

# PRACTICING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE CONFERENCE

April 9-10, 2025



**Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM)**  
**Comstock Memorial Union**  
**615 14th St S, Moorhead, MN 56563**



### 7:30am–8:00am — Registration Opens & Vendor Set-up

*Registration will remain open for the day.*

### 8:00am–8:30am — Light Breakfast (provided) – **CMU Ballroom**

### 8:30am–9:00am — Introductions

Elizabeth Hilt, *Consensus Council*

Geraldine Sloan, *MSUM*

### Welcome

Dr. Timothy Downs, *President, MSUM*

### Land Acknowledgement

Jered Pigeon, *Director, Office of Diversity & Inclusion, MSUM*

### Opening Prayer & Song

Christy Goulet, *Director, Indigenous Legacy*

*Welcome*

### 9:00am–10:15am — Keynote Session – **CMU Ballroom**

#### “A Life Restored”

**Tito Campbell**, *Restorative Justice Specialist*  
*Minnesota State Department of Corrections*

Tito Campbell is a Restorative Justice Specialist for the Minnesota Department of Corrections. In his role with the DOC, Tito leads a Restorative Justice pilot project that employs incarcerated individuals as restorative justice mentors working on preventing and reducing violence in prison facilities. He is the point person for all Restorative Justice councils in Minnesota DOC facilities. Tito Campbell has created and supports a Restorative Justice Committee, an advisory group of formerly incarcerated individuals. Tito also serves on the Board of Directors for Volunteers of America Minnesota/ Wisconsin. Tito is justice impacted having served thirteen years in the Minnesota state prison system. While incarcerated he was a Restorative Justice council member for ten years where he was able to learn and teach about RJ to the prison community, a peer mentor and treatment unit coordinator. Tito serves as a conduit for change and hopes to create a safer and more restorative prison environment through restorative justice/restorative practices. “We are not the labels you put on us.”



### 10:15am–10:30am — Break

10:30am–11:45AM

CMU 105

## Designing a Sustainable Blueprint for District-Wide Restorative Practices and Reducing Recidivism

Dr. Jen Sahr, *Fargo Public Schools*  
Dr. Rupak Gandhi, *Fargo Public Schools*  
Dr. Chasity Odden Heide, *Fargo Public Schools*

Join Fargo Public Schools (FPS) district leaders as they share their journey in implementing restorative practices district-wide. This session will provide a roadmap for building the necessary infrastructure, aligning efforts with district goals, and embedding restorative practices into classrooms. Facilitators will discuss key strategies, including stakeholder engagement, phased implementation, and integrating restorative practices into the district's strategic plan. Participants will explore how FPS aligns this work with equity, social-emotional learning, and student achievement while using data to measure impact. The session will also highlight FPS's focus on recidivism, demonstrating how a restorative mindset ensures behavioral interventions lead to meaningful, lasting change. Facilitators will share tools and resources for supporting educators in fostering a restorative school culture. This session is designed for district leaders, administrators, and educators looking to create sustainable, data-driven restorative practices that transform school climate and student outcomes.

CMU 207

## Transformative Community

Amber Harris, *Restorative Justice Movement*  
Tracy Stanton, *Community Consultant*

At Restorative Justice Movement, our non-profit organization harnesses the transformative power of restorative justice to make a meaningful impact. Our mission is to educate community members, leaders, and various stakeholders through the lens of restorative justice, focusing on those currently at risk or with a history of mental illness, substance abuse, and criminal behavior. We stand on a strong foundation built upon four key pillars: Repair, Rebuild, Restore, and Renew. These pillars not only shape the content of my presentation but also reflect the essence of our work. By championing these principles, we ensure sustainability and the opportunity to broaden the definition of "at risk," ultimately reaching previously overlooked community members and fostering a more inclusive society. As a presenter, my passion was borne from my personal experience as an educator who has 17 years of substance abuse recovery, and an ex-felon who can personally speak to the powers within the platform of Restorative Justice.

CMU 203

## Exploring the Intersections of Transformative Mediation and Restorative Justice

Sarah Prom, *New Perspectives, LLC*

This session will provide participants with a broad overview of the Transformative Mediation theory, including tenets of Empowerment and Recognition and where the theory differs and relates to Restorative Practices. Through lecture and Q&A, session participants will get a chance to dissect these concepts and learn about their importance in the parties' conflict talk as well as in the parties' resolution of their issues.

CMU 208

## The Art of Connection: Building Restorative Communities Through Creativity and Wellbeing

Heidi Danos, *Firefly Center for Art & Wellbeing*

Restorative justice offers a framework for addressing harm and fostering connection, but its true potential lies in its ability to build strong, thriving communities. This session explores how art and creativity unlock new dimensions in restorative work, creating spaces where people feel seen, heard, and connected. Drawing from my leadership at the Firefly Center for Art & Wellbeing and my experience as a Restorative Justice Facilitator and Mediator, I'll share how creativity can turn restorative spaces into places of transformation. Themes from my upcoming book, *The Art of Connection: Building a Restorative Community Through Creativity*, will guide our conversation on how to design restorative circles that foster trust, resilience, and belonging. Together, we'll explore how creative expression can amplify healing and bring people closer through shared humanity. Join us to discover how creativity can breathe life into restorative spaces and inspire meaningful change in your community.

CMU 205

## Teaching Midwesterners to Stop Fighting

Faye Seidler, *Community Activist*

Restorative Justice has often been a framework used within school systems, prisons, or other institutes that can have high trauma populations or experiences. However, restorative justice is applicable in every aspect of our life, especially within the community at large or in non-profits. This training talks about how a lack of conflict resolution, communication, and restorative justice framework leads to lateral violence in communities and causes. This training is not teaching restorative justice frameworks, but how we can and should apply them to community-based work.

11:45am–12:30pm — Lunch (provided) – **CMU Ballroom**

12:30pm–1:45pm — **Discussion Panel:** **CMU Ballroom**  
**Indigenous Peacemaking and Restorative Justice**



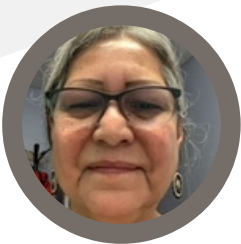
**Sadie Nelson, Panel Moderator**

Sadie Nelson is an enrolled member of the Sokaogon Chippewa Community and a descendant of White Earth Nation and Forest County Potawatomi, and is dedicated to restorative justice and Indigenous peacemaking. She has worked in the Homeless Response System since December 2024 and serves as the Indigenous Youth Cultural Program Coordinator at the Indigenous Association. Previously, she worked in Victim Services and Cultural Programs at Youthworks, where she was introduced to restorative justice. Influenced by her grandmother, she is passionate about teaching talking circles and culturally relevant peacemaking practices. Sadie integrates culture into her work to support marginalized communities, focusing on healing, prevention, and anti-poverty initiatives. She is also deeply involved in the Native community and holds extensive training in trauma-informed and culturally responsive practices.



**Natasha Gourd, Wicanphi Tokca Win (Different Star Woman)**  
**Spirit Lake Nation**

Natasha Gourd is a mother of four children and a member of the Spirit Lake Nation. She served five years as vice president of the Bismarck Public Schools Indigenous Parent Advisory Committee. She serves on the Native American Rights Fund Indigenous Peacemaking Advisory Committee. Natasha has developed a diversionary court system for tribal-affected youth and has been a peacemaking consultant for various tribes and organizations for ten years. She serves as the Restorative Practice Council Coordinator for the Consensus Council and a Leadership for Education Equity Public Policy Fellow for the South Dakota Education Equity Coalition.



**Laurie Vilas, Peacemaker**  
**Mille Lacs Band Tribal Court, White Earth Nation**

Laurie Vilas is a Peacemaker for the Mille Lacs Band Tribal Court with a focus on custody, visitation and guardianship cases. She has been doing Restorative Justice Work for over 25 years through building bridges with local, state, and tribal systems. She has been committed to working with youth from elementary and high school students with emotional behavior disorders and at a Native American Group home residential setting serving 8–18-year-old students. Laurie is a former Circle Coordinator for “Mahnomen County Working Together” in Mahnomen, Minnesota which led to collaboratively implementing a sentencing circle for youth offenders to reduce recidivism. She has done work with prisoner reentry for Northwest Indian OIC in collaboration with Minnesota Department of Corrections to reduce recidivism of Native Americans on Leech Lake, Red Lake and White Earth reservations. In these positions Laurie utilized Restorative Justice Practices to enhance safety, wellbeing, and cultural identity through traditional teachings of Native American Values.



**Ricky White, Niigonanakud Anishinabe**  
**Whitefish Bay First Nations, Ontario, Canada**

Ricky White is Pizhew or Lynx Clan and a lifetime member of the renowned drum group, the Whitefish Bay Singers. As a result of growing up on an isolated reservation, Ricky retained deep knowledge of the Anishinaabe language and culture and those teachings continue to guide his spirit and work today. Over the last 22 years, Ricky has served as an Ojibwe Language and Culture Teacher, Assistant Principal, Principal, Executive Director of Education, and Superintendent of Schools. He was exposed to world class professional development, especially in the key areas of school improvement, school climate, and reaching students that our school systems struggling with. Ricky has shifted his professional career to strategically sharing the blueprints of best practices for student success and working to help turnaround schools, programs and communities. He started a consulting company, fittingly called “First Nations Consultants,” and is now sharing his strategies all over Canada and the United States to inspire and unite his methods and messages for enhancing the educational experience for all involved.

1:45pm–2:00pm — Break

## 2:00pm–3:15pm

CMU 203

### **Utilizing Circles to Build Community and Resilience in High School Students**

Courtney Quist, *West Fargo Public Schools*  
Dana Rosendahl, *West Fargo Public Schools*  
Megan Cowden, *West Fargo Public Schools*

For the last several years, the Counseling Department at WFHS has been utilizing the Circle process to build community, trust, self-efficacy and resilience in our AP English classrooms and MTSS Study Halls. In this session, we will go over the theoretical foundation and philosophical foundation for Circle Practice in schools and share how we have used them in classrooms in our building, and the data that we use to inform the practice.

CMU 105

### **Using Restorative Justice in Cass County Criminal Cases**

Kimberlee Hegvik, Ethan Lee, Casey Moen  
- *Cass County District Attorney's Office*  
Lindsey Haugen, *Haugen, Moeckel, & Bossart*  
Dan Bertsch, *Public Defender*

In this session, the legal teams who prosecuted and defended two criminal cases in Cass County will discuss how Restorative Justice was utilized to support both the victims and offending parties in pre-sentence procedure. They will share what led them to consider Restorative Justice for these cases and review the implications and outcomes of introducing Restorative Justice services within the criminal court context.

CMU 207

### **Let's Go Outside—IZHAADAA AGWAJIING**

Pham Thi Hoa, *Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies*  
Joshua Jones, *Red Lake Trail Head*

The Red Lake Nation's "IZHAADAA AGWAJIING - Let's Go Outside" program offers spaces for youth to be youth, so that strategies for healing justice solutions foster belonging, meaning, purpose, and well-being, as defined and designed by the impacted individuals. Youth are engaged in outdoors activities from fasting camps to dirt bike racing, from cross-country skiing to building picnic benches for the Red Lake beach, and from traditional ceremonies to summer jobs. The Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies has had the privilege to learn from these solutions for individual and community healing. The partnership between "IZHAADAA AGWAJIING" of the Red Lake Family & Children services and MACP offers attendees practical actions that any individual, organization, or institution could adapt self-determination, community sovereignty, social equity, and healing justice for Native youth.

CMU 208

### **Navigating Cause and Effect: Empowering Neurodiverse Youth through Restorative Practices**

Carl Young, *FASD Advocate*

This interactive breakout session explores the intersection of neurodiversity and restorative justice by examining the unique challenges neurodiverse youth face in understanding cause and effect. Drawing from insights in the provided chapter, we will discuss how restorative practices can foster a deeper understanding of consequences, strengthen social connections, and provide supportive environments for youth with ADHD, ASD, and other neurodiverse conditions.

CMU 205

### **From Courthouse to Classroom: Transforming Restorative Justice for Schools**

Michelle Carney, Lukas Brandon, Jeff Nyquist  
- *Clay County Attorney's Office*

This presentation explores the transition of a restorative justice program from the courthouse to schools. Initially focused on addressing harm through the justice system, the program shifted to schools for proactive intervention—building community, improving school climates, and addressing conflicts at their root. It outlines the implementation process, including gaining administrator buy-in, integrating restorative practices into daily routines, and adapting strategies for educational settings. Key program elements include restorative circles, one-on-one interactions, and online programs. Challenges such as changes to our referral stream and capacity constraints are addressed, along with strategies to overcome them. The presentation shares measurable outcomes—reduced recidivism and stronger relationships. Finally, it offers practical strategies for engaging schools, building sustainable partnerships, and envisions a future where school-based restorative justice empowers youth and fosters lasting systemic change.

3:15pm-3:30pm — Break and Snack

3:30pm-4:45pm ■ **Keynote Session - CMU Ballroom**



“Restoring to What?  
The Importance of Community in Schools”

**Dr. Rachel Bachmeier**, *Principal  
West Fargo High School*

Rachel Bachmeier is Principal of West Fargo High School. Originally from Kent, Ohio, Dr. Bachmeier attended Marietta College in Marietta, Ohio for her undergraduate degree, majoring in History and Secondary Education. Upon graduating, Dr. Bachmeier joined Teach for America and served as a Corps Member on the Rosebud Indian Reservation, teaching 8th Grade Language Arts at Todd County Middle School. In 2016, Dr. Bachmeier moved to her husband’s hometown of West Fargo and began her career at West Fargo High School, first as an English Learner Social Studies instructor and later as an administrator. She received her doctorate from the University of North Dakota in 2024, completing a dissertation on restorative practices, and lives in West Fargo with her husband, daughter, and their rescue pup.

4:45pm-5:00pm — Closing and Gratitude

Thank you



7:30am–8:00am — Registration Opens & Vendor Set-up

8:00am–8:30am — Light Breakfast (provided) – **CMU Ballroom**

8:30am–9:00am

Welcome

Welcome

Joel Friesz, *NACRJ*

Dr. Arrick Jackson, *VP of Academic Affairs, MSUM*

Land Acknowledgement

Jered Pigeon, *Director, Office of Diversity & Inclusion, MSUM*

Opening Prayer & Song

Christy Goulet, *Director, Indigenous Legacy*

9:00am–10:15am

**Keynote Session – CMU Ballroom**

“Can Restorative Justice be a Vaccine for Violence?”

**Kendall Hughes**, *Restorative Justice Practitioner*



Kendall Hughes served as the first-ever director of the newly created Office of Restorative Practices (ORP) within the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) before recently returning to community and grassroots work. With decades of experience – both in the Federal Bureau of Prisons and a nonprofit in southeastern Minnesota – Hughes has a deep understanding of helping people rebuild their lives after crime. Hughes has spent his career working with people affected by crime – those who have been harmed and those who caused harm. He started as a nonprofit worker in lower-income communities and then served for 20 years as a federal prison chaplain. During this time, he developed programs that helped incarcerated men build skills, form supportive relationships and engage in meaningful conversations with survivors of violent crimes. In 2019, he co-founded Three Rivers Restorative Justice, which helps people resolve conflicts without going to court. The program has been successful, with high satisfaction rates from participants and a reduction in reoffending.

10:15am–10:30am — Break

10:30am–11:45am

CMU 208

## Using Talking Circles in the College Classroom to Build Equity and Community

Jamee Larson, *NDSU*

Over the course of the 2024–25 academic year, talking circles were implemented in various English composition and creative writing classes to examine their influence on equity, inclusivity, and collaborative learning. These sessions were conducted in both first-year composition courses and upper-level creative writing classes, offering a broad perspective on their impact. Following each circle, students submitted anonymous surveys to reflect on their experiences. The forthcoming analysis draws on these responses to highlight key findings. Preliminary results suggest that the talking circles significantly enhanced classroom equity, strengthened peer collaboration, and fostered a more inclusive learning environment—surpassing initial expectations.

CMU 207

## When the Teacher Speaks: Why I Do This Work

Rhonda Gilberston–Evans, *Advocate*

In this unique and engaging session, Rhonda will perform a series of evocative spoken word pieces inspired by the untold stories of the voiceless. Drawing on her work with marginalized populations, her poetry captures the essence of lived experience—reminding us that “My Story, Your Story, and The Truth” are deeply intertwined. Rhonda’s art not only elevates personal narratives but also fosters empathy and dialogue essential to Restorative Justice. By harnessing the transformative power of storytelling, she illustrates how creative expression can rebuild trust, repair relationships, and ignite pathways to healing.

CMU 205

## Restoring Hope and Cultivating Community Through Restorative Practices

Brian Andrews, *LARJP*, Katie McCormick, *LARJP*  
Jeanine Wiley, *LARJP*, Mike Skruskrud, *LARJP*

This session will provide a brief description of Lakes Area Restorative Justice Project and the processes and the enhanced approach used today and why. The session will cover the importance of community, the strategic and intentional recruitment of volunteers, intersections around harm, community and strength-based approaches and how this is used when discussing Restorative Agreement and how we include prosocial & emotional community connection. How connecting this process has been transformational in our community through case examples. Attendees will also learn how lived experience has influenced participants and has been a key addition to this organization and the community.

CMU 203

## Empowering Change: The Role of Lived Experience in Justice Involvement

Adam Martin, *F5 Project*

Lived experience is vital for justice-involved individuals as it provides authentic insights into the challenges and barriers they face. Those who have navigated the justice system often possess valuable knowledge about effective coping strategies, support resources, and pathways to rehabilitation. Their firsthand experiences can enhance peer support programs, making them more relatable and effective. Incorporating lived experience into discussions about policy and reform can drive meaningful change, ensuring that initiatives address the real needs of those affected. Individuals with lived experience can advocate for themselves and their communities, fostering a sense of empowerment and hope. By recognizing and valuing these perspectives, we can create more supportive environments that promote recovery, reintegration, and ultimately, a reduction in recidivism.

CMU 105

## Building and Restoring Connections: A Panel Discussion on Fostering Equitable, Inclusive, and Supportive School Communities

Jacob Snyder, *Ben Franklin Middle School*  
Yorrick Byers, *Davies High School*  
Jacob Kienzle, *Discovery Middle School*  
Dr. Chasity Odden Heide, *Fargo Public Schools*  
Rachel Nelson, *Fargo South High School*  
Dr. Jen Sahr, *Fargo Public Schools*

Join this engaging panel presentation to hear from district and school leaders actively working to create restorative school environments. Panelists will share insights, challenges, and success stories about implementing school-wide restorative practices to strengthen relationships, promote inclusivity, address conflicts constructively, and process significant events with students and staff. Learn practical strategies for fostering a sense of belonging and collaboration among students, staff, and families. The session will explore real-world applications of restorative practices, such as restorative circles, conflict resolution techniques, and community-building initiatives. Panelists will discuss how these methods have transformed school culture, reduced disciplinary issues, and empowered students and staff to build stronger connections. Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and explore ways to bring these practices to their educational settings. This session offers a unique opportunity to gain perspectives from policymakers and practitioners, making it an invaluable experience for anyone invested in creating equitable, inclusive, and supportive learning environments.



11:45am-12:30pm — Lunch (provided) - **CMU Ballroom**

12:30pm-1:00pm — **Closing Circles & Gratitude**



**Lauren Starling**  
Artist in Residence

Lauren Starling (they/them) is a graduate of MSU-Moorhead. They earned a Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice, emphasis in Psychology, with a minor in Juvenile Justice. Lauren has bravely spoken publicly about channeling the aftermath of domestic abuse and sexual assault, into creating large scale murals and public art. Lauren's primary works are in acrylic painting and illustration and is known especially for creating nearly 100 murals across the tri state region. In addition, they have been a painting instructor and have been independently teaching public & private painting classes. They also have volunteering service with assorted human rights groups.

The majority of Lauren's professional work experience is in the mental health/human services field. They are currently working full-time at a nonprofit with incarcerated women, providing rehabilitative services to achieve social reintegration, as well as continuing to take on freelance art projects. Lauren believes in the power of redemption, embracing fresh starts and resilience to emerge stronger from adversity. Lauren is interested in pursuing higher education as an Art Therapist to promote healing and empowerment through the creation of art.

*Thank you*

to our generous donors:

**North Dakota Human Rights Coalition**

**Interfaith Alliance**

**Crystal Rock Healing**

**Clay County Attorney's Office**

**North Dakota Parents Lead**



### **Designing a Sustainable Blueprint for District-Wide Restorative Practices and Reducing Recidivism**

#### **Dr. Jennifer Sahr, Fargo Public Schools**

Dr. Jennifer Sahr is an experienced educational leader dedicated to equity and psychological well-being in education. As Assistant Director for Educational Justice at Fargo Public Schools, she implements initiatives ensuring equitable academic and emotional support for students. With a doctorate in Educational Leadership, Dr. Sahr has extensive expertise in Multi-Tier Systems of Support (MTSS), restorative practices, and trauma-informed care. A skilled mentor and problem-solver, she has been recognized for her contributions to education, and passionate about community engagement, Dr. Sahr serves on various boards, advancing outcomes for children and families in Cass County.

#### **Dr. Rupak Gandhi, Fargo Public Schools**

Dr. Rupak Gandhi has served as Superintendent of Fargo Public Schools since July 2018 and was named the 2022-23 North Dakota Superintendent of the Year. Beginning his career in Houston ISD, he has held roles as a teacher, principal, and assistant superintendent in Colorado Springs. Dr. Gandhi holds degrees from Texas A&M, Grand Canyon University, and Northwest Nazarene University and has completed advanced leadership programs, including Harvard's UDL Summer Institute. Active in the Fargo community, he serves on multiple boards and committees while mentoring through AASA. Dr. Gandhi and his family proudly call Fargo home.

#### **Dr. Chasity Odden Heide, Fargo Public Schools**

Dr. Chasity Odden Heide is the Coordinator of Social, Emotional, and Restorative Services for Fargo Public Schools. Passionate about educating the whole child, she champions the role of collaborative teams in supporting students across school systems. With expertise in evidence-based programming, Dr. Odden Heide has led training in restorative practices, trauma-informed care, suicide prevention, and crisis management. As a former school counselor, she spearheaded district-wide initiatives in these critical areas. Recognized as North Dakota's School Counselor of the Year in 2017, she currently serves on the Executive Council of the North Dakota Counseling Association.

### **The Art of Connection:**

### **Building Restorative Communities Through Creativity and Wellbeing**

#### **Heidi Danos, Firefly Center for Art & Wellbeing**

Heidi Danos is a lifelong learner who has amassed a wealth of experience working across a wide range of industries, including e-commerce, hospitality, manufacturing, and nonprofits. Using a creative lens, she enjoys working toward innovative solutions and believes that nurturing positive connections is essential for the success of individuals, communities, and organizations. Her desire to pursue restorative practice work stems from personal experiences and a commitment to improving the landscape for others. She is a Restorative Family Mediator, MN Rule 115 Qualified Neutral, and a restorative Justice Facilitator. This work gives her hope that, collectively, we can address the deep divides in our social structures and families, repair harm, and strive for a more equitable balance of power in polarizing situations. On a more personal note, Heidi lives in Fosston, MN, with her husband Pete, two kids, one dog, a snake, and a gecko. She enjoys the outdoors and Minnesota's long summer days—though not so much the snow. Heidi finds joy in art and writing, and she is currently serving as Interim Director for the Firefly Center for Art & Wellbeing.

### **Teaching Midwesterners to Stop Fighting**

#### **Faye Seidler, Community Activist**

Faye Seidler is an award-winning advocate that specializes in suicide prevention, LGBTQ+ populations, and state data. She was born and raised in North Dakota and has a decade of experience in community organizing, public speaking, and professional development training. She is known for connecting and uplifting others, bringing communities together, and always keeping hope in focus.

### Transformative Community

#### **Amber Harris, Restorative Justice Movement**

Amber Harris (she/her) was shaped by a life of racial discrimination and societal bias, growing up in a community where her racial identity made up less than 1% of the town's census. A survivor of familial complex trauma, her lived experiences led her to advocacy, community engagement, and Restorative Justice education. Restorative Justice is at the core of who she is. Her education extends beyond institutions—she has been deeply shaped by the penal systems of Illinois, Louisiana, and Missouri. The lasting impact of the cocaine pandemic and opioid epidemic continues to fuel her passion for transformative justice, public safety education, and mental health awareness. Since 2014, Amber has been a powerful presence in her community as an advocate, educator, and resource. As co-founder of the Restorative Justice Movement Center, her role has evolved alongside the services offered. The grassroots center has impacted countless lives on the streets of Saint Louis. Her work contributed to a proposal replacing high school detention with Restorative Justice circles in the Springfield Catholic High School District. Amber is an active member of SDART (Sisters of Dominican Anti-Racism Team), GROW (Grassroots Optimal Wellbeing Coalition), and the Universal Advocates Network. She mentors at-risk youth and co-leads initiatives on food insecurity. With 15 years of experience as a Medical Technician specializing in geriatric mental health, wound care, hospice, and palliative treatment, she remains dedicated to community well-being. Her work spans all ages, economic classes, and educational backgrounds, driven by an unwavering commitment to equity, justice, and transformative change.

#### **Tracy Stanton, Community Consultant**

Tracy (T-Spirit) Stanton is an award-winning international spoken word artist, trainer, workshop facilitator, community organizer, and peacemaker. She harnesses the transformative power of spoken word poetry and storytelling to inspire personal and societal change. With a deep commitment to connection, collective liberation, and creative expression, she speaks truth to power and healing to the heart as a form of resistance. As a founding member of Freedom Community Center, a Black-led abolitionist organization addressing systemic and interpersonal violence, and the creator of Some Things Must Be Heard: Spitting & Politicking, she builds platforms for radical artists and organizers committed to freedom dreaming and power building. She has organized direct actions, led over 70 Black-only community meetings, and facilitated workshops worldwide on systemic violence, transformative justice, abolition, emotional regulation, and more. Her recent achievements include serving as a 2025 & 2024 Artist Inc Facilitator, a 2023 Artist Leadership Fellow with Mid-America Arts Alliance, and the 2023 Poet in Residence at the National Blues Museum. Featured in major media outlets and honored with numerous awards, T-Spirit continues to use poetry as a force for change, ensuring her voice lives in the hearts and souls of those she encounters.

### Exploring the Intersections of Transformative Mediation and Restorative Justice

#### **Sarah Prom, New Perspectives, LLC**

Sarah Prom, MA, LPC, ODCP has over 15 years of counseling, coaching, training and mediation experience. Sarah received her Master's in Counseling from the University of North Dakota and is a licensed Professional Counselor in North Dakota and Minnesota. She has expertise in the areas of team development and facilitation, workplace stress and conflict management and workplace training. Her focus in these endeavors is to build self-awareness and transform the quality of people's interactions. Having worked in higher education, healthcare organizations and in the non-profit sector, she has broad perspective of the dynamics that impact organizational systems. Sarah is also a Certified Transformative Mediator, an Organizational Development Certified Professional, Certified in the administration of the MBTI and the Conflict Dynamics Profile.

### Utilizing Circles to Build Community and Resilience in High School Students

#### **Courtney Quist, West Fargo Public Schools**

Courtney Quist, M.Ed, is in her 4th year of being a school counselor at West Fargo High School. She received her Masters of Education in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling from NDSU. Prior to this career as a school counselor, Courtney served as a Program Director and Operations Director for a small, neighborhood-based nonprofit that provided afterschool and summer programming that primarily served families with lower socioeconomic statuses and new American and refugee families. Courtney lives in Moorhead with her partner and her cat.

#### **Dana Rosendahl, West Fargo Public Schools**

Dana Rosendahl, M.Ed, is in her 6th year as a school counselor at West Fargo High School. She graduated from NDSU with her Master of Education in School Counseling in 2019. She lives in Fargo, ND with her husband and 2 daughters, Emmy (4) and Bria (2). She is also a group fitness instructor at Mojo Fit Studios and Ride Cycle Studios, which aligns with her passion for health and wellness.

#### **Megan Cowden, West Fargo Public Schools**

Megan Cowden is in her 1st year as a school counselor at West Fargo High School and will be graduating from MSUM with her MS in Counseling with a School Counseling emphasis in May 2025. Megan is one of the recipients of the Infuse Mental Health Grant at MSUM. Previous to this role, Megan has about 10 years of social work experience in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Megan lives in West Fargo with her husband and two daughters.

### Using Restorative Justice in Cass County Criminal Cases

#### **Kimberlee Hegvik, Cass County District Attorney's Office**

Kimberlee J Hegvik is the Cass County State's Attorney. Prior to her taking office in 2023, she worked as a Cass County Assistant State's Attorney for over 16 years. She obtained her law degree from the Florida State University College of Law, and her undergraduate degree from NDSU.

#### **Lindsey Haugen, Haugen, Moeckel, & Bossart**

Lindsey Haugen is a criminal defense attorney at Haugen, Moeckel, & Bossart in Fargo, ND. Mr. Haugen specializes in criminal defense practice both in North Dakota and Minnesota, as well as in Federal Court for the District of North Dakota. With over 23 years of experience, Mr. Haugen is a passionate supporter of alternative sentencing options including the introduction and use of restorative justice in criminal cases.

#### **Ethan Lee, Cass County District Attorney's Office**

Ethan Lee is a Cass County Assistant State's Attorney. He has been prosecuting for over six years. He graduated law school from the University of North Dakota School of Law in 2018.

#### **Casey Moen, Cass County District Attorney's Office**

Casey Moen is an Assistant Cass County State's Attorney. He has been prosecuting for 10 years. He graduated law school from Creighton University in 2010.

#### **Dan Bertsch, Public Defender**

Dan Bertsch is a public defender, a former assistant state's attorney, a former Air Force civilian attorney, and former Air Force Judge Advocate. He graduated from NDSU with a BS in Psychology then the University of North Dakota School of Law in 1988. He was once a productive citizen when he farmed near Hillsboro.

### Let's Go Outside—IZHAADAA AGWAJIING

#### **Pham Thi Hoa**, *Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies*

Pham Thi Hoa is about social change and impact. Her leadership in managing global and national programs has diversely addressed issues in arts and cultures, conflict resolution, cultures, climate action, disaster relief/recovery, economic development, migration and refugees, and public media. Hoa has a Master's in Public Affairs from Columbia University and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Minnesota.

#### **Joshua Jones**, *Founder/Director of Red Lake Trail Head*

Joshua Jones is a Red Lake Nations community leader, environmentalist, changemaker, and advocate for youth development. He is Founder & Director of the Red Lake Trail Head, a DNR Hydrologist, and Director of Ombimindwaa Gidinawemagiganinaadog.

### Navigating Cause and Effect:

### Empowering Neurodiverse Youth through Restorative Practices

#### **Carl Young**, *FASD Advocate*

Carl Young is a dedicated advocate for people with neurodiversity, especially those with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and Autism. With 20 years of experience, he's spoken at conferences and advocated for policy change at the state and federal levels for special needs individuals. He and his wife also founded a non-profit in 2018 to provide support and resources to families like theirs.

### From Courthouse to Classroom: Transforming Restorative Justice for Schools

#### **Michelle Carney**, *Clay County Attorney's Office*

Michelle Carney is the Director of Victim Services and the Juvenile Diversion Program in Clay County, a role she has held since 2012. With a career in victim services spanning North Dakota and Minnesota since 2004, she has been a dedicated advocate for victims. Through the backing of Clay County Attorney Brian Melton and the Clay County Board, Michelle has successfully grown programs that address the needs of victims while promoting restorative approaches for youth. Her work in juvenile-based restorative justice reflects her passion for supporting victims and engaging young people in meaningful accountability and healing processes. Michelle is driven to create impactful change, bridging the needs of victims and young people while fostering collaboration across systems to create safer, more supportive communities.

#### **Lukas Brandon**, *Clay County Attorney's Office*

Lukas Brandon is the Restorative Practices Coordinator for Clay County. Working in the schools with youth, administrators, law enforcement, and parents to find creative solutions to incidents of harm, Lukas brings a sense of fun and curiosity to his restorative work. Known for being "The Ball Guy", Lukas uses contact juggling as a means to engage with students and show them that practice is the path to mastery and success.

#### **Jeff Nyquist**, *Clay County Attorney's Office*

Jeff Nyquist is a local Restorative Justice Practitioner. Following a career in print media, Jeff was introduced to the Art of Hosting, a suite of methods to facilitate group dialogue which he used consulting with private organizations. While employed at the Clay County (Minnesota) Attorney's office he worked as their Restorative Justice Facilitator and later assisted their development of a school-based RJ Coordinator program and Restorative Practices Advisory Committee. He has training in Mediation and is currently a member of the State of Minnesota Office of Restorative Practices Strategic Planning Group.

### Using Talking Circles in the College Classroom to Build Equity and Community

**Jamee Larson, NDSU**

Jamee Larson teaches composition and creative writing at North Dakota State University, where she is in her 10th year. Larson has a MFA degree from Minnesota State University and is a very proud Dragon alum! She lives in Moorhead with her wife and three critter babies.

### When the Teacher Speaks: Why I Do This Work

**Rhonda Gilbertson-Evans, Advocate**

Rhonda Gilbertson-Evans is a poet and spoken word artist in the Fargo-Moorhead area. She holds a bachelor's degree in Community Health and master's degree in education, serves as a board member for Parachigo (an art collective in Fargo), and hosts open mic events at Black Coffee and Waffles. For the past 34 years, she has served marginalized populations through community activism, advocacy, and spoken word poetry. Rhonda's experiences working with the unhoused, HIV positive individuals, the deaf and blind, and the impoverished have inspired her to be a story-teller, recognizing that we live our lives in stories that weave together our struggles, triumphs, and shared humanity.

### Empowering Change: The Role of Lived Experience in Justice Involvement

**Adam Martin, F5 Project**

Adam Martin is the CEO and Founder of F5 Project, a nonprofit that aims to disrupt the cycle of crime, addiction, and isolation through individualized care that fosters resilience and restores hope. Adam isn't your typical entrepreneur and often had the odds stacked against him. Growing up in the foster care system, Adam often struggled as he grew up. After receiving five felonies, he thought there must be more to life than this. Adam always had a desire to serve those who often get overlooked; he made the decision to become a resource for individuals coming out of jail by providing personalized support to individuals to deter repeat offenses. With a passion for justice reform, he left his private-sector job and decided to be the catalyst his local community needed. Often described as ambitious, Adam started F5 Project in 2016. What began as a way of improving the lives of formerly incarcerated individuals in Fargo, ND, the nonprofit has evolved into a statewide initiative to bridge resources and provide full-spectrum services to people struggling with incarceration, mental health, and addiction. F5 Project offices in eight cities across North Dakota and serves 525+ participants each month.

### Restoring Hope and Cultivating Community Through Restorative Practices

#### **Brian Andrews**, *Lakes Area Restorative Justice Project*

Brian Andrews, Executive Director of Lakes Area Restorative Justice Project, experienced a life of overcoming mental health struggles and managing stress from the darkest depths of addiction, and homelessness, and personal experience with the criminal justice system. Brian has been married to his best friend of over 20 years and they have six amazing children together. Brian is a trainer for SMART (Stress Management & Resiliency Training), Peer Support Specialist, Peer Recovery Specialist, Trained RJ Conference Facilitator, Circle Keeper and community advocate working tirelessly to live his tagline of "Restoring Hope & Cultivating Community".

#### **Katie McCormick**, *Lakes Area Restorative Justice Project*

Katie McCormick is a person in long term recovery. who works for RecoveryCor as a Navigator helping participants reach their goals and live a healthier lifestyle. In her free time, I her free time Katie enjoys serving her community. Recently appointed as chairperson of the newly created Restorative Practice Advisory Committee formed in Crow Wing County and volunteers at Lakes Area Restorative Justice Project as a Community Member in the Community Group Conferencing Model along with volunteering at Open Arms homeless shelter. Some of her hobbies include paddle boarding, gardening and baking. Katies most important and rewarding role in life is being a mother to an amazing little boy, enjoying the challenges and rewards of parenting!

#### **Jeanine Wiley**, *Lakes Area Restorative Justice Project*

Jeanine Wiley is a Parent First to an adult daughter who is currently serving in the United States Marines. Over the years Jeanine served the community in various ways, from working with Head Start preschoolers to teens and young adults. Jeanine spent years working with the Crisis Line overnights, serving at her church, working for the school district and with children in the private sector. Jeanine's personal time is spent serving as a board member of a nonprofit organization that focuses on supporting marginalized communities.

#### **Michael Skruskrud**, *Lakes Area Restorative Justice Project*

Michael Skruskrud is a Minnesota native, growing up and raising a family in the Twin Cities area. He brings with him 30+ years of experience in meeting and exceeding his client's needs in the medical sales field. He was an entrepreneur and small business owner, helping to improve patient care in hospitals and clinics around the Midwest. During the COVID Pandemic, he reflected on what was most important to him, which was making a positive impact in people's lives. He started working in a Group home for vulnerable adults, assisting them with their day-to-day lives. Then an opportunity came to become a Peer Recovery Specialist in the Brainerd Lakes area. This came at the perfect time for him. He has close family ties to this area and was able to relocate to support his aging parents, while also living out his newfound purpose of working with people one-on-one to help them improve aspects of their lives. During this work he was given an opportunity to become a volunteer with LARJP. It was the result of this volunteer work that he found his purpose; to help turn lives around toward a path of success and achievement.

### **Building and Restoring Connections: A Panel Discussion on Fostering Equitable, Inclusive, and Supportive School Communities**

#### **Jacob Snyder, Ben Franklin Middle Schools**

Jake Snyder first began his work with youth through coordinating an adventure program at a summer camp in 2013. This evolved into after school mentoring with a local non-profit, and then his first position in the educational field was a special education paraprofessional at Century Elementary School in Grand Forks, N.D in 2016. Snyder worked at West Fargo High School from 2018-24 in multiple roles. He was an English Language Arts teacher at West Fargo High School from 2018-23, a Restorative Practice Leader from 2021-23, and a Social Emotional Behavioral Facilitator from 2023-24. Snyder served as the debate coach at WFHS from 2019-24. Snyder now works at Ben Franklin Middle School as the Dean of Students. He assumed the position for the 2024-25 school year on August 21.

#### **Yorrick Byers, Davies High School**

Yorrick Byers has over 30 years of experience supporting youth and families in education, mental health, and restorative practices. Yorrick served as a Dean of Students in Minneapolis schools for 22 years and worked in mental health at Miller-Dwan in Duluth, specializing in high-risk youth. Additionally, he supported community reintegration with Better Futures Minnesota. Currently, Yorrick is the Restorative Practices Facilitator at Davies High School in Fargo supporting students and staff with restorative practices.

#### **Jacob Kienzle, Discovery Middle School**

Jacob Kienzle is currently the Dean of Students at Discovery Middle School. Prior to his current role, he spent nine years as a classroom Language Arts teacher, working with students in grades 6 through 12. Mr. Kienzle has spent the past four years working as a restorative practices and Circle facilitator working with staff and students. He is dedicated to helping students grow academically, socially, and emotionally focusing on accountability and meaningful connections within the school community.

#### **Dr. Chasity Odden Heide, Fargo Public Schools**

Dr. Chasity Odden Heide is the Coordinator of Social, Emotional, and Restorative Services for Fargo Public Schools. Passionate about educating the whole child, she champions the role of collaborative teams in supporting students across school systems. With expertise in evidence-based programming, Dr. Odden Heide has led training in restorative practices, trauma-informed care, suicide prevention, and crisis management. As a former school counselor, she spearheaded district-wide initiatives in these critical areas. Recognized as North Dakota's School Counselor of the Year in 2017, she currently serves on the Executive Council of the North Dakota Counseling Association.

#### **Rachel Nelson, Fargo South High School**

Rachel Nelson is a graduate of MSUM with over 30 years of experience in private, non-profit, and public sectors. She has provided case management and crisis intervention to individuals ranging from ages 5 to 98, gaining extensive practical knowledge. Though comfortable in administrative roles, Rachel's passion lies in directly supporting people facing intellectual, cognitive, developmental, behavioral, and mental health challenges. Rachel has worked with Fargo Public Schools for 8 years and is currently a Restorative Practices Facilitator at South High.

#### **Dr. Jennifer Sahr, Fargo Public Schools**

Dr. Jennifer Sahr is an experienced educational leader dedicated to equity and psychological well-being in education. As Assistant Director for Educational Justice at Fargo Public Schools, she implements initiatives ensuring equitable academic and emotional support for students. With a doctorate in Educational Leadership, Dr. Sahr has extensive expertise in Multi-Tier Systems of Support (MTSS), restorative practices, and trauma-informed care. A skilled mentor and problem-solver, she has been recognized for her contributions to education, and passionate about community engagement, Dr. Sahr serves on various boards, advancing outcomes for children and families in Cass County.