

# 2023–2024 Change Network



North Dakota & South Dakota  
Meet The Cohorts

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NETWORK

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# Meet the Cohorts

North Dakota Change Network   
South Dakota Change Network 

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**Cani Adan**  
Fargo, ND



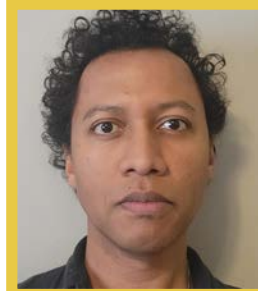
**Miranda Basye**  
Sioux Falls, SD



**Donna Belgarde**  
Minot, ND



**Sandy Bertelsen**  
Dickinson, ND



**Peter Britton**  
Sioux Falls, SD



**Michelle de Leon**  
Center, ND



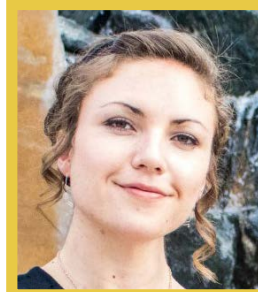
**Kari Dunn**  
Dickinson, ND



**Fred Edwards**  
Fargo, ND



**Antonio Franklin Jr.**  
Fargo, ND



**Mandy Froelich**  
Vale, SD



**Aimee Geurts**  
Bismarck, ND



**Amanda Hegland**  
New Rockford, ND



**Katie Johnke**  
Bismarck, ND



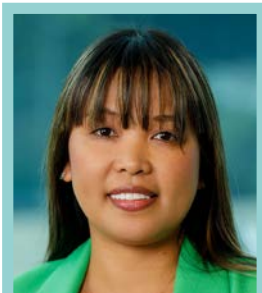
**Stephanie Kor**  
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**Kenzie Larson**  
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**Aubrey Malnourie**  
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**Crista McCandless**  
Mandan, ND



**Bernie McFarling**  
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**Eduardo Mendoza**  
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**Shaylee Miller**  
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**Peri Pourier**  
Rapid City, SD



**Juanita Prado-Sellers**  
Watford City, ND



**Cole Sartell**  
Brookings, SD



**Christine Shepherd**  
Bismarck, ND



**Janessa Storlie**  
Williston, ND



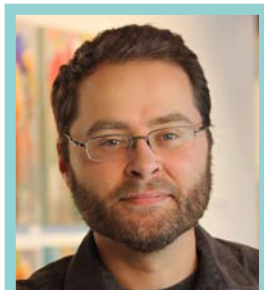
**Patri Thornock**  
Watford City, ND



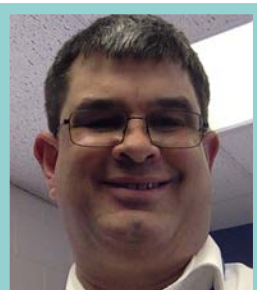
**Brianna Venekamp**  
Sioux Falls, SD



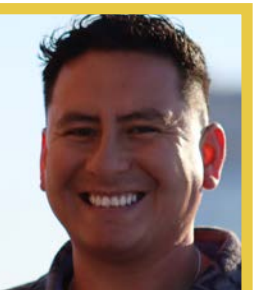
**Lisa Verdin**  
Sioux Falls, SD



**Greg Vettel**  
Minot, ND



**Erik Weber**  
Jamestown, ND



**JJ Wilson**  
Black Hawk, SD



**Kady Wittman**  
Sioux Falls, SD



**Richard Worae**  
Fargo, ND

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## Cani Adan

Fargo, ND

Cani Adan has served as the Program Coordinator at Afro American Development association Minnesota- North Dakota. He has more than 12 years of experience in Workforce development, Youth and Women Empowerment, and Human Rights.

Cani has been appointed by the superintendent of Moorhead Area Public Schools ISD #152 as a member of the leadership task force through carrying out interviews, surveys to students and parents, and teachers and recommendations about the general teaching of the school, healthy classroom, strategy, parent teachers' connections, issues of discrimination and bridging the gap between New Americans parents and the students and the administration.



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## Miranda Basye

Sioux Falls, SD

She/Her

Miranda Basye is an energetic, passionate, and intentional leader.

As the oldest daughter of multi-generational family business owners and operators, Miranda learned the value of hard work, grit, and creative problem-solving early on in life. Since her early days of sister duties and blue-collar support work for the family businesses, Miranda still rolls up her sleeves for whatever hole needs to be filled. Her “find-a-way, make-a-way” attitude coupled with optimism and zest for life offers a unique perspective on overcoming obstacles through steadfast listening and creative thinking.

Though transforming dying publications, igniting fundamental company culture shifts, empowering small business owners, and building teams, Miranda asks probing questions, notices vocal variety and body language, feels energy, and puts every single one of those things on the table for discussion. She demonstrates her servant leadership through integrity, accountability, and grace.

Miranda desires to live boldly and believes time is our most valuable asset of all. She is joyfully in a relentless pursuit of growth, truth, and authenticity for herself and those around her.

# Meet the Cohorts



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**Donna  
Belgarde**

Minot, ND

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## Sandy Bertelsen

Dickinson, ND

She/Her

Sandra Bertelsen is the instructor for the summer Women coding camp for girls, it is held the first week in June in Dickinson, North Dakota. This is the second year that camp has been held. It is funded by the Roughrider Area Career and Technical Center and non-profit group Women Empowering Women.

She retired from a long history of working with Dickinson Public Schools, Dickinson State University and Roughrider Education Services Program. In her work she spent a lot of time working with technology in all aspects from hardware, software, servers, networks, providing professional development for teachers, and small business owners, etc.

She most enjoyed the opportunities to teach and provide professional development opportunities to teachers, small business users, staff members and various community groups. Although she possesses a teaching license for grades 7-12, her abilities were needed in other areas of technology, She never had the opportunity to teach full-time in what she called a “regular student classroom” setting. One of her personal goals was that she would teach in a “regular student classroom” setting before she retired. At the time of her retirement, she did not achieve that goal.

She retired and then found that she really missed education, so she started participating in computer science courses. The timing was good as the state of North Dakota recently added the requirement that K-12 schools needed to include computer science education in all schools.

As a member of the Women Empowering Women here in Dickinson, North Dakota, she has been a promotor of offering technology education opportunities in the southwest area of our state. Due to the mission and beliefs of WEW and the opportunity to partner with the Rough Rider Area Career & Technical Center WEW has been able to raise funds to provide the opportunity for high school students to participate in the summer computer coding camps. This opportunity allowed her to reach her personal goal of teaching in a “regular classroom” setting and to share her education, experience and enthusiasm for technology with students.

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## Peter Britton

Sioux Falls, SD

He/Him

Peter C Britton is an Assistant Professor at Dakota State University in the Department of Arts and Sciences. He teaches Game Design and Digital Animation. Prior to Dakota State University, he taught Computer Animation and Game Art Design at Missouri Western State University, Digital Media Arts College, and the Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale. He has worked on real-time visualization for real estate using Unity and Unreal gaming engines. In addition to interactive and non-interactive media, he has developed and designed game controller add-ons for the PlayStation 4 and Xbox One gaming systems. He holds an M.F.A. and B.F.A. from Miami International University.



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## Michelle de Leon

Center, ND

Michelle is a storyteller passionate about community resilience and conservation. Her work focuses on creating events and programs to help adults connect with their communities, natural environment, and their personal wellness. Michelle has created wellness workshops focused on nature, consulted for community development nonprofits, and worked for the federal government on conservation programs. Her background in environmental sciences, community psychology, and yoga enables her to bring systems thinking into her work. The people she gets to collaborate along the way continue to foster her vision of a world where each person is meaningfully connected to their community and nature. Fun fact: If you can't reach her, she is probably playing outside or cooking in her kitchen! :)

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## Kari Dunn

Dickinson, ND

Kari Dunn is a Banker, Entrepreneur, Industry expert and Obsessed Community volunteer in Dickinson, ND.

Kari began her professional career by accidentally getting started in banking as a loan processor while working and going to school full time and eventually graduating with a Bachelors of Science Degree in Business Management from Minnesota State University Moorhead. She then bounced into the insurance arena, worked in all areas of banking operationally and customer facing including Wealth management, Commercial lending, Training and Development, HR and most recently in Private Banking and Business Development with ND based Bravera Bank. Kari launched Rise and Shine Retreats in 2020, a corporate and private retreat venture and KD Collaboration LLC with an emphasis on Breakthrough Coaching, Leadership Training and assistance for Business Start-Ups. Over the past few years Kari has travelled across Minnesota, Montana and throughout North Dakota working and collaborating with hundreds of business owners of many industries. In 2020, Kari co-founded Develop Dickinson, a professional development arm of the Dickinson Area Chamber of Commerce and enjoys volunteering her time with Rotary, Power of 100 Women, Women Empowering Women and the Medora CVB Board of Directors. In her free time Kari enjoys going to their family lake place in Detroit Lakes, MN, travelling, going to outdoor concerts, cooking and golfing with her husband- Blake, daughter- Paige and son-Beau.

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## Fred Edwards

Fargo, ND

He/Him

Fred is a recent graduate of North Dakota State University. Last year he graduated with his master's degree in Educational Leadership. Fred is a community engagement specialist, motivational speaker, community educator, program coordinator, and spoken word artist from North Minneapolis. The things he has seen speak through him with the energy he provides.

Currently operating Umoja Writing Workshops, a 16-week leaderships program in the F-M area. This 16-week workshop has created a sustainable pipeline to professions for youth instead of prisons. He is passionate about helping others find their inner greatness and potential. He has spoken to hundreds of college, high school, and middle school students. Fred provides testimonies and stories of struggle and resiliency. With nine brothers and sisters, Fred is the tenth and last child. Before he was born, his mother had her tubes tied—she had a .0001% chance of becoming pregnant after her last child. Fred was that .0001%.

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## Antonio Franklin Jr.

Fargo, ND

He/Him

Antonio Franklin Jr. currently works as the Revenue Manager for Emerging Prairie in Fargo, North Dakota. He formerly worked as an Economic Development Planner for Headwaters Regional Development Commission and is a member of Crow Creek Sioux Tribe. He brings 5+ years' experience working in economic development. Within the Headwaters Region, he is focused on equitable economic development, and various wealth-building and place-making initiatives. He has been instrumental in helping to co-facilitate the AI entrepreneur and business focus group discussions.

He is also very active in the community serving on the marketing committee for the Anishinaabe Art Festival, advisory committee for the Mahnomen Art Initiative, board of directors for Peoples Church, board of directors for Minnesota Housing Partnership, board of directors for BI-CAP Bemidji-Cass Lake, board of directors for Northwest Minnesota Foundation, and as a director for the Mahnomen County EDA and more.

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## Mandy Froelich

Vale, SD

Mandy Froelich is a born-and-raised South Dakotan who builds and collaborates on businesses that improve people’s lives.

As a licensed investment advisor and financial planner, UI/UX Salesforce developer, and serial entrepreneur with a background in the culinary arts, she is constantly innovating and collaborating on ways to “do good”.

Mandy believes that family, community, and a never-ending list of topics to learn about are some of the greatest gifts on Earth. As a neurodivergent entrepreneur, she find joy in breathing her projects to life while supporting others in doing the same.

From teaching a young couple how to plan for their family’s financial future and avoid the common pitfalls that keep most people trapped in debt to helping a business owner architect their intentioned company and then execute on that plan, she makes it a point to keep her days full and fun.

When Mandy is not working, she can be found raising her son with her husband, Aaron, on the prairie of Vale, SD. Hobbies include reading, running, soccer, playing music, and spending time with the farm’s menagerie of rescue animals.



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## Aimee Geurts

Bismarck, ND

Aimee Geurts is a North Dakota native who spent 25 years living in Denver before deciding she'd had enough of city life. She moved to Bismarck to be closer to her family, including a passel of nephews and nieces. In Denver, Aimee developed her career as a leader working for a family-owned plumbing, heating and electric company.

Upon moving back to North Dakota, she started volunteering in the English language classrooms at the Adult Learning Center in Bismarck. Eventually she was given her own classroom and loved the role of English teacher. She has since moved into a Career Navigator role where she assists refugee students develop job related English, create resumes, practice interviewing and apply for employment in the Bismarck workforce.

Aimee spends her free time taking her nephews and nieces to bookstores and movie theaters, wandering amongst the trees, tricking herself into believing she is a confident kayaker and reading every book known to man. Aimee loves to travel and is usually planning three trips at the same time. She can often be found at an independent coffee shop with a novel in hand.

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## Amanda Hegland

New Rockford, ND

She/Her

Amanda Hegland of Oberon, ND is the Executive Director of the New Rockford Area Betterment Corporation in New Rockford, where she focuses on community and economic development. She has served as the Executive Director since 2018. Amanda is passionate about growth and betterment for her community. In her role as Executive Director, she has helped fourteen new businesses get established in New Rockford. She created a business improvement grant to assist local businesses, and led the daycare project that created a new community daycare, as well as leading the major remodel and reopening of the Wonder Lanes Bowling Alley in New Rockford. Amanda has served on the board of directors for the largest employer in Eddy County and has seen the firsthand struggle of employee recruitment to rural areas. Amanda and her husband Jake have three children. They farm and ranch and raise registered Angus bulls on their ranch in Oberon. Being a mother to three young children, one of which has a disability, Amanda has firsthand experience with the trials of accessibility and offerings in a rural setting. This has helped drive her passion to value growth, change and making where you live a better community for all.

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## Katie Johnke

Bismarck, ND

Katie Johnke is the Nutrition Services Coordinator for Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health and Worksite Wellness Coordinator for the City of Bismarck since 2013. She is a Licensed Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and Certified Lactation Counselor and received her Bachelor of Science degree in Dietetics from the University of North Dakota. Katie works in many capacities in the Bismarck community whether it be active transportation, healthy food systems, breastfeeding support, or community wellbeing as a whole. Additionally, Katie has experience working with federal and state-funded grant projects that aim to improve chronic disease, maternal and child health, and community livability. In her free time, she enjoys the outdoors, running, baking, and coaching her kids' sports teams.

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## Stephanie Kor

Sioux Falls, SD

She/Her

Stephanie Kor describes advocacy not only as her profession, but her passion and calling. She currently works at Youth and Family Services as a Family Support Coach. She was previously employed as a Family Services Specialist for the SD Child Protection Division. She has served as a PTA member at three elementary schools in Rapid City, SD as well as holds the position of VP of Advocacy for South Dakota State PTA. Stephanie aspires to leave a lasting and sustainable impact on the families and individuals she interacts with through her career, as well as through her volunteer work with the Rapid City Homeless Coalition, Make-a-Wish, Girl Scouts, the Friendship Family Exchange Program at SDSM&T, and her church. Steph's favorite "job" is being a mother to her daughter Zoe (12) and a wife to her husband, John. In her free time, Steph enjoys spending time outdoors with her family and her fur babies.

Originally a member of the 2022-2023 South Dakota Change Network cohort, Stephanie chose to withdraw due to medical issues and is excited to rejoin Change Network and continue her work with the new cohort.

# Meet the Cohorts



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## Kenzie Larson

Minot, ND

Kenzie Larson was born in Minot, North Dakota. Kenzie moved to Wisconsin with her family and attended middle school and high school in Eau Claire. She moved back to attend the University of North Dakota. Kenzie graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Marketing and Management. Kenzie has strong ties to the community of Minot. She is very active in the recovery community. Kenzie is involved in the peer support network, which is a passion of hers. On her own recovery journey, Kenzie saw the need for recovery and mental health support in North Dakota and became a Certified Peer Support Specialist to serve people. Kenzie is currently employed at Independence, Inc. in Minot, ND as a Peer Support Specialist. She is passionate about seeing connections in everyday life and sharing her joy with others. She continues to help others to see their worth and abilities in this world. She is passionate about bringing others alongside her in recovery. She takes initiative and incorporates innovative ideas to make recovery inclusive. Kenzie has been recognized for her role as a Peer Support Specialist locally and is continually looking to increase her abilities. Kenzie is on the steering committee of the Peer Support Association of North Dakota and is Secretary of the Minot Area Peer Support Specialists Group. She is passionate about seeing others succeed in recovery and on their mental health journey.



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## Aubrey Malnourie

Grand Forks, ND

She/Her

Aubrey Malnourie was born and raised in Bismarck, ND. She has a deep appreciation for her family who has provided support and unconditional love while she left her community and moved to the Grand Forks area to further her education at the University of North Dakota.

Aubrey graduated with her undergraduate degrees in social work and psychology as well as her master's degree in social work. Aubrey has served as an advocate at a local non-profit for almost three years. Where she continues to provide support and safety services to individuals who have been impacted by intimate partner violence. At her employment Aubrey serves on their Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Committee as the chair. She works to develop inclusive, culturally competent and safe spaces for all. In her free time Aubrey enjoys spending time with her family, friends and partner. Additionally, she loves her two cats, Wellington and Murphy who both only have one eye.

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## Crista McCandless

Mandan, ND

Crista McCandless is the Co-Founder and President of North Dakota Asian-American Arts and Cultural Initiative. She holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Mindanao State University and a master's in business administration from the University of San Carlos. She received her business analytics certificate from The Wharton School. She is a first generation Filipino-American living in Mandan with her husband Ryan and children Sophia and Gavin.

When not busy with her nonprofit roles, you can find her nose in a good book, organizing her next travel itinerary, or whipping up homecooked meals.

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## Bernie McFarling

Box Elder, SD

She/Her

Bernadette “Bernie” McFarling serves the Airmen on Ellsworth AFB as the Sexual Assault Prevention & Response Program Manager. She has been engaged as a helping professional in a variety of capacities over the past 18 years, but the role that has her heart, is helping survivors of sexual assault. Bernie is responsible for implementing and managing the base’s prevention & response program and she serves as the consultant for addressing sexual assault and other acts of interpersonal violence.

Bernie grew up as a military brat, so “home” has been many different places, to include Germany, Guam and the Philippines. She is also an Air Force veteran draws upon her experiences as a veteran in order to be a true advocate for all who need her support.

Bernie has a BA in Sociology from St Edward’s University and earned her Master’s degree in Human Relations from the University of Oklahoma. She is a member of Black Hills Community Theatre’s Equity, Diversity and Inclusion committee and works on initiatives to make the local theater more accessible to everyone in our community. Bernie loves the theatre and is excited to support the arts and honored to serve on the Board.

Bernie and her family love hiking in the Black Hills. When she is not exploring the trails, she enjoys Polynesian dancing with her hula sisters and doing yardwork.

Bernie is hopeful that, one day, we will live in a society in which all people are valued, and treated with dignity and respect.

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## Eduardo Mendoza

Sioux Falls, SD

He/Him

Bolivian-born multi-instrumentalist, educator, and cultural ambassador, Eduardo Mendoza is an asset to South Dakota. His exceptional achievements include a Summa Cum Laude degree from Northern State University and being recognized as a Latin Grammy Cultural Foundation Scholar and Ambassador for three consecutive years. Eduardo's dedication to promoting cultural awareness through music is evident in his diverse range of activities.

With a passion for inclusivity and diversity, Eduardo organizes captivating multicultural presentations and concerts throughout South Dakota, with a special emphasis on showcasing the vibrant Bolivian culture. As a music educator at Laura B. Anderson and Renberg Elementary in the Sioux Falls School District, Eduardo not only inspires and nurtures young musicians but also fosters cultural appreciation and understanding among students and their families.

Eduardo's musical talent shines through his role as the lead singer and saxophonist of El Trio del Sur Latin American Combo, while also pursuing his own independent career as EMRO. His international travels to countries such as China, Germany, and Brazil have greatly influenced his musical style, resulting in a captivating fusion of global rhythms and melodies.

Eduardo Mendoza's dedication to creating harmony, uniting cultures, and celebrating the transformative power of music aligns perfectly with the mission of the Change South Dakota Network. He embraces the concept of serving leadership, using music as a positive force for change, and inspiring younger generations. As a performer, educator, and cultural ambassador, Eduardo aims to bridge cultures and motivate others to view music as a means of promoting positive change.

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## Shaylee Miller

Grand Forks, ND

She/Her

Shaylee Miller grew up on a farm in the tiny rural town of Deering, ND. Today, she works as Communications Specialist at Community Violence Intervention Center (CVIC) located in Grand Forks, ND. CVIC’s vision is a community where all people are safe, respected and free. Shaylee shares that while there are many great things about North Dakota, she believes that there is so much potential for positive change. Earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in anthropology and Spanish from the University of North Dakota, Shaylee is now a graduate student at UND working towards her master’s degree in public administration. She plans to graduate December 2023 with her MPA degree. One quote that she keeps in mind to guide her through work and life is the well-known and iconic quote by Maya Angelou, “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”



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## Geliza Ocheltree

Dickinson, ND

She/Her

Geliza brings a unique blend of creativity, adventure, and passion to the industry. With an insatiable appetite for thrilling experiences and a free-spirited approach to life, she embraces the motto of living life to the fullest in both breadth and depth.

Born in Crescent City, CA, and raised in the scenic Pacific Northwest, Geliza has developed a deep appreciation for the beauty of nature and the importance of finding a place to call home. Currently residing in Dickinson, she proudly considers this vibrant community as her forever home.

Working with people has always been Geliza's true passion, and she finds immense joy in helping others. Excited to explore a new avenue of community engagement, she is eager to utilize her skills and expertise towards her new endeavors.

Beyond her ongoing ideas, Geliza is blessed with a beautiful two-year-old son who brings immense joy to her life. When not immersed in strategy, you can find her playing with her son, learning new things, and enjoying the wonders of the world with their son outdoors.

With Geliza's unique blend of enthusiasm, creativity, and genuine care for others, you can trust that she will go above and beyond in anything she sets her mind toward.

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## Peri Pourier

Rapid City, SD

She/Her

Peri Pourier serves as South Dakota Education’s Tribal Engagement Coordinator. Peri is an Oglala Lakota, born and raised in South Dakota both on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and in Rapid City, Peri spent her life in service throughout her personal life and professional career.

Peri is a decorated U.S. Navy veteran whose intelligence work as a both military and civilian intelligence analyst was highly valued towards the United States military “hearts and minds” operations in southern Afghanistan. She garnered numerous commendations in her eight years as an intelligence analyst, providing vital insight into complex socio-cultural issues that impacted the field of conflict and delivering critical “ground truth” to decision makers.

Since her return home to civilian life in South Dakota, Peri led the Oglala Sioux Tribe’s Background Investigation and adjudication program for six years before launching her own small business. She co-founded and created a project to help meet essential needs in persistent poverty areas during emergency crisis, created a related nation-wide action network that assists persistent economically challenged young mothers and infants under an emergency, and a mothers helping mothers initiative to help meet essential needs during emergencies on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Her cross-cultural, personal and professional experience makes Peri uniquely situated to the work of bridging the gap between Native and non-Native stakeholders to foster clearer understanding and craft actionable, data-informed solutions that will better the lives of all South Dakotans.

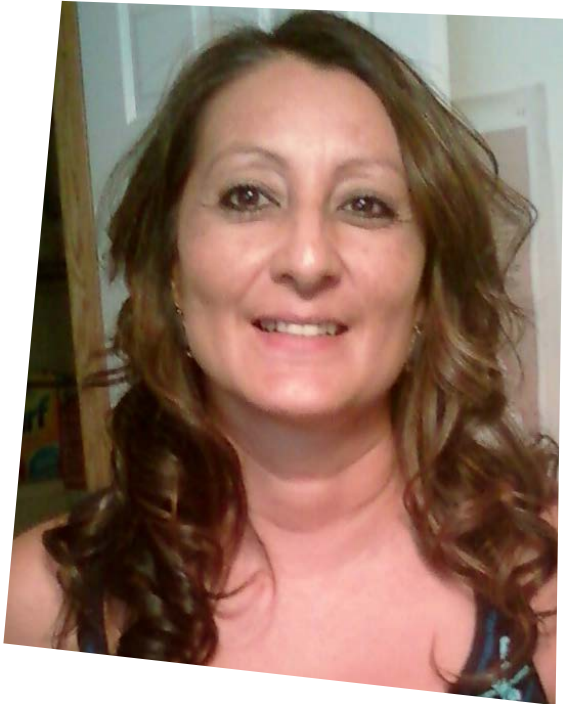
Peri is a South Dakota lawmaker in her third term representing legislative district 27 in the South Dakota House of Representatives, serving on House Judiciary Committee, Military and Veteran Affairs Committee, House Taxation Committee and State Tribal Relations Committee.

Peri has a proven record of success in building bridges across the aisle and political spectrum, among her achievements was prime sponsoring legislation that established the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Liason office under the South Dakota Attorney General’s Office. The first of its kind in the United States.

Peri Pourier currently serves as South Dakota Education Equity’s Tribal Engagement Coordinator, a non-profit that advocates for equitable access to innovative and inclusive educational environments.

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## Juanita Prado-Sellers

Watford City, ND

Hello, I'm Juanita Prado-Sellers, a dedicated professional with a passion for early childhood education and a wealth of experience in the field. With a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Services and an associate degree in early childhood education, I have developed a strong foundation of knowledge and skills to effectively support and nurture young minds.

For over 24 years, I have served as a Preschool Teacher and Director in both Christian preschools and Head Start programs. This extensive tenure has allowed me to gain invaluable insights into the unique needs of children during their crucial developmental years. I have been instrumental in creating a stimulating and inclusive learning environment, where children can thrive and explore their potential.

Throughout my career, I have implemented evidence-based teaching strategies, fostering holistic growth, and encouraging a love for learning. I have consistently prioritized the emotional, social, and cognitive development of each child, recognizing the importance of tailoring educational approaches to their individual needs. Additionally, my experience as a director has equipped me with exceptional leadership and organizational skills, enabling me to oversee staff, manage budgets, and maintain compliance with educational standards.

Beyond my professional accomplishments, I am deeply committed to instilling strong values and ethical principles within the classroom. I firmly believe in promoting kindness, empathy, and respect for diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

With a solid educational background, extensive experience, and a genuine love for children, I am confident in my ability to make a positive impact on the lives of young learners. I look forward to continuing my journey of fostering early childhood development and empowering future generations.

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## Cole Sartell

Brookings, SD

He/Him

Cole Sartell is an LGBTQ+ activist from Brookings, South Dakota.

He moved there with his parents in 2007 and graduated from the Brookings High School in 2010. He also spent some time at South Dakota State University.

He first began his journey in activism as a fellow during the 2016 Clinton campaign. In 2022 he ran as a democrat for a district 7 house seat and openly gay man, with a focus on reproductive rights, transgender rights and the state's education system.

Although Cole did not win his seat, this is how he built a strong network with other activists in his state and community. And it was a strong campaign. Cole continues to focus on many social justice issues, with a focus on the LGBTQ+ community and the issues they face in this state.

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## Christine Shepherd

Bismarck, ND

Christine J. Shepherd, born and raised in the Island of Jamaica is a mother of three girls and grandmother to four boys. She has been working to highlight the importance of cancer screenings and has written a book “Humbly Amazed” sharing her story of faith and hope as she navigates the multitude of issues that many families face when dealing with an illness such as cancer. Her husband Lloyd has been battling prostate cancer. Part of the proceeds from her book goes to the Bismarck Cancer Center.

Christine and her sister Eather Savage saw a need for something a bit different, but good, and got together to open Suzzy’s Island Twist, a Caribbean restaurant located in the Kirkwood Mall, Bismarck ND. This restaurant is a testament to her love for food and culture and will help her to educate and showcase some of the delicious foods from Jamaica. In addition to cancer and culture Christine is also working on figuring out how to find international help for nursing facilities. All her projects are focused on filling a need in Bismarck and surrounding communities and Christine will continue to work and partner with different organizations to highlight situations and find solutions.



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## Janessa Storlie

Williston, ND

Janessa Storlie is a Williston Local who has lived in the area since 2000. She has worked in many of the small businesses within the area, and has volunteered for many of the local organizations. Janessa has been involved with the Williston Downtowners Association, James Memorial Arts Center, Williston Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Upper Missouri Relay for Life. Janessa currently works for the American Cancer Society and supports the many community fundraising events through North and South Dakota. Janessa is also the founder of What's Happening, an organization dedicated to connecting community members with the organizations and businesses that improve the quality of life in the Williston Community. Her goal with [whathaps.com](http://whathaps.com) is to create a central hub where community members can learn about upcoming events, how to get involved, and how to connect with one another.

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## Patri Thornock

Watford City, ND

She/Her

Patricia is an enthusiastic and dedicated person who believes in the power of education to transform lives. With a diverse background and a focus on bilingual learning, she is passionate about creating inclusive and empowering learning environments for all students.

Having migrated from Spain, understands firsthand the challenges and significance of language acquisition and cultural integration. This personal experience has ignited her drive to make a positive impact on the lives of others.

Giving children a head start in education is vital for a bright future, and working closely with immigrant populations, and providing language support and educational guidance can achieve that goal. Patricia volunteers her time to assist adults on their ESL journey, witnessing the transformative power of education in fostering confidence and inclusion.

Beyond her daily work routine, she is an active participant in organizations that champion diversity, inclusivity, and equal opportunities. She serves on various boards, like BORM, McKenzie County Cares, or the Immigrants Inclusion Committee from Vision West of ND, where she advocates for underrepresented groups and works towards building a more equitable society.

Patricia is graduating in December with a double bachelor's degree in Spanish and Portuguese, as well as Psychology, and speaks 4 languages. This interdisciplinary knowledge enables her to connect with people from diverse backgrounds.

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## Brianna Venekamp

Sioux Falls, SD

She/Her

Brianna Venekamp began her career in non-profit work at the Washington Pavilion of Arts and Science as the Grants Coordinator. Around the same time, she began writing for Sioux Falls Woman Magazine and began the process to complete her master's in teaching through Augustana University. In 2005, she began teaching Language Arts to middle schoolers. As a passionate advocate for young people, she was a team leader, and a part of a team that developed school wide activities to help students feel safe and secure at school, physically as well as emotionally. In 2014 she was an EMBE's Tribute to Women Nominee in Education and in 2015 she received a Sioux Falls Education Foundation Innovation in Education Grant, for a project that taught students about non-profit work, and empowered them to use their writing skills to advocate for causes they cared about. In 2016-2017 she was a member of the ASCD Educational Leadership Magazine's Reading Advisory Board.

After teaching for 15 years, she returned to the non-profit world as the Program Coordinator for REACH Literacy, where she curated literacy programming for young readers and adults learning English as a Second Language. Currently, she is entering her third year as the Executive Director/Program Coordinator for TeamMates Mentoring of Sioux Falls. She lives in Sioux Falls with her husband, three children and precocious Labrador, Luna.

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## Lisa Verdin

Sioux Falls, SD

She/Her

After working post-college in for-profit marketing roles, Lisa landed in the nonprofit world by chance and has spent every moment since falling in love with the missions she has been able to serve.

Lisa has held roles in youth-based nonprofit organization for the past sixteen years. She is a passionate storyteller who uses her skillset to creatively engage a variety of audiences and advance the mission of those she serves. She is a passionate community member and belongs to the Sioux Falls Sales & Marketing Executive group where she volunteers on the Women in Business committee. A graduate of the Leaders of Tomorrow Leadership Program, Lisa is an advocate for continual personal and professional growth.

Lisa holds a BA degree in Journalism/Advertising from South Dakota State University. She enjoys spending time with her husband and teenage son Dylan and can most often be found supporting her son's passion for cooking by assisting him in the kitchen.

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## Greg Vettel

Minot, ND

He/Him

Greg Vettel classifies himself as a son (1982), husband (2008), father (2006, 2009, 2015), graphic designer (2006), teacher (2016), director (2018), nerd (forever), and student (always). He is also fond of lists. Vettel was immersed in art from a young age, a benefit of being in a family heavily involved in the Arts in North Dakota.

Vettel serves as the Director of the Northwest Arts Center and as an Adjunct Professor of Art at Minot State University. With 12 years professional experience in creative and production graphic design, he employs his background in visual communication, print and digital media, and technology as the digital tools instructor and technology coordinator for the Art Department. In 2018, Vettel started as the Director of the Northwest Arts Center, where he is responsible for the management of the Walter Piehl Gallery and Minot State University's Permanent Art and Native American Collections.

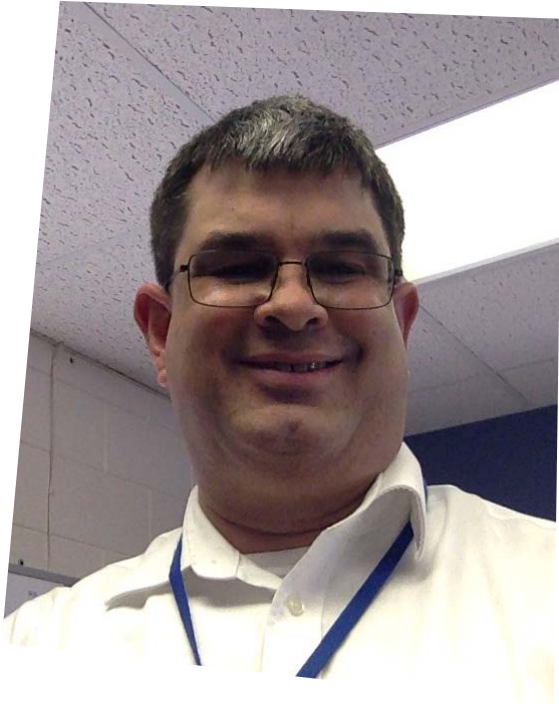
As an artist, Vettel's work draws upon influences from technology, science (fiction and non) and pop culture; exploring through narrative forms how our increasingly digital world, for good or ill, is affecting individuals and societies, often inequitably. With interest in both digital and analog processes, he combines imagery and typography in printmaking, sculpture and digital mediums. Recently, he has been working with Flat Tail Press, Minot State University's educational print studio, on developing a letterpress studio for incorporation into FTP activities and curriculum within the Art Department at Minot State.

Vettel lives in Minot, North Dakota, with his wife, Jayme, and three children, Logan, Eva, and Jackson along with multiple four-legged friends.



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## Erik Weber

Jamestown, ND

He/Him

Erik Weber brings decades of experience in a variety of backgrounds to new endeavors. He is a natural learner who excels at deep thinking and strategic planning. He learns quickly and is recognized as a person who can summarize complex topics succinctly and fairly. He is more concerned with an equitable process than a particular predetermined outcome. Erik serves as a pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and has been the senior pastor at St. John's in Jamestown since 2013. Previously he served a congregation in Skokie, IL and was active in helping to prepare two Community Health Assessments/Plans with the local Health Department. A native of Minnesota and alumnus of St. Olaf College (B.A.), St. Mary's University, San Antonio (M.A.), and Luther Seminary (MDiv.), Erik enjoys traveling, reading, and BritBox murder mysteries. His professional development has included regular anti-racism training, boundaries training, and assorted employment/employer management skills (hiring, evaluation, drafting position descriptions, and payroll).

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## JJ Wilson

Black Hawk, SD

He/Him

Pine Ridge Parks, Recreation & Trails was developed in 2022 by Oglala Sioux Tribal member and resident, John “JJ” Wilson Jr., a veteran who, upon returning to Pine Ridge after his career and worldwide experiences in the US Air Force. JJ traveled to numerous countries and visited several cities and parks and recreation areas. He saw an absence of parks, recreation and trail systems throughout the reservation’s 9 district communities. With lived experiences and exposure to the social inequities, public safety challenges and the mental and physical health disparities impacting contemporary reservation life, JJ began doing outreach and discovered that, to date, there is no organization or entity tasked with the responsibility of providing for the funding, planning and sustainability of parks, recreation and trails on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

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## Kadyn Wittman

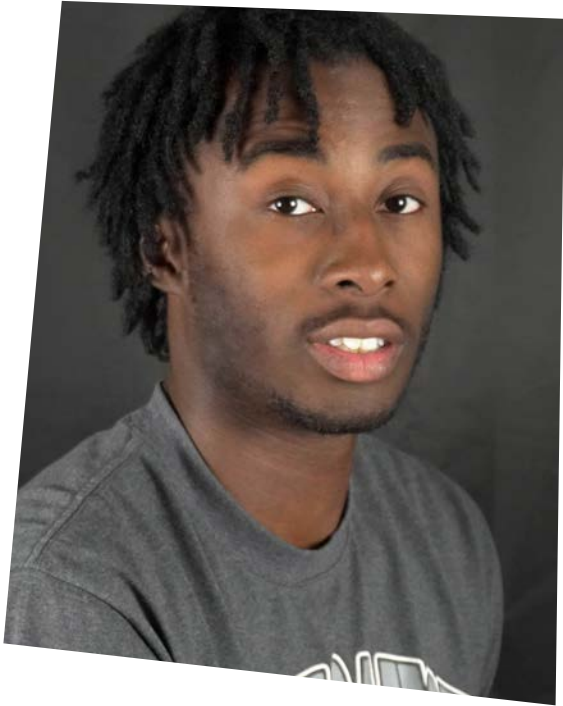
Sioux Falls, SD

She/Her

Kadyn is a young, working-class woman who has dedicated her professional career to assisting and advocating for South Dakotans across all avenues of life. Her work experience includes organizations like the Bishop Dudley House, the Multi-Cultural Center, and the Sioux Falls Family YMCA - all of which provide key programs and resources for the most vulnerable community members in our city. Kadyn has spent her career advocating for the expansion of programs that allow all community members to thrive, and she recently wrapped up her first legislative session representing District 15.

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## Richard Woraë

Fargo, ND

Richard Woraë is a community organizer, youth mentor, Content creator, event host and part-time student. Richard is the director of Colored Capital Entertainment (CCE), a media and content creation organization whose goal is to connect diverse communities through media and community events. Richard's passions include sports, movies, cars, and art. These passions are what he uses to create content to promote the organization and programming for the community. Born in the east coast Richard accompanied his family along many adventures including West Africa and downtown Anchorage Alaska. Finding himself in Fargo North Dakota Richard began hosting community events, while hosting he got connected with a youth shelter where they introduced him to the non-profit sector eventually, he started mentoring and guiding the youth. Slowly he started using his videography to help other nonprofits. His unique upbringing is what has allowed him to come the better understanding of people from different backgrounds and upbringing to form and create his vision.

The inspiration of CCE came from the need to create a platform for regular people to have a chance to express themselves. Modern media typically focusses on the upper echelon whose stories are unrelatable but CCE's goal is to reach the common people because we all have unique stories that we can learn from. Due to the organization having one formal member, Richard actively updates CCE's website, markets and creates videos while tailoring them to the needs of the community. Richard's goal is give the public a more accurate knowledge of the different communities of Fargo. So Far, CCE has hosted 2 community basketball tournaments in collaboration with Youthwork's BTG Elite basketball and plan to conclude the summer with a field day inspired by West African culture July 22nd.

# CHANGE NETWORK

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