



## Northland Foundation announces program officer hire and board members for new grassroots Indigenous grantmaking program



The Northland Foundation announced that LeAnn Littlewolf has been hired as a Senior Program Officer, starting on Monday, December 14. She will work primarily to help coordinate a grassroots program called Maada’ookiing – “distribution” in Ojibwe – focused on engagement and grant support for Indigenous people and communities in northeastern Minnesota.

Littlewolf, *Maaiin’gan Doodem and Anishinaabe/Gaa-zagaskwaajimekaag Band of Ojibwe*, has worked in the nonprofit sector and community advocacy for over 28 years, which includes direct services, development, and executive director roles. She designed and developed a start-up nonprofit organization focused on American Indian youth leadership and assisted with the startup of an initiative focused on Indigenous and rural women’s leadership. Littlewolf holds both a Bachelor’s and Master’s degree in Education, as well as a Master’s degree in Advocacy and Political Leadership.

Her most recent work has focused on building Indigenous economy, as the Economic Development Director at the American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO). As a part of a leadership team at AICHO, Littlewolf helped develop a Food Sovereignty initiative, new Indigenous social enterprises, and a theory of change based in cultural values and practices.

“We are thrilled to welcome LeAnn to our team. Her longtime experience and commitment to building equity and resources among Indigenous people in northeastern Minnesota is an excellent match for Maada’ookiing, as we prepare to launch it in early 2021,” said Tony Sertich, Northland Foundation’s President.

The program is being designed by a board of nine members representing the five sovereign Tribal nations in northeastern Minnesota (Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Grant Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, and Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe) along with representatives from other communities across the region. They are:

- Shane Drift, Bois Forte
- Jaylen Strong, Bois Forte
- Alexandra Houchin, Fond du Lac
- April McCormick, Grand Portage
- Robbie Howe, Leech Lake
- Baabiiitaw Boyd, Mille Lacs
- Mary Harrelson, Grand Portage
- Melissa Walls, Bois Forte and Couchiching First Nation
- Leanne Johnson, Couchiching First Nation

Maada'ookiing will make available grants to individuals who are working to strengthen Indigenous communities in the region.

"We anticipate that the first grant round will open in April 2021. Maada'ookiing is an expansion of the Northland Foundation's existing partnerships with Tribal Nations and Indigenous-led nonprofits, and we will continue to make grants to them through our current grant programs, as well," said Tony Sertich, President.

"The addition of awarding grants to individuals is an exciting new avenue to, we hope, provide more resources to those who are 'on the ground' in communities," Sertich stated.

Northland serves northeastern Minnesota's Arrowhead Region through its Grant Program, KIDS PLUS Program, Business Services including small business gap lending and hosting the regional SBDC, and other special initiatives.

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