation and Leadership programs. Grants and Fellowships are awarded through competitive processes open to people and organizations in the region.

We invest in efforts to address specific issues that we believe are a

priority for the region. We manage these investments through our strategic initiatives—Community Creativity, Education, Native Nation Building and Government Redesign, and Social Business Ventures. Each initiative makes a small number of targeted investments annually to accomplish a goal.

We also support organizations that help create and sustain an environment for our programs and initiatives to be successful. Through Ecosystem Grants, we provide operating support to organizations that create an environment for big things to happen in the region by supporting other organizations and leaders.

Through communications and events, we share what we and our partners are learning, celebrate successful examples of community change, and inspire, equip and connect people to more effectively lead change.

The Bush Foundation has changed a lot since 1953. But the thing that has always been the same is our commitment to do the most possible good with the resources Archie and Edyth left to the region. **b**

PHOTO BRUCE SILCOX

## A Secure Creative Space

**W**hen Dr. Tami Jollie-Trottier (BF'16) decided to open a community art space, she aimed for the heart of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Indian Reservation in northern North Dakota, where she grew up. Generation Art sits two doors down from Seven Stone Center for Behavioral Health & Healing, Jollie-Trottier's private practice clinic in the Belcourt Shopping Mall. What's more, her entrepreneurial parents once owned a successful supermarket in the mall, and her clinic is in an office where her mother once worked. Grounded in her own history, Jollie-Trottier has created a unique intergenerational space for others.

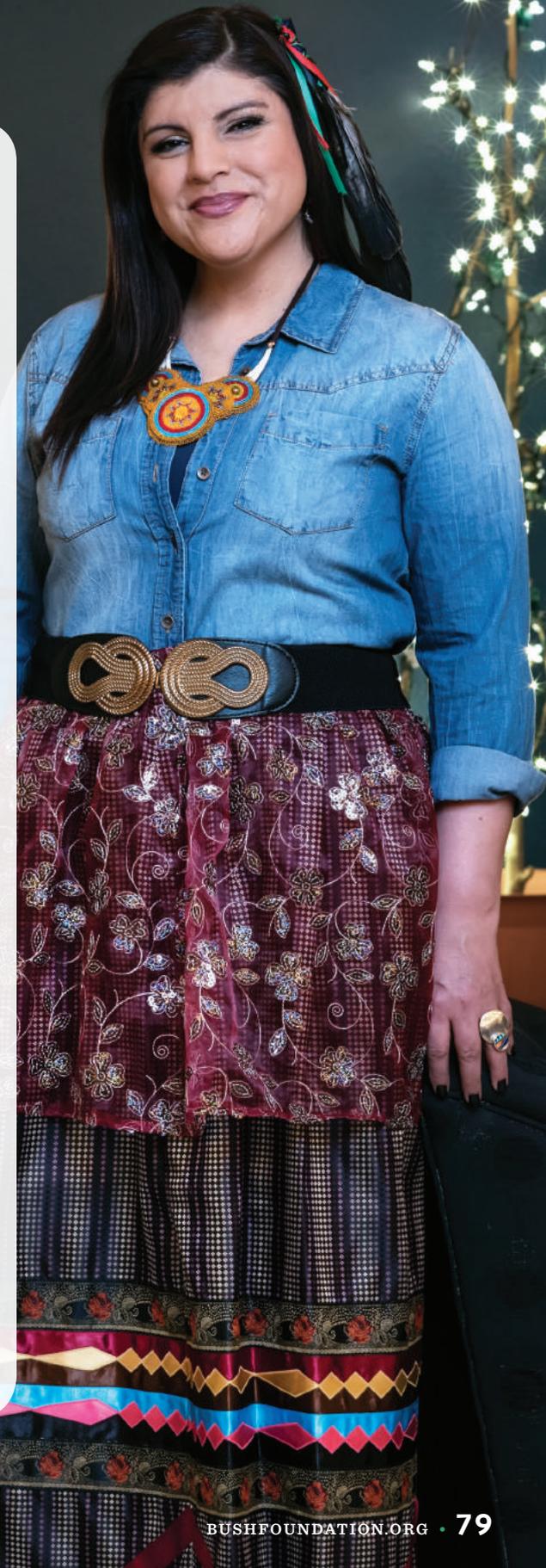
"It's not a place for therapy," Jollie-Trottier says of Generation Art. "There are no direct services. It's a place where people can heal through art and intergenerational, multigenerational interactions. We have elders connecting with kids. We have artists, poets and sculptors volunteering their time to teach classes and workshops." Generation Art prioritizes inclusivity and respect for differences in spirituality, gender, culture and other identities.

In the years between her childhood on the reservation and her return to establish her practice, Jollie-Trottier studied, traveled and worked as a research psychologist. Her travels inspired Generation Art's look, which brings the feel of an urban coffee shop to rural North Dakota. Beauty and safety are crucial to create a welcoming space for trauma-informed community art. The low lighting fosters intimacy, the scents promote emotional regulation and curtains on the windows heighten the space's sense of security. It's all intentional.

Before Generation Art had fully opened, friends and neighbors peered through its glass doors in curiosity. After it opened, two enthusiastic teachers started an art night. They brought in their own materials and donated their time to teach the community. Enthusiasm spread widely: Generation Art's seasonal skirt-making workshop filled within hours of being announced. It inspired other community artists of all ages to offer classes teaching traditional skills and crafts that recognize and reclaim their heritage.

Because Generation Art is an all-ages space, Jollie-Trottier can work near her entire family. In fact, it was her eldest daughter who came up with the name Generation Art. "It's about focusing on the strengths, healing and gifts of Native people," Jollie-Trottier explains. "It's about a new generation, a new time for us." —*Maya Beck*

photo by DAN KOECK



# Congratulations to the 2018 Bush Prize Winners



**Capital Area Counseling Service**  
Pierre, SD



**Mid-Dakota Education Cooperative**  
Minot, ND



**Native American Community Board**  
Yankton, SD

The Bush Prize for Community Innovation celebrates organizations with a track record of successful community problem solving.

[bfdn.org/bushprize](http://bfdn.org/bushprize)



**Nexus Community Partners**  
Minneapolis/Saint Paul, MN



**Northwest Indian Community Development Center**  
Bemidji, MN



Saint Paul, MN  
**Springboard for the Arts**  
Fergus Falls, MN



MID-DAKOTA BEN GUMERINGER, SPRINGBOARD FOR THE ARTS MIKE MADISON, SPRINGBOARD FERGOUS FALLS ERIC SANTWIRE ALL OTHER PHOTOS WES EISENHAUER





# BUSH FOUNDATION

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Ready Go's Streetcorner  
Letterpress at bushCON 2018

Investing in great ideas and the people who power them.