



# Inspiring Minds

Bethlehem Gronneberg  
(BF'16), founder of  
uCodeGirl, impacts  
young women in Fargo,  
Ethiopia and beyond

Native Nation Rebuilders  
mark 10 years of developing  
Indigenous leadership



Inside Appetite for Change's  
community-led movement shaping  
North Minneapolis food culture

THE MAGAZINE OF THE  
BUSH FOUNDATION 2020

# Contents



## FEATURES

**16 Inspiring Minds, Bridging Gaps**  
Bethlehem Gronneberg (BF'16) founded uCodeGirl to empower young women to pursue STEM careers worldwide

**28 Hometown Legacy**  
Archibald Bush's impact lives on in his childhood home of Granite Falls

**34 Community in Charge**  
Appetite for Change, a 2017 Bush Prize winner, uses food as an agent of societal change in North Minneapolis

**44 Rebuilding for the Future**  
The Native Governance Center's Native Nation Rebuilders program hits the 10-year mark

**50 Restoring the Wild**  
Two Bush Foundation grantees have revitalized precious ecosystems in Minnesota

ABOVE: ACKERMAN + GRUBER



## DEPARTMENTS

- 4 Connect**  
Building and strengthening connections among people working to make our region better for all
- 10 In Progress**  
Mike Temali (BF'98) helps communities of color grow their neighborhoods from within
- 57 Buzz**  
Catch up with Bush Fellows from the past and meet board member Eric J. Jolly, Ph.D.
- 66 By The Numbers**  
Bush Foundation investments in 2019
- 68 The Team**  
Staff, Board of Directors and Advisory Committees
- 69 What We Do**  
Discover how we try to do the most possible good
- 70 Think Bigger. Think Differently.**  
Artist Maria Cristina Tavera (BF'05) analyzes the roots of culture and place through her work



**ON THE COVER:**  
Bethlehem Gronneberg (BF'16), photographed at the uCodeGirl office in Fargo, North Dakota

Photograph by DAVID ELLIS



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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## A future where everyone can thrive

### Dear bMag readers,

As I write this in June 2020, the world is in the midst of both an unprecedented viral pandemic—COVID-19—and a collective reckoning with the historic and ongoing horrors of systemic racism.

These crises touch every aspect of our lives. As an organization focused on problem solving and committed to equity, we are engaging with our communities to respond to immediate, emergency needs as well as address long-term issues. We are reprioritizing funding and energy, and also reaching into our endowment to give more in this time of deep community need.

### Responding to COVID-19

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we took some immediate steps to address the unfolding crisis. After transitioning our office to remote work, we canceled the Bush Prize for 2020 and redirected that funding, plus all our flexible funding, to relief efforts across the region.

As the public health crisis continued and increasingly became a financial crisis, we adjusted our plans and adjusted our plans again. We adapted a lot of our programs—like selecting Bush Fellows without in-person interview days and converting our annual student-centered learning event to be virtual. We canceled or delayed a lot, too. We went line-by-line through our budget asking the question, “Is this the most important use of funding at this time?” in order to find more dollars for COVID-19 response.

We have tried to ensure we are doing the most helpful things we can with our funding, and to avoid creating harm with our decisions. For example, when we canceled programs and events, we worked with the vendors impacted by our decisions to find a way to pay them anyway. And we figured out what small businesses were most directly impacted by us working remotely and sent them each a check to help mitigate that impact.

We are adapting and expanding our Community Innovation grant program in order to be more responsive to community needs. We will also be making more grants and Program Related Investments to efforts that support businesses and help our economy grow back, more equitably. Please visit our website for the latest information about our programs at [BushFoundation.org](http://BushFoundation.org).

We know that our resources are not close to what is required to support people at this time. So we have also worked to connect our communities to other public and private funding available for individuals, nonprofits and businesses. See this list of resources on our website at [bfdn.org/COVID19](http://bfdn.org/COVID19).



Second Harvest Heartland's collaborative Minnesota Central Kitchen brings together restaurants, caterers and hunger-fighting organizations to address food insecurity and job losses brought on by the pandemic.



Learn more about the Bush Foundation at [BushFoundation.org](http://BushFoundation.org)

Connect to other COVID-19 funding resources at [bfdn.org/COVID19](http://bfdn.org/COVID19)



We supported several emergency response funds, including the South Dakota Community Foundation's Coronavirus Response Fund.



The George Floyd mural at 38th Street and Chicago Avenue in Minneapolis, Minnesota, was created by artists Xena Goldman, Greta McLain, Cadex Herrera, Niko Alexander and Pablo Hernandez.

### Working for Racial Justice

The murder of Mr. George Floyd in Minneapolis at the end of May was appalling. It was chilling to watch the bystander video and see a man treated with such disregard for his humanity—not in an instant but over several minutes. Not in a swirl of confusion but in a controlled situation with bystanders trying to intervene.

The crescendo of unrest that occurred in the days following was an expression of how our communities are hurting and grieving, an anguished outcry about the treatment of our neighbor and those responsible for his death. This community uprising sparked protests around the country and the globe.

Each time we have tragic police violence it exposes failures both in our systems and in our culture of community. Many of us keep hoping that we have learned from past mistakes. We want to believe we are better than this. Clearly, we have much more to do. We have to fix the formal ways that people are supported by and held accountable in systems. We also have to work on the broader issues of trust and respect and build connections in ways that overcome bias and bring out the best in each other.

In the aftermath of Mr. Floyd's murder, we joined and contributed to the Minnesota Philanthropic Collective Committed to Racial Equity and Justice, a joint effort to denounce anti-Blackness and racism and work towards realizing racial justice. Joining this effort represents a commitment in our external work, as well as a commitment to do the internal work needed to reckon with the roles we play in perpetuating and tolerating racism. We have also contributed to some immediate response efforts to support small businesses damaged in the unrest.

These quick response efforts are important, but insufficient. The underlying issues of institutional racism and white supremacy are deeply rooted. Addressing them requires sustained, intensive work. There is a lot of work to do and we are ready to both lead and follow to make sustainable change.

### Looking to the Future

The Bush Foundation exists to make the region better for everyone. We support communities to come together to solve challenges in creative and inclusive ways. We support leaders to think bigger and think differently about the change they can help make happen.

As we move beyond the COVID-19 crisis and into recovery and rebuilding, and as we continue our work towards racial justice, we are asking ourselves: How can we make our region better, stronger and more inclusive than it was before?

Too many institutions and systems in our region don't work well for everyone. We need more leaders with the skillsets and mindsets to adapt those institutions and systems—to push for and support people through creative and bold changes, to create a future where every person can thrive. We believe we have the power and responsibility to make a difference and we are committed to supporting people and efforts focused on this throughout the region.

If you are working inclusively and collaboratively to make positive change for our region, please look at our programs to see if we can be of help to you now or in the future. Together, we can make our community stronger and better for everyone.

FORD REEDY BRUCE SLOOX

MURAL: MUNSHOTS

# Connect

Building and strengthening connections among people working to make our region better for everyone.

## bushCONNECT On The Road

The Bush Foundation partners with national events to support scholarships for people from our region to participate as a cohort. In 2019, we hosted cohorts at the Aspen Ideas Festival, Independent Sector's Upswell, SOCAP and PopTech.



PHOTO 3, 6-8 ADRIANA ALEJANDRO OSORIO

PHOTO 9 COURTESY NAIMA DHORE PHOTO 10 ALLISON BARMANN

### 1+2 • ASPEN IDEAS FESTIVAL

Twenty-five leaders from across our region attended the Aspen Ideas Festival in June 2019. The festival is one of the world's premier gatherings of leaders and thinkers to discuss the ideas and issues shaping our time.

### 4 • INDEPENDENT SECTOR'S UPSWELL

The Bush Foundation hosted people from our region at a dinner at the Chicago Center for Arts & Technology (ChiCAT) during Upswell 2019. Upswell brings together changemakers from across the country and across sectors.

5 • The Bush Foundation and our event planning partner, Events by Lady K, presented a session at Upswell about planning inclusive events. Pictured here are Ryan Kroening of Events by Lady K and Megan Forgrave, communications program manager at the Bush Foundation.

### 6 • POPTECH

Fifty regional leaders attended PopTech at Point Lookout in Northport, Maine. They interacted with a wide array of speakers and artists during presentations, fireside chats and meals together.

7 • PopTech participant James Bergman of Fargo, North Dakota, was invited onstage to perform an impromptu spoken word recap of the event.

3+8 • Participants from the region got to know each other well while traveling together to beautiful Northport, Maine. Pictured here are Cam Yang and Adriana Alejandro Osorio, both from the Twin Cities. Osorio is also the photographer of photo 3.

9 • PopTech participant Naima Dhore takes in the view during a session break.

### 10 • SOCAP

The Bush Foundation hosted 25 participants at SOCAP in San Francisco, California. The event brings people together around social entrepreneurship and impact investing.

## Event Sponsorship

The Bush Foundation sponsors events across the region that help people think bigger and differently about what's possible in their communities, and build skills and relationships to lead more effectively.



### 1 • TRIBAL LEADERS SUMMIT

Officials from many tribal and government entities share the stage during the opening ceremony of the Tribal Leaders Summit, which is hosted by the United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck, North Dakota.

### 2 • MIT SOLVE AT PINE RIDGE

Solve Fellow Burrell Jones (left) discusses his work during a Solve at Pine Ridge working group at Thunder Valley Community Center. The program works to support and connect social impact innovators.

### 3 • TEDxFARGO

Emcee Greg Tehven welcomes more than 2,000 attendees to the 10th TEDxFargo event in Fargo, North Dakota. Fargo hosts one of the biggest TEDx events in the country.

### 4 • POLLEN LIVE

Pollen Midwest brought stories they've published to life during Pollen Live | A Wild & Precious World. Writers, artists and interview subjects presented together for an evening of learning and connection. Here, Leigh Finke interviews Ben Passer and Janiece Watts, who both work on equity and social justice in the energy industry.

### 5 • CONNECTUP

Entrepreneurs at the ConnectUP! Summit.

PHOTO 1 UTTC PHOTO 2 TARA ROSE WESTON PHOTO 3 J. ALAN PAUL PHOTOGRAPHY PHOTO 4 EMILY BARRERA PHOTO 5 FANG XIONG



### 6 • RURAL ARTS AND CULTURE SUMMIT

Participants experience the Tiny School of Art & Design by artist Heidi Jeub during the Rural Arts & Culture Summit in Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

### 7 • UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Janice Bad Moccasins of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community leads an opening prayer at the Indigenous Women Have Always Been Leaders event hosted by the Center on Women, Gender, and Public Policy.

### 8 • NATIONAL INDIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

NIEA invited the first ever Native Congresswomen, Deb Haaland (D-NM), left, and Sharice Davids (D-KS), middle, to speak at the 50th Anniversary Convention. The conversation was moderated by former NIEA Board President Heather Shotten, right.



PHOTO 6 HOLLY DIESTLER PHOTO 7 LISA MILLER PHOTO 8 NIEA PHOTO 9 ND DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PHOTO 10-11 BRUCE SILCOX PHOTO 12 JOHN WURM



### 9 • MAIN STREET NORTH DAKOTA

Gov. Doug Burgum addresses the Main Street ND Summit, which brought people together to learn and think about how to improve quality of life for all in North Dakota.

### 10+11 • CHARITIES REVIEW COUNCIL'S FORUM

Attendees connect at the Charities Review Council's FORUM 2019: Breaking Patterns.

### 12 • MINNESOTA COUNCIL OF NONPROFITS

Leah Goldstein Moses of The Improve Group speaks with a conference attendee at a pop-up evaluation station during the second day of the 2019 MCN Annual Conference.



## Bush Foundation Events

Bush Foundation staff and board members travel and host events across the region. In 2019, we hosted a reception in Bismarck, North Dakota and held our board retreat in Stillwater, Minnesota. We also hosted Office Hours around the region as well as program-specific gatherings for Bush Fellows, grantees and partners.



**1-3 • BUSH FELLOWS LAUNCH RETREAT**  
The 2019 Bush Fellows gathered for their Launch Retreat in April 2019 to learn together, connect and create plans for their paths forward.

**4 • BOARD RETREAT**  
The Bush Foundation board regularly travels to a new part of the region to connect with leaders and learn more about the community. In 2019, they visited Stillwater, Minnesota.

**5-7 • BISMARCK RECEPTION**  
The Bush Foundation hosts a reception in the region to connect with community members and celebrate the work of grantees and Bush Fellows in the region. In 2019, we gathered in Bismarck, North Dakota.

**8-9 • COMMUNITY CREATIVITY COHORT 2 CONVENING**  
Community Creativity Cohort 2 is a participant-led capacity building program that supports organizations to make art and culture central to problem solving on more issues, in more communities and across more sectors in our region. All 40 organizations of Cohort 2 are led by and serve communities of color/Indigenous

communities and/or rural communities. In October 2019, the Foundation hosted a three-day convening to provide cohort members an opportunity to come together to continue building their peer network and community of practice and to attend education sessions on topics such as Native American history and trauma-informed, body-centered psychology.

**10-12 • EDUCATION CONVENING: LEADING THE WAY TOGETHER**  
The Bush Foundation hosted its annual convening for educators, policy makers and community members who are building the movement to offer more student-centered learning in schools across our region. Along with partners The School Leadership Project, Education Evolving and others, we brought together nearly 400 people for a day of learning and connection around the theme "Leading the Way Together."

**13 • STAFF VOLUNTEER DAY**  
Bush Foundation staff volunteered together to help Habitat for Humanity build and rehabilitate homes.

PHOTO 1-3 BRUCE SILCOX PHOTO 4 JEFF ACHEN PHOTO 5-7 BEN GUMERINGER PHOTOGRAPHY

PHOTO 8-12 REBECCA JEAN LAWRENCE PHOTOGRAPHY



# Risk for Reward

With the Neighborhood Development Center, Mihailo “Mike” Temali (BF’98) provides urban communities with business tools and resources to grow from within.

by SARAH CHANDLER

PHOTOGRAPHY HUNT + CAPTURE

Mihailo “Mike” Temali is many things: the proud son of Danish and Yugoslav immigrants, founding CEO of the Neighborhood Development Center (NDC), Eagle Scout, husband, father and dyed-in-the-wool St. Paul East Sider. Just don’t credit him as the mind behind Midtown Global Market, a multicultural food destination in south Minneapolis.

“This wasn’t my idea,” Temali insists with a smile, surveying the market’s exuberant mix of diverse families, couples and Abbott Northwestern Hospital medical staff in mint-green scrubs. Lunch options surrounding them include tamales from La Loma, East African camel burgers from Safari Express and turmeric-scented tikka masala from Hot Indian Foods. Inspired by public markets

like Seattle’s Pike Place and Philadelphia’s Reading Terminal Market, the team that developed the blueprint for Midtown Global Market as a community business incubator built upon the momentum of NDC’s earlier flagship project, Mercado Central.

Temali, a 1998 Bush Fellow, has spent his entire career investing in entrepreneurs and small businesses as catalysts to transform low-income neighborhoods. In the early 2000s, NDC and other partners joined with the City of Minneapolis to transform the abandoned Sears Roebuck building in south Minneapolis into a neighborhood hub with office, residential, commercial and community uses. In 2006, the \$190 million Midtown Exchange project, including Midtown Global Market, was complete. The project Temali calls “an insane risk” paid off, and remains a welcoming international signifier of Minneapolis’ 21st century urban renaissance.

That’s not by accident. NDC, whose mission encompasses community development, community organizing and microfinance, endeavors to harness “the personality of the business owner and the personality of the neighborhood,” Temali says. New entrepreneurs receive technical assistance, legal help, marketing consultation and business training classes in five languages: Spanish, English, Hmong, Somali and Oromo. With these resources, they can make the most of the loans the NDC offers—a total of nearly \$25 million to date.

“I’m endlessly fascinated by entrepreneurs—their cultures, their stories—by what they create from scratch,” Temali says. “It’s like watching an artist create. It’s also super cool to watch their kids follow in their footsteps. It’s intergenerational.”

A stroll through the Market reveals

the power of building strong relationships for growing a business. Taco Cat’s chefs, Intown Sushi proprietor Than Zaw and chief maintenance engineer Melissa Marcelle all greet Temali. Marcelle, a Native American entrepreneur, participated in NDC’s business training sessions before launching The Greenery, a plant shop.

“We’ve trained close to 6,000 low-to-very-low-income people to start a business,” Temali marvels. Close to 90% of these aspiring business owners are people of color. Since its inception, NDC’s training has led to the launch of more than 1,000 small businesses, about half still open, and the creation of more than 5,000 jobs, according to Wilder Research estimates. Well more than half of these businesses employ neighborhood residents, hire people of color and occupy formerly vacant buildings. NDC’s free classes don’t sugarcoat the challenges of entrepreneurship, and the training leads some to get out before getting

started. As for businesses that launch and crash, Temali maintains that NDC’s role is partner, not parent.

“When these things blow up, which they do,” he muses, “we have pretty deep insight into what went wrong. But we are not the driver.”

## East Side Kid

It’s an old question: Are leaders born or made?

Mike Temali’s Yugoslavian attorney father and Danish social worker mother met in a World War II displaced persons camp and eventually emigrated to Youngstown, Ohio. Between them, Temali’s parents spoke seven or eight languages—but English was initially foreign to his father. His father’s inability to communicate, Temali recounts, created a son with empathy for immigrants who, despite their skills and knowledge, were often consigned to low-wage work and discrimination due to language barriers in the U.S. “We dismiss them even



Patrons enjoy a variety of cuisines at Midtown Global Market, a key NDC project.

INTERIOR: BRUCE SILCOX, COURTESY MIDTOWN GLOBAL MARKET

though they might have a Ph.D. or be a judge in their home country,” he says.

In the mid-1950s, the family settled in the Dayton’s Bluff area of St. Paul. Temali describes the East Side of the 1960s as “white, blue collar and dominated by three employers: Hamms, 3M and Whirlpool—all companies that have since left the neighborhood.”

In his 2002 book, “The Community Economic Development Handbook,” Temali describes two neighborhoods: in the first, litter swirls around boarded-up storefronts and residents lucky enough to be employed work elsewhere. The other neighborhood is well-maintained and buzzing with economic and cultural activity. Temali writes, “Imagine that these two neighborhoods are actually the same neighborhood, 5 or 10 years apart in time.”

Temali witnessed the rapid decline of Dayton’s Bluff when the construction of Interstate 94 flattened whole city blocks of St. Paul’s East Side. People left the neighborhood, and by the Internet age, the mom-and-pop businesses succumbed to gentrification.

“We no longer have neighborhood churches, schools or diners—so what you have is isolation,” he says. “NDC spends a lot of our work rebuilding community gathering places.”

### A Lightbulb Moment

In 1990, St. Paul’s Western Bank—then a local family-run institution in Frogtown—hired Temali to extend the reach of its community impact. In those days, Temali was running a two-person office for North End Area Revitalization (NEAR), which focused on supporting local businesses in the Rice Street commercial district.

Temali convinced Western Bank chairman Bill Sands to join him on an impromptu fact-finding trip to Chicago, where the South Shore Bank had become a game-changing economic force on the impoverished South Side. Not long after the trip, Temali experienced what Sands calls a lightbulb moment: “What if we tapped into neighborhood residents’ skills and talents and asked them if they might be interested in training and technical

assistance to either create or expand a business? NDC took off from there.”

An early focus was to help the Latinx community, many of whom were monolingual Spanish speakers, to kickstart businesses. By the mid-1990s, several graduates of the NDC business course envisioned an exciting idea: a mercado, or Mexican-style market, with local entrepreneurs selling food, clothing and household wares. In 1999, Mercado Central launched on Lake Street. Two decades later, the project has come full circle: NDC sold the building for \$1 to the cooperative of tenants, making Mercado Central truly community owned.

NDC has focused on changing negative perceptions of Twin Cities neighborhoods from within. According to NDC, reversing systemic, long-term economic depression and social inequity is not so much bottom up, but inside out. Entrepreneurs start with things they already possess: knowledge, skills, passion and dreams.

“Mike has always believed that you build a community, a city, from within,” says Patti Tototzintle, a longtime NDC board member and CEO of St. Paul domestic violence shelter Casa de Esperanza. “That means you trust the people who live in the community.”

Scaling NDC up from one staff member to 35 has created more challenges along the way. “How do you train and align everyone with the mission?” Temali wonders. “How do you stay out of day-to-day issues? There are a lot of judgment calls—how do you make the endless daily decisions while balancing mission and financials?”

### The Spirit of Adventure

The 66-year-old Temali is, at heart, an adventurer. Over a lunch of shrimp tagine at Moroccan Flavors inside



“I’M ENDLESSLY FASCINATED BY ENTREPRENEURS—THEIR CULTURES, THEIR STORIES—BY WHAT THEY CREATE FROM SCRATCH.”

—Mike Temali

Midtown Global Market, Temali recounts hitchhiking out west after college with a pair of skis and \$20.

“It was my biggest training for this career,” he says with a laugh. “Your job as a hitchhiker is to get the driver talking—so that they keep driving and take you where you need to go.”

Later, trips to Peru, Bolivia, Indonesia and Thailand in the early ’90s were research in the emerging practice of microfinance for community development. In 1998, Temali took a leave of absence from NDC for a Bush Fellowship. He studied microlending and community development in Santiago, Chile. “Those lessons learned abroad during the Bush Fellowship,” he says, “became completely integrated at the NDC, creating a more powerful and confident base.”

What works in Santiago, he found, may not work in Minneapolis. “The amount of work it takes to go from the informal economy to the formal economy in a society like ours is significantly more,” he says. “A loan isn’t enough. You need training and technical assistance.”

Yet, he warns, “There’s a balancing act between overseeing entrepreneurship and scaring the hell out of people.”

### Closing Opportunity Gaps

Also during his Fellowship, Temali gained more perspective on microlending during six months of economics and finance study at Harvard and MIT. While in Massachusetts, he audited lectures with “rock-star professors” teaching students how to scale and how to bring in other people’s money. His time included internships at the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City and global financial nonprofit ACCION USA.

One MIT professor was incredulous when Temali explained NDC’s work: “Let me get this straight,” he told me, “You work with low-income people with bad credit and no money to start businesses that they’ve never run before, in tough low-income neighborhoods? You are brilliant at selecting for failure.”

Where his professor saw failure, Temali saw potential. “Mike taught me that when you have an area with high deficiency or disparity, you have to create high opportunity,” says Mike Goze, CEO of American Indian Community Development Corporation (AICDC) and an NDC board member. “He has taken on a tremendous role in the development of underserved

and newer immigrant populations—Hmong, Latino, Native, Somali and East African—who have all been helped by NDC.”

The motivation behind working with underserved entrepreneurs is not merely economic, but philosophical. “Success is not measured by turning a boutique business into a corporation,” Temali insists. “One of our goals is to get a whole lot of people of color on the ladder, and most haven’t had that chance. We get 95-98% of our loans paid back. The numbers speak for themselves.”

In the case of Hot Indian Foods, NDC mentorship and loans helped a popular food truck business expand to four brick-and-mortar locations, including Midtown Global Market and Target Field. Another NDC-trained success story is Los Ocampo, a taqueria chain with more than 150 employees. “If I have a problem, Mike gives me a solution—or he gives me the number of someone who might have the solution,” says founder Armando Ocampo.

Until recently, Temali still faced occasional pushback from national funders and legislators who believed that NDC only helps mom-and-pop businesses. But the COVID-19



Temali (second from right) receiving the 2013 E Pluribus Unum Prize for exceptional immigrant integration initiatives with (from left) NDC CFO Teshite Wako, Senator Amy Klobuchar and NDC accountant Daniel Birru in Washington, D.C.

PHOTOS COURTESY TEMALI



From above: NDC Director of Lending Perla Mayo (left) working with a borrower; Temali with members of NDC partner organization Community Stabilization Project, a housing advocacy group in St. Paul; entrepreneur training class in the Somali community in Minneapolis' West Bank neighborhood; NDC neighborhood partner New American Academy in Eden Prairie

shutdown changed the narrative. “For the first time in my career, there is a national realization of what communities are like with small and micro businesses shuttered,” he says. “Fifty percent of America works for these businesses, and suddenly they’re unemployed and not paying rent while they’re closed. Visually, our neighborhoods’ commercial corridors look like a ghost town. It’s where people get their daily experiences and needs met, whether it’s getting their haircut, a lunch, a morning coffee or an evening workout. Small and micro businesses have the nation’s attention, one level below the health workers in terms of priorities.”

### The National Stage

NDC’s strategies have become the gold standard among community development organizations. As the founder of NDC’s national program, the nonprofit Build from Within Alliance (BfW Alliance), Temali has traveled to cities from Anchorage to Miami to train local leaders and guide community development operations across 37 low-income neighborhoods in 12 cities. The mission is a familiar one: build neighborhoods, empower diverse entrepreneurs and disrupt poverty.

“The United States is good at doing two things with low-income neighborhoods of color: abandonment and gentrification,” Temali reflects.

While leading the BfW Alliance, Temali is slowly handing off regional NDC leadership to Renay Dossman, the new Twin Cities executive director. BfW seeks to carry out NDC’s four pillars: training, lending, technical assistance and real estate. By including ownership, successes of newly thriving neighborhoods do not force longtime residents and businesses to relocate when property values rise.

Recently, climate change has also

influenced the BfW Alliance’s work in low-income communities. In hurricane- and flooding-prone coastal cities like Miami and Houston, land at safer elevations in low-income neighborhoods becomes vulnerable to developers and corporations. If the community doesn’t buy the land, skyrocketing prices and gentrification are imminent threats, Temali predicts.

### Rooted Resilience

For all of Temali’s relentless energy, he’s also a keen listener who exudes a calm focus. His colleagues describe him as fun-loving, with an infectious sense of humor and a fierce willingness to embrace uncertainty. “He takes the risks that need to be taken,” affirms NDC board member Mike Goze.

So how does an effective leader maintain resilience through the inevitable storms that risk invites? Unsurprisingly, Temali finds balance by staying rooted in the community where he grew up. “I live six minutes from my office, even in bad weather.” Lifelong friendships ground Temali. When he married wife Laura, an adult education teacher with whom he has two children, five friends he has known since childhood flanked him at St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church.

Would Temali blanch at being called a rebel or a visionary? Probably. He says he has weathered every difficulty and celebrated every success in tandem with community leaders. Yet his vision remains bold.

“I’ve spent my entire career embracing this one tool for community empowerment,” he says. “I don’t view my role at NDC as the driver of these businesses: it’s their energy, ideas, skills and families who sacrifice. It’s their 100-hour work weeks. I have never spent one day in this alone, and I have never taken one step alone.”



PHOTOS COURTESY TEMALI

# Inspiring Minds, Bridging Gaps

Bethlehem Gronneberg, 2016 Bush Fellow and founder of Fargo's uCodeGirl, multiplies her impact from Ethiopia to Fargo and back again

by MO PERRY

PHOTOGRAPHY DAVID ELLIS



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“WE WANT YOUNG WOMEN TO BE THE AUTHORS OF THEIR LIVES AND THE CREATORS OF SOLUTIONS TO REAL-WORLD PROBLEMS. TO BE THE DRIVING FORCE OF INNOVATION AND LEADERSHIP IN TECH RATHER THAN JUST CONSUMERS OF IT.”

—Bethlehem Gronneberg



**“GROWING UP, ALTHOUGH BOOKS WERE SCARCE, I READ EVERYTHING I COULD GET MY HANDS ON. I WAS INTENSELY PASSIONATE ABOUT LEARNING, AND SEEING EVERYONE ELSE IN MY FAMILY READ AND WRITE, I WAS IN A HURRY TO GET THERE.”**

*—Bethlehem Gronneberg*

**B**ethlehem Gronneberg was born in Addis Ababa, a beautiful city nestled in the foothills of Ethiopia’s Simien Mountains. A first-generation college student, her family nurtured in Bethlehem a passion for learning. “Growing up, although books were scarce, I read everything I could get my hands on,” she remembers. “I was intensely passionate about learning, and seeing everyone else in my family read and write, I was in a hurry to get there.”

Because there were no libraries nearby, the Bible and chapter books captured her imagination at home. “The stories spoke to me and enlightened me,” she says. Books started her on a lifelong journey of blazing trails, breaking down barriers and bringing digital worlds into being.

Decades later, Gronneberg brings the same imagination and creativity to girls in North Dakota. In 2016, Gronneberg celebrated twin milestones: she was awarded a Bush Fellowship and founded uCodeGirl, a Fargo-based nonprofit that aims to bridge the gender gap in science, technology, engineering

and math (STEM). Her mission is to empower girls with mastery of computer science, which transformed her from a shy young girl in Ethiopia into an influential global leader.

### **Overcoming Barriers, Blazing New Trails**

In 1991, Gronneberg was a second-year student studying statistics at Addis Ababa University when she became one of two women invited to pursue the just-launched computer science minor—Ethiopia’s first. Gronneberg’s math professors thought her proficiency with numbers and logic would make her a good fit.

“I was curious, but also terrified,” she says. “I had never touched a computer before this, let alone programmed one. However, assurance from my professor gave me the boost I needed to persist. It was the beginning of a long, fulfilling journey.” On her first day in the lab, she sat down at a big, boxy IBM computer that ran a programming language called BASIC and wrote her first instruction. “Hello!” the machine responded. Gronneberg was

intrigued, and never looked back.

Against many odds, Gronneberg became one of the first two women to graduate with a computer science minor in Ethiopia in 1993. Dr. Nancy Hafkin, who pioneered the development of electronic communication in Africa in the ’80s and ’90s, explains that while Ethiopia now has 64 universities, there was only one in the early ’90s, and tens of thousands of students tried to get in every year.

“For a young girl like Bethlehem to get through 12th grade and compete with all the boys in the country just to gain entrance to the university was amazing,” she says. “Women made up no more than 10% of the student body, and they were mostly clustered in the social and health sciences. But when Bethlehem sees something she wants to accomplish, she goes for it, even when she’s got no role model.”

After graduating, Gronneberg worked at the university as a research assistant until 1995, when Hafkin recruited her to work for the United Nations’ Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). She was hired as a system administrator, and later became a web developer.

“I told her the UNECA needed a website and asked her if she could build one for us,” says Hafkin. “She didn’t have any experience designing websites, since the computer science lab at the university wasn’t well-equipped, but she read everything in sight and developed a prototype. I invited the Assistant Secretary General of the UN to see a demo of it, and he was blown away.”

At the time, Ethiopia still had very few libraries, let alone access to the burgeoning world wide web. Hafkin made it a priority for the UNECA to lead the development of electronic

communication networks throughout Africa, and she tapped Gronneberg to be the organization’s webmaster, sending her to Canada and the U.S. for more web development training.

“I had never traveled outside of Ethiopia, so it was really exciting,” says Gronneberg. “Our server was located at the UN in New York City, so I went there to learn how to update the website. I had never been on the 38th floor of anything!”

Her tech and coding peers’ passion proved contagious, and she returned to Addis Ababa eager to train her UNECA coworkers. “I’d run mini-workshops on what the internet is,” says Gronneberg. “I explained that ‘It’s like an information superhighway.’ A few people asked, ‘What’s a highway?’” Gronneberg traveled throughout the continent to train and empower peers in Botswana and Cameroon to launch their own websites.

Hafkin watched with pride as Gronneberg shared her knowledge and passion. “Having your first job out of university be designing a website for the UN is quite remarkable,” says Hafkin. “But Bethlehem immediately had such professionalism that it disarmed anyone who might have been skeptical about her abilities.”

### **A Time of Change**

In 2000, Bethlehem married North Dakotan Ron Gronneberg, who had worked as a consultant for the UNECA. The two moved to Fargo together, and now have three sons. “When I arrived two decades ago, Fargo wasn’t as diverse as it is now,” remembers Gronneberg. “Leaving behind everything I knew and loved, only carrying what was in my heart, coming to a place with a different

culture that was unfamiliar was not an easy endeavor. I built my new community one relationship at a time.”

Gronneberg became a programmer/analyst for a Fargo-based software development company and continued her professional and technological development. In 2012, she graduated with a master’s degree in software engineering from North Dakota State University (NDSU) while working full-time as a software engineer at a company building automation and software solutions for healthcare. Senior and management roles within software engineering followed.

“I associate a feeling of isolation with my time working in, and managing, software development teams,” says Gronneberg. “You feel like a novelty—an immigrant, Black and female developer. There is a certain level of weight with that. As a hiring manager, I wondered why more women who are computer science graduates in the U.S. are not part of the applicant pool.”

She saw plenty of women working as testers, business analysts and quality analysts, but a severe shortage of developers. “I later learned it’s a pipeline issue. There simply aren’t many women choosing that career path.”

It turns out that the underrepresentation of women developers in the workforce can be traced all the way back to their formative tween years. “Research points to middle school as a critical time period for engaging girls in STEM and helping them see and chart a pathway in it for themselves,” says Gronneberg.

This revelation inspired her life’s “third phase”—a phase of bold vision and powerful leadership to enact systemic change for the advancement of women in technology.



*From left:* Gronneberg coding in BASIC and FORTRAN as a second year student of Addis Ababa University’s pilot computer science program in 1991; at her graduation (holding folder) to receive a Bachelor of Science in statistics and minor in computer science

PHOTOS COURTESY GRONNEBERG

## Breaking the Paradigm

Women currently make up only 18% of computer science graduates nationally, according to National Science Foundation data, despite huge (and growing) demand. In 2017, there were more than 500,000 job openings in the U.S. that required a four-year computer science degree, yet according to the National Center for Education Statistics the nation produced only about 71,000 computer science graduates. According to the Computer Science Education Coalition, new graduates are estimated to only fill half of the more than 900,000 open computing jobs by the end of 2020.

Not only are women missing out on promising and potentially lucrative tech careers, but this has also left the field with a “sameness of thought,” according to David Batcheller, CEO of Fargo-based Appareo Systems. Batcheller’s product development and technology company works with uCodeGirl to provide mentors and sponsorships. “We need to do a lot of paradigm breaking upstream to create the diversity of thought and capability the industry needs,” he says. “[The technology field] could be more successful, creative and fun if we weren’t so homogenous.”

Changing the culture of tech will go a long way toward eliminating some of the most challenging barriers to women in the field. As more girls and women embrace STEM, they will be able to reshape the field’s reputation, perceived and real, as a “boys’ club.”

Breaking the paradigm also includes showcasing STEM’s creative potential, and pairing girls with role models and mentors who reflect their interests and identities. “I wanted to create a STEM-powered community of girls and their

supportive mentors. A creative and enriching space where girls can micro-experiment and discover their inner ‘nerdness,’” says Gronneberg. “Girls already have the natural curiosity, creativity, focus and intellect to succeed in the ‘T’ of STEM. It’s about helping them explore how tech can make the world more kind, healthy and fun, while solving real-world problems.”

So Gronneberg began volunteering, teaching coding, mentoring students and presenting at events such as Microsoft’s DigiGirlz Day, a one-day workshop designed to show girls what tech careers look like. At that event in 2015, Madison Pilon first saw Gronneberg speak. It was the summer before her freshman year of high school at Central Cass High School, about 20 minutes west of Fargo. She had signed up for DigiGirlz Day half-heartedly, at the urging of her mother, Mary Beth. But the event ended up changing the course of her academic life. “I went to pick her up at the end of the day, and I immediately knew something big had happened. It was like she had been hit by lightning,” says Mary Beth.

“I’m very girly,” says Madison, “and it seemed like STEM didn’t fit my personality. But Bethlehem came out and spoke that day at DigiGirlz, and she’s also really girly. I could relate to her. She showed me that you can be both.” Madison became a member of the uCodeGirl leadership team, and after graduating from Central Cass will begin studying computer science at NDSU in fall 2020. “The way she grew through Bethlehem’s program enabled Madison to get to that point,” says Mary Beth. “It tapped into her greatest strengths. It feels like we found her people. Without Bethlehem she might have fallen through the cracks.”



GRONNEBERG WITH STUDENT COURTESY UCODEGIRL

## uCodeGirl is Born

In 2016, Kathy Cochran, a 1995 Bush Fellow and co-worker of Gronneberg’s, convinced her to apply for a Bush Fellowship, noting that her dedication to creating big, systemic change for girls in STEM was a great fit for the program. “I didn’t think it was for me,” remembers Gronneberg. “It seemed very high up and out of reach. But after attending the Bush Foundation’s webinar on the program I realized it is for people like me who are filled with dreams and know what they want.”

The application process forced her to clarify how she could increase her impact and think bigger. “They have a great set of questions that make you think about what you really want to do,” she notes. By the time she was awarded a Bush Fellowship after the nine-month selection and interview process, she had also launched

“THERE ARE PLENTY OF CODING CAMPS AND INITIATIVES OUT THERE, BUT WHAT’S SPECIAL ABOUT UCODEGIRL IS THAT HOLISTIC APPROACH OF EQUIPPING THESE GIRLS TO HAVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS AS WELL.”

—Bree Langemo, founding board member of uCodeGirl

uCodeGirl—a nonprofit dedicated to filling the technology sandbox with diverse voices globally. Its programs are designed to inspire and enrich young girls with leadership traits, computational skills and an entrepreneurial mindset through real-world projects, mentorship and immersion into the world of tech.

“We launched uCodeGirl when the Fargo-Moorhead tech entrepreneurial ecosystem was growing and thriving,” says Gronneberg. “It became a fertile ground for uCodeGirl to impact the community. The Bush Fellowship was an extraordinary opportunity for personal growth and reflection. It is a great platform to amplify my passion and vision.”

## Holistic Engagement

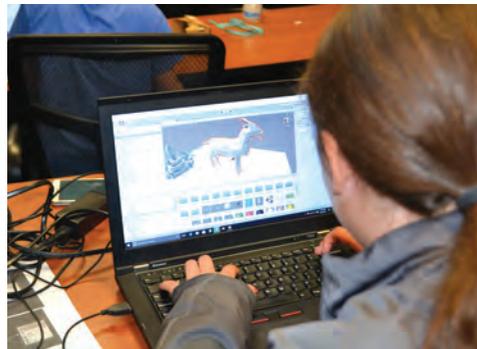
Bree Langemo, a law professor at Concordia College and former

president of the Entrepreneurial Learning Initiative (an organization that advocates for entrepreneurial mindset education), was drawn to Gronneberg’s vision because of its holistic approach. “uCodeGirl offers enrichment and mentorship, and even more importantly, community,” says Langemo. “It’s more than a program. It’s an ecosystem. When a middle school girl sees a high school girl choose tech as a pathway and then come back and serve as a mentor, that creates a community of support.”

A founding board member of uCodeGirl, Langemo also appreciates the organization’s three-fold mission to train girls to be leaders, programmers and entrepreneurs. “If you only provide the computational and technical skills, they may not see themselves launching, creating or innovating something new in the field,” she notes. “There are plenty of coding camps out there, but what’s special about uCodeGirl is that holistic approach of equipping girls to have entrepreneurship and leadership skills as well.”

“We want young women to be the authors of their lives and the creators of solutions to real-world problems,” says Gronneberg. “To be the driving force of innovation and leadership in tech rather than just consumers of it.” At uCodeGirl’s summer camp in 2017, one team of girls designed and coded T-shirts to light up in tandem with the wearer’s beating heart. Some went on to participate in a national STEM design competition, prototyping an organizer-based app to help alleviate stress in teenagers.

Dr. Kendall Nygard, chair of NDSU’s Department of Computer Science, served as Gronneberg’s advisor for her master’s degree and is advising her



as she works toward her Ph.D. in the same field. He also leads cybersecurity instruction at uCodeGirl camps.

According to Nygard, the percentage of women majoring in computer science at NDSU is between 10-15%. “Where’s the lever to change that?” he asks. “We really need to step it up. When we consider emerging areas like cybersecurity, the need for more bright computer science graduates is even more extreme. What Bethlehem is doing with uCodeGirl is one example of a lever.”

### Growing as a Leader

In order to enact her vision for uCodeGirl, Gronneberg knew there were a few areas in which she needed to grow. In her application for the Bush Fellowship, she wrote about wanting to improve her public speaking skills, learn more about managing a nonprofit and conquer the voice in her head whispering about the risk of failure. She wrote, “I need to keep reminding myself, ‘What is the worst that can happen if this doesn’t work, and can I live with that?’”

The Fellowship allowed her to travel to California for training on

social entrepreneurship at Stanford University and to attend a women’s leadership retreat. “It took me out of my little circle into the bigger world and let me see myself as part of the bigger sum,” says Gronneberg. “It opened my eyes to possibilities on a larger scale—what can I do in my community and in the world to move this needle forward?”

While building her nonprofit, she employed the same mindset she’d learned in the tech and startup world. “Bethlehem takes the lessons of tech into the work of nonprofits,” says Lulete Mola, vice president of community impact for the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota, a funding partner of uCodeGirl. “She translates that idea of innovation to social innovation, saying it’s OK to try, to fail fast and fail forward.”

“She’s relentless in her passion and pursuit,” says Langemo. “She has a quiet, commanding presence so when she talks, people listen. And the Fellowship has helped her improve her speaking skills even more and infect others with her passion. People want to see her succeed because Bethlehem succeeding means all these young girls are succeeding as well.”

### Collaborating Across Sectors

Gronneberg knew her vision would require collaboration between schools, businesses, families, nonprofits and funding organizations. “I didn’t want to create a transactional coding camp,” she says. “I wanted to build an ecosystem that sustainably engages young women and helps our community to thrive.” In addition to uCodeGirl’s partnerships with local schools

and universities such as NDSU, the organization also calls upon area businesses for mentors, sponsorships and job shadowing opportunities.

Many of the mentors and business leaders say they get more out of their support of uCodeGirl than they give. “From an enterprise perspective, it’s difficult to invest the time and energy to promote STEM to an audience of young women,” says Appareo Systems CEO David Batcheller. “uCodeGirl is a bite-size way for a business like ours to support events and activities with schools and students. It’s all packaged up for us and makes it easy for professionals to engage and have a real impact.”

And many of the women tech professionals who serve as uCodeGirl mentors express gratitude for the opportunity to give back, saying they wish something like uCodeGirl had existed when they were in school.

There’s no doubt that Gronneberg herself has stitched together this ecosystem of support. “She’s a connector,” says Batcheller. “But she’s also a brilliant, educated scientist and engineer—she’s an inspiring example of what the program is intended to achieve.”

It’s the role modeling that lies at the heart of uCodeGirl’s mission that will continue to multiply the organization’s impact. Since uCodeGirl’s founding in 2016, two of its participants have already gone on to realize their passion in programming at area colleges, and three high school seniors have plans to do the same in fall 2020.

“Even when they’re in college, we won’t leave them alone,” says Gronneberg. “When they graduate, we want them to come back and be mentors. The multiplying is just beginning.”



Opposite and above: Scenes from uCodeGirl in Fargo, North Dakota

STUDENTS COURTESY UCODERGIRL



From above: Gronneberg at Africa Code Week in Ethiopia in 2017; instructing at uCodeGirl's Crack the Code: Tech Camp for Girls at Lebawi Academy in Ethiopia; accepting the 2018 YWCA Cass Clay Woman of the Year award in Science and Technology

### Enlarging the Circle

uCodeGirl emphasizes inclusivity not just in terms of gender, but also in engaging girls from diverse backgrounds, including immigrants, Native Americans and those from disadvantaged communities throughout the upper Midwest. As Gronneberg pursued her Bush Fellowship and was challenged to think bigger, she expanded uCodeGirl's mission to Africa. In her travels to visit family (a crucial element of her self-care), she hosts international coding camps and workshops to introduce STEM to young girls in Ethiopia. She envisions a world where the people who create and build software mirror the societies for which they create and build.

In the summer of 2019, Gronneberg hosted a coding camp for 130 high school girls in Ethiopia and facilitated a Skype call between uCodeGirl participants in Addis Ababa and Fargo. "They had so much fun, just giggling and being teenagers, asking questions about each other's cultures," says Gronneberg. At one point, a Fargo girl asked an Ethiopian girl about her favorite part of coding. The Ethiopian girl said she had no answer because she didn't know what coding was. "Everyone was quiet for a second," says Gronneberg, "and then the Fargo girl said, 'Oh you will love it; you'll be so good at it.' Right there, across the world, she gave that girl permission to explore and be empowered."

Gronneberg's work with uCodeGirl in Ethiopia led to a private meeting with President Sahle-Work Zewde, the country's first female president. The efforts to engage young girls in STEM align with the president's vision of girl empowerment through education. Also in 2019, Gronneberg

was the guest of honor of North Dakota Senator John Hoeven at the State of the Union address in Washington, D.C. "She's a North Dakota ambassador to the world in a lot of ways," says her Ph.D. advisor, Dr. Nygard. "She sends me selfies with the senator and the Ethiopian president. All these people buy into what she's trying to do."

"As a partner in her work and as a fellow Ethiopian, I'm so inspired by her," says Mola of the Women's Foundation of Minnesota. "She connects what's happening in greater Minnesota to the Twin Cities to East Africa. She's a global leader." Hafkin, Gronneberg's first boss and lifelong friend and mentor, says, "It's been amazing to see her grow from the young woman I first knew who was so shy and soft-spoken to someone who can speak with the Ethiopian president and promote the program she developed globally. She's a model for so many others. She shows young women that her story can be their story, too." 

**"SHE'S A CONNECTOR. BUT SHE'S ALSO A BRILLIANT, EDUCATED SCIENTIST AND ENGINEER— SHE'S AN INSPIRING EXAMPLE OF WHAT THE PROGRAM IS INTENDED TO ACHIEVE."**

— David Batcheller, Appareo Systems CEO



### INVESTING IN PEOPLE

Giving grants to individuals, rather than just organizations, is unusual in philanthropy, but it's a key element of the Bush Foundation's strategy for building a region that's better for everyone. "All our organizations, systems and ideas are powered by people," says Anita Patel, leadership programs director at the Bush Foundation. "We want them to have what they need to think bigger and think differently, whether that means cultural and personal healing or getting exposed to new ideas or people. When we think about what helps our region to thrive, it's that individuals are inspired, equipped and connected to lead change in ways that are effective and equitable."

The idea is that inspiring, equipping and connecting leaders will make them stronger and more effective in addressing whatever issues or problems they want to tackle in the future. "There may be a specific issue or project motivating you to want to become stronger right now, but your growth as a leader isn't explicitly tied to that issue," notes Patel. "You might solve that problem. We want you to be prepared to take on the next one."

Ultimately, investing in individuals is really about investing in communities. "No one leads on their own," says Patel. "We're all part of something bigger. The money and resources may go to one person, but through their leadership and connections, they ensure that investment ripples out to their wider community."

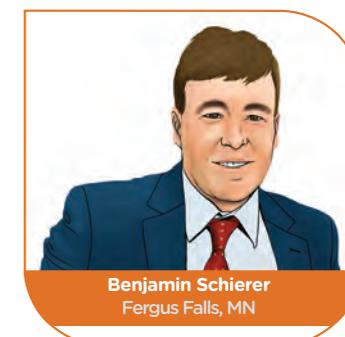
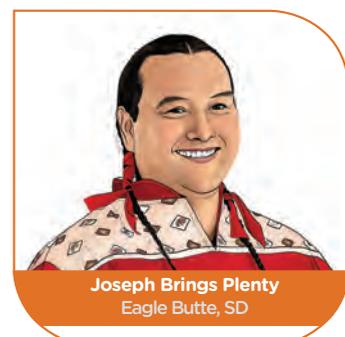
The Bush Foundation invests in individuals through the Bush Fellowship, which provides grants of up to \$100,000 to leaders in all sectors to help them strengthen and develop their leadership skills.

For more information on how to apply for a Bush Fellowship, visit [bfdn.org/bfp](https://bfdn.org/bfp).

PHOTOS COURTESY GRONNEBERG

# Congratulations to the 2020 Bush Fellows

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



ILLUSTRATIONS HAWWA YOUNGMARK

Applications accepted August 18 through September 17, 2020.



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“ARCHIE BUSH’S GENEROSITY SHOWS HIS FONDNESS FOR HIS HOMETOWN AND A BELIEF THAT THOSE WHO ARE SUCCESSFUL HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP OTHERS FIND WAYS TO BE SUCCESSFUL.”

–Dave Smiglewski (BF’16),  
Granite Falls mayor

# Hometown Legacy

Archibald Bush’s community spirit lives on in his birthplace of Granite Falls, Minnesota

Dreams and professional goals led Archibald “Archie” Bush out of Granite Falls, but he always remembered where he came from. After founding the Bush Foundation in 1953, he committed to giving back to the community near the 240-acre farm where he was raised. Bush Foundation grantees in Archie’s hometown have included the Yellow Medicine East School District, Granite Falls Public Library, Upper Sioux Indian Community and addiction recovery center Project Turnabout. In 2017, the Bush Foundation gave \$1.8 million to the Granite Falls Area Community Foundation—\$200,000 to address immediate community needs, \$600,000 to fund college scholarships for area students and \$1 million to establish the Archibald Bush Endowment Fund to serve the Granite Falls community into the future.

The Granite Falls Bridge, which is a suspension footbridge crossing the Minnesota River, was built next to downtown Granite Falls in 1935.

“GRANITE FALLS IS A COMMUNITY OF FAMILY, TRADITIONS,  
AND GOOD AND GENUINE PEOPLE THAT MAKE ME BURST  
WITH PRIDE IN CALLING THIS MY HOMETOWN.”

—Anna McCosh, Archie Bush  
Legacy Scholarship recipient

NSS  
GRANITE FALLS

These railroad tracks run adjacent to the Yellow Medicine Quarry, a local employer since the 1940s, and connect Granite Falls to Marshall to the south and Willmar to the north.

RAILWAY AND MCCOSH GENE STUKEL SMIGLEWSKI HUNT + GATHER  
PREVIOUS SPREAD, RIVER JAMEY GUY



above: Granite Falls Mayor **Dave Smiglewski** (BF'16) is a board member for historical Bush Foundation grantee Project Turnabout. He used his Bush Fellowship to further his education and explore ways to inspire others to become more civically engaged.

below: **Anna McCosh** is one of five 2018 Yellow Medicine East High School graduates to receive a \$16,000 Archie Bush Legacy Scholarship. She is attending the University of Wisconsin – River Falls.



above: **Ashley Hanson** (BF'19) established the YES House artist hub as the home for an official Granite Falls artist-in-residence. "Granite Falls is founded on a legacy of cooperation and big ideas," she says. "It's a spirited small town that is looking to its arts and cultural workers to help shape its future."

below: **Teresa R. Peterson** (BF'11), Dakota, Upper Sioux Community, is a 2016 Native Nation Rebuilder through the Native Governance Center and serves on the Southwest Initiative Foundation's board of directors. Her Bush Fellowship explored Indigenous leadership, conflict resolution and Dakota ways of decision making.



"BECAUSE OF THE CLOSE PROXIMITY AND OVERLAPPING FAMILIES AND NETWORKS, THERE IS A SHARED HISTORY AND A HOPEFUL FUTURE BETWEEN THE UPPER SIOUX COMMUNITY AND THE TOWN OF GRANITE FALLS."

— Teresa R. Peterson (BF'11)

A stretch of the Minnesota River flows within Upper Sioux Agency State Park, which was established in 1963 to preserve the remains of the historic Upper Sioux Agency (or Yellow Medicine Agency) that was destroyed in the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. The site was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1970.

HANSON HUNT + GATHER PETERSON SOUTHWEST INITIATIVE FOUNDATION  
MINNESOTA RIVER JAMEY GUY

# Community in Charge

Appetite for Change is fostering a movement to put the North Minneapolis population in control of its food spaces

by MECCA BOS



PHOTOGRAPHY ACKERMAN + GRUBER



Fresh-picked produce from one of the organization's seven urban farms  
Opposite: Tekyla Thompson and Arieana Moore at West Broadway Farmer's Market



AFC founders Princess Haley, Michelle Horovitz, and LaTasha Powell

When Alona Henderson was a little girl, her grandmother cooked food for three buildings within the housing projects they called home on the South Side of Chicago. Henderson ran the plates of macaroni and cheese, collard greens and scratch-made cakes up and down the stairs and collected the money.

By the time she was 10, Henderson was juggling far more than deliveries. Her responsibilities expanded to caring for her sickly grandmother by doing the cooking, giving grandma her meds and paying the bills. In 2006, at the age of 20, Henderson moved to Minnesota to find a better life, and respect for her cooking prowess followed. “I kept hearing this: ‘You need to do it,’” she says.

A turning point came when Henderson connected with the Minneapolis-based nonprofit Appetite for Change (AFC). AFC was founded in 2012 by a trio of women—Princess Haley (formerly Titus), Michelle Horovitz and LaTasha Powell—who sought to use food as a tool for “health, wealth and social change” in North Minneapolis. While that mission has not changed, a movement has emerged from the effort: putting diverse communities—and Black women, in particular—in charge of their own food spaces, a powerful vision from which countless positive outcomes can follow.

Through engagement with the Northside Food Business Incubator program, an AFC partnership with the North Minneapolis-based nonprofit Northside Economic Opportunity Network (NEON), Henderson was able to launch Royalty Soul Food & Catering. Within days, she had her business license, the start of a business plan and access to a professional kitchen. She could take catering orders and do pop-ups for her new enterprise.

Her dream is to pick up her grandmother’s torch and cook fresh and healthy takeout meals daily for working Northside families. “People need healthy, traditional food daily—not just once in a while,” she says.

Henderson hopes to open the Black-owned-and-operated storefront in North Minneapolis. “This is not something I’m just jumping into,” she says. “This is something that’s been bred into me through my bloodline.”

### The Secret Sauce: Community-Led Solutions

AFC founders Haley, Powell and Horovitz came from different backgrounds, but they believed in the power of food as a change agent in North Minneapolis—which was high on fast food, low on affordable healthy meal options.

“Food is what brings the family together,” Horovitz says. “That’s bringing people together around a table to eat and talk, not eating McDonald’s in the car together.” Children and young adults who regularly eat family dinners perform better in school, develop healthier diets and have a wide range of mental health benefits, according to several scientific studies.

After growing up on the tough South Side of Chicago and relocating to Minneapolis, Haley lost a son when a stray bullet from gang-related violence hit him in 2010. She and Powell, a lifelong Northside resident, wanted to provide positive options for other area youth, including their own children.

Horovitz’s father grew up in North Minneapolis. After working as a public defender and line cook in Miami, she moved back in 2010 and was eager to reconnect with the community—respectfully.

“We had ideas about more gardens, a grocery store and healthier options with locally owned food businesses,” says Haley. “We also thought that it would be disrespectful to impose our answers to the issues around food access without consulting with members of the community.”

They asked the neighborhood to join them, over food and cooking, to discuss how they would like to see the Northside’s food landscape change. Haley says this is how any real work gets done in the Black community. The elders, women and youth all came together to talk and to be heard. That’s their “secret sauce,” she says.

From those initial community meetings, Appetite for Change was born. Now, AFC offers a bevy of community-led programs and opportunities, including cooking workshops, urban farms, commercial kitchen space for food entrepreneurs, catering and dine-in restaurants. Throughout all their initiatives, AFC has developed a holistic food system that spans production, processing, distribution, access and consumption. For example, fruit and vegetables planted and grown by local staff and youth in AFC’s seven North

“WE HAD IDEAS ABOUT MORE GARDENS, A GROCERY STORE AND HEALTHIER OPTIONS WITH LOCALLY OWNED FOOD BUSINESSES.”

—Princess Haley, AFC co-founder



Appetite for Change manages the West Broadway Farmers Market.

FOUNDERS TYSON M. CROCKETT, COURTESY AFC

Minneapolis urban gardens end up at the AFC-operated West Broadway Farmers Market and in the program's commercial food businesses. As they've grown, AFC has kept coming back to their community for feedback and input.

In 2017, AFC's innovative work was recognized with a Bush Prize for Community Innovation. With Bush Prize funds, AFC added more space for indoor urban agriculture, a youth staff office and more space for the rest of the staff. They also made improvements at their Northside-based Breaking Bread Café. "The Bush Prize has allowed AFC to invest in our long-term sustainability while improving our impact in the community," Horovitz says.

"The growth has been divine," Haley says. "We went from sitting on the floor of the Jordan Area Community Council to being in the business section of the newspaper. The initial engagement of the community really caused an organic response that shifted the culture of North Minneapolis. Now the people who are being disproportionately impacted [by social and economic disparities] are the ones solving their own problems."

### **Rooted and Rising in North Minneapolis**

When LaTajjah Powell, daughter of AFC co-founder LaTasha Powell, thinks about growing up with a nurturing family in North Minneapolis, she sees a beautiful place and a beautiful community. And she's not alone: the area has parks, tree-lined streets and a vibrant artistic history that once saw native son Prince play his first solo concert at the Capri Theater on West Broadway Avenue.

However, she grew to understand that "Not everybody thinks of North Minneapolis as a beautiful place."

Even as a child, LaTajjah knew her neighborhood was missing things that other communities take for granted. "We did not have one restaurant where you could go and sit down where people who look like you are cooking and serving your food," she says. "A lot of people are standing on the corner and don't have a safe space."

By many metrics, North Minneapolis (composed of six neighborhoods that are officially known as Near North) has unique challenges. The Twin Cities metro area ranks among the worst nationwide for racial disparities between white and Black residents. Nearly half of Near North's population of about 35,000 people are Black—compared to just 13.4% of Hennepin County, encompassing Minneapolis and nearby suburbs. Census data shows that Near North has higher unemployment rates, and lower graduation rates and median household incomes, than other parts of the metro area. What's more, "In the city of Minneapolis, 75% of our shooting victims are African-Americans," Minneapolis Police Chief Medaria Arradondo said at a 2018 city council committee meeting. "It's a public health crisis, quite frankly."

Add a history of systemic disinvestment, segregation, gentrification and corresponding traumas to all of the above. With complex challenges, complex solutions must be explored.

Now in her early 20s, LaTajjah can see her childhood home from the windows of AFC's West Broadway headquarters. Currently an evaluation specialist and program facilitator, she has worked at AFC since its inception.



When well-intentioned support efforts from outside of the community come in, she says, they often miss an important piece: they forget to listen. "Like, they have all this stuff they wanted to do for youth," she says. "But there wasn't any youth involved. The culture here is different. A lot of people don't really understand that."

Appetite for Change's Youth Training and Opportunities Program provides peer-led opportunities to work in the garden, the kitchen and even in the recording studio as a part of the music collective AFC Urban Youth.

A 2016 hip-hop song and music video produced by AFC youth, "Grow Food," went viral, racking up more than a half million views to date. "See in my hood, there ain't really much to eat / Popeye's on the corner, McDonald's right across the street / All this talk about guns, and the drugs, pretty serious / But look at what they're feeding

BREAKING BREAD CAFÉ DAVID PIERLINI

STATION 81 COURTESY UNION DEPOT

y'all—that's what's really killing us," goes the opening rhyme.

"Every day I come in here, there is a kid with a new idea," says Ieshia Dabbs, AFC's youth training and opportunities program facilitator. "A lot of them have never had someone in their life to tell them they can prosper. They come in and they talk, and they talk so much. When they come together, it's a different kind of vibe. We don't limit ourselves to our failures, but use them to project our success."

### **Real Food for Real People**

When it came to the formation of another AFC initiative, Breaking Bread Café, Princess Haley offers a story: A youth group arrived one night with no easy answers for dinner. When one of the many fried chicken restaurants that dot West Broadway was suggested, they pushed back, saying "We ain't eating that s---!"



Left: Breaking Bread Café in North Minneapolis Above, right: The newly opened Station 81 inside Union Depot in St. Paul



"They're passionate," she recalls. "They went off and they came back with data. They said, 'There's 38 fast food restaurants up and down these streets. If there's a wedding or a funeral, we have to spend money outside of our community for a nicer meal.'"

In 2015, Appetite for Change built a restaurant out of that pushback. On many days the sunny storefront at Breaking Bread thrummed on all cylinders, providing "global comfort food" meals and an environment that was previously lacking in North Minneapolis—a warm third space operated by Black people, for Black people living in the neighborhood.

Biscuit sandwiches and dry-rub chicken with mac and cheese and collards came sailing out, piping hot, as kids zoomed around the courtyard and neighbors gathered for coffee and coconut cornbread. In off hours, its Kindred Kitchen commercial kitchen

space offered space for fledgling food entrepreneurs' pop-ups.

In the summer of 2019, Breaking Bread Café paused its service to restructure its financial sustainability, staffing and overall quality of the dining experience. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, its reopening was delayed.

In late 2019, Appetite for Change opened a new restaurant, Station 81, inside the Union Depot transportation hub in St. Paul's Lowertown neighborhood. The menu carries over Breaking Bread's spirit of healthy, affordable and locally grown ingredients and includes vegetarian and vegan options. It also seeks to provide employment opportunities to underserved populations. During COVID-19, Station 81 has partnered with Second Harvest Heartland's Minnesota Central Kitchen initiative and



Above: Ibrahim Mohammed, Appetite for Change urban agriculture program manager, at one of their seven urban farms Right: Youth and adults (Omariasha Houston pictured) tend the plots using regenerative, sustainable and organic techniques.



produced 1,000 free meals daily for local residents in need.

Along with their dine-in restaurants, AFC offers full-service catering and an on-the-job training program for staff. “Philosophically speaking, food and hospitality improved my quality of life, and I’m interested in providing that to the people I work with,” says Geoffrey Wilson, AFC’s catering director and a North Minneapolis resident. “A lot of people that work for us haven’t gone to culinary school or haven’t worked at, or even eaten at really good restaurants. We’re bringing people to the spaces they might not otherwise have access to.”

### Northside Business Growth

“The food business is brutal, and the people who live in North Minneapolis have a lot more obstacles,” says Ann Fix, business advisor/program manager for the Northside Food Business Incubator. The program is part of NEON’s mission to build and support Northside businesses owned by lower-income residents.

And yet, Fix believes growing small

businesses is the best way to curb gentrification as developers eye prime Near North land close to Minneapolis’ downtown core. Rising housing prices and new developments signal another uncertain period for the neighborhood that was predominantly Jewish immigrants and their descendants until the middle of the 20th century. By the late ’60s, unrest and riots in North Minneapolis increased and a high percentage of the Jewish population migrated to nearby suburbs.

But who will capitalize on the next round of economic development on the Northside? “Small [Black-owned] business can make a difference and create wealth in our community,” she says “[Those small business owners] are going to hire from within the community and train young people.”

As a response to the few Black-owned businesses in this predominantly Black neighborhood, AFC’s Kindred Kitchen program and NEON co-created the Northside Food Business Incubator in 2016 using funds from a Bush Foundation Community Innovation Grant.

The goal was to provide small food businesses with a commercial kitchen to launch or grow their business. To date, Alona Henderson and about 40 others have received “high touch” services through the incubator. When Fix came on, she didn’t realize that incubating small businesses would also be “creating a culture of first-generation entrepreneurship” in North Minneapolis.

As late as the 1940s, Black entrepreneurship was blocked by law in Minnesota, with African Americans being told by government officials that they could only operate “barbecues, shoeshine parlors and barbershops.” Opened in 1949, A.B. Cassius’ Cassius Club Cafe represented the first liquor license and loan granted to a Black

business owner in Minnesota. But Cassius was an anomaly. In 2019, the City of Minneapolis joined with nonprofits to host its first Black Business Week. But real societal change needs more public buy-in, according to Fix.

“We are creating some really kick-a-- food in North Minneapolis,” she says, wishing foodies and local press would dive in more actively. For example, attending Breaking Bread Café pop-ups—run by Northside Food Business Incubator participants—is a chance to directly support small food businesses in North Minneapolis, she says. Pop-ups allow businesses to test processes and demonstrate that in exchange for a little patience, really innovative ideas might become more permanent. AFC and NEON’s

collaboration has evolved to include the New Market, a series of public markets featuring Black-owned food, art, fashion and body product businesses.

Success might initially look a little different than dozens of Black-owned businesses lining West Broadway, which is the dream of many, including Powell: “I want West Broadway to be for Black people the way Plymouth Avenue was for the Jewish people back in the day.”

### A Garden Community

Haley says meeting Horovitz and Powell in 2011 was being “invited by the universe to go back to the garden.” The seeds for the mission of AFC were planted. After battling and overcoming her share of life’s

challenges, Haley thinks of her journey to AFC as nothing short of a lifesaving divine intervention—one that she is obligated to pay forward.

Appetite for Change now leads Northside Fresh, a coalition of individuals, businesses and organizations that use food as a pathway toward community well-being, economic stability, policy change and social justice.

Northside Fresh provides technical assistance to growers, hosting a farmer’s market on West Broadway, offering seed distribution events and aligning a network of community members, organizations and businesses that have the common goal of building a more self-reliant, just and connected food system on the Northside, all in a culturally sensitive way.



Above: Appetite for Change's urban farms produced 9,554 pounds of produce in 2019.  
Below: Jadea Washington, AFC's communications & marketing facilitator

"It is your responsibility to feed your family," Haley says. "If the food trucks don't roll in, what are we going to eat?" Relying on the same system that has created problems for the Black community to fix those problems won't work, she argues. Instead, Haley says it's a personal duty to teach anyone she meets to sustain themselves outside of that system.

"I can sustain myself for months without having to go to Cub [Foods]," she adds. "I have onions, ginger and garlic, oh my. Mint, sage, basil, and tomatoes. This is how I advance my personal liberation plan."

### Seeds for the Future

"Appetite for Change has made me who I am," LaTajiah Powell says. "It's helped me understand that [life] is bigger than here." Her plans to become a police officer are spurred on by the confidence she's gained at AFC, which she says expands beyond a focus on food. "We don't have many places

like what we have here. The people who live here need something that's going to stay, and not gonna leave."

"I'm more open [since working at AFC]," says Ieshia Dabbs. "I'll try anything once, at least. Whether it's gardening, going out to talk to people. Before, you couldn't pay to me to do it. AFC lets us see Black women in charge. It's OK to eat vegetables. It's OK to try something different."

In December of 2019, AFC Urban Youth released a full-length album titled *Trap or Grow*. At a release show at the Fine Line Music Cafe in downtown Minneapolis, they performed songs about motivation, growing food and self-love, with songs like "BBQ (Big, Beautiful, Queen)" and "Rethink Your Drink." A music video for the title track arrived in January.

As North Minneapolis continues its cultural, economic and culinary evolution, so will Appetite for Change. "We're sailing the ship as we build it," says Horovitz. 



Above, top and left: AFC Urban Youth onstage at Fine Line Music Cafe in Minneapolis  
Above, right: Appetite for Change founders Haley, Powell, Horovitz



### APPLY FOR A BUSH PRIZE

The Bush Prize for Community Innovation is an award for organizations that have the audacity to think bigger and think differently. These organizations work in partnership with their communities to take on tough problems, and have innovation in their bones.

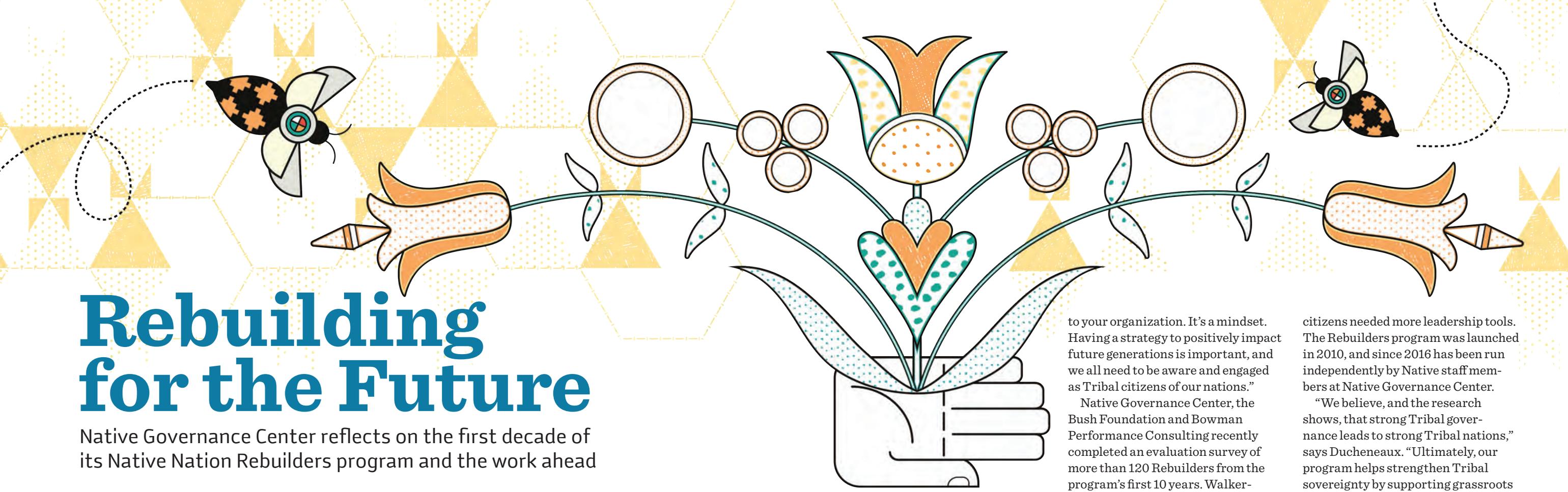
We think organizations like this deserve to be recognized. And we think that their stories could inspire more bold thinking and community collaboration. After all, this kind of problem solving can be scary, thankless, and too often, happening below the radar. That's why we created the Bush Prize and why it's one of our flagship programs at the Bush Foundation. We hope to give these bold organizations the recognition they deserve and thereby inspire more community problem solving on some of our toughest problems. We think this is a major path to making the region better for everyone.

Typically, we embark each year on a process to find these special organizations, enlisting partners and grantees from all over the region to help us find applicants. After a thorough selection process, we leave it in the hands of community panels (one in each state we serve) to select the Bush Prize winners. We canceled the Bush Prize for 2020, in order to redirect funding toward COVID-19 emergency relief.

The Bush Prize comes with a significant grant: up to \$500,000, the equivalent of 25% of the organization's last fiscal year operating expenses. This is meant to be creative capital for the organization to use however they see fit in advancing their mission.

To find out more about the Bush Prize, visit [bfdn.org/bushprize](https://bfdn.org/bushprize). —Mandy Ellerton, Community Innovation Director

RELEASE SHOW PIERRE WARE



# Rebuilding for the Future

Native Governance Center reflects on the first decade of its Native Nation Rebuilders program and the work ahead

by ART COULSON, CHEROKEE NATION OF OKLAHOMA  
profiles by LAUREN KRAMER, NATIVE GOVERNANCE CENTER EXTERNAL AND DONOR RELATIONS OFFICER

Ten years. Twenty-three Native nations. One hundred seventy-six Tribal citizens trained in innovative governance practices, leadership skills and nation building.

But the decade-old Native Nation Rebuilders program is about more than numbers.

“It’s a 176-person-strong family,” says Jayme Davis (Turtle Mountain/Standing Rock), program director at Native Governance Center, the Native-led nonprofit that oversees this leadership development program. Davis is also a Cohort 7 Rebuilder.

“There are many other Native leadership programs, but the Rebuilders program is unique because of its specific focus on governance,” says Wayne L. Ducheneaux II (Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe), Native Governance Center executive director and a Cohort 3 Rebuilder. “The program is

rooted in nation building, culturally-grounded leadership skills and data from 40 years of research on Indigenous economic development. Native leaders from all different sectors become Rebuilders and use what they learn to make a positive impact on their communities.”

Each Rebuilders cohort is a two-year experience that inspires and invests in Tribal citizens as they develop knowledge, hone leadership skills and build connections. The program centers on nation building, a set of strategies that Native nations can use to strengthen their governments and overall quality of life for Tribal citizens. Year one consists of four in-person sessions incorporating leadership development exercises and the core principles of nation building. In year two, Rebuilders develop and execute a nation-building project that

benefits their home communities. These projects span a wide range of focus areas and can include everything from social entrepreneurship to developing training programs for Tribal citizens to working with youth.

And, participants say, the investment of the Rebuilders program pays off when they return home to replant seeds of good governance, strategic thinking and innovation. “We run for office for the right reasons—wanting to make our sovereign nations better—but the tools that are typically used are based off that old ‘standard approach,’” says Jamie Azure, Tribal chairman of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa and a Cohort 9 Rebuilder. “The Rebuilders program shows that there is a better way—a strategic, planful way to lead.”

Rebuilders come together to discuss common issues and challenges.

ILLUSTRATION MARLENA MYLES

They share strategies, success stories, best practices and case studies of related situations from Tribes across the U.S. and Canada. In the end, they come away with a framework for leadership that focuses on the long term and includes strategic tools to overcome obstacles.

The Rebuilders program’s emphasis on long-term thinking with a cultural lens helps elected leaders, but it can also assist Tribal nonprofit professionals, educators, entrepreneurs and others.

“We focus on more than just a framework for governance,” says Pearl Walker-Swaney (Standing Rock/White Earth), Rebuilders program manager and a Cohort 7 Rebuilder. “Whether you’re in a nonprofit, the education sector, or are an entrepreneur, the characteristics of what makes a nation successful can apply

to your organization. It’s a mindset. Having a strategy to positively impact future generations is important, and we all need to be aware and engaged as Tribal citizens of our nations.”

Native Governance Center, the Bush Foundation and Bowman Performance Consulting recently completed an evaluation survey of more than 120 Rebuilders from the program’s first 10 years. Walker-Swaney says several findings are evident from the enthusiastic stories shared by participants. “They’re inspired that there is a framework, that there is a different way of governing that works,” she says. “There is something out there that matches who we are as a people, is innovative, long-term and sustainable.”

Dr. Twyla Baker, chair of the Native Governance Center board and a Cohort 2 Rebuilder from the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation, says the program has become essential in today’s polarized political climate. “We have to be forward-thinking. We have to focus on what the next iteration of Indian Country looks like and prepare for more challenges.”

The Native Nation Rebuilders program originally grew out of conversations between the Bush Foundation and Tribal leaders from the 23 Native nations that share geography with Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota. To strengthen their nations’ sovereignty, Tribal leaders said their

citizens needed more leadership tools. The Rebuilders program was launched in 2010, and since 2016 has been run independently by Native staff members at Native Governance Center.

“We believe, and the research shows, that strong Tribal governance leads to strong Tribal nations,” says Ducheneaux. “Ultimately, our program helps strengthen Tribal sovereignty by supporting grassroots Native changemakers.”

The 176 Rebuilders trained over the past 10 years are driving changes in their communities by creating nonprofits, opening schools, establishing language revitalization programs, running for Tribal council and pursuing elected roles in state government.

“The value of being surrounded by like-minded people cannot be measured. Going into a cohort of strangers from many other Tribes in session one, then leaving session four considering those same strangers as family is a feeling I cannot describe,” says Chairman Azure. “Knowing that even though we are all extremely busy in our professional lives, we can still reach out to any of our ‘family’ and get an almost instant response is calming.”

Baker shared a similar sentiment from her experience in the program. “We’re able to collaborate, support each other and sometimes even commiserate,” she says. “I can think of scads of Rebuilders who have skill sets that I can tap into for advice,



or who I can just lean on—folks to support the work that I do.”

As the program enters its second decade, Native Governance Center plans to refine the Rebuilders curriculum piece by piece to ensure that it maintains a strong focus on shared values and cultural practices, while acknowledging the unique beliefs, leadership styles and histories of different nations. There will be more nation-building case studies from the 23 Tribal nations it serves, rather than relying on success stories from Native nations in other regions of the U.S. and Canada. The new curriculum will begin to roll out this fall, Davis says.

Rebuilders, board members and staff also plan to further Indigenize the Rebuilders curriculum by taking a holistic approach to learning nation

building, including additional time for health or movement breaks, reflection and prayer. Program staff are also working directly with Tribal youth to launch a Youth Rebuilders program for Tribal citizens between the ages of 14 and 24.

While Tribes outside of Native Governance Center’s 23-nation service area have expressed interest in the program, Davis says there is a lot more work to do within this region before any expansion.

“No one ever said that rebuilding nations would be easy and without failures,” Chairman Azure says. “Take the lessons and assets that are provided, apply your Tribe’s uniqueness, build strong teams that will live longer than yourself, and just keep moving forward to that better tomorrow.”

**“...APPLY YOUR TRIBE’S UNIQUENESS, BUILD STRONG TEAMS THAT WILL LIVE LONGER THAN YOURSELF, AND JUST KEEP MOVING FORWARD TO THAT BETTER TOMORROW.”**

—Jamie Azure, Tribal chairman of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa and a Cohort 9 Rebuilder

#### NATIVE NATION REBUILDERS 2009-2019

10 Cohorts: 176 Native Nation Rebuilders from 22 of the 23 Native Nations in Minnesota, North Dakota & South Dakota

**97%** said the Rebuilders curriculum was empowering to them

**94%** said the program helped them be a more effective leader in their community

**94%** said the program helped them design, lead and effectively implement nation-building efforts in their communities

**90%** have supported an increase in their community’s use of Tribal sovereignty for community initiatives and programs

**87%** have supported the strengthening of their community’s capacity to use more effective self-governance practices

*Data based upon 120 survey respondents representing all 10 cohorts and 12 Native Nations*

#### Rebecca Crooks-Stratton Building Strong Partnerships

Rebecca Crooks-Stratton, a Cohort 2 Rebuilder, believes that community engagement and accountability lie at the heart of successful leadership. Now in her second term as secretary/treasurer for the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC), Crooks-Stratton keeps her fellow Tribal citizens informed about what’s happening at the governmental level and instills confidence in SMSC’s policies and systems. She is part of the three-person SMSC Business Council, which oversees the day-to-day operations of SMSC’s Tribal government and its 4,000 employees. In addition, the Business Council builds strategic partnerships with local, state and federal governmental entities.

Growing up in a political family fostered Crooks-Stratton’s early interest in Tribal politics. Since childhood, she has played an active role in her community. Crooks-Stratton feels extremely grateful for all of the support that she’s received from the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community over the years. Her desire to give back guides her leadership. She explains, “Our Community has provided me with so many opportunities. There was never a question that I wanted to take what I’ve learned and give back to my community, in a way similar to how my elders gave back to me.”

One of the many ways that Crooks-Stratton gives back is through her leadership of the Understand Native Minnesota initiative. Launched in October 2019, Understand Native Minnesota is a three-year, \$5 million strategic campaign that seeks to improve public attitudes toward, and knowledge of, Native Americans. The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community created the campaign to transform Minnesota’s K-12 school curriculums to better reflect the history, modern-day realities and contributions of Native people.

Building partnerships with non-Tribal entities as a member of SMSC’s Business Council fueled Crooks-Stratton’s passion for Understand Native Minnesota. “I’ve seen the value of people understanding Tribal sovereignty,” she explains. “Multiple groups can’t work together in the best interest of the greater community unless they truly understand each other. Having that basic level of education about who Tribes are gives our partners a better knowledge of where we are now.”

The recently completed, multi-million-dollar water treatment plant opened by the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community in partnership with the city of Prior Lake is an example of a successful partnership



fueled by mutual understanding, Crooks-Stratton says. “Twenty years ago, that never would’ve been possible,” she adds. While the treatment plant is a start, her hope is that Understand Native Minnesota’s work leads to additional sustainable and money-saving partnerships between Tribal and non-Tribal governments, among other positive impacts.

Between her work, family and community, the busy Crooks-Stratton credits the Native Nation Rebuilders program’s training for helping her stay grounded. The program gave her a better understanding of who she is, what her priorities are and how she can bring others along to get projects done. In addition, she cites the support network that she built with her fellow Rebuilders as a source of strength and inspiration for her own leadership. “You gain a lot of resources when you’re in the program,” she says. “And it’s not just through the programming. It’s the people that are on the journey with you.” —Lauren Kramer

CROOKS-STRATTON SHAKOPEE MDEWAKANTON SIOUX COMMUNITY





**Michael Laverdure**  
*Indigenizing Architecture*

For Cohort 10 Rebuilder Michael Laverdure (Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa), an Indigenous mindset is a key component of good architecture. He's a partner at DSGW Architects in Lake Elmo, Minnesota and the president of Native-owned planning firm First American Design Studio. Since joining DSGW back in 2008, Laverdure has focused entirely on Tribal projects. He designs structures that align with Native values and community members' future goals and visions.

Just the second Native American student to graduate from the North Dakota State University School of Architecture, Laverdure grew up sketching his dream home and excelling in science and art. At his first firm in Grand Forks, he worked on non-Tribal projects across the country, but joining DSGW Architects unlocked his true passion. "I started working with Tribes, and that's where I had a renaissance with my architectural soul," Laverdure explains. "I was practicing tenets of nation building without knowing it. I started participating in the process of planning and long-term visioning, and understanding what sovereignty means through architecture. It became a passion for me."

The Rebuilders curriculum has given Laverdure a new language to incorporate future thinking, an emphasis on quality and deliberate community input into his business.

For example, the curriculum seeks to avoid "standard approach" leadership that's non-strategic and focused solely on short-term concerns. In architecture, rushing to build a standard, pre-engineered metal building instead of emphasizing long-term quality poses similar risks. "A lot of times, I'll get a call from a Tribal council member or someone, and they'll say, 'You know, I need to get re-elected. And I want to build my pet project in time so I can campaign on it.' That's the standard approach. I've heard it a million times...But now I have words, and I have examples to show them how it works."

In addition to the Rebuilders program, Laverdure credits his mother for demonstrating important Indigenous values that have helped him succeed. He approaches tasks with a strong heart and spirit, and he thoughtfully incorporates site blessings, prayer and other Indigenous concepts into the design process. "I say that we like our buildings to be like elders: they create an environment of subsistence. Subsistence is defined as acting upon something to keep it new. And renewing it," Laverdure explains.

Laverdure says he can count all of the Native architects he knows on his fingers (and maybe on a few toes, too), so he encourages more young Native people to pursue architectural careers. "Having a Native architect



on your team is a force multiplier in cultural match," he says. "We can make sure that a building isn't patronizing to a Native person. Like an appropriation of slapping an Indian headband on a building and saying it's Native. Because that's not it. Being a warrior for your people and ensuring that architecture responds to your culture—that's why Native kids need to be architects."

Within the next five years, Laverdure hopes to write another book and finish developing an Indigenous certification process with colleagues at the American Indian Council of Architects and Engineers. He notes that no current building certification categories talk about culture. "If you have a project that was Indigenously conceived, designed, built and constructed, we'll certify your building as Indigenous," he explains. "It's pretty ambitious. But it's going to be one of a kind." —Lauren Kramer

LAVERDURE/TURNER

PHOTOS JACOB LADUGER



**Joleen Abourezk**  
Oglala Sioux Tribe



**Amber Annis**  
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe



**Jewel Azure**  
Spirit Lake Nation



**Nathaniel Brown**  
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe



**Courtney Davis**  
**Souvannasacc**  
Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians



**Kelsey Ducheneaux**  
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe



**Daniel Henry**  
Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians



**Buster Isenrock**  
Rosebud Sioux Tribe

# Congratulations to Native Nation Rebuilders Cohort 11

The Rebuilders program is a cohort-based leadership development experience for Native changemakers who are passionate about strengthening their communities.



**Lydell Merrick**  
Spirit Lake Nation



**Alli Moran**  
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe



**Michael Mudgett**  
Spirit Lake Nation



**Curtis Rogers**  
White Earth Nation



**Adam Savariego**  
Upper Sioux Community



**Eugene Sommers**  
White Earth Nation



**Shere Wright**  
Rosebud Sioux Tribe

To learn more about the program and how to apply, visit [nativegov.org](https://nativegov.org).  
The Native Nation Rebuilders Program is a partnership between Native Governance Center and the Bush Foundation.





# Restoring the Wild

How two creative collaborations  
enhanced Minnesota's  
natural habitats

by JOHN ROSENGREN

**C**hallenges around the environment and conservation can feel enormous and intractable. Over the years, the Bush Foundation has funded a number of organizations that are undaunted by these challenges. In these two cases, one involving a past grantee and one a more recent Bush Prize winner, organizations were willing to think bigger and think differently to revitalize crucial and priceless natural resources in Minnesota.

## IMPACT REPORT: 15 YEARS OUT The Nature Conservancy's Glacial Ridge Prairie Restoration Project



Twenty years ago, where others saw a large parcel of subpar agricultural land in northwestern Minnesota's Polk County, Ron Nargang saw opportunity. Instead of trying to bring back cowboys on horseback herding cattle and soybean-lined fields, Nargang—then the Nature Conservancy's state director—envisioned restoring the 24,158 acres as a habitat for endangered wetland prairie wildlife. It could also be an asset to advance environmental, educational and economic goals for the region.

While more than 18 million acres of Minnesota were once tallgrass prairie, only about 1% still exists today. Purchased by the Nature Conservancy in 2000 for \$9 million, that parcel of land is now the core of the Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge, touted as the nation's largest

wetland and prairie restoration by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

It was not an easy sell, though. To restore the land, the Nature Conservancy's plan called for filling in more than 100 miles of drainage ditches on the land. It also included planting more than 120 species of native prairie grasses and flowers—well beyond the five varieties typical of many prairie restoration projects. The scope, cost and local skepticism seemed enough to dull the gleam in Nargang's eye. "It was intimidating," Nargang admits. "So much needed to be restored. We were going to need help."

When Polk County officials expressed concern about no longer collecting \$2 million in annual property tax, the Nature Conservancy helped develop an endowment to cover the shortfall. When neighboring property owners worried about the impact of plugging ditches, the Nature Conservancy reassured them it would reduce the recurring flooding on their land. Well-connected local resident Clayton Engelstad was hired to do most of the work with his two bulldozers. "He'd sit down in the morning to have coffee with his neighbors in Fertile and tell them what a wonderful project it was," says Jason Eckstein, restoration ecologist on the project. "That really helped get the support of the community."

The restoration work cost the Nature Conservancy an additional \$9 million, and two early grants from the Bush Foundation in 2001 and 2005 totaling \$950,000 proved to be the project's cornerstone. "When the Bush Foundation said it was in, we knew we could move on and make

this thing happen," Nargang says. "Their reputation gave us credibility with other organizations."

In all, the Nature Conservancy enlisted more than 30 partners, including nearby cities, counties, universities, conservation groups, state agencies and national concerns. Ducks Unlimited brought in surveyors and engineers. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service operated heavy equipment. Members of other organizations supervised controlled burning of grasses. "It was like an ant farm with people crawling around the land," Nargang says.

Between 2002 and 2011, the restoration moved at a pace of about 2,000 acres each year. (By comparison, the

nation's next-largest restoration project averaged about 500 acres a year.) Over that time, workers filled 118 miles of drainage ditches, planted 90 tons of seeds and restored more than 200 acres of existing wetlands. They also dug two wells to provide clean water for Crookston residents nearby, replacing a well contaminated by agricultural runoff.

By containing water on the land, the Nature Conservancy project reduced excess water flow and flooding in areas like Grand Forks. The area became a natural laboratory for students from elementary to university levels studying the habitat's flora and fauna. It also boosted local tourism as wildlife returned

to the area, including migrating waterfowl, burrowing owls and thousands of sandhill cranes.

The Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge now encompasses 37,756 acres and has become home for species ranging from bees to moose—with talk of bringing in bison. In 2012, the Nature Conservancy transferred the land to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

While the Nature Conservancy is currently engaged in two smaller prairie restorations in Minnesota—one near Buffalo State Park, the other in the Ordway Prairie area—it has remained involved in the Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge to ensure the area's continued success.

"The Conservancy wants to see that the restoration continues to be well-managed so these grasslands can thrive in the future," says Peggy Ladner, who took over Nargang's role as state director after his retirement in 2006.

Perhaps most significantly, the project, which went beyond the limits of any previous prairie and wetland restoration project, showed the possibilities of achieving what can be imagined. "The Nature Conservancy was able to show you can do a restoration project this large—actually more of a reconstruction than a restoration," Ladner says. "People didn't know this could be done until we did it."



IMAGES AND OPENING SPREAD: JOHN GREGOR/COLDSNAP PHOTOGRAPHY





**2014 BUSH PRIZE WINNER**  
**Cannon River Watershed Partnership**

In remote areas of Southeastern Minnesota, aging septic tanks and corroding sewage pipes were leaking human waste into the water tables along the Cannon River watershed. Most of the time, residents didn't realize they contributed to the problem every time they flushed their toilet. Other times, they were aware, but the complicated process of assessing deficiencies and formulating a solution deterred further action.

Repair costs, sometimes in excess of \$50,000 per homeowner, were prohibitive. So they did nothing—and the wastewater thickened with hundreds of gallons of sewage, damaging the ecosystem, depositing sewage

in yards of those living along the river and polluting drinking water.

Alice Flood, who has lived along the Zumbro River for more than 40 years, heard stories of washing machine water and failing septic systems draining directly into the river. "We used to tell our kids, 'Don't go into the water, your fingernails will turn yellow,'" she says.

Then the Cannon River Watershed Partnership (CRWP) stepped up in 2002 on a mission to clean up the waters of the Cannon River and other Mississippi River tributaries flowing through southeastern Minnesota communities including Faribault, Northfield and Cannon Falls. It

formed the Southeast Minnesota Wastewater Initiative (SMWI), a partnership with Southeast Minnesota Water Resources Board and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Through this collaboration and grassroots organizing, the nonprofit has assisted 31 communities to upgrade their sewer systems, which now eliminate approximately 454,090 gallons of untreated sewage daily.

Flood can see the Zumbro River from her back deck. It looks cleaner after nearby Oronoco updated its septic system (with the help of SMWI) and silt was removed through dredging. "It's not as brown," she says. "It's a real refreshing river flow now."

In the past, state or local governments have fined communities with inadequate sewage or tried to impose fixes. Residents have been reluctant to work with agencies that can penalize them, or with engineering companies that offer a free assessment followed by an expensive proposal. SMWI has taken a transformative approach, sending wastewater facilitators to listen to concerns, educate residents on the implications of not addressing problems and solicit a local resident to take charge of a sewage task force.

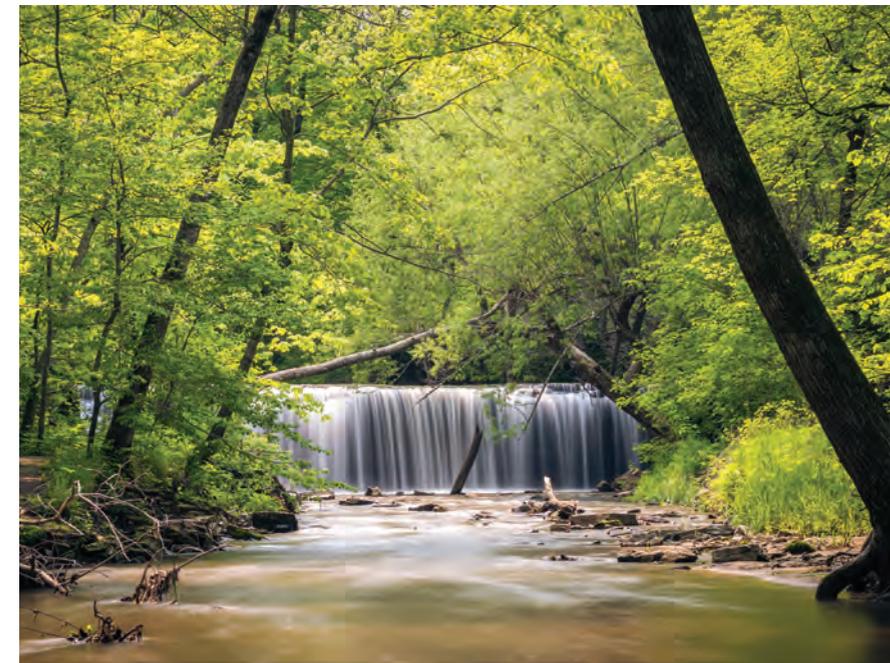
These facilitators build trust as a neutral party with no vested interest other than helping the community find a solution. "One of the bedrock principles for us is we don't tell communities, 'Here's what you need to do to fix this,'" says Aaron Wills, CRWP finance manager and wastewater facilitator. "That's what

has led to the success of many of these communities finding a fix. They have the driving power. It's not an outsider like me telling them what to do."

SMWI facilitators like Wills help the community assess the problem and map out a solution, which can involve reviewing county permit records, scouting and mapping sites, and determining whose systems are functional and whose need replacement. They help communities apply for a state grant worth up to \$60,000 to pay an engineer to do a detailed wastewater infrastructure compliance survey and feasibility study of possible solutions. They also help draft requests for proposals and vet engineering firms to do the study and the work. Then, the community decides on a solution.

The entire process, from identifying the problem to fixing it, takes three to seven years. At any one of these stages, the process can break down. That's why even though there are 1,000 small unsewered communities in Minnesota, according to estimates by the state pollution control agency, fewer than 10 get addressed annually. "Without the facilitator piece, these projects wouldn't move forward," says Peter Miller, chief strategy officer at Wenck, an environmental consulting and engineering firm that has worked on SMWI projects. "If communities don't have somebody like SMWI helping them, it won't happen."

The repair estimates can be overwhelming. For instance, Hope, Minnesota, had to build new infrastructure that included laying new concrete pipes with lines to each house. The new sewage treatment system cost \$1.3 million. Divided among the 55 homes and



IMAGES EVAN PAK

**“COMMUNITIES HAVE THE DRIVING POWER.  
IT’S NOT AN OUTSIDER  
TELLING THEM WHAT TO DO.”**

*—Aaron Wills, CRWP finance manager  
and wastewater facilitator*



businesses in the community, the bill came out to about \$23,000 per property. By knowing where and how to apply for loans from the state and elsewhere, the SMWI facilitator was able to lower the cost to \$4,900 per property. “Our goal is to bring the cost down to around \$10,000,” Wills says. “A big part of my job is identifying and accessing available money.”

In 2014, the Bush Foundation awarded CRWP a Bush Prize for its work with SMWI. The Northfield nonprofit used the \$88,200 in prize money to train staff and fund wastewater projects. “The Bush Prize gave us a vote of confidence that allowed us to say, ‘This is good. We need to keep fighting to make sure this money is

still available for people,” says Kristi Pursell, executive director of CRWP.

To date, SMWI has worked with 13 counties in southeastern Minnesota to replace inadequate sewage systems in their communities. The result is a cleaner river running through that corner of the state. The benefits extend to the wildlife throughout the watershed as well as the people drinking the water.

Working together toward a solution has also benefited communities by strengthening them. “We’ve seen the process build communities,” Pursell says. “We see the potential in local leadership when someone becomes passionate and takes charge. We are there for these people to lean on, but it is a community-based effort.” 



IMAGES EVAN PAK



## 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 67 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



- 58** Board Member  
Eric J. Jolly, Ph.D
- 59** Claudia Berg (BF’00)
- 60** Dr. Khu Thao (BF’05)
- 61** Chris Romano (BF’10)
- 62** Kevin Killer (BF’15)
- 63** Dipankar Mukherjee  
(BF’05)

BACKGROUND EIGENS - ADOBE STOCK



BOARD MEMBER Q&A

Who is Eric J. Jolly?

Get to know Bush Foundation Board Member Eric J. Jolly, Ph.D.

YOU'VE BEEN IN MINNESOTA FOR ALMOST TWO DECADES, BUT ALSO LIVED IN MORE THAN SIX DIFFERENT STATES. HOW DOES THAT AFFECT YOUR WORLDVIEW?

It helps me understand the different sensibilities of our many communities, to have a sense of the values in an agricultural community, in a ranching community, in an urban setting, on different coasts, among people who value higher education and those who haven't been exposed to it. It's given me a better sense of the diversity of our nation, which is much more than just our racial and ethnic makeup.

HOW DID YOU GET CONNECTED TO THE BUSH FOUNDATION?

I joined the board in 2009, when I was president and CEO of the Science Museum of Minnesota. I knew the Bush Foundation wanted to advance their agenda in education and equity, and that was a space where I had particular expertise. I've been a part of education reform efforts for much of my career, and my focus has been around closing the achievement gap, whether it's a gender gap, a racial gap or a gap due to poverty.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR PROUDEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS?

Six hours after 9/11, I was in a position to assemble an incredible group of talented people, and we wrote what became the most widely distributed classroom curriculum in the aftermath of 9/11 ("Beyond Blame: Reacting to the Terrorist Attacks"). It was designed to be taught anywhere from late elementary through high school, and over 500,000 classrooms across the United States adopted it within the first three months. It was about promoting civility and reducing violent reactions to what happened. It became a way to focus our dialogue on people.

WHAT HAS MADE YOU SO PASSIONATE ABOUT EDUCATION?

I'm the first child in my family to have attended a high school. Although neither parent had much experience, they both held much value for education. Education has been a liberating force for me. It is something that once gained, it cannot be taken away. It is a source of power, of access and of opportunity. Education changed my life in its trajectory, and I so appreciate what I was able to gain through education. Being able to assure that all communities have access to this richness has been a passion and a value of my life.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO KEEP GOING?

A deeply held desire to have made an impact on this world. That maybe something, or someone, is just a little better because I was here, because so many people made the world a lot better for me. It's a desire to leave a footprint that benefits the community that's treated me so well.

JOLLY: GALEN FLETCHER

FELLOWSHIP: 20 YEARS OUT

Claudia Berg

When Claudia Berg (BF'00) applied for the Bush Fellowship, she had just become the museum and education director for the State Historical Society of North Dakota (SHSND). With her Fellowship, she chose to go to the Museum Management Institute (MMI), run by the American Alliance of Museums, to gain museum operational skills. The experience also enhanced her network, not only with her cohort but with others connected to the Bush Foundation. After retiring from her post as SHSND director, Berg plans to continue focusing on personal projects.

How has the Fellowship changed you?

I had a master's degree, but it wasn't in museum studies. MMI added to my toolkit of skills. I was pretty driven in what I ended up doing in museum work, but it was the Bush Fellowship that allowed me to do the training and gave me a professional focus to my passion. It helped me develop confidence in myself and inspired me. It also recognized that creative thinking was important, and that teamwork was a very important—and productive—approach.

What was your biggest takeaway from MMI?

Probably the biggest thing that came out of MMI for me was the professional network that I developed with the other participants in the institute—they were from all over the country, from all different types of museums, and some

came from Europe as well. It was a very intense month. It was held at the University of California, Berkeley, and we had case studies and books to read. There were discussions all day, and into the evening as well, so it was a very immersive experience.



Where do you find inspiration to lead?

I'm inspired by working with other audiences. Typically it's students, but I would like to look at those working at the North Dakota National Guard, all of whom have been deployed overseas. I'd like to explore working with soldiers that have come back and are having some challenges, and offering up the museum as a neutral, safe environment. It's not that we're trying to be counselors; but even through exhibits of past soldiers, they can know they're not the only ones going through their experiences.

What is your advice for current and future Bush Fellows?

Recognize that the Fellowship will keep on giving, through programming, bushCON and bMag, staff traveling around the region and holding community receptions and conversations. It's not this one-time experience and then you never hear from the Bush Foundation again. I've come full circle from being a grant recipient to contributing to the Fellowship selection process.

2019 BUSH FELLOW & ALUMNI NEWS



**Roxanne Anderson** (BF'18) gave a keynote address at the 2019 Wyoming Arts Summit in Cheyenne, Wyoming. The Summit provides

an opportunity for individuals to come together, learn from one another and empower the state's creative sector.

**Dr. Sylvia Bartley** (BF'14), **Tene Wells** (BF'12) and **KaYing Yang** (BF'19) were selected for AARP



Minnesota and Pollen's 2019 50 Over 50 list, honoring Minnesotans over the age of 50 who have made significant contributions and achievements in their communities.

I. Am. Legacy, founder **Erik Bringswhite** (BF'18) opened a new healing center in Rapid City, South Dakota. The center is geared towards providing space for Native youth as well as community members interested in learning about Native culture.

Artist **Jim Denomie** (BF'08) was recognized with the Distinguished Artist Award. The award, given by the McKnight



ILLUSTRATION: ALLEGRA LOCKSTADT; DENOMIE: MOLLY MILLES, MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION

FELLOWSHIP: 15 YEARS OUT

*Dr. Khu Thao*

Khu Thao (BF'05) was working in social services and supporting her husband through graduate school when she applied for a Bush Fellowship. Her hope was that pursuing a Ph.D. in psychology would increase her clinical skills, but the experience changed her personally as well. Today, she oversees service lines for adults with mental illness as the vice president of community mental health for Touchstone Mental Health in Bloomington, Minnesota.

**What made you consider applying for the Fellowship?**

My desire for equal opportunity: my wish to pursue higher education as a minority woman and to break down the barriers I encountered trying to find culturally appropriate services for the individuals I worked with. As a child-protection social worker, many families I worked with were from communities of color. It was difficult to find providers trained to work with diverse cultures, and even more challenging to locate providers of color. While I wanted to expand my skills and circle of influence, it was impossible to do so being the only income earner. The Bush Fellowship was the only hope I had of being able to work toward my goals.

**What were your goals for after the Fellowship ended?**

When I started my Fellowship, I just wanted to complete my doctorate. However, as I progressed through the program, I met incredible mentors who inspired me to do more and

be more. I distinctly remember one of my internship supervisors telling me, "You may want to only be a clinician, but the field needs you to be a leader." That was the first time I began to even consider what leadership meant and how it would look for me.

**How has the Fellowship changed you?**

Every day, I am grateful to be in a field that I love, doing work that inspires me. This would not have happened without the Fellowship and the individuals who made the decision to invest in my dreams. By granting me the Fellowship, I was given the message that someone like me—an Asian woman who grew up in the projects with uneducated parents—was worth investing in. I have carried that message forward, and now I do all that I can to support and invest in other young professionals or individuals from marginalized communities who aspire to do great things.

**Where do you find inspiration to lead?**

My daughters have been my greatest inspiration. It is important to me that my children and the next generation of girls are empowered to challenge stereotypes and other social barriers to success. I want them to strive for their dreams, feel that anything is possible, and to do this with ease and grace. The best way to teach this is to model it through everyday interactions.



FELLOWSHIP: 10 YEARS OUT

*Chris Romano*

Already a leader in Twin Cities community development, Chris Romano (BF'10) saw a Bush Fellowship as a chance to up his game helping people in underserved and marginalized communities. His Fellowship centered on pursuing an MBA at the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management, which allowed him to sharpen his leadership skills and add business acumen. Both are put to use in his current roles as the board president of the Latino Economic Development Center and executive director of Seward Redesign.

**Where do you find inspiration to lead?**

I'm inspired by immigrant communities. I'm inspired by underserved communities. And I'm inspired by people who aren't in a natural position of power or hierarchy but lead anyway. I'm also inspired by leaders who bring out the best in others. I think there's a distinction between those who lead because of their own charisma and ability to influence, and those who lead by making people around them better and stronger.

**What were your goals for after the Fellowship ended?**

My plan was to take my newly found skills, expertise and business rigor and bring them back to community-based economic development. Initially, after I finished my Fellowship, I didn't do that. I took a job and spent seven

years honing my business and functional skills around strategy and operations inside a large, competitive and hierarchical environment.

When the timing was right, I knew my calling was to go back into community work. Now, I'm back in that community space, but it wasn't a linear path. The fact I was successful inside a corporate environment has actually made me better equipped to lead in the community and nonprofit spaces.

**What is your advice to current and future Bush Fellows?**

When you start your Fellowship, you have a plan. I would imagine for many Bush Fellows that plan has not played out exactly the way they thought, but that's totally OK. The Foundation is investing in you as a person and as a leader, not just in your plan.

**What would you tell your past self the first time you sat down to apply for a Fellowship?**

You've already won if you're to a point where you have enough conviction in who you are and what your potential is. You've already won if you have enough self-confidence to take the risk of saying, "You know what, I believe I'm good enough for this. I believe I'm worthy to be a Bush Fellow. I believe that I can compete on this stage."



Foundation in Minnesota, is given "to support working artists who create and contribute to vibrant communities."



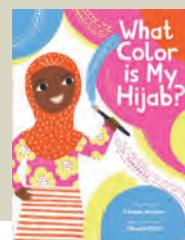
**Julie Garreau** (BF'11), executive director of the Cheyenne River Youth Project in Eagle Butte, South Dakota, won the 2019 Arts Education

Award given by Americans for the Arts. "Words cannot adequately express how honored I feel to receive

this acknowledgement on behalf of the Cheyenne River Youth Project," Garreau said.

**Anab Gulaid** (BF'09) was named assistant deputy commissioner for the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

**Hudda Ibrahim** (BF'19) published "What Color is My Hijab?" The book educates children



and adults alike about the importance of cultural diversity.

Journalist **Mukhtar Ibrahim** (BF'16) launched Sahan Journal, a nonprofit digital newsroom dedicated to providing authentic news reporting for and about immigrants and refugees in Minnesota. Ibrahim was also named a 2019 Great Immigrant by the Carnegie Corporation. The award recognizes extraordinary people who have made progressive contributions to American society.

GARREAU BRUCE SILCOX

**Larry McKenzie** (BF'18) received the National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) Guardians of the Game Award for Education. The award is presented annually for advocacy, education, leadership and service, the four core values of the NABC.

**Mark J. Meister** (BF'83) became the executive director and president of the Museum of Russian Art in Minneapolis. The Museum explores the art and culture of Muscovite Russia, the Russian Empire, the

ILLUSTRATION ALLEGRA LOCKSTADT

SHERMAN BRENNAN PHOTOGRAPHY INC.

Soviet Union, its former republics and post-Soviet Russia.

**Mary Rose O'Reilly** (BF'96) won the Brighorse Prize in the Novel with her debut fiction "Bright Morning Stars." She is the author of two previous books of poetry and five books of nonfiction.



**Sean Sherman** (BF'18) received a James Beard Leadership Award. This distinction is given to individuals and organizations advancing the conversation on sustainability, food justice and public health. In his role as founder and CEO of the Sioux Chef, Sherman seeks to revitalize and promote the Indigenous foods of the Americas.



FELLOWSHIP: 5 YEARS OUT

*Kevin Killer*

Throughout a successful career inside and outside of politics, Kevin Killer (BF'15) has worked to amplify and empower Tribal voices. The former member of the South Dakota House of Representatives and Senate is the co-founder of the Native Youth Leadership Alliance. His Bush Fellowship began as a chance to reach leadership goals but evolved into an exploration of self-care as a key to sustain his leadership.

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

One of the best things that came out of the Fellowship for me was being able to reconnect to my own spirituality, because of the emphasis on self-care. My mom passed away suddenly a few weeks after the Fellowship application due date. She was an amazing support system that I would rely on for advice, and I was really close with her. I know my mom would've wanted me to continue in my leadership journey and reconnect with my spirituality, because she was always encouraging me to grow and learn. I know she would've been proud of me becoming a Fellow.

**Where do you find inspiration to lead?**

My inspiration to lead has always been rooted in my family, culture and community. Having the time to learn more about the roots of leadership within my own ancestry has given me a broad sense of wanting to leave a place better than I found it. Whether it's a legislative body or a nonprofit, this mindset helps set an example for future generations and helps me be more purposeful in my own leadership.

**How has the Fellowship changed you?**

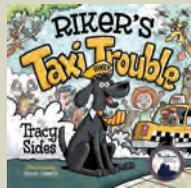
The Fellowship has instilled in me the priority of self-care in whatever I do. I just turned 40 and try not to get too stressed out about life, because both of my parents passed away at relatively young ages—my dad at 52 and my mom at 61. Both were sudden, and I think if they were able to prioritize some self-care habits, things may have been different. Self-care can be hard at times because at its core, it's dealing with the traumas we experience in life, and that is hard! But even if we make a little effort, it will pay dividends because it allows us to grow beyond what we can imagine.



ILLUSTRATION ALLEGRA LOCKSTADT

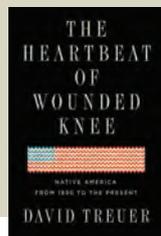
**Tracy Sides**

(BF'13) published "Riker's Taxi Trouble." The children's book was the Bronze-prize winner of the Moonbeam Children's Award for best first book.



the mission to "economically empower women by providing safe, accessible space for personal and professional transformation."

**David Treuer** (BF'03) was a finalist for the 2019 National Book Awards for Nonfiction. Treuer's book, "The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America from 1890 to the Present," was selected for its refashioning of American history.



**Hamsa Warfa** (BF'16) was named commissioner for economic opportunity at the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). In his role, Warfa aims to amplify DEED programs that target under-invested and under-capitalized communities of color.



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

*Positive Direction*

Dipankar Mukherjee (BF'05) leads Pangea World Theater with a message of peace and inclusion

by SHEILA REGAN

**W**hen he applied for the 2005 Bush Fellowship, Dipankar Mukherjee had the audacious idea to research peace.

"I remember when I first presented, the whole room burst out laughing," Mukherjee recalls. "I said, 'Isn't it interesting that if I had said I wanted to research war or violence, I would have had a less cynical response?'"

As a theater director, Mukherjee has always found himself drawn to the question of peace. As a teenager directing street theater in India, he was introduced to the writings of anti-apartheid playwright Athol Fugard and found a parallel between the struggle in South Africa and the stories he was bringing to life about caste systems and colonialism.

Mukherjee would eventually study with Fugard and assist him in directing his work in North America. In the early 1990s, Mukherjee came to Minnesota to be a resident director at the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis. He and his wife, Meena Natarajan, went on to found Pangea World Theater in 1995.

"I think he is a brilliant artist and director," says Sharon Day, an Ojibwe activist and artist who is on the Pangea board of directors. "If you are going to see a play he has directed, it is going to be seething."

MUKHERJEE REBECCA JEAN LAWRENCE PHOTOGRAPHY



Day credits Pangea for its long tradition of supporting Indigenous artists, as well as forging alliances between local theaters of color and Native theater in the Twin Cities. "What better way to work toward social justice than for people around the world to tell their own stories?" Day says.

For his Bush Fellowship, Mukherjee spent 26 months traveling to South Africa to work with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a restorative justice assembly created in the wake of apartheid. He also made multiple visits to India, where he met with peace activists, artists, poets, writers and teachers doing work in reaction to incidences of religious violence.

The Fellowship created a shift for Mukherjee personally as well as for others at Pangea. "We are not the same human beings," Mukherjee says.

Today, each staff meeting begins with a ritual, in part as an attempt to decolonize their space. "We always sit

*Mukherjee continued on page 64*

**"WHAT BETTER WAY TO WORK TOWARD SOCIAL JUSTICE THAN FOR PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD TO TELL THEIR OWN STORIES?"**

*—Sharon Day, an Ojibwe activist and artist who is on the Pangea board of directors*

Mukherjee continued from page 63

around the fire,” Mukherjee says, gesturing to a small table covered in a red tablecloth, with a lamp and a bell in the center. “It’s our method of ritualizing our life and ritualizing our work.”

As Pangea marks its 25-year anniversary, Mukherjee continues to seek connections with communities of color, Indigenous populations and LGBTQ communities in the Twin Cities. Pangea has held programs such as the Indigenous Voices series, the Directing Institute for artists of color, queer artists and women directors, and the Alternate Visions program, which supports artists of color, immigrant and Indigenous writers developing their work and craft.

Pangea has also opened their space in a critical time, when other venues that have been accessible to historically marginalized communities have shuttered. And the organization has extended its work throughout the surrounding neighborhood in south Minneapolis, bringing art and performance to the community through their Lake Street Arts program.

This work is an extension of Mukherjee’s intersectional approach to art that is intricately linked to social justice, equity and spirituality. It’s a practice that starts with an inner awareness, continues with building trust in relationships and dares to imagine that a better world is possible. **ib**



MUKHERJEE REBECCA JEAN LAWRENCE PHOTOGRAPHY

## Inclusive Events That Spark True Engagement

by MEGAN FORGRAVE, Communications Program Manager

When you plan an event, whether virtual or in-person, you may dream of excited participants, lively conversations and people who feel welcomed and engaged. But that doesn’t just happen on its own. Over the past few years, we’ve focused on learning from our event attendees and using their feedback to develop inclusive events that spark true engagement and allow attendees to participate fully.

We start with the concept of universal design: picture the people who are least familiar with your event, your topic or the other attendees—then design for them. That might mean being intentional about how you greet participants from the beginning, or explaining industry terms and acronyms and explicitly honoring all the identities present. We’ve learned to strive toward the Platinum Rule: Treat others as *they* want to be treated.

One way to do this is to ensure you know your audience. Building relationships is key to understanding what people need. You can also capture input via registration forms and event surveys. If you ask, listen and act, people are usually happy to share and contribute ideas to make your event better for everyone.

Through listening to event attendees, we have learned valuable lessons that we’ve turned into a toolkit of tips for creating inclusive events. Some are simple and some are more complex, but all have helped us make Bush Foundation events more accessible, welcoming and engaging for everyone. And, we’ll keep learning with each event we do. Visit our website for more: [bfdn.org/EventsToolkit](https://bfdn.org/EventsToolkit)



Clip out the guide below and put it to work!

### 2019 STAFF NEWS



**Megan Forgrave** joined the board of Sweet Potato Comfort Pie. Based in Golden Valley, Minnesota, the organization (led by Rose McGee, BF’19) fosters dialogue about race through opportunities to share personal stories over pie.

**Rudy Guglielmo Jr.** joined the board of Tofte Lake Center, in

Ely, Minnesota, which aims to expand artists’ capacities and deepen their impact through retreat, nature and community.



**Greg Keane** was elected board chair of Twin Cities-based Opportunity Partners. The organization works alongside people with disabilities to advance quality of life for people with disabilities.

**Anita Patel** was named one of the “40 Under 40” by the Minneapolis/



Saint Paul Business Journal (MSPBJ). Each year, MSPBJ editors select 40 leaders under the age of 40 who have demonstrated outstanding professional achievement while also finding time to give back to their communities.

**Khamara Pettus** joined the board of Friends School of Minnesota in St. Paul. Based in Quaker values, the school strives to prepare children to embrace life, learning and community with hope, skill, understanding and creativity.



EVENT PHOTOS REBECCA JEAN LAWRENCE PHOTOGRAPHY VIRTUAL EVENT NAUTAKORN - ADOBE STOCK

### TIPS FOR PLANNING INCLUSIVE EVENTS

- **Scheduling:** Consider academic, religious and cultural observances/holidays. (See Google’s Calendars of Interest.)
- **Registration:** Ask about participants’ accessibility and dietary needs, then address them.
- **Information:** Spell out the kind of support you will offer attendees (like live captioning or reimbursement for travel costs).
- **Space:** Offer private spaces for nursing, prayer, etc. If virtual, explain online platforms ahead of time.
- **Gender inclusivity:** Share pronouns during introductions and offer a gender-neutral restroom.
- **Authentic connections:** Disrupt power dynamics. Add question prompts to name-tags instead of job titles, and mix up seating.
- **Program:** Include a diverse set of presenters as experts.
- **Native land acknowledgement:** Do your research and include an acknowledgement that honors the past, present and future. Learn more at [nativegov.org/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/](https://nativegov.org/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/).
- **Food and beverage:** Try to meet as many dietary needs as possible in each meal, and label everything. Be thoughtful about whether you offer alcohol, and always offer non-alcoholic options.
- **Listen:** Survey attendees after the event and use the results to create an even better event next time. **ib**

Special thanks to Events by Lady K for their thought partnership on inclusive events.

### Ask Yourself:

When have I felt most welcomed and comfortable at an event? Why?

### Ask Others:

How could we make this event more welcoming and inclusive?



From “Inclusive Events That Spark True Engagement” by Megan Forgrave in the Bush Foundation’s bMagazine 2020.

## VENDOR EQUITY: A Work in Progress

While the biggest financial impact we have on the region is through our grant programs, our vendor spending totals about \$5 million per year—about 10% of our total spending. Vendor expenses include everything from catering lunch for a board meeting to producing the Bush Prize films to conducting evaluation projects on our grant programs.

Research tells us that some segments of business owners encounter additional barriers that challenge their start-up and sustainability, such as access to capital and networking opportunities. We want to be thoughtful about how our own spending can help address these barriers and make the region better for everyone. So, we've established vendor sourcing and selection guidelines that keep inclusivity top of mind and help us be more open and accessible.

Since 2018, we've been asking all vendors and potential vendors to share their ownership demographics with us. We have been focused on expanding our vendor pool to include more businesses that are owned by people of color, Indigenous people, women, LGBTQ+ folks, refugees, immigrants, people with disabilities and veterans. Our data show that almost half our vendor spending is going to these owner groups.

Along with owner demographics, we also consider other types of mission alignment—like whether the vendors we work with are based in our region. We will share more findings from our vendor equity work as it progresses.

## Vendor Spending

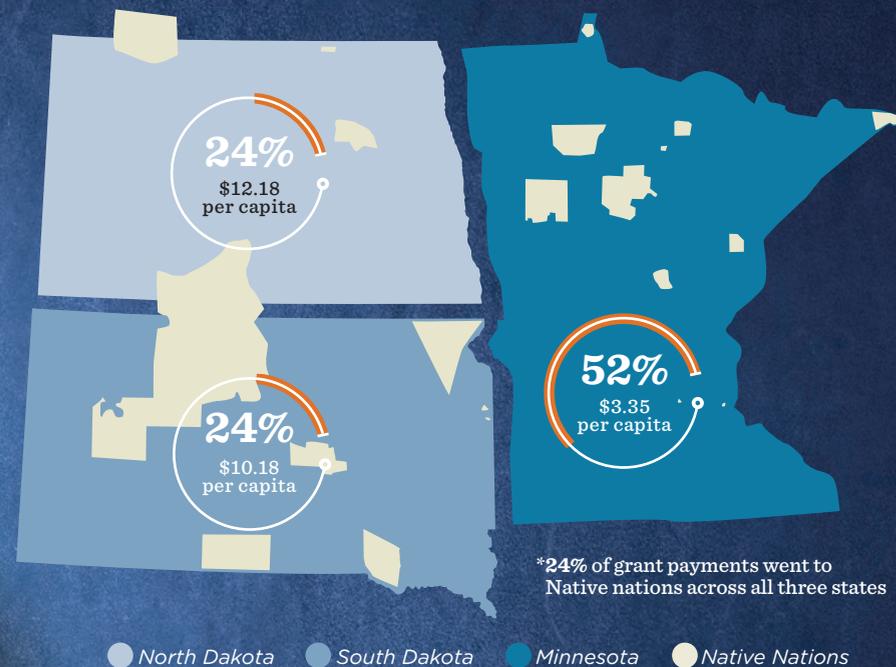
\$4.6 million spent on vendors in 2019

**49%**  
went to  
under-  
served  
owner  
groups

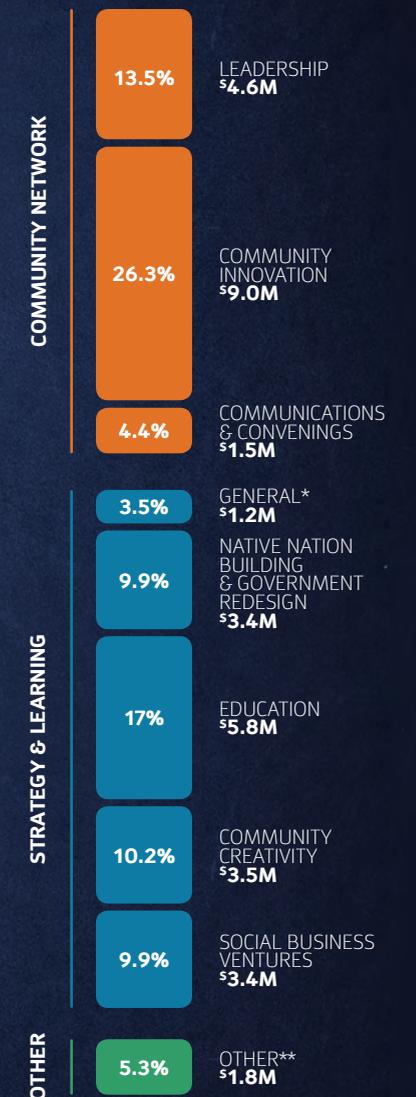
**62%**  
of grants were made  
to advance racial  
and economic  
equity

**71%**  
of grants were made  
through open and  
competitive  
processes

## 2019 GRANT PAYMENTS BY GEOGRAPHY



## 2019 GRANT PAYMENTS BY PROGRAM



## BUSH FOUNDATION INVESTMENT ASSETS, END OF YEAR

\$1,060 million in assets (as of 12/31/2019) including investments in equity, fixed income and real assets



**TOTAL GRANT AND FELLOWSHIP PAYMENTS:**  
**\$34.2M**

\*Such as data projects that support multiple initiatives  
\*\*Such as funders collaboratives and the President's Innovation and Partnership Fund

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## 2020 Bush Fellows Selection Panel

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## 2019 Bush Prize Selection Panel - Minnesota

Thomas Adams  
Jennifer Alstad **3**  
Connie Carlson  
Sarah Curtiss  
Matt Kramer  
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Sharon Kennedy Vickers **1**  
Jaime Villalaz  
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### Legend

- 1** Bush Fellow
- 2** Native Nation Rebuilder
- 3** Foundation Board Member
- 4** Consultant

BOARD OF DIRECTORS,  
NON-BOARD INVESTMENT  
COMMITTEE, STAFF AS OF  
5/1/2020; ALL OTHER LISTS  
AS OF 12/31/2019



DO THE MOST  
POSSIBLE GOOD  
FOR THE  
COMMUNITY

PHOTO, AND OPPOSITE BRUCE SILCOX



Bush Foundation staff retreat at the Bell Museum in St. Paul, MN, September 2019

Archibald 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 two ways: Develop, test and spread great ideas that will make the region better for everyone, and inspire, equip and connect people to more effectively lead change.

Our operating values guide everything we do. We try to live them in every aspect of our grantmaking and our operations:

### Spread Optimism

We encourage individuals and organizations to think bigger and think differently about what is possible. We are positive and supportive in our internal and external interactions.

### Work Beyond Ourselves

We actively seek opportunities to work in true collaboration with others to have more impact. We are willing to both lead and follow. We candidly share what we learn with others.

### Everybody Matters

We are a champion for both excellence and equity inside and out of the Foundation. We have fair, open and inclusive processes. We work to raise overall quality of life while also closing opportunity and achievement gaps.

### Steward Well

We demonstrate appreciation for the Foundation's history and thoughtfully build on its legacy. We hold ourselves to high standards of integrity and accountability and conduct ourselves in a way we hope would make our founders proud.

### More good. Every year.

We are a true learning organization and work to be smarter and more effective every year. We never lose sight of the reason we exist: to do the most possible good with the resources left to the community by Archibald G. Bush. 

## Artistry, Scholarship and Identity Intertwined

Raised in Minnesota and Mexico, Maria Cristina “Tina” Tavera (BF’05) is a bicultural artist always on the move. As a result, she can turn any space into her creative hub: her car, her table at the coffee shop, even her airplane seat.

“I’m constantly coming up with ideas, continually writing notes—on my phone, on the backs of envelopes,” Tavera says. “Just list after list after list.”

A resident of Minneapolis’ historically artist-activist Powderhorn neighborhood, Tavera is deeply influenced by the places and spaces of her worldwide community. As a curator, installation artist and screen print artist, Tavera has had her work exhibited from Fargo to San Juan, Duluth to Mexico City. She and her artist-photographer husband, Xavier Tavera, adore traveling and the inspiration a global perspective brings.

“Traveling, getting outside your comfort zone, makes it easier to notice differences,” Tavera says. “Especially speaking two languages, you start to notice what’s said and how it’s said.”

Particularly in her screen printing work, Tavera often explores how people, especially Latinx immigrants, are seen and how they want to be seen. Screen printing is Tavera’s medium of choice because of the artwork’s long history as a tool to spread ideas to the masses. Her images hone in on iconography—physical traits, symbols and paraphernalia—that tie to Latinx ethnicity, analyzing the roots of culture and place. Tavera said she hopes prints like hers “make it possible to have a conversation” about difficult topics when people don’t always have the words.

When Tavera is not “obsessing over her next creative idea,” as she puts it, she is the McNair Scholars program director for Augsburg’s TRIO program, which seeks to increase graduate students from historically marginalized communities, such as first-generation college students and immigrants. Tavera calls this role the work of her intellectual scholarship, rather than her creative artistic work. But just as her Bush Fellowship was used to both obtain a master’s in public affairs at the University of Minnesota and to pursue a self-directed program on visual arts and museum studies, her two roles as educator and artist are intrinsically intertwined.

Tavera’s artistic work articulates the American immigrant experience of having a foot in two worlds, which is the experience of many of her students at Augsburg. Tavera’s vibrant screen print “Escribes Con Tus Uñas o Con Tu Corazón?” (Do You Write With Your Nails or With Your Heart?) is one example. It depicts a pair of well-manicured hands, often a point of pride and self-care among working class women of color, furiously typing on a typewriter. The piece exemplifies the urgency of women of color speaking out. Shortly after creating the piece, back in her role as an educator, Tavera and TRIO students presented research at an academic conference. All of the young women she presented with had impressive manicures.

“It was one of those ‘art imitates life, life imitates art’ moments,” Tavera says. And it confirmed that being in two professional and cultural worlds is exactly where she needs to be. —Cristeta Boarini

photo by XAVIER TAVERA



# Congratulations to the 2019 Bush Prize Winners



**Hmong American Partnership**  
Saint Paul, MN



**Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center**  
Minneapolis, MN



**Rural Renewable Energy Alliance**  
Backus, MN



**South Dakota State University Wokini Initiative**  
Brookings, SD



**Valley City-Barnes County Development Corporation**  
Valley City, ND

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

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

PHOTOS BY WES EISENHAUER





BUSH  
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Investing in great ideas  
and the people who power them.

Glacial Ridge Prairie  
Restoration Project