

WATERERS

# Equitable Philanthropy through Radical Gift Making



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## AN INVITATION

# Philanthropy do better: an invitation

From March of 2020 through the end of 2021 we were tasked with a transformative experiment as recipients of the last grant made by ArtPlace America. We were asked to look regionally and invent a paradigm shifting, people-powered process to move money to local artists and culture bearers who do not usually have access to funding.

This document lays out what we have learned about this process and contains an invitation. An invitation to do better. We are inviting philanthropic institutions to change how they redistribute funding. There is a better way. The basic tenets are straightforward and should not be a surprise to anyone:

- Prioritize and dedicate human resources and funding to BIPOC artists, organizers and culture-bearers who have historically been exploited.
- Recognize that art is culture and culture is art. Culture and art is language, food and lifeways.
- Replace competitive grant processes to center identity, trust, healing, relationships and the land.
- Center cultural power and the peoples grounded in place who make up the field of creative place-keeping.

### And also to take the time to consider:

- 1 Trust-based philanthropy works.** Get inspired by and give credit to local, global, and ancestral cultures of mutual aid and giving circles. Share decision making power with local people and community groups through values and mutual trust to build local and hyper local capacity.
- 2 Scrap the onerous application process.** Engage the locals doing the good work through conversations and relationship building as well as asking them for locally based nominations (new and longstanding). Paid foundation staff can do the research on who artists and cultural workers are and their work that is new to funders to activate networks in their region.
- 3 One off project based funding isn't effective for long term work.** Artists and culture bearers need wellbeing, time and space to build, grow and innovate. This radical approach funds artists to self-determine how they do creative work and cover their living costs. Imagine what could be achieved if healthcare, food and housing wasn't an issue. Fund community wellbeing over building something limited.
- 4 Stop funding the usual suspects** like big white-led institutions. Recognize that it is often the institution or individual who already has assets and access (to grant writers or foundations) who get grants. Instead, increase the flow to hyperlocal BIPOC led groups to build capacity. Fund both arts and culture work. Big impacts come from the people when we support local growth in urban and rural areas.
- 5 Invite reflection.** Are you being a gatekeeper, are you funding the usual suspects? Be curious. Who else is out there? How can you help them get funding? How are you reaching deep into the community to bring equitable opportunities to artists, culture bearers, and communities you do not know?
- 6 Reimagine reporting.** Resist the urge to ask for reporting but encourage and fund organizations and individuals to use storytelling to describe their work and help them tell their stories - cover their communication strategy expenses. Foundation staff can build relationships in the community to witness the work and collect the data for themselves.
- 7 Fund us and learn with us** so we can continue our work as leaders in this method of philanthropy to make a transformative impact for BIPOC artists, culture bearers, and community members to heal and prosper from historical and ongoing marginalization by systems of oppression. We see our work as a regional pilot even as we are thinking beyond the borders of state lines, and decolonizing national borders. Lessons from which can be applied nationally.

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**For more information contact John  
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## OUR WORK

# The power of listening: How we collaborated

### What we practiced

From the beginning we have sought to democratize our process and bring together an unusual diversity of perspectives from the communities we serve. We listened throughout our process and that's how we learned more intimately what's happening in each part of our region and in communities we wanted to reach.

We all uphold a commitment to generous communication and relationship building that fosters shared understanding. Our regional Assembly established specific criteria based on our values which were given to nominators, as well as regional and cultural considerations to ensure a rural/urban balance as well as equitable and historically aware distributions across the region.

We learned from the Appalachian Assembly who kindly shared their process and learning which helped us further ground our own values. As we worked through the options, we came to the conclusion that we wanted to offer funding via grassroots, local nominations, with no application process.

### What we have learned so far

- Serious time and resource commitments are needed to do radical grantmaking. It's all about relationship building and the onus should be on the grantmaker to do the work of finding, sifting, nominating, researching and reporting back to the group.
- Coming together regularly was vital to allow us to practice moving and learning together in community. This is not surface work. It takes deliberate time and commitment, which leads to deeper and long lasting connections.
- We took the time we needed to allow us to dig deeper to understand the multiple truths that exist across our lived experiences. We resisted the "more, faster, bigger" mentality of white supremacy culture.
- Language matters - we were intentional with our vocabulary. We make gifts not grants.
- We created data collection processes that allow for self identification to further learn what nuances exist beyond standard boxes and what we know.
- When trying to contact giftees, technology worked against us: award letters went into spam, folks thought it was a scam, many just ignored emails. We turned to more grassroots methods of contact, such as direct phone calls, texts, social media messages, and mutual trusted acquaintances to confirm receipt of the award letters and begin the funding process.
- We reached across the whole region as much as possible, acknowledging "local" definitions varied between Future Building, Amplifying Sovereignty and Individuals.
- We centered healing, connection, and deep inner work when selecting giftee case studies that we wanted to highlight. We broke from the mold of sharing case studies in order to take credit for the work of our giftees. We wanted to uplift the truths of those who are working to better themselves and their community, not focus solely on who is creating the newest, biggest, brightest thing.

### Being a good relative, being in relationship

We felt it was our job to do the work required to find giftees, not make people who are already overworked and underpaid jump through multiple hoops to access funding. This process helped us reach into and build deeper relationships with people and communities that were new to us.

We embraced going deeper into the roots of communities and asking them to tell us who is doing the good, values-based work. We did this through a shared process of carefully identifying and selecting nominators in communities who embodied our values as well. (We also offered the option to our nominators to self-select for a gift.) This way we could find the people who usually go unnoticed and unfunded by philanthropy due to gatekeeping, capitalism and systemic oppressions.

We wanted to build capacity and stack resources to support Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) artist/cultural bearer work in every way possible (from communications to accounting). We wanted to decenter ourselves throughout the process while using our access and assets to build community and networks.

**Want to know more or see how we could help you apply this model to your program?**

**[Contact John and Michelle from the Waterers](#)**

## OUR WORK

### We are:

- Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) led
- Rooted in belonging & relatedness
- Artist centered & narrative shifting
- Centered in tactics for decolonization, anti-oppression, reparations
- Ensuring that gifts do no harm
- About healing, risk-taking & trust-building



## Vision and mission

**We are the Waterers.** We are a group of disruptors in the philanthropy space. Our work is part of the [Local Control, Local Fields initiative](#) of ArtPlace America and we are one of six groups using a people-powered process led by grassroots Assemblies in six distinct geographies. Each group has shaped the use of a funding pool to further strengthen our local creative place-tending field of practice. The Upper Midwest Assembly entrusted the Waterers as fund stewards from the Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and the 23 Native Nations geographic region.

Our Assembly centers BIPOC artists and culture bearers as leaders. Our gift-making strategy attends to the nuance and complexities of this region. We exist to keep decision making power with communities. Support those communities already doing the work. Disrupt traditional grant making. Move money.

**Our vision** is to radically transform the paradigm of 'giving' from a scarcity economy model to one of abundance and cooperation. We envision funding and resources that continue building communities with unrestricted funding. Imagine if the elder beadworkers, culture-bearers, story-weavers had just as much access to funding as the white-led Arts agency? It can happen in a funding paradigm where we center local BIPOC Artists and culture bearers to make the decisions.

**Our mission** is to propel the philanthropic field to change how it redistributes funding to prioritize BIPOC Artists and culture-bearers who have been historically exploited. Traditional competitive grant processes and systems make sustaining, let alone applying, out of reach. We urgently center land, identity, healing, and time - recognizing the land and peoples grounded in cultural power who make up the field of creative place-keeping.

## OUR WORK

# Our values guided our process

Our values are a compass, both in who receives funds - they shaped our process. We boldly diverge from the types of traditional 'grantmaking' we've all experienced. We believe in mending the connective tissue to deepen the roots of relation, and taking risks to build trust and capacity through every step of our design and decision making. Our choices seek reconciliation.

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### Unlearning colonial philanthropy

Our program thrives on collective leadership and decision making, and fully-invested people who know and are part of the geographies and communities. The Waterers identified individuals within their respective localities to make the decisions.

### Our community

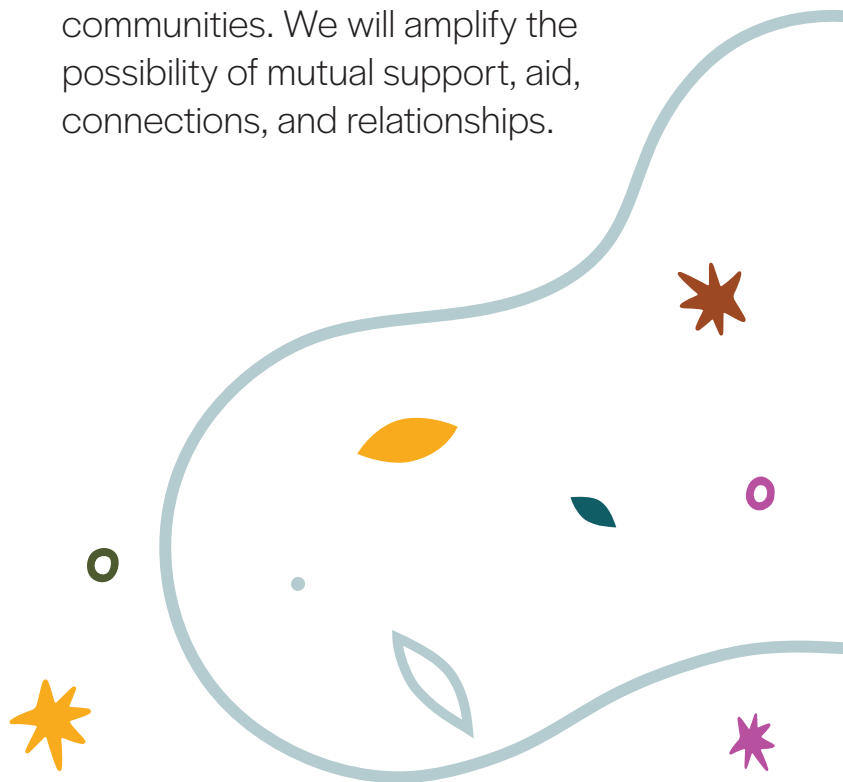
Artists and culture bearers have long existed in our communities. Our Assembly and all who receive funding are invited to be in relation, to make decisions, mentor each other, build camaraderie and alliances beyond the funding period.

### Blossoming connectivity

We invite everyone associated with this program to be in continuing relation to each other as peers, mentors, advocates, and fellow practitioners.

### Sustaining practice

Recipients don't apply, they get recognized for their work by their communities. We will amplify the possibility of mutual support, aid, connections, and relationships.



## OUR WORK

# Our gifting

Centered on building local power and capacity. We came up with three methods to disburse \$2.76 Million to take into account the immediate and evolving nuance and complexity of this region.



### Immediate disbursement

We distributed a first round of funds immediately. We moved quickly because of COVID-19 and the global uprising after the murder of George Floyd in 2020. Immediate and unrestricted funding was, and is still vital. Assembly members distributed \$900,000 to artists and local organizations, 79% was gifted to BIPOC recipients and 63% went to rural recipients. We took lessons from this round that shaped and built into the next phases.



### Future building

While watering the existing trees in our forests, we must also tend to the new sprouts. Utilizing our values-based nomination process, we redistributed an additional \$960,000 in funds to BIPOC artists and culture bearers across the hills, lakes, prairies, woods of our geography. We believe in investing in small, local, and the non-colonial. These direct gifts were towards future building and as gifts of recognition for work being done for and by BIPOC communities. One-hundred percent of the gifts went to BIPOC individuals ranging in age from 18-80, with 40% of the giftees belonging to the LGBTQ/Two Spirit community and 41% being from rural communities.



### Amplify sovereignty

A significant portion of funds was set aside for Native reparations and recognizing the complexities and diverse meanings of sovereignty for Native organizations in our region. A nominating committee of Native Assembly members redistributed \$900,000 in direct gifts. Eighty three percent of the giftees were rural, two-thirds were reservation based, and there were four gifts per colonial state boundary. Our strategy centered on transformational gifts, sovereignty, self-determination, culture, language as determined by Native communities and organizations. We see an urgent need to center land, healing, identity, and time - in short we must recognize the land and livelihoods who make up the field of creative place-keeping.

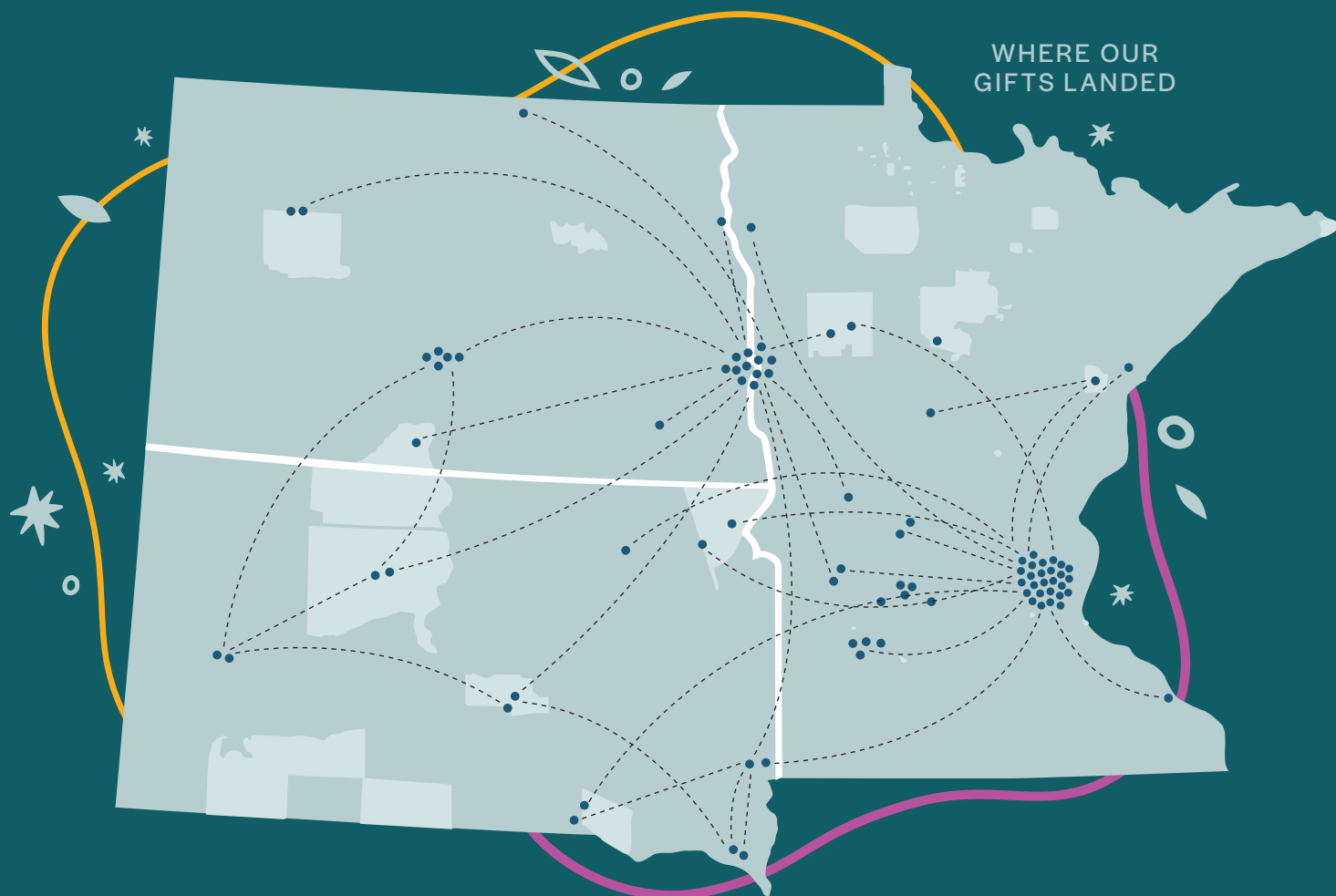
### Every giftee received funding for communications work

Rather than requiring reports, we decided to double down on giving further funding to each giftee to enable them to have access to communications expertise. We hired communications agency Flannel & Blade to run webinars on storytelling, press, PR and networking. We wanted to make sure that the folks we funded had access to the information and tools they needed to tell more people about their important work.

### Our Fiscal Sponsor

We chose [Racing Magpie](#), based in Rapid City South Dakota to house this work; and to build our capacity to collectively lead and steward this fund. They are a Lakota-centric arts and culture organization, founded in 2015 to center the Lakota practice of being a good relative in everything that one does. Racing Magpie's work is focused on elevating and amplifying the ongoing work of community-based artists and culture bearers.

## THE STORIES OF OUR GIFTEES





## STORIES



# I come from generations of innovators and change makers.

FREDERICK EDWARDS JR.

### **How funding enabled a man rooted in his history continue his work**

Frederick Edwards Jr. is the founder of [FredDissonance](#), co-founder of Umoja Leadership Exploration, Program coordinator and case manager at [Youthworks, ND](#).

Having lost over 50 friends to gun violence, Frederick began to create events and platforms, providing opportunities for African American voices to be heard. Frederick says, “Understanding our history and our past is the first step to restoring our future. I am excited to work with other Waterers because I can serve in a more extensive network now.”

He was shocked when he was told he had been seen for his future building work in the community. Being recognized gave him “the go ahead to keep going with the work he had been doing” with equity and inclusion at the forefront.

“It is now more important than ever to bring the culture that people have left behind back to Fargo. From the connections and stories, I know I am not alone in the journey of education, advocacy, and decolonizing my community.”

## STORIES



# Connecting with her home community and shining a light on important stories

**STORYTELLER, ACTRESS, SURVIVOR - GRACE T. ANDREOFF SMITH**

### **How healing and learning can overcome the fear of remembering**

Grace T. Andreoff Smith is a storyteller, an ensemble actress with the [New Native Theatre](#), and a boarding school survivor who has been active in her Twin Cities American Indian Community for many years. Grace embodies the Yupik values of spirituality, love, sharing, hard work, respect, and humor and lives them out loud everyday.

At 80 years young, she relies on strong bonds of kinship and fortitude to courageously share her story of being a boarding school survivor, a story that is not often told. Her spirit embodies Indigenous values and brings joy to all the younger Native people who are lucky enough to encounter her bright and kind energy.

Her stories of boarding school survival are almost unbelievable and must be documented. This gift will give Grace an opportunity to go back home to Alaska and reconnect with her land and people. The visit will provide a sense of healing and peace that quells the fear of remembering a dark past that is often overcome by strength, love and prayer.

## STORIES



# Transformative justice and imagination—tools for discovering a new and just world

## LIGHTNING ROD

### How Funding Helped a Theatre Collective Continue to Live Out Loud

[Lightning Rod](#) is an experimental theatre collective of trans and queer artists the Twin Cities. Their mission is to show their community that they already possess the skills and knowledge needed to create relevant, meaningful, timely, and quality performance art. The collective invites artists of all backgrounds and skill levels to participate in what they call “flash theatre,” an action of community and political involvement, begging the question “What needs to be said this week?”

On the gift from the Waterers they said, “We are invigorated by the opportunity to be recognized and supported by artmakers and culture bearers in Minnesota. Our work has become increasingly important as our city processes through the uprisings of 2020 and the ongoing global pandemic.”

Immediate Distribution funds were used to pay their staff and artists and allow them the ability to strategically plan and make decisions about their future. “We are a company tethered to our community of queer and trans people, most of whom happen to be BIPOC. We are interested in possibility and creation as we believe that Transformative Justice and imagination are tools for discovering a new and just world.”



# Native artists devoted to perpetuating and revitalizing Native art

## NATIVE ARTISTS UNITED

### **The Waterers redistribution of funds in North Dakota benefit Native Artists United**

**Native Artists United** (NAU) are a group of Native artists devoted to perpetuating and revitalizing Native art, both traditional and contemporary, and creating a local Native-based economy. NAU has three focus areas: Community, Education and Opportunity.

They pride themselves on supporting those whose work focuses on community building and self healing, narrative shifting, artist centered, and centering belonging and relatedness. NAU and The Waterers both value healing, community, decolonial thinking, and trust-building.

After being gifted funds on the Immediate Distribution phase, NAU founder Holly Doll regifted a portion of the funds to her cooperative which redistributed funding to artists and culture bearers across North Dakota, ranging from helping an elder take care of her grandchildren to securing financial support for an up and coming fashion designer to supporting someone in their journey back to college to work toward their BFA. Doll says, “NAU doesn’t seek power or control, we seek to receive and give support.”

## STORIES



# Everything we do is with the guidance of the people

DUSTINA GILL, SITOMNI SA YAPI WIN, PAINTS RED AROUND HER

**Becoming allies to a community led non-profit doing vital resilience work**

Dustina Gill, Sitomni Sa Yapi Win, Paints Red Around Her, hails from the Wahpekute band of the Oceti Sakowin and is an enrolled citizen of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate in the northeast corner of South Dakota on the Lake Traverse Reservation.

As a lifelong advocate of Native youth, Dustina established [Nis'to Incorporated](#), a Native nonprofit organization. Nis'to, a Dakota word that means “concern for others outside of ourselves,” does cultural resilience-based work with youth, young adults and families on the Lake Traverse Reservation centered around leadership, reentry, and mental health and well-being.

Priding themselves on intentionality, Nis'to feels that's what connects them to the values of the Waterers. Dustina says, “I was taken aback, shocked, and so honored. It was such an amazing feeling to realize someone noticed what I was doing.” Everything they do is guided by the people they work with and they strongly believe in “not about us, without us.”

## STORIES



# Committed to upholding the intellectual strength and creativity of Indigenous people

PTAYELA OWAYAWA WANKATUYA

### How the waterers boosted confidence, infrastructure and creativity

[Clementine Bordeaux](#), artist and doctoral candidate, Mary V. Bordeaux, co-owner and creative director of [Racing Magpie](#), and [Layli Long Soldier](#), author of *Chromosomomy* and *WHEREAS*, lead Ptayela Owayawa Wankatuya. They are committed to upholding the intellectual strength and creativity of Indigenous people, with a focus on serving students from the Titunwan heritage and the larger Oceti Sakowin community.

Funds provided by the Waterers allowed them to focus on building infrastructure for the organization and relieved them of the pressure of fundraising. They created a logo to aid in outreach for their workshops and training to propel their mission. Since they are in their preliminary stages of developing their programming and outreach, the funds from the Immediate Distribution have given their organization's confidence a boost.



## STORIES



# Now is the time to take action to disrupt the status quo

## GIZHIIGIN ARTS INCUBATOR

### **Supporting an artist-led initiative providing resources to help advance artistic goals**

The [Gizhiigin Arts Incubator](#), an artist-led initiative, supports Native artists in the White Earth Nation by providing services and resources to advance their artistic and entrepreneurial goals. Starting as a vacant storefront on Main Street in Mahanomen, the incubator provides space for exhibitions, common work areas and studio space.

On receiving the gift from the Waterers, Gizhiigin said, “It is a great honor to be recognized by others doing similar work. With the pandemic and the aftershock of the murder of George Floyd laying bare the inequities of a system designed to exclude Indigenous and BIPOC communities from the equitable access to resources needed to thrive, now is the time to take action to disrupt the status quo. Artists are the culture bearers of our Indigenous communities.”

Gizhiigin seeks to grow the arts economy within the White Earth Nation and the region. Partnering with the Red Lake Nations 4-Directions Development, Inc., Gizhiigin has helped to design the Anishinaabe Art Festival set for July 2022 in Bemidji, MN.

## STORIES



# Working to repatriate our ancestral horse to help us to heal from our historic trauma

## SUNKAWAKAN TA WOUNSPE

### **How a gift helped this nonprofit reconnect with their sacred relative**

Sunkawakan Ta Wounspe: Teachings from the Horse Nation is a nonprofit committed to repatriating our [ancestral horses](#), preserving the teachings of their ancestors and nurturing the relationship between the horse nation and the people of Standing Rock.

After years of traumatic events like the Indian wars, forced assimilation, boarding schools, the organization wants to work on bringing horses back into the lives of their people. They believe that if they can reconnect their people to the horse, then future generations can once again flourish.

“The nomination and gift was an answer to a prayer,” they said in regards to being gifted from the Amplifying Sovereignty fund. “The support came at a crucial time giving us the ability to purchase much needed hay during a period of extreme drought in the Dakotas. The future of our ability to care for our horses was at risk due to climate change. The gift gave us the ability to care for them at a very crucial time for our family.”





# Being good relatives past, present and future

## LAKOTA YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

### **Working with Lakota youth in multigenerational, experiential programs**

**Lakota Youth Development** (LYD) is a culturally specific program that teaches self sufficiency, healthy lifestyles, land stewardship and youth development. This is done through Lakota language immersion, apprenticeships in bee keeping and cultural heritage tourism enterprises.

“Our work is based on the cultural teachings of Wolakota; grounded in the understanding that we are relatives to all creation as well as Grandmother Earth. These teachings are a lifeway of being good relatives and ensuring that there is no abuse, harm or disrespect, and are shared throughout our multigenerational, experiential programs.

As our youth grow up, they begin to ask how they can live well in today’s world and be successful as a Lakota; so we have supported the development of the first youth led social enterprise Honey Lodge.

We center our culture and our way of life as uniquely strong, independent people to ensure that the next generations remain grounded in who they are. The risk of losing our language risks losing the deep meaning of our cultural ways, balance with the environment and our clear connections to the universe.’



## ATIM OPOKA

Atim and her family are refugees from Uganda who now live in South Dakota. As a musical artist and storyteller, her work has been heavily impacted by these years of COVID. She continues to inspire others, and make an impact in her daily work as an educator for marginalized youth in the arts. She has persevered through many obstacles and said “this gift is helping me to love and heal all the parts of me I have tried to run away from. It has made me realize I have always been an artist, even when I couldn’t meet the white- euro standard of “Good Art”. My culture, my roots were always the foundation of who I am today. Art is at the heart of Acholi culture that uses music and dance to tell stories and celebrate our lives.

Atim is working on releasing her first music video, and a 5 song EP next fall, [releasing singles](#) and [merchandise](#) throughout the year. If it is safe, she will also be booking live shows in the Twin Cities in 2022.

## WHO ARE THE WATERERS



**ABDURRAHMAN MAHMUD** (He/Him) ▪ Saint Paul, Minnesota

Abdurrahman is a creative organizer and storyteller. As a culture and community admirer, he founded [Twinist](#) - a platform that advocates for and connects minorities and immigrants to millions of job opportunities through volunteering and personal brand development. He is also an immigrant advocate in Minneapolis, founding the “[City of Nations Storytelling Studio](#)” which uses theatre, film and storytelling to empower local residents to be advocates for their own health care, create a dialogue about community health and use art as a means for overcoming stigmas and obstacles. Abdurrahman has a decade of management experience in various areas, including public health, humanitarian assistance, and human rights, as well as designing and implementing community-driven development initiatives. He lives in Minneapolis, and Galkayo, Somalia is his home.



**HOLLY DOLL, ANPAOW WIN** (First Light Woman) (She/Her) ▪ Mandan, North Dakota – Standing Rock Sioux Tribe

Holly is the founder and president of [Native Artists United](#), owner of [Five Nations Arts](#), a public speaker on cultural education and racial sensitivity, and making a shift to having a healing-centered approach to work and life. She is also an artist, specializing in traditional Lakota forms of beadwork and quillwork, modern painting with watercolor, and occasionally writing poetry. Her mother taught from the age of two everything she knows when it comes to art and she has kept it up ever since. A lover of Halloween, astrology, fall scented candles, poetry, baking, fiction books, and crying over Pixar movies. Lives by this quote by spoken word poet Shane Koyczan: “If we ever become who we hope we are, it is because we see how far there is still to go. And if we are none of these things to everyone, then we are none of these things at all.”



**KA OSKAR LY** (They/Them/She/Her) ▪ Saint Paul, Minnesota

Ka is a queer Hmoob (Hmong) American artist and cultural producer based in Imnizaska Otunwe, Mni Sota Makoce. As an immigrant and child of refugees, Ka is driven by exploring previously unimaginable possibilities to forge cultural innovations and community futures inspired by their ancestors. They have worked at the intersection of art, organizing, and community development. Ka is a co-founder of [Ua Si Creative](#), a Hmong womxn artist collective creating and playing in the public and community realm through cultural power that spun out of [ArtCrop](#), an art and agriculture Community Supported Share. Ka is also a Springboard for the Arts 20/20 Fellow and Artist Consultant, a 2021 ILI (Intercultural Leadership Institute) Fellow, and a 2021 McKnight Fiber Artist Fellow.



**MICHELLE FREDERICKS DUBRAY** (She/Her) ▪ Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation – South Dakota

Michelle makes her home with her family on a buffalo ranch along the Missouri River. She is an enrolled member of the Mandan Hidatsa Arikara Nation of North Dakota, and owns and runs [Pinto Horse Woman Consulting](#). Michelle has over 34 years of experience assisting many organizations in working to build Native communities, develop partnerships, forge collaborative efforts, and encourage the sustainability of rural communities. She has been a Kellogg Fellow for her participation in the Americans for Indian Opportunity Ambassadors Program and was in the 1st Cohort of the Bush Foundation's Native Nations Rebuilders Program.

## WHO ARE THE WATERERS



**JOHN DAVIS** (He/Him) • Lanesboro, Minnesota

John is passionate about creating opportunities for artists to help transform communities. With over 30 years of experience creating and implementing rural artist residency programs and art centers, John has spent his career working to transform policy and amplify narratives of the arts in rural America. His collaborative and innovative work in New York Mills, MN has been recognized as a national model for rural economic development in the arts, and the town was twice recognized as one of the top 100 Small Arts Towns in America. His work with the Lanesboro Arts Campus initiative resulted in the city's selection as one of the top 12 Small Town Artplaces in America. As a Bush Fellow, he has studied and advanced the field of rural arts and rural sustainability and is currently a Senior Policy Fellow with the Rural Policy Research Institute.



**PETER STRONG** (He/Him) • Rapid City, South Dakota

Peter has been active in the arts, culture, and museum fields for most of his life, and has extensive experience in many aspects of museum and arts work. He is dedicated to supporting Native artists, arts, culture, and communities through creativity and being a good relative. Peter worked as Director of [The Heritage Center at Red Cloud Indian School](#) and Vice President of Operations and Programs for [First Peoples Fund](#) before co-founding [Racing Magpie](#) in 2015 where he is currently its director. He has served on multiple arts boards of directors, and was the chair of the organizing committee and was the first executive director for the [Native POP: People of the Plains](#) cultural event in Rapid City. Peter has been an adjunct instructor at Oglala Lakota College since 2019. He earned a BA in American History from Marshall University and an MA in Museum Studies, History, and New Media from George Mason University.



**RACHEL ASLESON** (She/Her) • Fargo, North Dakota

Rachel is many things...Friend. Project Manager. Trotter. Includer. Positive. Communicator. She sees beauty and values connection, creativity, possibility and presence. She is a Fargoan (Red River Basin), queer, small-business owner, [\(Reach Partners, Inc\)](#) project and event manager, facilitator, and jill-of-all trades. She's never done anything alone, and together with many partners, has curated exhibits, organized international conferences, hosted conversations that matter, and organized community events. She identifies with those who seek deep, meaningful connections; those who are curious, who find joy in reflection and beauty in odd places and times, and those who delight in diversity. She is working towards a new collective openness in the region; opening hearts and minds to everyone's humanity, and possibility. She wants to imagine the future in years, not just answer today's needs.

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### ASSEMBLY MEMBERS

Fowzia Adde  
Rachel Asleson  
Mary Bordeaux  
Keith BraveHeart  
Anna Claussen

Lauren Carlson  
Vicki Chepulis  
Nicole Crutchfield  
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