NATIONAL ASSEMBLY of STATE ARTS AGENCIES

Knowledge ▲ Representation ▲ Community

2024 Virtual Creative Aging Institute

Speaker Bios

(in alphabetical order)

DRAFT updated December 3, 2024

Sheila Kay Adams
Artist

A seventh-generation ballad singer, storyteller and musician, Sheila Kay Adams was born and raised in the Sodom Laurel community of Madison County, North Carolina, an area renowned for its unbroken tradition of unaccompanied ballad singing dating back to the early Scottish, Scots/Irish and English settlers in the mid-17th century. In September 2013, she received the nation's highest award for the arts, the National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship Award, which recognizes folk and traditional artists for their artistic excellence and efforts to conserve America's culture for future generations. In 2016, Sheila received the North Carolina Heritage Award, the state's highest award for the arts.

Kari Benson
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Aging
Administration for Community Living

As the deputy assistant secretary for aging, Kari Benson leads the Administration on Aging in advocating on behalf of older Americans. In this capacity, she guides and promotes the development of home and community based long-term care programs, policies and services designed to afford older people and their caregivers the ability to age with dignity and independence and to have a broad array of options available for an enhanced quality of life. This includes the promotion and implementation of evidence based prevention interventions proven effective in avoiding or delaying the onset of chronic disease and illness. Kari's entire career has been in the aging network, most recently serving as the director of the

Aging and Adult Services Division of the Minnesota Department of Human Services and as the executive director of the Minnesota Board on Aging. Through these dual roles, she oversaw the full range of federal- and state-funded HCBS for older adults, their families, and the friends, neighbors, and others who provide informal caregiving support. Prioritizing collaboration with the 11 tribal nations that share geography with Minnesota, as well as organizations reaching rural and underserved communities, was a hallmark of her leadership at the state level. She also partnered with the state's Disability Services Division to coordinate quality assurance and improvement strategies for the Medicaid waiver programs, strengthen maltreatment and critical incident remediation efforts for older adults and people with disabilities, and launch the state's universal LTSS assessment tool. Kari holds a bachelor's degree in human ecology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a master's degree in public policy from the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota.

Amy Berridge
Senior Manager, School Programs
The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

Amy Berridge oversees preK-12 teacher and student programs as well as youth and adult studio experiences. She taught art in public, private and charter schools before joining the Nelson-Atkins in 2011 to teach school workshops and studio classes. She earned a B.S. in art education from the University of Missouri–Kansas City and completed an M.S. in leadership in museum education from Bank Street College as a Kress Fellow.

Beth Bienvenu
Accessibility Director
National Endowment for the Arts

Dr. Beth Bienvenu manages the NEA's technical assistance and advocacy work devoted to making the arts accessible to people with disabilities, older adults and people in institutional settings. She provides guidance to arts organizations, state and local arts councils, and artists with disabilities. Her office supports technical assistance to NEA applicants and grantees, disability research in the arts, and resources for disabled artists pursuing careers in the arts. Prior to the NEA, she served as a policy advisor for the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy and as an adjunct professor for George Mason University's Master of Arts in Arts Management program, where she taught courses in arts policy. Dr. Bienvenu has master's degrees in sociology and arts administration from Indiana University and a doctorate in organizational leadership from The University of Oklahoma.

Pieper Bloomquist
Artist

Pieper Fleck Bloomquist is a contemporary folk artist with nearly 30 years' experience painting in the traditions of Swedish dalmålning and bonadsmålning. Using traditional materials of linen/jute, traditional gesso and egg tempera, she creates painted tapestries with scenes that narrate modern human stories—drawing inspiration from family traditions and her experience as an oncology nurse. She has found her voice in helping local communities and elders tell their stories using these traditions—all with the goal of creating awareness and appreciation for folk art, its connection to a heritage, and the ability it has to connect us all through our stories. Based in Grand Forks, North Dakota, Pieper is a recipient of the North Dakota Governor's Award for the Arts (2023-2025), and the 2024 Culture Bearer Award from Arts Midwest. For over 25 years she has been active in programs sponsored by the North Dakota Council on the Arts, including the Art for Life Program and the Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship program as a master artist. She has twice been granted a Folk Arts Fellowship through the American Scandinavian Foundation.

Teresa Bonner
Executive Director
E.A. Michelson Philanthropy

Teresa Bonner brings more than 30 years of professional experience in philanthropy, foundation and nonprofit leadership to her role as executive director for E.A. Michelson Philanthropy. She is a frequent presenter on philanthropy as well as on creative aging, including sessions at the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, Grantmakers in the Arts, Grantmakers in Aging, Americans for the Arts, Philanthropy New York and the American Society on Aging. Teresa previously served as director of the U.S. Bancorp Foundation, where she managed $20 million in Foundation grant making annually and led the company's community relations activities; the Piper Jaffray Foundation; and two nonprofit organizations, Milkweed Editions and the Library Foundation of Hennepin County. Arts and cultural programs have long been a major focus of her professional experience and a personal passion. She is a principal in Family Philanthropy Advisors, with offices in Minneapolis and the Bay Area. Teresa graduated magna cum laude from the University of North Dakota with a degree in journalism. After completing law school at the University of Minnesota, she clerked for the Hon. Gerald Heaney of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit and was a partner at the Minneapolis law firm of Lindquist and Vennum before moving to the nonprofit sector.

Alyssa Carr
Evaluation and Visitor Research Associate
The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

Alyssa Carr (she/her) specializes in visitor research and evaluation at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Missouri. She prioritizes community engagement and participatory analysis of accessibility and IDEA-centered projects. She is the author of the chapter "The Deaf Culture Project: Setting an Expectation of Adaptability" in the edited book *Evaluating Accessibility in Museums: A Practical Guide*. She has presented on participatory evaluation, evaluation of accessibility projects and audience research. She is the current chair of the Visitor Studies Association Art Museum Focused Interest Group. Previous focus areas have included early education, military leadership, and youth and adult education. She holds a master's degree in organizational development from Avila University in Kansas City.

Troyd Geist
Folklorist
North Dakota Council on the Arts

Troyd Geist is charged with encouraging the preservation and continuation of folk and traditional arts, heritage and culture at the North Dakota Council on the Arts (NDCA). His responsibilities include managing the Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program, research, documentation, expanding awareness of cultural heritage, producing folk art/folklife exhibits, publications, and audio recordings, special projects, and assisting with folk arts integration efforts in other agency programs. He has examined the interplay between folk art/culture and health regarding the "three plagues" affecting the lives of elders in care facilities, the use of storytelling as a counseling tool for fetal alcohol syndrome, Bell's palsy as viewed and treated in traditional cultures, familial Alzheimer's disease tracking using anthropological methods, and culturally contextualized guided imagery to have a physiologic impact on the human body. His early work in creative aging and health with folk arts in eldercare facilities and service organizations resulted in the development of the NDCA's Art for Life Program in 2001.

Jon Kay
Interim Executive Director for Arts and Humanities
Indiana University Bloomington
Director
Traditional Arts Indiana

Jon Kay is the interim executive director for Arts and Humanities at Indiana University Bloomington, an associate professor of folklore, and the director of Traditional Arts Indiana. A recognized leader in the field of arts in later life, Kay is the author of *Folk Art and Aging: Life-Story Objects and Their Makers* (2016), *The Expressive Lives of Elders: Folklore, Art, and Aging* (2018), *Memory, Art, and Aging: A Resource and Activity Guide* (2020), and *Everyday Arts and Aging* (2024). He is frequently invited to speak about the value of creative practice in later life and to advise on arts and aging initiatives. In his role at Traditional Arts Indiana, Kay oversees a statewide apprenticeship program, manages Indiana's Heritage Fellowships, and mentors students. He received Indiana University's Mary Burgan Distinguished Service Award in 2023 and the Bicentennial Medal in 2020.

Lindsay Lewis
Program Officer
E.A. Michelson Philanthropy

Lindsay Lewis joined E.A. Michelson Philanthropy as program manager in 2016. A lifelong artist and arts enthusiast, Lindsay feels honored to support the work of E.A. Michelson Philanthropy. Lindsay has a background in nonprofit leadership and arts administration. In addition to the exciting work of E.A. Michelson Philanthropy's *Vitality Arts*®, 55+ arts fund, Lindsay is the program officer for E.A. Michelson Philanthropy's Humanity Arts, adult residential mental health art fund, and Discovery Arts, arts education programs for children and youth. Lindsay graduated cum laude from Wellesley College in Massachusetts where she earned a bachelor of arts in cognitive science and studio art. Lindsay lives in Minneapolis, where she enjoys cooking, throwing a party and exploring the arts scene.

Andria Lo, Photographer
Valerie Luu, Writer
Chinatown Pretty

Photographer Andria Lo and writer Valerie Luu have been interviewing and photographing Chinatown's most fashionable elders on their blog and Instagram, Chinatown Pretty, since 2014. Their first book was released in fall of 2020. *Chinatown Pretty* is a photo and storytelling project that shares nuggets of philosophical wisdom and personal stories about immigration and Chinese-American culture. It's a signature style worn by pòh pohs (grandmas) and gùng gungs (grandpas) everywhere—but it's also a life philosophy, mixing resourcefulness, creativity and a knack for finding joy even in difficult circumstances. Website: http://chinatownpretty.com. Photo credit: Andria Lo / Chinatown Pretty

Torshira Moffett, MPH
Senior Program Officer
Center for Health Care Strategies

Torshira Moffett, MPH, is a senior program officer at the Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS). In this role, she works on initiatives related to improving care delivery for older adults and people with disabilities, including individuals who are dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid and people who require long-term services and supports (LTSS). She leads a variety of CHCS learning collaboratives that provide states and managed care plans with the tools and resources to implement innovative programs, such as the Multisector Plan for Aging Learning Collaborative and the Institutional Long-Term Care Carve-in Learning Community. Prior to joining CHCS, Torshira served as a director of product development at the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA). In this role, she led market research efforts to identify opportunities to develop new accreditation and recognition programs for emerging care delivery models (e.g., virtual care, episodic/convenient care, and accountable care organizations). In collaboration with internal and external stakeholders, she managed the development of standards and guidelines for new and existing programs to align with industry best practices. She led the development of NCQA's Case Management Accreditation and served as subject matter expert for the LTSS accreditation programs, which address populations with complex care needs. She also served as faculty for the LTSS Best Practices Academy, an online forum for health plans, home and community based organizations, and other stakeholders to learn strategies for achieving and maintaining accreditation, engage with NCQA and external experts, and learn from other organizations. Torshira holds a master's degree in public health with a concentration in health policy from George Washington University. She received a bachelor's degree in sociology and political science from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. When not working, Torshira enjoys going to the museums in D.C., sewing and other creative endeavors, and watching Carolina basketball.

Sara Morman
Elder Connections Division Chief
Ohio Department of Aging

Jackie Niekamp
Manager of Community and Access Programs
The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

Since joining the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art as a teaching artist in 2014, Jackie Niekamp has cultivated partnerships with community organizations and developed hands-on workshops for underrecognized audiences—offered onsite, virtually, and in the community. Named Museum Art Educator of the Year by the Missouri Art Education Association in 2023, Jackie brings a creative background in silk screening and holds a B.F.A. from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Holly Riley
Director of Aging Services
ADvancing States

Holly Riley oversees ADvancing States's No Wrong Door technical assistance efforts including person-centered options counseling. Holly supports the association's training and technical assistance efforts for State Units on Aging (SUA) related to the Older Americans Act Final Rule. She also provides policy and legislative analyses and support on multisector plans on aging and evidence based program development. Previously, Holly served as the director of aging services coordination for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and worked for the Texas State Unit on Aging for over 25 years. In that role, she oversaw the development of dynamic public-private partnerships to support the state's aging programs and the establishment of robust statewide marketing campaigns to educate Texans on healthy aging and provided subject-matter expertise to the commission's aging services and programs. Holly served on the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities as the Older Americans Act member and has worked on a number of statewide and national committees.

Jennie Smith
Manager of Gallery Teaching
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

Jennie Smith is a museum educator and practicing artist. She has worked in a variety of roles within the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco's education department as a teaching artist and project manager. She has authored curricula for school and family programs and coauthored a series of activity guides created for public use. She believes in a teaching philosophy that centers the participant experience and strives to create space in the museum where people feel connected with the art and with each other. Her art is included in a number of museum collections including The Whitney Museum, Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archives, as well as the Fine Art Museums of San Francisco. Her body of work reflects a reverence for the natural world, a willingness to confront ecological crises, and a determination to find beauty and mystery in the world. Smith entwines narrative threads to describe the gravity or wonder of her subjects and their relationships to the forces of nature—drawing what is in close proximity, what is beyond physical reach and what is from the realm of the imagined. She earned her M.F.A. from UC Berkeley and has an affinity for the ocean and woodless graphite pencils. Her perspective as an artist deeply influences her role as a museum educator.

Zoe van Buren
Folklife Director
North Carolina Arts Council

Zoe van Buren is the folklife director for the North Carolina Arts Council, a division of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. She has a B.A. in anthropology from Vassar College and an M.A. in folklore from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In her role at the Arts Council, she manages grants and projects to support the preservation and vitality of folk and traditional arts in all 100 counties of North Carolina, through programs such as the North Carolina Heritage Awards, Traditional Arts Programs for Students, Folklife Apprenticeships, and grants for projects and organizations. She is also the editor and coauthor of the book *Hanging Tree Guitars* with the visionary luthier Freeman Vines. She lives in Durham.

Kiersten Ware
Deputy Director, Division for Aging Services
Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services

Kiersten Ware has devoted her career to creative solutions that promote healthy aging in community with dignity and choice. Through her integrated professional background, which includes nonprofit leadership, community planning and the delivery of aging services at the community level, Kiersten brings strength and experience in strategic partnership building, organizational development, workplace culture, financial management and communications. She holds a master's degree in gerontology from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Erika Wilhite
Arts Learning in Communities Director
Oklahoma Arts Council

Erika Wilhite has over 20 years' experience producing arts programs in community settings. She received her master of fine arts degree in theatre from the University of Central Florida and bachelor of fine arts degree in theatre from University of Central Oklahoma. In 2010, Wilhite founded Artist's Laboratory Theatre, a social practice, community based theater organization in Fayetteville, Arkansas. She is a practicing performance artist, writer and theatre director. Wilhite applies her passion and experience in her role at the Oklahoma Arts Council, through which she oversees the Oklahoma Arts and the Military Initiative and the new Creative Aging Initiative. Wilhite also serves as the agency's accessibility coordinator.