

# NAROPA

MAGAZINE

2021-22





# Naropa UNIVERSITY

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Naropa University is a private, nonprofit, nonsectarian liberal arts institution dedicated to its mission of contemplative education. This approach to learning integrates the best of Eastern and Western educational institutions, helping students know themselves more deeply and engage constructively with others. The university comprises a four-year undergraduate college and graduate degree programs in the arts, counseling, psychology, and religious studies.

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# THE POWER OF A STORY

A Letter from the President

Naropa's mission to prepare people with knowledge, wisdom, and skills to "be the change" is grounded in the practice and study which illuminates the causation of suffering. Over time, with perseverance and discipline, we can begin to recognize interdependence. That regardless of the manifestation of suffering—whether it be a personal loss, a traumatic event, or systemic oppression—we are all being impacted because we are intimately connected. The suffering hit us especially hard at home this year, with the tragic Boulder shooting and Marshall Fire affecting an entire community. This year's magazine is about connection and points out ways to build our collective resiliency.

As we have navigated our way through the pandemic, resulting in so much disappointment, disruption, and insecurity, there is a predictable and somewhat understandable narrowing of focus with emphasis on our personal well-being and that of those who are closest to us. But especially in such moments, it feels important to take the extra effort to stand in each other's shoes and to weigh our struggles against the even greater struggles of others, to extend our breaths of good intention and kindness and aspire for boundless social health, healing, and equitable access to care and resources. That practice is not one of depletion of energy, but one which increases energy for the benefit of ourselves, our loved ones, and all sentient beings.

Trungpa Rinpoche said, "We must try to think beyond our homes... We must try to think how we can help this world. If we don't help, nobody will. It is our turn to help the world...you can never just relax because the whole world needs help."

From the outset, Naropa students and alumx have strived to help this world as counselors and therapists, chaplains, teachers, writers, poets, actors, musicians, practitioners of the fine arts, environmental activists, entrepreneurs, and religious scholars. And sometimes we're asked for data regarding our graduates in the form of numbers. However, I actually am a big believer that the anecdote is where the power is. So, regardless of whether we're now keeping track of hundreds or thousands of graduates, the individual stories are still the stories that we need to tell, and that we need to keep alive.



And in that spirit, I invite you to dive into this collection of individual stories about our students, staff, faculty, and alumx that ultimately weave together to become the collective story of Naropa. And I look forward to the fact that you are going to add your own threads to this weaving. The unique expressions, that of their wisdom and their skill, are what enrich the collective impact of our university.

Thank you to our entire community of students, faculty, staff, alumx, donors, and board members for adding your wisdom, skillful means, and care for Naropa now and for the almost half-century since our improbable experiment was launched. We often succeed and sometimes are pushed to learn from mistakes and return to habitual habits. But we do that work now as an established institution, held together by academic discipline, creative expression, social action, and a commitment to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Charles G. Lief". The signature is fluid and cursive.

CHARLES G. LIEF  
PRESIDENT, NAROPA UNIVERSITY



# THE MARRIAGE OF ART AND HEALING

Cover Artist, Paula Gasparini-Santos

By Marcos Perez

The two paths of art and therapy converge in the heart of Paula Gasparini-Santos. She has cultivated her passion for helping others navigate trauma and creates artwork that is as beautiful as it is deeply personal, revealing universal truths about being human. Over her life, these two themes have been woven together as she fosters a life that she loves, bringing her entire self fully to her work.

Paula is a Brazilian-born artist living in Boulder, Colorado, and a graduate of Naropa's MA in Transpersonal Art Therapy. Early on, Paula had a deep interest in understanding what it meant to be human and looking at the intrinsic truths behind the human experience through theology. "I have a trauma background in my family history," she says, "so I knew that I wanted to go into psychology." She went on to get her bachelor's degree in psychology while she also discovered a love for painting.

As a university student, she explored her love of color through ceramic classes. Her professor saw the painter in her, and together, they invented a painting class around her interest in psychology and art. The syllabus would look very much like an art therapy class.

After graduation, she was looking for a small community where she could make a difference. She moved to Hana, Hawaii, to help bring the arts back to the public school system. In order to fund her arts program, she started showing her paintings and selling them. She was surprised at how much people loved her work.

She went on to do a solo exhibition in Miami where she sold every piece.



Photos by Anna Fischer

She liked that people were excited about her work, but she most loved that they were connecting to the story that she was telling about her own life. "The heart is a reoccurring symbol [in my work], because I do believe the element of healing is vulnerability," Paula says. "You have to expose that heart, you have to expose everything that is within for us to be able to do the work of healing."



While later working as a clinician at a family trauma center dealing with mental health and sobriety, Paula helped children do their work of recovery from family traumas, such as methamphetamine addiction. After a year, she was struggling with vicarious trauma from listening to the children's stories. She knew that she needed to learn how to better sit with her own emotions while doing her job. Her supervisor



Paula in her home studio.

recommended Naropa University's Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, Transpersonal Art Therapy program.

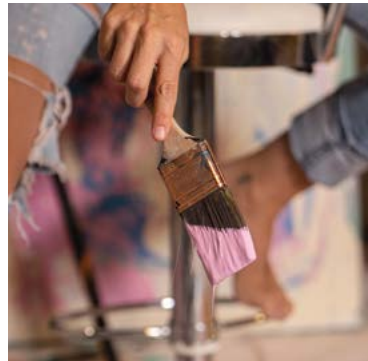
Naropa offered exactly what she was looking for. She learned solid techniques to skillfully sit with her clients. Naropa's body-speech-mind technique is something she uses regularly to observe how her clients are feeling in the session. She looks at the language of the body's posture, how they are speaking, and whether their thinking is rapid or confused—she can then get a feeling of the client as a whole.

At Naropa, Paula got the clinical skills that she needed to do the job, as well as approaches for holding space to cultivate the esoteric part of therapy. It was a blend of humanism, professionalism, and theory—the application of all of her in her career.

Called to work with trauma survivors, Paula now brings her Naropa education to her current work as an EMDR therapist. Although she doesn't use art therapy in sessions, her art has become her way of caring for herself and processing her life. She describes it like this: "In a way, I am reflecting my internal landscape as I am creating. My artistic

process is the vessel through which I land on my canvas. People come to me as a therapist, then as a therapist, I then go to my canvas." Her inner landscape and her experience as a human then become something universal, and she can understand this more deeply through her art.

This is the marriage of her art and her heart for her therapeutic work. Her art supports her heart's calling to help people, in their transparency, bringing truth to light, so there can be an honest conversation and a more honest connection and intimacy. "The more I do that work for myself to land," Paula says, "the better I can hold space for those who need to land on me." 🌀





# CREATING A CULTURE OF CARE

By Danielle Poitras



*Photo by Sofia Drobinskaya*

When asked about his leadership style, Associate Dean of Students Jeremy Moore, PhD, describes himself as a synergistic leader who is heartfelt and collaborative, someone who is driven by the belief that difference—in perspectives or identity—can make us stronger.





Stephan Taylor,  
Director of Campus & Residential Life

Photo by Anna Fischer

“I actually have Werther’s Originals in my desk right now, which is funny.... When I think about the impactful relationships that I have had, I think about my grandfather,” Moore says. “And he always had a bowl of Werther’s Originals. It’s about having respect for each other even when we have conflict.”

Over his thirteen-year career, Moore has worked at both small private liberal arts schools such as Lake Forest College in Chicago, as well as larger public institutions like Northern Illinois University and the University of Colorado Boulder. At CU for eight years, Moore first ran one of the 400-person residential towers at Williams Village, before moving on to supporting off-campus, commuter, and transfer student populations, a group encompassing almost 25,000 students collectively.

“Even though CU and Naropa are neighbors, I really didn’t know a lot about Naropa, and I say this in the best way,” he says. “I looked at Naropa as kind of like Willy Wonka’s Chocolate Factory. I knew there was a lot of magic happening here, and I would see signs of that while driving by. I didn’t really know what was going on behind these walls, but I knew there was some delicious chocolate being made here.”

A first-generation college student three times over, Moore completed his doctorate in 2020 at Arizona State University in Innovation and Leadership with a focus on higher education change management.

“I felt a strong resonance with the Naropa community and its culture of celebration,” he says. “When I say ‘celebration,’ I’m talking about, ‘Oh, you are a first-generation college student? You’ve achieved something in being here. Or you’re a student of color? You’ve worked through barriers that you might be facing systemically.’”

What Moore encountered at Naropa was a tight-knit community with a sense of humor and a lot of heart. He experienced a community that was self-reflective and honest about how it needed to improve, and he found colleagues who were generous at providing authentic feedback.

“That’s how we grow—as professionals, as leaders, and as organizations.... When you’re looking at change management, those are the keys to being able to implement change,” he says. “And those are also good signs of a healthy organization.”

One of Moore’s goals this year is to streamline processes to help staff do their jobs more effectively with the intention of creating a culture of care.



Jeremy Moore, PhD  
Associate Dean of Students

Photo by Sofia Drobnikaya



Photo by Sofia Drobinskaya

Naropa's new case management software, Maxient, will serve as the new student of concern CARE team portal, and will be used for Title IX, restorative community, as well as student conduct.

"Because case management is very time intensive, we must create systematic structure," he says. "This is how Naropa is going to get to the next level of student support. It's about creating consistency and sustainable regenerative processes with an emphasis on good record keeping."

"I want our team to be focusing on connections with students and not only on the paperwork and administrative processes," Moore adds. "And right now, we're spending a lot of time on the administrative and not as much time on the heartfelt leadership piece. I want our team to spend more time supporting and less time on laborious administrative processes."

He is passionate about helping students to develop the skills they need to be successful in today's world. "How can we help students be empowered to make decisions for themselves and

be armed with the tools and resources they need to feel good about those decisions?" he asks. "I see myself as an educator with a different classroom. And in this case, the classroom is the world."

Moore also plans to create a series of sessions for parents to learn what resources are available at Naropa and how to best support their students. "Parents are huge champions for their students, but a lot of times they struggle on knowing how to intervene and how to support them," he says. "When a parent takes on the role of decision maker, it doesn't build agency or resiliency in the student."

In his view, Naropa has a solid foundation to build on as well as powerful thought leadership. "There's a lot of really rich collaboration happening right now. Naropa is a beautiful cocooned, ready-to-emerge butterfly, I truly feel it. We're getting ready to really take it to that next level."

What Moore refers to as the "artist formerly known as Student Affairs," Student Success represents a more holistic and integrated approach that recognizes that lots of learning happens in the residence halls and elsewhere. "You have interpersonal relationships, either you're sharing a room or an apartment and you're sharing a community, and you definitely have neighbors," says Director of Campus and Residence Life Stephan Taylor. "You are essentially committing







yourself to not only personal actions but also to community actions.”

In Student Affairs since 2013, Taylor moved to Boulder in the summer of 2019.

He had worked at a few different institutions, such as Central Arizona College, Augsburg University in Minneapolis, and most recently the University of Nebraska Omaha, but he was eager to challenge himself with a director-level position at a Buddhist-inspired school in a state he had only visited once. “I am probably the least relaxed person,” he says, “that Naropa could have possibly hired.”

His mission is to pay it forward and help someone else have an amazing college experience like the one he had at Louisiana State University. “I want to help cultivate the leaders of tomorrow,” he explains. “I’m going to help them be well rounded, well read, and interested in other people. We constantly hear that employers are looking for people who are empathetic, good communicators, and open to dealing with conflict positively. When people leave Naropa, hopefully they’ve gotten the chance to explore some of that.”

As of fall 2021, the average age of an undergraduate student living in a residence hall at Naropa is twenty-seven years old, and our students are coming from a wider variety of backgrounds. For those students who are living away from home for the first time, Naropa’s living and learning communities assist them in making connections in the community, understanding the wealth of resources available to them, as well as preparing for adulthood.

“You’re in this microwave-safe, non-rust, hard-to-break container to play around in,” Taylor says. “This is the place to make mistakes because when you move off campus, you’re not going to have an RA, and your landlord is not going to sit down with you and have a discussion about how you are not picking up your wet towels.”

“Naropa is an expensive school in an expensive

*Photo by Sofia Drobinskaya*





Photo by Sofia Drobinskaya

city, so you immediately think that everyone here will be relatively comfortable,” Taylor continues. “People don’t realize that more than half of our students are eligible for extensive financial aid, such as Pell Grants, so we have a mix of people who can afford to go skiing every weekend versus people who are scraping every penny they can to be here.”

Taylor is also interested in building connections between online and low-residency students wherever they are, so they also have the experience of engaging with each other in person. “We have many students who are remote this year for various reasons—some of them because of COVID and others because of the economic hardships that came out of the pandemic. Others are part of the online BA program, so they will rarely if ever be on campus.”

Arising out of the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, Naropa’s Emergency Housing Program is space dependent and offers students a two-week stay free of charge in an apartment that’s not currently being used. For longer stays, students pay a nightly rate of \$30. “I think that Naropa has always been trying to assist students in this way. And a big part of that is our mission to be radically compassionate because many schools don’t offer that,” Taylor says. “Or if they do, it’s in the building they’ve been trying to condemn for three years or

it’s in their overflow housing.”

As the co-chair of Staff Executive Council (SEC), Taylor hopes to be a voice for non-cabinet-level staff and to amplify student concerns. “One thing that many staff see, especially those that interact with students, is what goes wrong,” he says. “SEC is trying to create a stronger network behind the scenes, making sure that staff and faculty have lines of communication open so that we have a full safety net to hold students in order to give them the experience that we say we want to give them.”

In his free time, Taylor likes to geek out with tabletop role-playing games and karaoke. After graduate school, Stephan briefly worked as an extra in numerous films and TV shows, including HBO’s *Treme*, *Now You See Me* with Woody Harrelson and Jesse Eisenberg, the Quentin Tarantino film *Django Unchained*, and *The Campaign* with Will Ferrell and Zach Galifianakis, among many others.

If he were to give one piece of advice to students, it would be to use their time at Naropa well. “Use college as a time to play and experiment and find your geek,” he says. “What makes you get excited about life? And it doesn’t have to necessarily be something that makes money.” 🍷

# SCHOLARSHIP MEETS PRACTICE

An emergent vision for cross-cultural learning and understanding

By Kendall Higgins



Photo by Sofia Drobinskaya

**I**n the Fall of 2020, Naropa launched a groundbreaking master's degree program in the field of yoga studies.

Today, yoga is a billion-dollar industry. Studios, classes, retreat offerings, and yoga pants can be found all over the world—from South America to Europe throughout Asia and across Instagram—so how did a master's degree in the subject make it to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains at a university located in Boulder, Colorado?

Yoga has been studied at Naropa since the university's inception in 1974 when spiritual teacher Ram Dass taught a course on the yogas of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Since then, the study of yoga has

unfolded in many ways with the academic and contemplative atmosphere at Naropa providing a rich source for its growth. Ten years ago, the university launched the first yoga studies undergraduate degree program in the United States.

The bachelor's degree focuses on practices central to different iterations of yoga, including classical yoga, Tantra, hatha yoga, and modern postural yoga, while culminating in a 1000-hour teacher training certificate. Both the undergraduate and graduate degrees explore the development and history of yoga, but the new master's program dives deeper into the history and evolution of yoga through an academic lens.

Naropa's graduate program does not offer a teacher training certificate or involve postural yoga practice. Instead, it is an academic training where students immerse themselves in theory and study the Sanskrit language, giving them the ability to more comprehensively access source texts in which the practice of yoga emerged.

The graduate degree is low-residency, which means students can work while completing the program and take classes online from anywhere in the world. The cohort and faculty members come together for two nine-day in-person retreats at mountain centers in Colorado before the first and third year to build a sense of community and start their classes for the semester. Students take courses like History of Yoga, Hindu Tantra, Power, Privilege, and Diversity, and Yoga and Globalization. This gives them a full roadmap from the source of yogic traditions to the many streams we see today.

Ben Williams, PhD, Program Lead of the MA Yoga Studies degree and Assistant Professor of Yoga Studies and Hinduism, explains:

"What I think differentiates our program in many ways, is that we take this panoramic view of the history, philosophies, and theories of yoga. We do





Sreedevi Bringi, PhD  
Photo by Anna Fischer

that by tracking the best scholarship in the field and offering a training in the humanistic study of yoga. We are also true to Naropa’s lineage of practice and engaging in meditative forms of yoga in the classroom. We do that not with any kind of sectarian commitments or within a specific lineage of yoga practice, but with an appreciation of the incredible diversity, depth, and integrity of the yogic texts and traditions as they emerged.”

Nataraja Kallio, Associate Professor at Naropa, elaborates on the benefit of studying yoga in an academic setting saying, “it gives us time to study the breadth and depth of the tradition in ways it deserves.” He explains: “It enables us to emphasize cultural appreciation rather than appropriation. Nevertheless, we equally grapple with those issues that arise with the globalization of yoga because, of course, whenever a tradition travels, it’s inevitably influenced by the values and the interests of the cultures it arrives in.”

Sreedevi Bringi, PhD, is a retired instructor of yoga studies and Hinduism at Naropa and was instrumental in developing the master’s program alongside Kallio and Williams. She says the calling to “bridge science and spirituality has been there [her] whole life.” It’s “part of my family heritage,” she says. Bringi grew up in India, where her mother was a chemistry professor and her father a spiritual teacher.

In 1998, Bringi was teaching chemistry at Colorado State University when now retired Naropa faculty member Judith Simmer-Brown, PhD, invited her to teach a course on contemplative Hinduism at Naropa. This was the beginning of Bringi’s renowned career at the university where she inspired countless students to dive deeper into yogic traditions and worked alongside professors like Andrew Schelling to develop courses on Sanskrit.

Bringi and Kallio developed the yoga studies curriculum at Naropa together, and Bringi was nervous as it came time for her retirement. She compares the graduate yoga program to a blossoming lotus and says she is “pleased and honored we chose Dr. Ben Williams,” to carry on the legacy and lineage of yoga studies at Naropa.

“He so quickly embraced the Naropa philosophy and the needs of our students,” Bringi says. “He brings his unique and brilliant scholarship from Harvard University and is further developing the program through his own lineage and appreciation of yoga, Shaiva Tantra, and Sanskrit.”

The love and appreciation Naropa professors hold for the Sanskrit language is contagious. Williams shares how he finds studying the Sanskrit language “an inherently blissful challenge.” Research shows studying languages, like Sanskrit, that require a lot of memorization “actually transform the structure of your brain.” He says “it awakens your capacity for memory and allows you to begin to experience the texts you’re studying in a more direct and intimate way.”



Photo by Anna Fischer



Williams also highlights how studying a language, like Sanskrit, that is from “a radically different time period and radically different set of worldviews is actually a really good way to distance ourselves from our own bias.” He explains:

“Often, we are so enmeshed in our English world that we need to study something extremely far away from that world to begin to get some perspective on our own implicit worldview. What these texts afford when you start to learn the language is another way of organizing knowledge—another syntax for experiencing the world. It’s really a doorway into another way of seeing, and I think that’s a basis for a much deeper empathy, cross-cultural understanding, and ability to connect to the civilization of South Asia.”

Thousands of Sanskrit manuscripts live in archives throughout South Asia and the world. Many have yet to be translated, and a number of research grants support scholars in translation initiatives. The teachings these texts reveal through the doorway of Sanskrit are changing the way people understand and relate to yogic traditions.

Continued doctorate work in Sanskrit study and translation is one of the professional avenues one can take after graduating from this program. However, Cassandra Smith, Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications at Naropa and a second-year student in the graduate yoga program, says “it’s amazing to hear what all of my classmates are planning to do with this degree because none of us really want to do the same thing.”

There are studio owners utilizing the program to inform their teaching training curriculum and broader educational initiatives. There are students who plan to continue in doctorate study and become professors. There are yoga teachers who want to become better yoga teachers, and there are practitioners enriching their practice.

The graduate yoga program illuminates for many the need for more depth and accountability in the global conversation about yoga today. Smith speaks to the way her understanding of yoga has completely changed since beginning the program, and her plan is to bring this deeper understanding and appreciation of nuance to larger audiences through marketing and the publishing field.

Smith also speaks to the expertise of the faculty in the program. Professors come from universities such as Harvard, Oxford, and William and Mary, yet they are also practitioners of these traditions. Smith shares that “every faculty member [she] has had in the program has spent significant time in India. They’ve sat in ashrams and studied with Hindu masters.”

“They are a part of these traditions,” Smith says. “When they teach us about these things, it’s coming from a place of really true understanding and their own life practice in this world.”

This fusion of scholarship and practice is what sets Naropa’s Master’s in Yoga Studies apart from other programs. Students not only obtain a graduate level understanding of the culture, history, and language in which these traditions emerged, but they are also encouraged to directly experience the states of yogic consciousness they learn about.

This marriage of scholarship and practice is a technique of teaching Naropa is pioneering. It enriches one’s life personally and professionally and is really a doorway into another way of being.


“This emergence of sensitivity as a scholar-practitioner,” Williams emphasizes, “is definitely what we’re up to here at Naropa University.” 



Photo by Anna Fischer

Sanskrit professor Andrew Schelling recently published a book in collaboration with Anne Waldman titled *Songs of the Sons and Daughters of the Buddha*.

# SPIRITUAL FIRST RESPONDERS

Words of wisdom from Commencement Speaker Kyva Holman

While Naropa's 2021 Spring Commencement Ceremony had to take place virtually due to COVID-19 restrictions, the event was still full of lively and radical Naropa spirit.

**Kyva Holman**, graduate of Naropa's BA in Interdisciplinary Studies and MA in Religious Studies, was elected to be the graduate student speaker for the class of 2021. His address below speaks to the unique hardships our 2020 and 2021 graduates faced and the beauty and resilience they found in these challenging times.



Photos by Tashi Browder

**W**ow... Naropa University class of 2021—just trip off how crazy that sounds for a minute. Advanced, dystopian, apocalyptic. The fact is that we are living in the future. Many predictions have been made about this future by everyone from economists, climate scientists, and think tanks to philosophers, poets, and even prophets.

Well, here we are. You, me, and all the sentient beings who are desperately counting on some form of sanity to prevail on a deeply troubled and imperiled planet.

So before I say another word, I want to enthusiastically offer you a 21-ton salute for having made it this far in the first place. That was never a *fait accompli*, and if you're anything like me, you've probably had many moments where it looked like you actually might not pull it off.

Unlike Ivy League institutions, which prepare people for material and technological success, our contemplative education at this crazily wise Buddhist-influenced institution provoked us to look deeply

into the very essence of who we are as spirit beings having a human experience.

We faced Babylonian towers worth of maladies like structural racism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and the like, beset—if not bombarded—by notions like planned obsolescence, systems theory, and intersectionality. Really? Yes, really. We've been forced to reckon not with statistics and algorithms but with the very psycho-spiritual origins of human dysfunction. How many times have you cringed just anticipating the next discussion post, the vulnerability-exposing homework assignment, or the next warrior exam?

Time and again we have faced down the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. The arrows of Maras demons assaulting Buddha beneath the bodhi tree and the invitation of provocation was to not freak out, like so many in this chaotic moment, but to respond with deep presence, compassion, and skillful means; and don't forget for a minute the broader social conditions you did so in.

The COVID-19 pandemic or plandemic, the great reset, Black Lives Matter, white nationalist unrest, Trumpism, political skullduggery, a full-frontal attack on democracy at the Capitol, and now mass shootings and bomb threats. It was nearly 60 degrees on Christmas day and 80 degrees in early April.

As I write this text, my visual field is diminishing with stress and anxiety, and I'm reminded why it took me so long to deal with this address in the first place. And I'll tell you exactly what I did. I lit a stick of incense, got up to take some deep breaths, did a little stretching, made a cup of tea, and came back to the computer. I'm confident at least some of you out there can relate.



We can do this. We have to. The causes and conditions of our lives led us to an education that prepared us to be spiritual first responders. As we steel ourselves to the mission ahead, let us also pause to acknowledge and celebrate the positive trends we see arising in our time.

States across America are beginning to lift the restrictions and impositions made on our lives as a result of COVID-19. Some of the side effects of the pandemic have been deer spotted in central park in New York City, mountain lions in downtown Boulder, shrinkage of the hole in the ozone layer, and the stunning ability of New Delhi residents to see the Himalayan mountains for the first time in recent memory. As I write these words, the state of Minnesota delivered a guilty on all counts verdict for the murderer of George Floyd, officer Derek Chauvin.

As long as the arc of history bends, it bends toward justice. Now is not the time for trepidation or cowering, but boldness and vision. I have said from time to time that the advantage a Naropa education affords us over an Ivy League one is that an MBA, lawyer, or tech specialist is not trained to deal with the moment where they step out of their house and the entire neighborhood is upside down.

We live in extraordinary times—the best and the worst—if there ever were such times. Our familiarity with Sunyata, or emptiness, means we can even challenge the notion of time itself. As I said in a song I recorded many years ago, it's only maya, illusion, samsara.

So with that said, let us boldly go where no one has gone before into the wild blue yonder of tomorrow—apocalypse, Age of Aquarius, or more than likely, both.

May we be ever mindful of the things we discovered here that not only bring us joy but are in fact, technologies for self-realization and transcendence. Let us stay vigilant about our yoga, tai chi, aikido, and ikebana practices. If you're a musician, keep playing. Music, art, or photography—whatever you do that gives your soul nourishment, guard it like a precious jewel.

Let us also keep in our hearts and minds the many wonderful instructors, staff, and administrators of Naropa who kept us on our journey—our path—straight and narrow or sprawling and messy.

Please, keep yourself sane and functional. The world needs you desperately. The way I see it, the three trends to be reckoned with going forward into this great reset will be natural consequences, ripening karma, and boundary dissolution. It was perhaps not given to you to finish the task and yet you may not give it up—and the times are so crazy that you just might finish it.

Essentially, we have our marching orders from Siddhartha Gautama himself and from the holders of the Kagyu lineage responsible for Naropa through Trungpa Rinpoche and beyond. Good luck. Godspeed. May all beings be happy, and may the world know healing, peace, joy, prosperity, and positive transformation. Asé. 🌀





# NAROPA UNIVERSITY LAUNCHES PSYCHEDELIC-ASSISTED THERAPIES CERTIFICATE

By Halley Hadfield

**I**n March 2022, Naropa University launched the first cohort for the Psychedelic-Assisted Therapies Certificate program facilitated by the Naropa Center for Psychedelic Studies in partnership with Naropa Extended Campus. This offering is one of only a few university programs in Psychedelic-Assisted Therapies available worldwide. The program combines academic and clinical practice expertise with mindfulness and compassion training to provide an in-depth education in essential aspects of this emerging field.

As Naropa President Charles G. Lief notes, “The effectiveness of the scientifically validated potential of Psychedelic-Assisted Therapies is directly linked to the skill of the professionals who guide clients through the experience. Naropa University is well-positioned to offer this new certificate, which draws from our almost fifty-year history of integrating academic study, community-based learning, and

contemplative disciplines as the foundation for training therapists, counselors, and chaplains. Naropa graduates are sought-after practitioners, and their impact on mental health care is internationally known.”

This 200-hour non-degree, low-residency certificate provides postgraduate level training for advanced professionals working in relevant therapeutic areas, including mental health counseling, medicine, chaplaincy, and social work. The program brings together contemplative practices and teachings, trauma-informed care, and spiritual integration to prepare trainees to skillfully navigate the rapidly evolving landscape of Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy (PAT) with competency and integrity.

The course is ten months, with two in-person, week-long retreats held in March and August. For the rest of the program, trainees participate remotely to

extend access internationally. The program also offers cohort-based learning in smaller groups to ensure a continued sense of community with cohesive connections with peers and faculty.

In collaboration with the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS), Naropa was pleased to offer a stand-alone training course in MDMA-Assisted Psychotherapy in 2020. This collaboration with MAPS will continue for Naropa's new certificate. Students will also gain foundational competencies in additional psychedelic therapy modalities, including the use of ketamine and psilocybin. Naropa's program is further grounded in feminist, anti-oppression, and social justice perspectives and includes extensive ethics and Right Use of Power™ training.

"We spend a lot of time on ethics and the right use of power. There's much to cover regarding equity and access, including right relationship with BIPOC communities," says Sara Lewis, PhD, Faculty Co-Director of the Center for Psychedelic Studies. "For folks who are not that interested in those topics, we probably would not be the right program for you. If you're really interested and ready to understand your positionality and social locations and why that's important to become an ethical psychedelic-assisted therapist, then we might be the right program for you."

"We are deeply interested in the training of psychotherapists and chaplains...[and considering] what are the important things that people need to train in to provide high quality, ethical, and helpful therapy. Naropa can play a role in understanding more about safety and assessment because psychedelics are not right for everyone, and they can even be harmful sometimes. So I think we have a unique role to play," adds Lewis.

Following decades of suppression, a recent resurgence in science and research has

demonstrated promising results for using psychedelic medicines to treat severe PTSD, depression, end-of-life anxiety, addiction, eating disorders, and other mental health conditions. As a pioneer and current leader in integrating contemplative training with counseling psychology, professional chaplaincy, ecopsychology, and other therapeutic disciplines, Naropa is uniquely positioned to expand the unprecedented healing potential within this emerging field.

"People have often tried many other modalities with no relief for their suffering. Psychedelic therapies demonstrate positive outcomes for conditions including severe conditions that cause significant upheaval in people's lives. Psychedelic journeys can be challenging, and Naropa's approach to training chaplains and therapists crosses over well into psychedelic therapies. In particular, chaplains have this capacity to help assess the spiritual and religious landscape for a person before they go into a psychedelic experience," says Jamie Beachy, Faculty Co-Director, Center for Psychedelic Studies. "You can have a very powerful existential awareness—and then it becomes important to integrate that with your religious and spiritual commitments. The conversation happening in the field right now among religious leaders, professionals, and chaplains is about the right use of these medicines and plants and how we can also do that without harming the communities that they come from."

The intention is for these alternative treatments to serve people who have explored various other means of treatment, including extensive therapies and medications. The potential clients range from veterans, first responders, sexual assault survivors, people with substance abuse, and those who have had suicide attempts. This therapy modality holds promise for a more widely accepted integration, having been given "breakthrough status" by the FDA. "This means the results have been so effective that drugs are given this status and expedited when it seems like




Sara Lewis, PhD



Jamie Beachy, PhD

the results are so promising,” Lewis explains. “We must expedite this process so that more people can receive help. I think it’s always good to keep that in mind that our motivation for doing this is to help and be of benefit.”

Chair of Naropa’s Board of Trustees, Tyler Norris, says, “When I look at the array of programs popping up around the world and seeing Naropa’s certificate

just going live, I’m thrilled that we’re rooting in indigeneity and wisdom traditions that predate the recent interest across other circles. This means what we’re talking about is not only an extraordinary therapeutic opportunity, but an opportunity to explore how we approach sacred encounter and what it means to be in relationship with all creation and the divine. There’s something very particular there.” 

## Financial Assistance

With generous support from donors, partner organizations, and related charitable initiatives, we plan to offer various types of financial assistance, including Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Scholarships, as well as support for specific program aspects, such as select Non-Ordinary States Immersive Experiences. In an effort to support program access for a diverse and dynamic cohort, all assistance assessments will take financial need into account.

As part of Naropa’s commitment to help promote diversity, equity, and access in the emerging field of psychedelic studies, the certificate program awards Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Scholarships with preference given to trainees from historically-underrepresented groups as well as trainees serving these communities. Historically underrepresented groups include but are not limited to Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), LGBTQ+, military service members and veterans, and persons with disabilities. Commensurate with a recognition of the many links between social and economic marginalization, demonstrated financial need is also considered in the awarding of program scholarships. Our commitment to diversity aligns with our highest aspirations to apply contemplative inquiry and education to explore and embody the human qualities that will facilitate collaboration by differences to create common humanity and a just society. Trainees from historically underrepresented groups as well as trainees serving these communities may be eligible for program scholarship support toward tuition.

## About Naropa Extended Campus

Naropa Extended Campus offers continuing education, professional development, and public programs for the lifelong learner within us all. Our programs promote Naropa University’s core mission and values in ways uniquely adapted to meet your ongoing educational needs.

Anchored in experiential and contemplative education principles, Extended Campus programs bring the embodied richness of the Naropa on-campus experience into accessible, learner-centered online and hybrid formats. By applying mindfulness-infused learning across a variety of disciplines, we prepare compassionate leaders with the knowledge, wisdom, and skills they need to “be the change” in their workplaces and communities.

Extended Campus programs are created and delivered by a diverse group of resident Naropa faculty, as well as distinguished visiting scholars who are widely respected for their academic, creative, and socially engaged contributions. Many of our programs are enriched through impactful collaborations with other leading visionary organizations and mission-aligned partnerships.

By combining experiential depth, contemplative pedagogy, and online flexibility, Extended Campus offers dynamic public programs that support your personal and professional goals in ways only Naropa University can offer.

**Sign up for information about future Extended Campus offerings.**







# Courageous Engagement with the World

## THE VULNERABILITY OF BEING HUMAN

By Danielle Poitras

Life as we knew it came to a halt at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In an instant, we became conscious of how vulnerable we are as humans and, at the same time, how connected we are. The global health crisis has impacted every aspect of our lives and tested our resilience as individuals and communities.

With the lockdown in March 2020, the Naropa Community Counseling Center (NCC) sprang into action to support members of the Boulder community. With the help of Naropa's IT Department, the NCC rapidly shifted all of its services to telehealth. "I felt like the clinic was prioritized and supported," says Clinical Director Joy Redstone. "The Naropa administration understood that people's mental health was really on the line."

One of the first priorities was the creation of a virtual COVID-19 support group. "Our clients were sad, anxious, isolated, and really in need of human contact and knowing that they weren't alone," Redstone says.

"We didn't talk as much about the wildfires until they were in our backyard, but now we must acknowledge the tremendous impact they had on people's health. And clients are still reporting to us that all the smoke is one of the hardest things," she adds. "It's a visible representation of what's happening with the climate. It's so immense that it's hard to digest. And it makes people anxious—and cuts them off from being able to go outside."

“The eco-resilience group was another way to tap into this zeitgeist that we're experiencing, which results in more anxiety, more isolation, more existential depression.”

Scientists are looking at the intimate connection between climate change and the emergence of pandemics—how the unsustainable ways that we relate to our environment and other species are leading to new infectious diseases.

"Many people believe that the reason that pandemics are taking hold is related to our intrusion into areas that were

formerly more wild. That as we take up space, we may continue to have these experiences with new illnesses," she says. "Running the eco-resilience group was another way to tap into this zeitgeist that we're experiencing, which results in more anxiety,

The purpose of Naropa University is to cultivate compassionate, creative, and critical engagement with an ever-changing world through the discipline of contemplative education. Never has this wisdom and skill been more urgently needed.

In the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic, war, racism, global climate change, misinformation, and the resulting hopelessness, humanity finds itself at a crossroads.

The work of Naropa is to reawaken a new world that is fueled by authenticity, compassion, interconnection, and love. On the leading edge of a societal transformation, Naropa exists so that individuals can courageously engage in interior work as preparation for compassionate and transformative work in their workplaces, their communities, and the world.

Here are a few ways that Naropa community members are offering wisdom and healing during these challenging times.

more isolation, more depression, but not always straight-up clinical depression—existential depression.”

Going to the grocery store, as well as working in one, was already stressful due to the pandemic. And then, on the afternoon of March 22, 2021, ten beloved Boulder community members lost their lives in a mass shooting at the King Soopers.

In the twenty-four hours after the shooting, Phillip Horner, the founder of Whole Connection Counseling, began planning a free ten-week trauma support group on Zoom for anyone impacted. The first step was to reach out to like-minded organizations, including the NCC.

“I felt that we needed to do something immediately. Knowing trauma and understanding the response cycle, I knew that people would be having impact almost immediately,” Horner says. “And I also understand that with trauma that the faster you can get in and talk with someone or be with others, the quicker you are going to be able to actually start to engage that process and not walk away from it.”

The creation and running of the group was a labor of love on the part of many. Redstone handled the marketing and promotion on social media and also co-facilitated every session. Somatic counseling program founder Christine Caldwell volunteered as a facilitator.

With the support of the Community Outreach Task Force of the American Group Psychotherapy Association, more than thirty trauma therapists were recruited as facilitators and organized by psychotherapists Craig Haen and Suzanne Phillips, both faculty at the Kint Institute.

After hours of discussion with Li Brookens, the director and founder of Umbrella Collective, Horner designed a new group format to create an enhanced sense of safety and allow participants to show up in whatever state they were in. There would be a main room, as well as breakout rooms based on what participants needed or how they were impacted by the shooting. Additionally, a trauma therapist was available via chat.

More than sixty people attended the raw and emotional first group. Spanish-speaking participants had access to a breakout room with interpreters so that they could express themselves in their language of origin, “which slowed down the rapid-fire trauma processing that can happen in groups,” Redstone explains.

The result was a powerful group experience, one where participants shared that they felt cared for and safe. “People were kind and loving and supportive of each other,” she adds. “For most of the people there, it was another trauma on top of the pandemic, and for others, it was another trauma on top of a lifetime of trauma.”

## COMPASSION IN TIMES OF TRAGEDY

By Jordan Quaglia, PhD

Originally published in the Daily Camera Guest Opinion on March 26, 2021

As I write this, less than 24 hours have passed since news first broke of a mass shooting at a grocery store here in Boulder, CO—less than five miles from where I work at Naropa University. We now know ten people lost their lives, including one Boulder police officer.

As a researcher who studies empathy and compassion, I know that tragedy can make us feel pulled in two seemingly opposite directions. On one hand, our natural empathy and compassion pulls us into taking action. We want to do something—anything—that may offer support and healing to those suffering most. Yet we may also feel a pull toward something else, namely overwhelm, numbness, and less motivation to help, what researchers call “empathic distress” or “compassion collapse.”

forward in ways that neither abandon our own suffering nor the suffering of others.

What does this balance between self- and other-oriented compassion look like in practice? As mentioned, I’m writing these words within less than 24 hours since the shooting, which may seem to some like rushing into action. However, I first thought to write this article yesterday, within hours of the tragedy. Fortunately, my self-compassion protected me from acting too fast. I paused, breathed, and felt. I checked in with friends and loved ones, watched the news, and explored the pain alive within me.

When I awoke this morning, one day after the shooting, I already had three more ideas for actions I could take to help. Clearly, my compassion for others was calling on me to act. So, I asked myself: How can I honor this wish to help without abandoning my own pain, suffering, and needs? I decided I would start with whichever one action felt most important. Soon after, fresh cup of coffee in hand, I sat down and began writing.

As I hope this example from my own life shows, finding balance between self- and other-oriented compassion isn’t about a prescribed way of doing things. Instead, it’s a fluid, dynamic process of self-discovery, helping us navigate challenging situations in ways that honor ourselves and others simultaneously. Moving forward with the pain of this senseless tragedy fresh on our hearts, my wish is that we may all discover

what balanced compassion looks and feels like for us, uniquely, in the days ahead.

To close, here’s a simple compassion practice you may find useful for exploring balanced compassion within your own lived experience. The practice begins by gathering our attention on each inbreath, allowing ourselves to feel any pain, discomfort, or unease within our own minds and bodies. Notice,

To avoid these extremes—of either rushing blindly into action or checking out—we can check in with ourselves to identify what balance uniquely looks and feels like for us. Informed by my role as Research Director and Trainer for our Compassion Initiative at Naropa University, I believe what’s most needed is finding an approach that balances self-compassion with compassion for others. When we balance these two orientations of compassion, we can move



Photo by Marc Piscotty





The memorial fence in front of King Soopers became a powerful place for community members to remember the victims of the shooting and to grieve. The offerings were lovingly relocated to the Museum of Boulder in June.

too, any shared pain or suffering you feel as you empathize with others who are struggling. On each outbreak, simply allow yourself a natural pause, without any particular focus. Then, as you settle more into the practice, you can begin to explore your natural wish for the wellbeing of yourself and others, seeing if you can find some phrases to express this wish silently to yourself. You may even wish for the discovery of a balance between self- and other-oriented compassion. For example, you might repeat phrases such as:

*“May I and others experience balanced compassion through these difficult times.*

*May we find ways to balance care for ourselves and others.*

*May these wishes bring about healing for not only me, but all those who are suffering.*

*May we all feel and experience greater safety, peace, and ease.”*

Please feel free to create and explore your own phrases. Anything that helps you

connect with an authentic wish for yourself and others to experience some relief from suffering. As research shows, practicing with wishes such as these can help our mind and hearts move gently in the direction of healing, growth, and compassionate action.

Jordan Quaglia, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Psychology, Director of the Cognitive and Affective Science Laboratory, and Research Director of the Center for the Advancement of Contemplative Education (CACE) at Naropa University. Quaglia’s research, supported by funding from the Mind and



Photo by Marc Piscotty

Life Institute and John Templeton Foundation, has been featured in leading scientific journals and books, and relies on a range of tools, from neuroscientific measures to virtual reality, to study topics such as mindfulness, compassion, and lucidity.

# BUILDING RESILIENCE DURING CHALLENGING TIMES

By Danielle Poitras

Associate Professor Jennifer Nicole Bacon, PhD, is an author and educator who is in her third year of teaching in Naropa's Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education. She has served as Associate Dean of Naropa College and practicum coordinator for the education program. Bacon is most interested about mindful and culturally responsive teaching that is rooted in anti-racism and social justice.

Bacon was inspired by her daughter, Kriya, to write her first children's book, *Aleta's Feelings During Coronavirus*. Her daughter was four years old at the time of the lockdown and attending Alaya Preschool. The character "Aleta" was named in memory of Bacon's mother, Darline Aleta Bacon, who was a special education teacher, professor, and tireless advocate for children's rights.

"The pandemic was something we've never encountered.... Through this book, I want young children to feel like they have some sort of control and a sense of agency in a world that feels like it has been turned upside down," Bacon says. "And I hope it helps them move through the uncertainty by


having tangible things that they can do, such as creating a feeling jar or blowing love bubbles to the world."

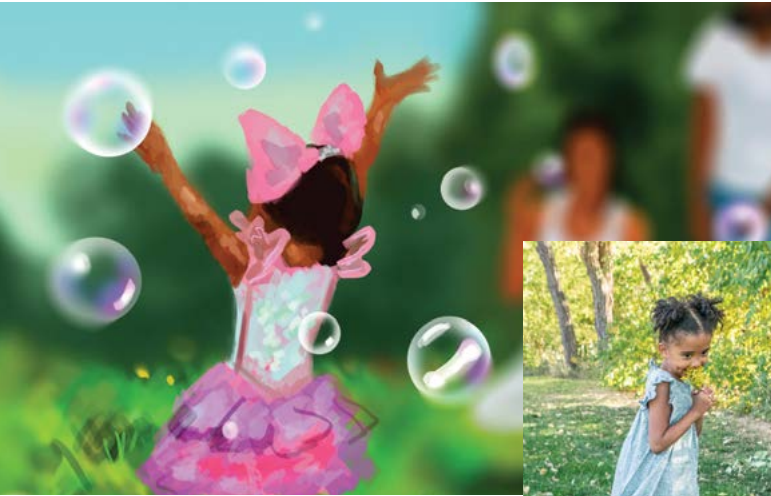


Photos courtesy of Jennifer Bacon

...realizations and practices for cultivating resilience. The book helps young children to get in touch with their emotional needs and ground themselves in a sense of mindfulness. *Aleta's Feelings* is illustrated by Patrickson St. Elien skillfully capturing scenes from Bacon's daughter's life during the pandemic to bring this to light.

Two additional children's books are currently being released. The second book in the Aleta series is a bilingual children's yoga book that will be available in 2022. The third book is an anti-racism children's book that was sparked by the tragic murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Elijah McClain. It is scheduled to be published in 2023 by Bala Kids, the new children's imprint from Shambhala Publications.

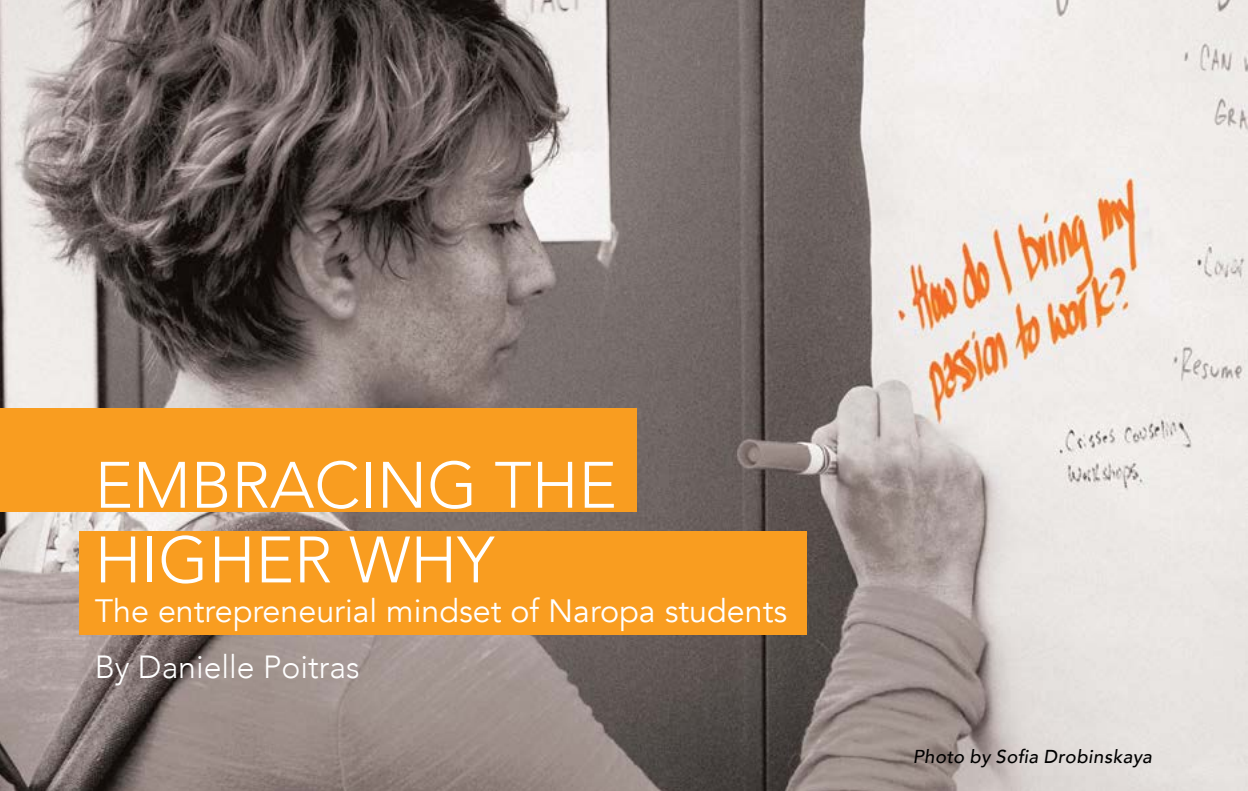
"What we are doing is bringing literacy practices while grounded in culturally responsive pedagogy and mindfulness into real time," she explains. "We are not just keeping it for ourselves in the classroom. Our goal is to share it with our community and our world. It is a gift and an exchange between a community." 



Illustrator Patrickson St. Elien skillfully captured scenes from Kriya's life.







# EMBRACING THE HIGHER WHY

The entrepreneurial mindset of Naropa students

By Danielle Poitras

Photo by Sofia Drobinskaya

Naropa University's mission of contemplative education invites students to engage in an internal process of exploring how they might make a positive difference in the world. Lyndsay Farrant (MA Transpersonal Counseling Psychology, '15), Executive Director of Strategic Projects, underscores that Naropa's emphasis on cultivating present-moment awareness and encouraging courageous engagement with the world attracts students who want to be catalysts for change.

"Our education supports people in getting clear on who they are as individuals and how they want to shine," Farrant says. "Contemplative education embraces inner discovery, and this speaks to the students that want to learn more about their unique gifts and strengths that they bring to this world.... Our students inspire each other to be creative and embrace an entrepreneurial spirit."

In June 2021, *Digital Information World* highlighted Naropa University in their survey of the best U.S. universities for aspiring business founders and entrepreneurs. At 14.2 percent, Naropa has one of the highest percentages of founders, ahead of Stanford University with 13.6 percent.

Our students further refine the skills needed to develop a founder mindset, whether it be through a specific course or our holistic approach to career

counseling. "Fundamentally, how do we develop our own bold vision for the future that we want to see?" says President Charles G. Lief. "And how do we do that through deepening skill in creativity, in collaboration, in courage, in compassion—all of which are aspects of successful social entrepreneurs."

President Lief, whose professional work has been focused on nonprofit social enterprise, teaches the undergraduate seminar Social Innovation & Entrepreneurship. Surveying local, regional, and worldwide examples of social enterprise and the impacts that innovators can have in the twenty-first century, the course explores the ways that business tools can be harnessed for significant social change.

As the culminating project, students develop a business plan for a mission-driven enterprise that addresses a social issue they are passionate about. They then present their plan to a panel of judges composed of community leaders, including faculty from the Leeds School of Business at the University of Colorado Boulder. Some then take their refined plans and start their own business after graduation. Lief describes the work of the seminar as building students' capacity to be visionary and pragmatic change agents.

The undergraduate internship is another course that offers on-the-ground training. Blending



professional development, career exploration, and life design, the internship gives students the opportunity to apply their knowledge in organizations that meet their interests and career goals and build professional networks to create meaningful careers. Placements range from community-based media to restorative justice initiatives to educational organizations working on issues of social justice, peace, human rights, mental health, and environmental sustainability. Approximately 47 percent of Naropa students are hired by their internship site.

In fall 2019, Naropa's Office of Career and Life Development received a call from Governor Jared Polis's office asking for Naropa students for the Governor's Executive Internship Program. Two students were placed in the program: Shatasia Griffith (BA Contemplative Psychology, '20), worked directly with Lt. Governor Diane Primavera and Christopher Rachal (BA Contemplative Psychology, '19) assisted Governor Polis in developing and monitoring public policies, as well as analyzing legislation being considered.

Naropa students are making a significant impact on their communities and the world at large via the internship. "Being an alumna of Naropa myself, I find the internship class to be invaluable as it allows our students to gain hands-on experience in diverse fields, build connections, develop their professional aptitudes, and take the brilliance of our unique Naropa education into the community," says Senior Director of Academic Advising Jessica DelCastillo (BA Contemplative Psychology, '06).

Naropa's career counselors use different tools to help students uncover what motivates them. Stanford University's Odyssey Plan model brings a design-thinking mindset to the career search. "When we're working with students, we're looking for where there is congruence between their emotions, their tone of voice, their excitement, their energy levels," Farrant says, "and we're helping them tap into the unconscious to explore different career options."

As an alternative to interest inventories, the Career and Life Development Office also uses aptitude testing via YouScience, a platform that allows students to discover their natural abilities and top talents through eleven different brain games. At the end of the test, each student gets key terms to



Photo by Claudia Lopez

help describe who they are, which is helpful for resumes and interviewing.

**“Naropa encourages the ‘why,’ but not the ‘why because’—the ‘why in order to,’ the higher why, the why that embraces curiosity and meaning and invokes questioning and looking at fresh perspectives.”**

Naropa students are uniquely positioned to contribute to reimagining the world of work by bringing different values, namely authenticity and presence, to their jobs or the companies they create.

“Our students don't want to live in a culture where you leave your life behind when you go to work. They want to be true to and be seen for who they are,” Farrant says. “The year 2020 was the first time that America saw an equal number of Millennials and Gen Z in the workplace. And the values that motivate these two groups—flexibility, remoteness, early-on leadership, transparency, and trust—are so different from the values that have been driving the patriarchal way in which we've been working.”

In her view, the pandemic allowed for more creativity and more opportunities for our students to thrive. "Our students are innovative, and they want to make a difference. They want to live in an inclusive environment, and they want flexibility and freedom," she says. "Research shows that the top two leadership skills for 2020 were authenticity and versatility. We teach our students how to be versatile, how to be agile. So the leaders that were

most successful at helping their teams re-adjust, were folks that could flex and who were genuine."

"Naropa encourages the 'why,' but not the 'why because' — the 'why in order to,' the higher why," Farrant adds. "The why that embraces curiosity and meaning and invokes questioning and looking at fresh perspectives."

## Entrepreneurial Mindset Case Study: Death as Teacher

A veteran of the U.S. Air Force, Seth Viddal (BA Interdisciplinary Studies, '19) describes his professional life following active duty as diverse, unpredictable, and exceptionally fun. "I built classified communication networks for government intelligence agencies in Europe and Australia," he says. "I developed and sold both residential and commercial real estate; I also founded and grew a commercial and industrial construction company."

When you least expect it, life has a way of stopping you in your tracks. For Viddal, it was the 2016 experience of nearly dying of sepsis after a ruptured intestine, which was followed by the death of four beloved family members that same year.


Unsure of where he was on his path, several friends suggested that he look to Naropa University for inspiration. In the presence of Sycamore trees and the Allen Ginsberg Library during a campus tour, Viddal decided to enroll at Naropa as an Interdisciplinary Studies (INTD) major.

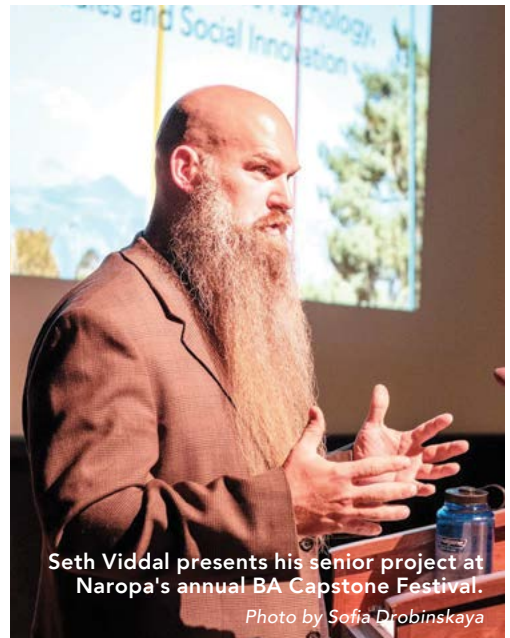
"The Religious Studies and Contemplative Psychology programs contributed so much to my processing of the recent transformations in my life," he says. "They also informed how I could serve others. The Social Innovation track allowed me to stay excited about entrepreneurship, and I was able to blend in rich 'electives' like photography, songwriting, and art."

In the Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation class, he explored how disrupting the status quo could be incorporated into a business plan. Although he knew he wanted to work in end-of-life care, his specific plan was in the process of becoming. After completing a Green Building course, Viddal decided to focus his INTD capstone project on designing a hospice and palliative care facility.

Deeply impacted by a training about mindfulness in end-of-life care at Willow Farm Contemplative Center, he served as an intern there in the fall of his senior year. He currently serves on their board of directors and on their faculty.

During his final semester, Viddal interned at The Natural Funeral in Lafayette, Colorado, where he is now co-owner. "The holistic funeral home had not yet opened, and my background in construction and real estate development helped us open for business that semester," Viddal says. "I fell deeply in love with the style of service that we provide to families. I'm on the path of empowering families to participate in natural death care."

"Cultivating mindfulness and compassion, non-attachment to outcome, and approaching life's possibilities with a beginner's mind are the greatest lessons I received at Naropa." 



Seth Viddal presents his senior project at Naropa's annual BA Capstone Festival.

Photo by Sofia Drobinskaya





**The heart of Naropa's mission is to nurture student insight, awareness, courage, and compassion.**

The commitment of Naropa's donors ensures our beloved university's continued place as a leader in contemplative education, and a hub of creativity, innovation, artistic expression, and social engagement—creating a better world for all.

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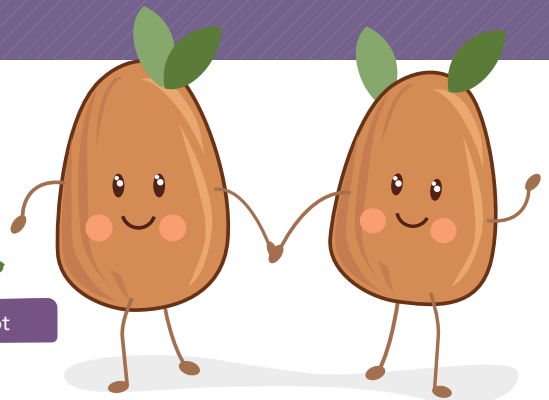


At a university that asks its students to lead with their heart, it should come as no surprise that some students' hearts intersect in relationship with each other. These two Naropa love stories show the inspiring ways our alumx are embodying their intersectional values at work and in love.

# Embracing the Awkward

Alumx power couple using awkwardness to disrupt

By Halley Hadfield



Many of us consider awkwardness as something we try to avoid. For Tosha Jordan (BA Contemplative Psychology, '15, MA, '19) and Christina Shore ('19), alumx of Naropa's MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling: Somatic Counseling program, awkwardness has become a crucial component of their everyday lives. Together, they have built a love, and life, that is both unique and empowering to the work they do in normalizing what it means to embrace the uncomfortable.

"We were about September deep into our first year of a cohort together, and we were crushing on each other pretty good," Shore reminisces. "So, we decided to go for a walk. We hadn't clarified that the other person also had a crush, so it was a very awkward walk, and I had some almonds in my purse. I offered Tosha some almonds, and Tosha proceeded

to take the almond and was just being awkward and flirting in a kind of an unusual way with the almond. So, we always joked about the awkward almond. And that was Tosha—always embracing the awkward."



Photos courtesy of Jordan and Shore

That awkward walk was the beginning of their love for one another, and the moment they planted a seed that they would revisit years later. Meanwhile, other seeds of purpose and mission were blooming within both of them.

During their studies within the Naropa bubble and then integrating into the wider Boulder bubble, the couple faced challenges in navigating their paths, both individually and as partners.

Engaging in conversations around diversity and inclusivity while attending a predominantly white

university in a predominantly white town is definitely a space for discomfort. As of 2019, Boulder was 79.6 percent White (non-Hispanic) and 1.11 percent Black or African American (non-Hispanic). According to Naropa's Fall 2021 census, the total student body was comprised of 73 percent White (non-Hispanic), 22 percent Students of Color, and 5 percent Unknown.

Over time, this lack of diversity began to weigh on them and played a role in their eventual decision to move to Evanston, Illinois, after graduation, Shore's hometown.



*A classically trained dancer focused on being graceful, Shore (left) credits Jorden with helping her to embrace her inner awkwardness.*

For Jorden, the discomfort was even more significant because they completed their bachelor's and master's degrees at Naropa. "Boulder being very white, it felt like my nervous system was feeling fried. And being there for undergraduate and graduate, that added up, and I needed to go do work with people who look like me, and maybe who had some similar experience," Jorden says. "So I felt like that was the push for me to go out into the world and be a therapist with folk who have similar

identities to me. I work with youth and families right now in Evanston, and it gives me an opportunity to practice mindfulness with youth in a container that is social justice-oriented."

Shore explains there was a lot of dialog at Naropa in terms of how to translate their education into the real world, but feels Naropa's training "really holds up." She says, "All the buzzwords like diversity, inclusivity—there's so much that doesn't back it up. I think we've learned how to actually show up interpersonally and do that work."

"I use it a lot with my clients—and it's so beautiful and powerful, just to be like, that's oppression; this is what's happening around you. People don't get that named for them. Very often, it can just reframe and shift the perspective. It's so potent, and I don't think a lot of therapists necessarily use it actively in therapy. This is where I want to be focusing my attention."

While supporting their clients to name what oppression feels like, the two have also come to take a stance against bullying, a word they believe to be more approachable in deconstructing power dynamics.

"When I'm being oppressed, it feels like I'm being bullied," Jorden explains. "They have a similar ring, but I think the word 'bullying' is more accessible than people saying, 'Oh, you're being oppressive.' It seems people are more receptive to feedback that they are being bullies rather than being racist or oppressive."

But how do we stop bullying? These two believe we interrupt it.

"You teach your kids not to bully, but beyond that, how to teach your kids to interrupt bullying, or stand up for other people being bullied, or what to do around that?" Shore says. "It feels the exact same as social justice work, and I like that it's connected to the word 'awkward' because it's often so awkward to interrupt because the whole system is based on not being awkward and following the status quo."

Interrupting isn't easy, and so they continue embracing the uncomfortable that goes along with disrupting systems that don't work.

"Interrupting is often not a particularly graceful act. Sometimes it can be, but often, it's like, how





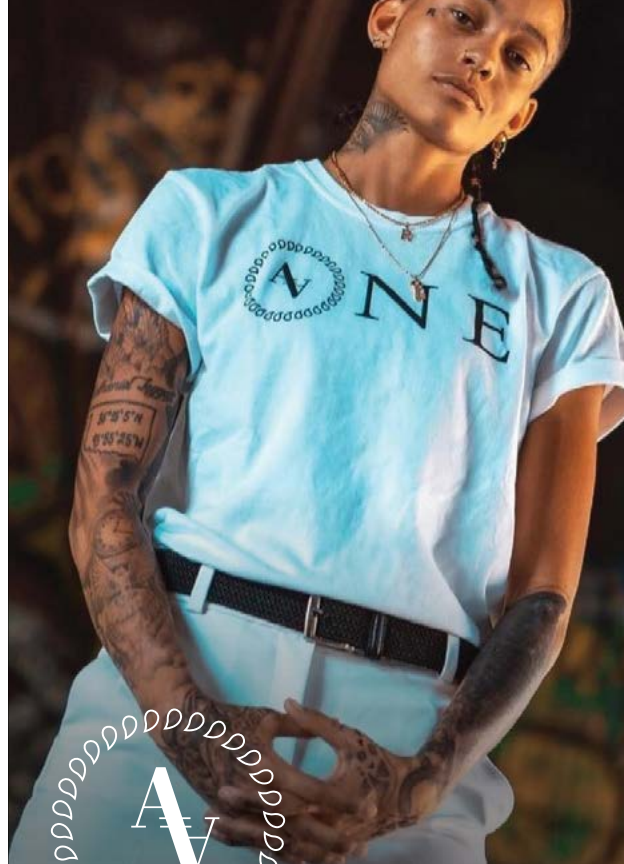
do I say this thing? Even just having conversations around bullying or around social justice stuff can be so awkward. And just to sort of normalize that and get comfortable with that. It can help the process," Shore says.

Remember the almond that started this whole love story? Now it's a clothing line, Awkwrld Almnd.

"I thought to myself that every time I dress I need to embody my spirit, I need to make a statement bigger than myself," Jordan says.

So they created Awkwrld Almnd, an independent, non-gendered clothing brand that aims to stop bullying. Their commitment to awkwardness is as prevalent as their commitment to moving social justice forward. They continue to embrace all that makes them who they are.

"I think because I have multiple marginalized identities, my existence has felt awkward. And then I just learned I have to just be who I am. I feel like I spend most of my time saying things that people don't want to hear. Because I'm in a female body, I'm supposed to wear female clothes and have long hair, the list can go on. So from a very young age, I just had to embrace myself. And it's still very awkward. And it's a living, moving thing. Meditation has also helped me be more aware of it and move through it. Because I believe before I was meditating, it was just awkward and painful. But now I have the choice about how I want to move in the world with that, what I want to say with it, which has given me my own power," Jordan says. 🌀



**AWKWARD:**  
is a fashion statement  
is activism  
is beautiful!

**At Awkwrld Almnd,**  
we go beyond gender here.

We are here to embrace AWKWARD and to stop bullying for being different. This brand was created by two therapists who have an equity and somatic foundation.

We are a Black/interracial queer-owned clothing company.

You may notice that our clothes are not gendered, you buy what you like, period.

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# PRIDE IS MORE THAN A MONTH

A Naropa love story three-decades strong

By Halley Hadfield



Photos courtesy of Perkins and Kirkendall

Love didn't always win, but it has always had the power to transform. For Jonathan Kirkendall (MA Counseling Psychology, '94) and Scott Perkins (MA Buddhist Studies, '92), it did just that.

"We were at Naropa when Amendment 2 was passed," recalls Kirkendall. "All of our friends told us that there's no way it would, and then it did, overwhelmingly. And that was eye-opening for me about just sort of the bubble that Boulder was in."

In the early '90s, Aspen, Boulder, and Denver announced citywide policies that prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation. This did not sit well with the socially conservative group Colorado for Family Values (CFV). CFV drafted and supported a statewide constitutional initiative, called Amendment 2, that would prohibit cities and institutions in Colorado from establishing anti-discrimination language for sexual orientation.

In the 1992 election, Colorado voters approved the amendment by a 53–47 percent margin. This passage meant "homosexuals living in Colorado were not protected from discrimination based on their sexual orientation."

Prior to Naropa, Kirkendall had been working with Catholic workers for social teachings in Washington D.C. when he was brutally attacked. He discovered

psychotherapy to recover from the trauma he endured. He saw an ad for Naropa, and at the time it was actively recruiting what was then the only 'LGB' for the psychotherapy department.

Meanwhile, after studying Buddhism in India, Perkins returned home to Michigan where he struggled to find a Buddhist community. Committed to his desire to help people deal with suffering, he chose Naropa because it recognized the value of contemplative practice, which was rare in the '90s.

After thirty years together, Kirkendall and Perkins' love story has many chapters. They reflect fondly on the chapter of how they navigated the challenges of being in Naropa graduate programs during a time where they were under the constant worry and stress of the uncertainty around them.

Over time, the two would come to share their true feelings, including Perkins who boldly navigated coming out amidst all the uncertainty of his personal rights.

Kirkendall invited Perkins to go to Washington, D.C., with a group of their friends to join the March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation. On April 25, 1993, an estimated one million attended the march, making it one of the largest protests in American history.

"I was a student rep for the Presidential Search Committee for Naropa, and we were reporting to the board on our progress," Perkins says "I managed to force an interjection in front of the board and with a shaky voice mentioned Amendment 2, and I said basically that I couldn't imagine attending a school that wouldn't speak out against this. Had Jonathan

not taken me to that march, I never would have known to do that.”

“It was a significant experience for me and my own comfortability and confidence in who I was, in general, and also as a gay person.”

Naropa did publish a statement coming out against Amendment 2 and clarified to the public that it strove to be an open and inclusive community. Together, Kirkendall and Perkins both credit Naropa with being a safe place to share their voices and learn how to speak their truth with courage and conviction.



*Left to right: Perkins, former Naropa president Judy Lief and Kirkendall at their wedding ceremony, which Lief officiated.*

Eventually, Amendment 2 was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, but not without setting a precedent for the current struggle of LGBTQIA+ rights in the United States.

“I think one of the big things I’ve taken from Naropa is the confidence that if I get on the spot, I can relax and trust myself,” Perkins says. “All the battle is just putting myself on the spot.”

“Naropa enabled me to ask questions that I didn’t even know I had permission to ask,” Kirkendall adds. “My parents were Southern Baptist missionaries. There is very much a right and wrong about everything. But at Naropa, I could ask all the questions that I have. Naropa was really good at emphasizing that our curiosity has wisdom to it.”

“I remember my ‘on the spot’ situation in front of all my classmates. I raised my hand and said, ‘So Amendment 2 has passed. It’s very detrimental to me and my community. I don’t want to be paired with an older person who may have voted for it.’ I walked out of that class and the teacher’s assistant was with me. And I turned to him and I said to him, ‘Is it okay that I asked that question?’”

“And he said, ‘You know, Jonathan, the deal with being a minority is that you feel like you have to ask permission to ask the questions to keep you safe.’ And he said, ‘You don’t have to do that here,’” Kirkendall says.

In 2006, Kirkendall began working with The Tragedy Assistance Program for survivors—a non-profit that offers bereavement care to military families. Kirkendall was most recently issued an invitation to join the board of the Veteran’s Service Organization, an honor he is both proud and excited to receive.

“I would not be fearlessly jumping into work that I know so little about if it wasn’t for Naropa. But it’s because of Naropa, that I feel like I can walk into these places that I really know nothing about and start asking questions.”



“The most transformative thing Naropa provided me was the inspiration to shift my career path from academics to social service with a focus on alleviating suffering in the world. I am grateful for that. And it’s why I’m doing what I do now, and I really love what I’m doing,” says Perkins.

On June 26, 2015, twenty-three years after Amendment 2 was reversed, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down all state bans on same-sex marriage, legalizing it in all fifty states.

“Scott said, ‘Should we do this thing? And go get married?’ And I said to him, ‘Look, dude, we’ve literally only been together for twenty-two years. What if it doesn’t work out?’”







# Tyler Norris

## CHAIR OF THE NAROPA BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Edited by Cassandra Smith

*Photo courtesy of Tyler Norris*

In January of 2021, Naropa's Board of Trustees selected **Tyler Norris** (Divinity, '11), as the new chair. Norris is an alumnx of Naropa and is the chief executive at Well Being Trust, an impact philanthropy with a mission to advance the mental, social, and spiritual health of the nation. Over the past three decades, Norris has served as a social entrepreneur and trusted advisor to philanthropies, health systems, government agencies, and collaborative partnerships working to equitably improve the health of people and places.

He recently had a discussion with BA Contemplative Art Therapy student **Luci Gaddie**, who also serves as student representative on the Naropa Board of Trustees and as a Student Union of Naropa officer for visual arts programs and students who are BIPOC. In their role on the board of trustees, Gaddie acts as an advocate for the student voice and hopes to help build sustainable, artistic, BIPOC spaces. In this interview, they help us get to know Norris and what he hopes to bring to Naropa:

**Luci** Thank you so much for being here. I think this is a great opportunity for students, faculty, and staff to get an idea of what Naropa leadership is like. The first thing that I want to start with, Tyler, is what is your relationship to Naropa?

**Tyler** Thank you for inviting this conversation Luci! My first experience with Naropa was in the late 1980s, an immersion into Buddhist-Christian dialogues. I had been studying contemplative Christianity for a long time, and the work of Father Thomas Keating and other contemplatives was drawing me into the deeper core of the tradition I was raised in. Also, as a long-time practitioner of kriya yoga, I had great interest in the Buddhist studies of the mind, and was fascinated about the intersections of those teachings. These Buddhist-Christian dialogues over thirty years ago now led to my periodically attending an arts or meditation event at Naropa; and that was my relationship with Naropa up until 2006, when I entered the Master of Divinity program.

**Luci** Do you feel like your relationship to Naropa has evolved and informed who you are today as now being on the board and being chairman?

**Tyler** Very much so. I experience Naropa as rooted in loving-kindness, in dignity and respect for all human beings as they are; and welcoming courageous conversations on difficult subjects. I believe we seek to do this every day. I was not around in the beginning in 1974, but rather arrived a dozen years later on the journey. And it appears that the pilot light ignited by the founder, with a new flame in every moment, is still informing and sparking the courageous conversations we're having today around justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion; and climate, and indigeneity and healing. So I love seeing the lineage continue to express itself, applied to the vital issues of this day, not just with nostalgia to an earlier period.

**Luci** Right? Yes, that lineage of loving-kindness and compassion was the very bedrock

of what started Naropa. And this is often brought up in a broader discourse about Trungpa's lineage here. But before we get into the meat and potatoes of that, I'd like to know, just your thoughts and personal relationships to the leading edge that Trungpa beheld here and how that might have influenced your experience at Naropa.

**Tyler** I was interested in divinity school because I was really looking for inner support for my own healing and development. So, as a resident of Boulder, raising a family and building a business here, I felt blessed to be able to enter the Master of Divinity program, rooted in the heart of what Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche taught.

In the program, I found myself doing contemplative practice for an hour or more a day, and it changed me for the better. It changed how I was thinking, changed how I was showing up, changed how I was seeing and listening to others. I also appreciated the way Naropa's Buddhist-inspired roots allowed me, as a contemplative Christian with a yogic practice life, to deepen my understanding of the Buddhist studies of the mind, while investigating other wisdom traditions. This, coupled with the training of chaplaincy to bring healing presence and stability for others, was wildly liberating. It was also directly relevant to rising to my sense of calling, my vocare.

**Luci** Absolutely. It definitely sounds like Trungpa gave you the framework to be able to discern your own way. However, there's also amongst that discord—a lot of the setbacks that have been ascribed to this lineage, particularly surrounding sexual abuse—sexual assault often comes up among students. How is this being addressed in terms of how students are being impacted in education, but also, what students can do about this? There's a lot of frustration in terms of, do we listen to the lineage even with this abuse hanging on to it or perhaps attached to it? Or do we go about discerning that, and what are some ways that Naropa is addressing that from your awareness?

**Tyler** Well, first, I really love the question. And I think it's essential to be holding the question of what is being taught, alongside the behavior of those who are teaching, and to name and address unacceptable behavior whenever it

occurs. Because part of what we're trying to do here is to create a conducive safe environment for people to be who they are and be safe and vulnerable as they are; this is essential. Any environment that doesn't allow someone to show up with dignity, respect, and safety is not okay. There's no room for that at Naropa. Accountability for this, is in all of our roles, as trustees, cabinet leadership, faculty leadership, student leadership, staff leadership. This is vital for Naropa fulfilling its mission to cultivate compassionate, creative, and critical engagement with an ever-changing world through the discipline of contemplative education.

One of the ways we're leading right now is by addressing the many forms of racism and other forms of exclusion in our society. This includes upending the white-centeredness that I believe holds all this in place. And which far too often makes it unsafe and unwelcoming for Black and Brown and indigenous and immigrant and LGBTQIA and others to show up as they are, and be able to speak and live freely. Fearlessly addressing this, is the beginning of healing. We cannot pretend about the past or present, or push the truth away or uphold any form of facade. This is what courageous



**Luci Gaddie**  
Photo by Sofia Drobinskaya

leadership is all about. It surely is for me, as a white, educated, mostly straight, cisgender male of means and privilege.

**Luci** Absolutely. So it's this journey from trying to decipher teaching from teacher and the past, and this is proof of Naropa attempting to redefine what it's like for an institute to apply their mission and values into the actual practice of its curriculum. I definitely see that there's this contention between the mission and values at Naropa, and how that's translating back into the world. Do you feel like the current mission and values are what will be the guiding framework for the next five to ten years for Naropa?

**Tyler** Well, that is a really interesting question. In regards to Naropa, I'm inspired by how we are applying contemplative education to the issues the world faces today. A living question for me is: How shall we best bring the relevance of compassion and loving-kindness to pervasive racism, sexism, lack of equitable economic opportunity for all, climate change, and political toxicity? That's the Naropa I want to see—that continues to meet these leading-edge issues with an open heart and open mind.

I observe what holds these vexing issues and profound suffering in place is mostly centered in how we see and show up with each other—particularly in places where people are polarized on identity or issues that appear to be binary or

defined by either/or. The leadership that's required to navigate this fraught and fecund territory is, in my experience, directly served by the kinds of practices and ways of being that are cultivated at Naropa. I see Naropa as an extraordinary vehicle for building the capacities and competencies in our personal, professional, and social lives, that allow us to move courageously into the messy maw of these issues while growing our own stability and ability to lead with skillful means.

What the world is needing right now is people who are coming alive to that which is rising unbidden and undeniably from within them; and who can lead with kindness, love, and respect. We need people of every stripe, who can increasingly navigate through polarities by unlocking curiosity and creativity. My observation is that however relevant Naropa might have been to the '70s and '80s, that we are even more relevant to the array of challenges that the world, and each of us, faces today. What Naropa teaches is needed more than ever in the fields of health and social services, politics, sustainable development, and civic life—as well as in the arts, where we find ways to express the fullness of life and living that defy words.

**Luci** Absolutely. I guess this leaves room for the really beautiful starlight in all of this. If you could go either to the past or go to the future, what are some words of wisdom that you would have given your past self?

// **Any environment that doesn't allow someone to show up with dignity, respect, and safety, is not okay."**








Tyler

You know, I'm 62 now, and I've come to know a couple of things as true. One is that for much of my life, I actually didn't know that it was all going to be okay; more accurately, that I was okay. By this, I don't mean easy or without suffering—that's part of the territory of human experience. But I can now look back and know that the way out is through. And there is always a way through. As with the Noble Truths, there are ways to work with our own suffering and that of others. I have faith in divine unfolding. A simple example is what is often called serendipity, which at Naropa we name auspicious coincidence. That we get to have undeniable glimpses that somehow, something far greater than ourselves is afoot. And that each of us has purpose and belonging in that unfolding. Bottom line: each life, your life, my life matters, and is needed here.

Earlier in my years, I'd have flashes of thinking it was this way, that there was some kind of a divine perfection—but I was always suspicious. My sunny disposition shrouding fear. Increasingly with each year, I'm noticing that's actually how life works. That each person that's put in front of us, each conversation, each situation—even if it doesn't arrive in a way that seems to be wrapped perfectly, or might feel a little awkward or even profoundly difficult—that it's exactly right, that it couldn't be more perfect. By meeting the world as it is, we're actually meeting our own self as we are. That in our

own learning and healing and facing what's being dished up right in front of us—we can begin to see it's just right. You just can't make this up in a more propitious or beautiful way than it is already. Including right now.

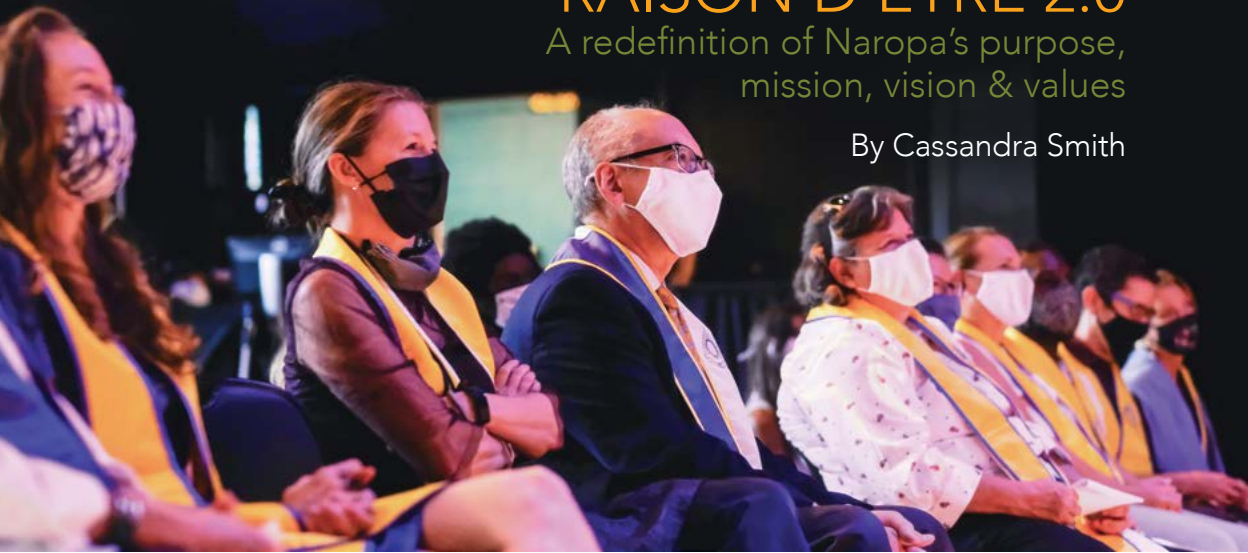
Luci

Thank you so much. That was absolutely beautiful. And that shows the very resilient spirit of Naropa of how we are consistently looking for new souls to push the boundaries of where we are at and even the horizons we have yet to wake up to. I think right now we are at that pivotal point. And as harsh as the alchemical processes, it is going to get us that gold at the end. So thank you so much for taking the time to do this interview, and thank you for what you do for Naropa. 

# RAISON D'ÊTRE 2.0

A redefinition of Naropa's purpose,  
mission, vision & values

By Cassandra Smith



A confluence of events created a new landscape for higher education that provides an opportunity both for redefining higher education and demanding that institutions of higher learning are more innovative in the ways they meet the needs of their students and communities. With an ongoing global pandemic, a dwindling amount of time to deal with the climate crisis, increasing political polarization, and daily proof that we still have not reckoned with both the historical and the current lack of racial justice and equity in this country, it is fair to say we are facing a radical crisis.

"The old way of being in the world and of interacting with each other in the realm of nature isn't working. Our survival is indeed threatened and at this point, we are either going to become extinct or evolve," says Regina Smith (MA Contemplative Psychotherapy, '12), Vice President of Mission, Culture, and Inclusive Community (MCIC), Naropa's newly created administrative division.

In terms of Naropa's role in this evolution, Smith thinks "the reason that we exist is to co-create a new way of being in the world, a socially just, conflict-positive, compassionate, and regenerative way of caring for each other and for our planetary home." She says, "I've never really looked at Naropa as humanity's hope for survival before, but I am the mother of a five-year-old, and we watch a lot of Star Wars. So all of a sudden, I'm really into saving the planet."

Smith's leadership of the new MCIC division will allow her to try to do just that. Recognizing that community culture is critical to saving the planet, Naropa's new MCIC division called in administrators, faculty, and allies in the hopes of facilitating the further integration and impact of Naropa's values across the university and curricula. Critical to this new division are newly created staff roles, including Senior Director of MCIC, Amanda Aguilera, PhD (MA Contemplative Psychology, '08), and Program Manager Seann Goodman.

In this new division, Smith says they "work tirelessly to support Naropa in living its mission and hope to build a bridge between what Naropa has been, what Naropa is today, and what Naropa needs to become, if we are to help humanity evolve." The new structure is intended to help Naropa to integrate a unified office for its guiding values, with the primary nodes in this new network of MCIC each facilitated by a director. This includes Smith, who leads Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (JEDI); under which is the newly created Restorative Community Institute (CRI).

Smith explains: "We have also recently integrated our work towards sustainability, with the living legacy of Joanna Macy to create the Joanna Macy Center for Resilience and Regeneration, led by the ever lovely and loving Director Michael Bauer, and Faculty Lead Sherry Ellms. In addition, we house CACE, the Center for the Advancement of Contemplative Education, where Director Charlotte Rotterdam and Program Manager Carla Burns (Divinity, '16) lead

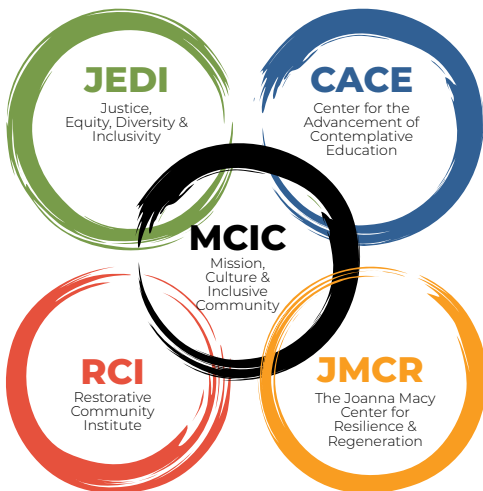
our community in deepening into our contemplative roots and in defining both the present and the future of what it means to educate the contemplative compassionate warriors we need for the great turning.”

Together, these offices collaborate on mission integration and represent the heart of MCIC. Bauer explains, “Mission integration across the university is a priority for Naropa, as we see the emergent need for racial justice and reconciliation, restorative community and sustainability, all of which are grounded and energized by contemplative practices and traditions.”

One of the first projects MCIC took on was an initiative to renew Naropa’s commitment to its vision, mission, and values across the university. A team was formed in the summer of 2020, which led numerous ideation and strategy sessions with the board of trustees and began a re-evaluation and renewal of Naropa’s guiding statements.

While Naropa has had several iterations of mission statements over the years, this work by MCIC was the first attempt at also clearly articulating Naropa’s purpose and vision. With this broad framework as a guide, MCIC then engaged in a renewed exploration of the institution’s values and mission. Smith says this tedious two-year process involved digging into Naropa’s history as well as present commitments to work to “refine our stated purpose, mission, vision, and values, so that they are more clear and precise, and so that Naropa’s wisdom can pierce into the places that need it most.”

After input and critical feedback from students, staff, and faculty and hours of careful wordsmithing,



Naropa’s new guiding statements are as follows:

**Purpose:** We exist to cultivate compassionate, creative, and critical engagement with an ever-changing world through the discipline of contemplative education.

**Vision:** Naropa envisions an interconnected global community that embodies an everlasting commitment to personal actions, interpersonal relations, and vocations, which promote individual, social, and ecological liberation, and wellbeing.

**Mission:** We commit to create a more just and regenerative world by nurturing student insight and awareness, courage, and compassion. Through contemplative pedagogy, critical thinking, and active engagement, we offer students the skills they need to authentically engage as effective mindful leaders.

**Value Statements:**

1. To foster lifelong learning, meaningful lives and success for students and graduates.
2. To expand our leading edge of contemplative education that embraces inner discovery and learning.
3. To build a culture of belonging and challenge systems of oppression that undermine human dignity.
4. To awaken and renew ecological interconnection and commit to regenerative practices, choices, and leadership.
5. To cultivate capacity for authentic and trusting relationships, and practice radical compassion.
6. To champion active responsibility and courageous, effective, and inspired engagement with the world.
7. To invoke artistic expression of the full human experience through creative awareness.



the team completed a draft set of new guiding statements for the university, which are now collectively called the “Naropa Community Compass.” Landing on a final draft of these statements in the fall of 2021, the team sent them to the board of trustees for approval and ratification.


Smith hopes the Naropa “community members will reflect on these statements and let them be more than words that just go in one ear and out the other; but may they be seeds that [they] plant in [their] hearts.” From an institutional perspective, she hopes these statements will serve to keep Naropa pointed in the direction it needs to go and as guide points when it is lost and inevitably strays from the path.

Naropa President Charles G. Lief acknowledges, “To meet its potential, the work can’t be an insular process limited to the members of this privileged community. From this privileged place, we can’t lose sight of the fact that we’re part of a world that keeps experiencing great poverty and injustice, environmental degradation, ethnic, racial, gender, and religious bias.”

An important part of this process involves a critical look at how Naropa got to where it is today. Lief explains that Naropa was founded out of a “concern that higher education both in the West and in the East was at risk of losing its sacred traditions—traditions that gave co-equal emphasis to personal growth, gaining wisdom and knowledge, and sparking students in the motivation to live a life that’s framed by service regardless of vocational pathway.”

Lief acknowledges that while there is “consistency that’s maintained by the connection to our traditions and the willingness to take a long view of Naropa’s benefit to the world,” he says, “without question, there is much about Naropa today, which differs from that founding time, and that’s a good thing. It’s a testament to the generations of students, faculty, and staff whose commitment and brilliance consistently has informed our evolution on our continued relevance to the world.”

“I hope you can see that despite what we say in our short sound bites, Naropa’s mission is not neatly divided into east and west, it’s actually an international and intersectional mission completely,” Lief says. “We aspire to be a place of integration and appreciation, where challenging conventional

thinking is welcomed and celebrated, even if it’s messy. We strive to be a place where challenge comes not only from debate and exchange based on logical mind but also from practicing contemplative disciplines, learning how to be kind to ourselves and others, how to be in the world with both fearlessness and kindness.” 



**Regina Smith, Vice President for Mission, Culture, and Inclusive Community at Naropa, presents “A Black Woman Speaks” at the annual SparkTalks event.**

*Photo by Sofia Drobinskaya*



# SHAPES OF TRUTH: DISCOVER GOD INSIDE YOU

Neal Allen & Anne Lamott in Conversation

**I**n June, Naropa Extended Campus welcomed Neal Allen and Anne Lamott for a conversation about Allen's new book entitled *Shapes of Truth: Discover God Inside You*. Allen is a coach and writer who studies and practices traditional and contemporary spiritual traditions. His private coaching practice blends standard psychodynamics with AH Almaas's Diamond Approach and Eastern practice and methods. *Shapes of Truth* presents a method of spiritual inquiry based on a set of thirty-five divine objects found within the human body and provides step-by-step instructions for encountering them yourself. His wife, Anne Lamott, is the best-selling author of numerous books of essays, novels, and long form nonfiction, including the classic writing manual *Bird by Bird* and the child rearing memoir *Operating Instructions*. Lamott's most recent book is *Dusk, Night, Dawn: On Revival and Courage* published in March 2021 by Riverhead Books. *Following are some excerpts of their conversation.*

## On Writing as a Contemplative Practice

**Lamott:** I don't consider writing a contemplative practice. It's just always hard, and I'd almost always rather be watching MSNBC, but I get these things inside of me—they're actually like a tug on the sleeve by something that wants me to help it get itself written.... I have an idea usually for one thing that I might possibly be able to do, and I just do that. In *Bird by Bird*, I talked about just looking through an empty one-inch frame and seeing one passage, one essay, one vision, one conversation, and just letting myself do it really badly. I sit down every day.... I don't wait for inspiration or particularly believe in it.

**Allen:** I don't think of myself as a particular kind of writer like a contemplative writer. I actually think of myself as a hack writer, because I spent most of my career writing for daily newspapers and popular magazines and then for corporations. During that time, I learned about the beautiful feeling of writing when it was working. It took years for it to start to

work for me. It took thousands of newspaper articles before I had the experience of finding my voice. Up to that point, it was all about learning the rules and trying to get at the truth of something.... I enjoyed doing that as a craft more than as a way to understand myself or understand the bigger world.... But I learned how to write and, eventually, I entered into an appreciation that there might be a world beyond that materialist empiricist world.

Sometimes Anne and I use the experience of writing to expand on our own understanding of more abstract and spiritual things—phenomenologies or concepts or feelings or perceptions or existences or whatever we want to call them.

**Lamott:** I might say to Neal, "Do you have a minute," which means "Do you have 45 minutes?" and I'll say, "Can we talk about spirit?" And then he'll start saying what spirit means to him, and I'll say what spirit means to me, and then we'll start jamming, and it takes us to places that are so far

out there.... I recommend, for the writers here, that you ask somebody whom you love to talk to about the most meaningful topics....

I want to introduce you to Neal, whom I met five years ago and married two years ago under duress.... One terrifying day, he wrote me a description of the book that he was working on, and it turned out to be *Shapes of Truth*, and it was about his work in Diamond Heart with Hameed Ali and his own spiritual practice.... I thought, oh no. A. he's a writer, and I bet he just wants the name of my agent and B. this book just sounds like voodoo.... After we met for coffee, we were never apart again, and so I thought it was time to see if this guy could write because it was going to be a problem if I didn't love his writing, and so I exchanged an essay with a piece he'd written for a quarterly that had just come out. And I was flooded with relief that it was beautifully written.

### On Shapes of Truth

**Allen:** Hidden in your body is a set of thirty-five divine objects that represent aspects of God. They can grant immediate and sustained relief from everyday suffering, and each of them corresponds to a common human emotional difficulty, but each of them also is an abstract noun of value or represents a pure form found without a word, but instead encapsulated in a color and a sense of shape inside you. There might be a color for joy and a color for strength and a color for will, and each of them is discriminated from the others, and they act as a fundamental and rudimentary vocabulary, out of which you can build an idea of the human useful characteristics of God.... Five or six of them were known to the Sufis as early as the 13th century but the other thirty or so were actually



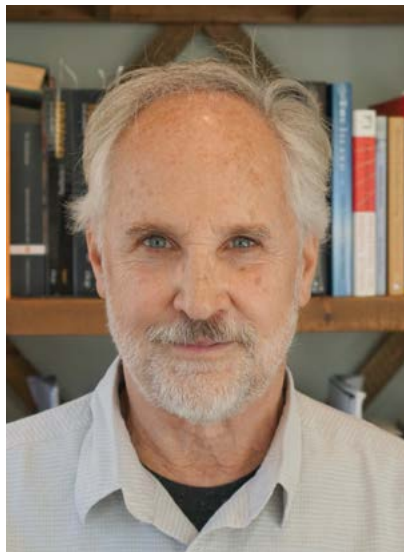
Anne Lamott

discovered by modern spiritual master Hameed Ali and he discovered them through an inquiry into what exists within presence.... These body forms started to appear, and he catalogued them, and as far as he and I have been able to figure out, they're not related to a chakra system or the tree of life. They're not Jungian, and they don't have a cultural dependence. It's a vocabulary that he uses brilliantly within the path called Diamond Heart, but the book is an introduction to these objects to people who might find them useful on another path.

**Lamott:** I can tell you more specifically how I have experienced the shapes. I wrote the foreword to the book, which includes our first date:

*So this guy was gentle and kind, a little shambly perhaps, very observant, and an excellent listener. He was droll but subtle about it. I was a tiny bit discombobulated because, after all, it was a first date, but my main problem was less romantic. That very morning, I had decided to fire a longtime assistant. As I settled into my seat at the restaurant, I felt down and guilty. Being me, I might have mentioned this, in passing with Neal, in fact, I'm sure I did. He didn't recoil at the overshare or express knee-jerk sympathy at my distress so much as he seemed deeply curious, so curious that I had a hard time changing the subject. After our second cup of coffee, we got down to the books we were each writing. His was called *Shapes of Truth*. Oh, I asked prettily, "What is it about?"*

*"Let me show you," he offered, and began to walk me through the process that he describes in this book. He told me to think about my difficulty that morning with my assistant. I*



Neal Allen



closed my eyes to begin the interior visualization. He asked if I felt anything distinctive in my torso and, if so, where it was. I described a cramped feeling in my lower belly, anxiety I had over the firing. Neal asked me to describe the exact size of the area of tension, the shape of the area, its density and its color. It was an ugly stain, a spilled liquid, grayish brown, the density of mercury. He asked me to stay with it for a minute. I desperately wanted to run, but I sat quietly, partly because he has such a cute nose, but also because my stomach felt terrible, and I thought maybe this just might help. Then I noticed the strangest thing—that the grey brown liquid was floating in an empty space as if some of my internal organs had been pushed aside and had left behind a pristine staging area.

After a while, he asked if the thing in my belly was changing in any way. Well, not fast enough, I can tell you that. But, in fact, it had changed slightly and continued to, becoming wider and less dense, less like mercury. Then, after some time, it rose higher, eventually reaching my chest, much airier now, and then it slowly rose up my throat and into the air beside me where it disappeared. In its place, I noticed a white balloon, an icky thick grayish brown blob had transferred through attention and Neal's curiosity into a white balloon hovering beside me, and then magically inside me, too. "Ah," Neal said, "you went straight to the pearl." "The Pearl?" I asked, "Yeah," he said, "The pearl—that white balloon is kind of like looking straight at your own soul or at least a part of it, as if you can see both your own divinity and your ability to function in the world from your divinity.

### On Whether the Shapes Are Universal


**Allen:** This isn't double-blind tested, but it has been experimented with and known by at any one time

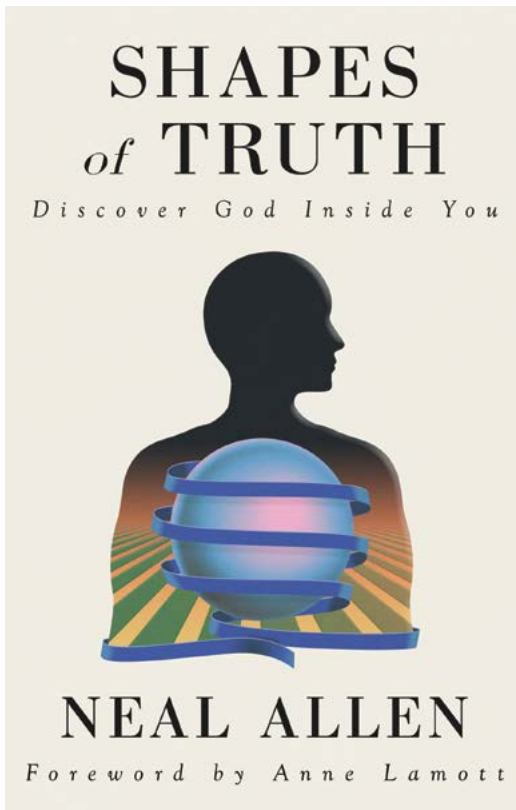
five thousand people within the Diamond Heart community who are using the exploration of these in order to discover more about their own divinity and to get out of their familiar restrictive materialist empiricist lives into a broader view of things. So as far as I can tell, they are universal, and they have a certain kind of purity that is essential to them in the sense that we have a word *strength*, we have a word *will*, we have a word *value*, why would I need something other than a word, why would I need a color inside me?

The problem is that words bend and move and get really cluttered with associations, and so they tend to be unreliable and tend not to be universal. They

tend to actually lack universality, and we tend to spend a whole lot of time asking each other to better define what that word means, so that we're on the same page. And they can lead us astray, as we all know, and there are ways in which, when we use words, we are reifying things that are false, and that's part of being a human being....

If you go into a spiritual path, you're going to spend time trying to clean up all your verbal assumptions. The thing about these simple forms inside is they don't seem to have cultural attachments. They seem to be so fundamental that they

can only be seen as building blocks.... One thing that these objects do is they remind us that the ineffable soul that we've been told about—that ineffable selfness that doesn't have identities attached to it—is maybe not as ineffable as we think.... They're certainly helpful for the period in which a person is trying to rid him or herself of identities and wants to get to that "I am" that lacks another word that follows it. 



# #NAROPIANS

The pandemic may have changed a lot in our lives, but it didn't stop the Naropa community from showing up and having fun. Here's a look back at some of our favorite social media moments from the year.



▲ Bernie visits the Naropa Green.



▲ "I am well again. I came to life in the cool winds and crystal waters of the mountains."—John Muir



▲ This project was a beautiful collaboration between many heart-oriented justice lovers, and we are honored to have Ramon Parish's support and involvements.



► Nestled inside the Pamela Krasney Pavilion at Naropa, the Little Lama Cafe is open to the public and serves locally sourced celebratory cuisines from around the world.







▲ I'm trading in my favorite skyline for the mountains.



▲ Whiskered companion lures me away from my mind and into my heart.



and just like that, a new road opens and the way behind me fades away in complete





# RESTORATIVE COMMUNITY

By Halley Hadfield



Photos by Anna Fischer

Conflict rarely has positive associations, but Naropa University is striving to change that. As college campuses nationwide are seeing the value of restorative justice practices as a means of upholding university values, Naropa is taking a step further to become a “restorative first” university, integrating restorative principles and practices at every level of the university.

“One of Naropa’s most important efforts is to become the first Restorative University in the US,” says Regina Smith (MA Contemplative Psychotherapy, '12), Vice President for the newly created Division of Mission, Culture, and Inclusive Community (MCIC).

Restorative community is an approach to actionable social justice by building a trusting, safe space for conflict resolution. The underlying belief characterizing this effort is that all members add value and enrich the community, a conviction upheld by adhering to practices that hear and respect all voices while creating authentic listening and sharing opportunities.

“My amazing colleague Dr. Amanda Aguilera taught me that if we want to see a world in which different needs, beliefs, and opinions don’t escalate to policies and punishments, we have to start with transforming our very own community, which means building the awareness and the skills for being in conflict,” Smith says. “If we’re going to have diversity, conflict is inevitable. So learning how to do conflict in a healthy way is part of what we’re working on.”

“We are building a bridge between what has been, what we are today, and what Naropa needs to become if we are to help humanity evolve,” she adds. “One thing I am still learning is that we cannot do any of this work by ourselves. Every day I have to remind myself that it

is not just on me; it is on all of us. And if all of us are going to do it, then I need to learn how to move from being a ‘me’ to being an ‘us.’”



Regina Smith

This initiative began in response to the student-led Decolonized Commons racial justice action on the Naropa Green in April 2015. Since then, Naropa staff and faculty have committed to creating structures to support the change in our systems that have consistently caused inequity and harm. Becoming a restorative community means we take responsibility for these inequities while creating opportunities for both support and accountability.

### How do we do it?

Under the direction of Amanda Aguilera, PhD (MA Contemplative Psychology, '08), the Senior Director of Mission, Culture, and Inclusive Community, Naropa has taken a two-phase approach for this effort. The first phase began in 2018 and involved integrating restorative principles and practices at every level of the student conduct process, including a complete rewrite of the student conduct policy to include various restorative justice processes. Phase one also expanded the efforts of the Community Repair and Support Team (CRest) and an integration of restorative practices into Title IX policies wherever possible.



Jamelah Zidan

Building upon the first phase, phase two focused on creating a plan to expand Restorative Community across the university and implement the structural supports and training necessary for shifting Naropa’s culture towards a more conflict-positive and actively responsible community. This phase involved the creation of the Restorative Community Institute, which provides mandatory and optional self-paced online courses as well as live, in-person, and virtual training, and practice opportunities.

Much of this work has been possible due to the hiring of Jamelah Zidan, Naropa’s new Restorative



Amanda Aguilera, PhD



Community Coordinator. Zidan's role provides assistance to the Support and Accountability Team (SAT) and the Restorative Pod Network while contributing to the readiness of the Restorative Community Institute (RCI).

The RCI created and leads SAT to identify and address systemic and equity concerns and challenges, as well as the policies and procedures meant to address them. The SAT team comprises fifteen members with diverse roles and statuses from different locations across campus, intending to examine policies and procedures. If a grievance or harm has happened, this team looks at how Naropa is responding and if the guidelines are clear, available, and aligned with the mission, vision, values, and purpose. This method ensures conflict resolution is the responsibility of a team of people rather than one.

"I'm on a mission to change how we do relationships," says Aguilera, the creator of 'The Restorative Integration Pyramid.' She explains the pyramid serves as one of the vehicles Naropa utilizes to live by its mission, vision, values, and purpose, and believes we must continue to explore questions like: What is power? What are the right uses of power? How do you navigate power differentials?

"If we don't have the capacity to engage in difficult conversations, we're not moving the culture of JEDI; we're not changing. It begins with

the ability to understand power dynamics joined with the capacity and the skills for engaging in those conversations," Aguilera says.

With a nod to a Buddhist-inspired education, Aguilera believes the roots of Naropa provide a foundation for doing the work. "The thing that enables us to stay engaged with power and difficult conversations is the ground for compassion and mindfulness; otherwise, our fragility shows up, and our shame, and we're not encouraged to engage. At Naropa, we have this expectation that we're going to encounter it mindfully, but if you're not trained to see power dynamics, to give and receive feedback, then you're not going to see it. We don't train people to see that in our culture, so we have to create it."

Creating a culture around giving and receiving feedback requires a deliberate training foundation, cultivating trust, and ensuring sustainability. To the newly created position of Restorative Community Coordinator, Zidan brings years of experience in mediation and restorative practices, including training at the International Institute for Restorative Practices.

She firmly believes that how a community reacts to conflict is an indicator of its health and ability for all to thrive.

Efficiency, reducing burnout, and alleviating the burden of carrying too much responsibility sounds









# THE YELLOW-BRICK ROAD TO CURIOUS SUNSHINE

Sarah Iverson follows the universe's imagination through mindful play

By Halley Hadfield

**S**arah Iverson (MA Environmental Leadership, '18) is a "creative, a wellness entrepreneur, and an overall happy being," she laughs. After earning her bachelor's degree in graphic design, she began working in the corporate world. It didn't take her long to realize the work was not aligned with her deep desire to be of service in a meaningful way.

"I had a really cool logo and a mission, but I didn't know logistics, and I didn't know enough about who I was," she says. "I didn't know as much about the history of injustices as well the history of the planet and how to show up advocating for global compassion."

Iverson was drawn to Naropa because she gravitated toward Eastern modalities and loved the uniqueness of the MA Environmental Leadership program. "One of the things that caught my eye was the variety of courses the program offered. Not only did it touch on the traditional Buddhist ideologies, traditions, and meditation practice, but it also highlighted environmental justice and multiculturalism," she says. "So, looking at racism and oppression and how that ties into environmental oppression opened my eyes to this nugget that I was missing in regard to how I show up as a Black woman in this world to

advocate for environmental justice, when Black people aren't really the face of environmentalism."

In her graduate thesis, Iverson focused on the importance of mindfulness, meditation, and nature in Black communities.

"As long as we've been oppressed and moved away from the privilege of being in nature, our voices have disappeared from that narrative because we weren't allowed in these pure spaces: pure as in white. Growing up hearing, 'Oh, Black people don't do these things out in nature,' has always made me ask why. I don't see why we would restrict ourselves from exposure to nature if it's healing for everyone and everything on this planet."

By the time Iverson graduated, she found her voice and her space to advocate. "At Naropa, we learned to follow the signs and synchronicities and let magic emerge," she says.

And that's exactly what she did. She named her business, Curious Sunshine, which focuses on invigorating liberation and authenticity through mindful play. This past November, it turned three.

Iverson's intention is for her company to be a tool that helps people become more happy, liberated, and authentic.

Her first offering was an activity book, *Black in Color: A Melanated Activity Guide to Liberation* to provide something tangible to folks that conveyed the same essence of the importance of exploring curiosity.

The COVID-19 pandemic also nudged her to transform her quirky workshops, or quirkshops, into the eCourse, "The Curious Sunshine Method," with everything custom-made from the music to the guided meditations. "It's hard to find liberation and authenticity," Iverson says, "if we don't know how to ground and get present with ourselves."

The intentionality behind her offering is the confluence of her art, her mindfulness practice, and her love of curiosity.

She designed the eCourse to have thirty-minute modules because she doesn't want to perpetuate the idea that you have to sit in front of a computer to learn. Her work with play is largely inspired by a book she read during her master's program by Stuart Brown explaining that play is a biological need. "Same as sleep, food, all that good stuff. And so I was like, this guy's saying that it's important, and it has survived through evolution—it's for a reason," Iverson says.

"I invite people to ask themselves why normalcy is so good. Curiosity highlights the questions, but also the innate curiousness of life—who we are, the oddness—the way nature is curious," she explains. "So we create and highlight the inner sunshine. Once we've gotten ourselves curious and asking ourselves questions, then we play with that in active exploration."

"It's like I'm following the yellow-brick road," Iverson laughs. Her unapologetic joy and trust in her purpose unfolding as she follows her multi-passionate heart allows her to stay in a creative space that seems to continuously expand what she believes is possible.

"No one's policing your curiosity and your imagination. Our imagination is not as big as the universe's," she says. "Surrender to that, and let the universe imagine a nicer outcome for you than you can imagine for yourself."


This past spring, she had an influx of art opportunities, including the Black Love Mural Festival in Denver, as well as exhibitions in several galleries and art bars, as well as a few commissioned pieces. She also utilizes her background to do web development and graphic design but caters to smaller Black and Brown businesses that don't have the resources to afford high-end design costs.

She's passionate about supporting small businesses because she knows how sacred it is to create something from your heart. Iverson credits her Naropa education for forcing her hand at entrepreneurship because she couldn't go back to the feeling she was living in a false reality and not pursuing work that aligned with her purpose.

"You really have to become an entrepreneur because of what [Naropa] teaches you," she says. "I can't handle anything that's not authentic."



"Curious Sunshine is bigger than me. Ultimately, the work I'm doing is something bigger than just me as an individual. I'm trying to start and invigorate and inspire others to pursue this as well."

Connect with Iverson's work, and see how you can reimagine what is possible to discover your own yellow-brick road. 

Learn more at [curioussunshine.com](https://www.curioussunshine.com)



# Passion in Action: Alumnx stories of service

by Halley Hadfield, Kendall Higgins & Danielle Poitras

## CONTEMPLATIVE BUSINESS

Beth A. Smith utilized their degree in Contemplative Psychotherapy to re-enter and rise in the business world

Beth A. Smith's degree in Contemplative Psychotherapy ('06) prepared them to re-enter the business world with what some might see as an unconventional perspective. Today, Smith is the CEO of StickerGiant—a company with 130 employees voted "One of the Best Places to Work in 2018" by *Denver Business Journal* and again in 2022 by *Built in Colorado*.

Smith is one of the few CEOs who identifies as gender non-binary, and they say they utilize their training in contemplative psychotherapy all the time to meet the demands of being a leader in the fast-paced world of business.

Smith first heard about Naropa through a tourism book they picked up on a business trip in Denver twenty-some years ago. They decided to visit campus

and were amazed to discover a university like Naropa existed, yet they returned to Virginia and eventually obtained their first master's degree from George Washington University.

Years later, when Smith got their first home computer, the first website they typed into it was naropa.edu. They had not thought about Naropa in ages—yet, when confronted with the question, "What do I want to search?" The answer that came to mind was Naropa.

Smith shares how their dyslexia always drew them to non-traditional education and speaks to the uniqueness of a Naropa education. They valued the connection with their cohort and experiences in the Maitri rooms—and they laugh about how Naropa can be challenging to explain to someone who has

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## FINANCIAL THERAPY

Bari Tessler fuses financial management with somatic counseling in *The Art of Money*



Bari Tessler is a pioneer in the financial therapy field and redefining how it looks to cultivate a healthy relationship with money. Fusing her financial management experience with the tools she learned in Naropa's Master's in Somatic Psychology program ('98), Tessler developed her own money methodology, *The Art of Money*.

Upon graduating from Naropa, Tessler thought her areas of expertise would be intimacy, sexuality, food, the body, grief, and death, "and we get to all of these topics," says Tessler. "Our relationship to money is the doorway I'm going through."

Her methodology navigates the practical through the sacred. Tessler invites her clients to practice a body check-in and notice what emotions arise in money situations. "They are the same set of emotions that come up in every other area of our life," Tessler

never experienced it. Thankfully, Smith found someone who understands to share their life with.

Less than 24 hours after Smith initially moved to Boulder, they met Lisa Sydow—also a graduate of the Contemplative Psychotherapy program—at the dog park, and they have been together ever since.

Smith says their training at Naropa “focused around being of therapeutic benefit,” but “therapeutic benefit is not the only thing the training benefits.” After graduating, Smith opened a psychotherapy and coaching practice then felt drawn to re-enter the business world.



They say their experience at Naropa prepared them “in a way nothing else really could have” to be of benefit leading a local fast growing organization with the support of a contemplative framework and practices.

They describe themselves as not “your classic entrepreneur,” but rather an “intrapreneur” who works with entrepreneurs to help scale their ideas into growth models.

“The path of entrepreneurship/intrapreneurship involves a considerable measure of dealing with the unknown and uncertain. Your feet are dangling a little bit, and you don’t know if your great idea is actually going to take off. I think that’s what a Naropa education and training is all about—learning to be in discomfort and remembering how to stay centered.”

Five years from now, Smith aspires to “retire” then continue helping business leaders of the future handle the rapidly changing world of business through advising, coaching, and consulting.

Connect with Beth Smith at [linkedin.com/in/bethasmith](https://www.linkedin.com/in/bethasmith)

observes, spanning from guilt, shame, anxiety, and sadness to pleasure, excitement, and joy.

“I use the body check-in as a way to help bring more awareness and understanding to ourselves through our money moments. This helps us understand our money story more and what our patterns are,” Tessler shares. “This awareness leads to understanding” which opens an opportunity for change.

She teaches clients to approach financial planning as a self-care practice, encouraging them to set “money dates,” and make it a sacred ritual. When Tessler sets her own money dates, she lights candles, plays music, and brings in a feeling of playfulness.



Tessler was featured on the cover of *Mindful Magazine* after publishing her first book, *The Art of Money* (2016). It weaves together personal finance

practices, couples' money teachings, and creative entrepreneurship training. In May of 2022, she will be releasing her second book—a workbook that guides readers through a self-paced personal money journey. It is based on the curriculum she teaches in her yearlong program, “Art of Money.”

Last year, the program had over five hundred participants. To make the program more accessible, Tessler extended a couples discount to include many iterations of couples—from best friends, parents and child, siblings, etc.

She also offers numerous free resources available online, including two recently published blogs, “10 Things Your Financial Therapist Just Wants You to Know” and “A Beginner’s Guide to Financial Therapy.”

Learn more at [baritessler.com](https://www.baritessler.com)

# THE ART OF BEING A BETTER HUMAN

Lisa and Brooks Witter tap into wise roots

"There's a peeling away of the layers that happens over time with basic teachings on nonattachment," says Brooks Witter (MA Contemplative Psychotherapy, '05). "Just today, homeschooling my kid, I came right into contact with where my attachments create my suffering."

As a religious studies major with a minor in psychology, Brooks had always been interested in the intersection of healing and spiritual experience. After a few false starts, including a brief stint as a photographer, he found the Contemplative Psychotherapy program. He felt that the training was "rich and unique and tailored to my interests and my desire to work in the healing arts."

Lisa Witter (MA, '04) had been working with teenage girls in the juvenile justice system in the Bay Area and looking for a graduate therapy program when she went on a three-day silent meditation retreat at Jack Kornfield's Insight Institute. Fireworks went off for her.

"I wasn't even sure that I wanted to be a therapist," Lisa says. "But I felt like the Contemplative Psychotherapy program with its meditation component was training people to be better humans... If I'm going to do *anything* in life, I wanted to learn how to be a better human."



Their paths converged in Naropa's Graduate School of Counseling and Psychology.

"Being a better human is the ability to just be with shit as it unfolds—whether that's the pandemic or the intense feelings of a client," she adds. "That's the piece of the program that keeps unfolding for me as long as I keep attending to it, and the ground of that is meditation."

After graduation, both started their own private practice: Lisa founded Effective Parent Coaching and Brooks, Luminous Counseling.

Working with parents and teens in some capacity for the last twenty years, they co-founded Wise Roots Parenting in 2016, an online resource library that brings together "a set of experience-tested tools that work well for supporting system change in the family when the adolescent or young adult is struggling." These tools were developed during the eight years that Brooks worked at Living Well Transitions, an organization founded by Naropa graduate Bill Sell.

"There are the skills and the resources they need—an understanding about the teenage brain, addiction, consequences, structure—but then there's the other side: you can't give from an empty cup," Lisa says. "As a parent, I may be well-resourced in terms of knowing the theories and fundamentals of parenting, but if I haven't slept well enough, in those moments, I'm depleted and not a good mom."

Both Lisa and Brooks had worked with a primitive skills healer on exploring ways to connect with nature. During the pandemic, they even moved to Lyons and arranged to take clients to a friend's property near their home.

"Every day, I walk up to the open space behind us and connect with nature," Lisa says. "That little act fills up my cup enough that I can be the 'good enough' parent that I want to be. And the need for this really hit home during the pandemic."

"At the crux of so many parenting issues is being able to be with their children's anger, sadness, and



fear. How to be with anger in a way that both has a lot of care and structure," she says. "That's what I really appreciate about helping parents connect with the natural world and being able to give themselves permission to be angry."

"And you actually have to build up your system to have the strength," she continues. "The act of sitting with and tuning into a tree will offer you strength and solidity—there's science that proves it. It's called 'earthing.' You're connecting deeply with something, and your cup just fills pretty quickly."

**// This work is not just individual, it's also ecological. The relationship with the Earth is happening, whether we're tuned into it or not. And the more we can tune into it, the more strength and benefit and wisdom we can derive from the relationship."**

Brooks also utilizes nature-based connection work. "My clients are generally high-performing men who are struggling in some form or another," Brooks says. "A big piece in promoting internal strength is fostering a connection to something bigger than themselves. When we step outside, we participate in a world that is spontaneous, and there's an order to it and a complexity. And there's a life force that runs through it."

"And then we start to weave our life force with a greater life force," Brooks adds. "And that can really start to move emotional expression and energy."

"Being in nature is a great holding environment to catalyze that process. It's like getting a big hug," he says. "And then there's room for reverence and awe, and there's room for your ego to get out of the way. You start to care for other things more readily, because you can receive that care more readily."

After more than twenty years of working in the field, they find that helping clients tap into this wellspring of strength has never been more vital.

"When you heal as an individual, the systems that you are part of derive benefit from that strength and from that health," Brooks says. "And then they can bring that health and connection into their families, their work groups, and friend groups."

"This work is not just individual, it's also ecological," he explains. "The relationship with the Earth is happening, whether we're tuned into it or not. And the more we can tune into it, the more strength and benefit and wisdom we can derive from the relationship. And the more we can then give to others."

Viewing connecting with nature as a grand gesture can sometimes be an obstacle for clients, so Lisa emphasizes starting where you are. "This work can be simple. I can go on a walk in my neighborhood, find juniper berries, and then put some in my tea," she says. "It can be as simple as connecting with the tea that I'm drinking. It's about connecting with yourself first. And then how do you give that connection to your children, your family, the bigger world?"

Brooks describes the clarifying process that was born out of the pandemic and how his meditation practice was instrumental.

"Life got very simple, and it focused the lens on what was most important, which was really family and supporting myself, so that I could be available for the people who I need and who need me most," he says. "In times like these, contemplative practice is essential in offering paths back to a posture of openness towards the difficult situations of life."

Lisa emphasizes that the Contemplative Psychotherapy program's root teaching of brilliant sanity shines through in their work. "We work with the whole family system. Everybody has a role, and there's wisdom within each role. I get to help every family see the brilliant sanity of their particular system. The neurosis is so obvious, but the wisdom is also right there. Growing the sanity is the work I love to do every day."

[Learn more at \*\*wiserootsparenting.com\*\*](https://www.wiserootsparenting.com)

# BRIDGING POLARITIES

EdWord Galan brings people together by reigniting public space with funk music



EdWord Galan graduated from Naropa's BA Interdisciplinary Studies program ('18) where he focused on music, peace studies, and the psychology of health and healing. He tailored his studies to help propel him into his

work and immersed himself in every activity, club, and course he could.

Galan took a Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship class with Kate Malachuk and President Charles G. Lief at Naropa, and this intersection of business and social impact is right where he is today.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Galan and his business partner Aaron Myers wondered what things would look like when the world opened up again and people started to reengage. They began brainstorming how they could bring people back together in a way that is safe, fun, and funky while also supporting local businesses.

They started riding around Boston with a bicycle and a speaker inspiring people to reconnect through funk music and dancing in public spaces. Lifelong artists and dancers themselves, Galan and Myers believe in the power of music to bring people together. In a world divided by polarities, Galan sees art as the through line.

"One of the most effective ways to bypass intellectual and ideological differences is through interactions on a dance floor—the interactions we have when we're out of our head, just having fun, enjoying life, and being in the moment."

In July of 2021, Galan and Myers' fun idea became an incorporated business—A Trike Called Funk. They now have a mobile marketing and musical front-loading tricycle with a hood, grill, and speakers

to bring the party everywhere they park. They set the DJ controller on top of the tricycle and a portable stage out front.

They partner with local, value-based organizations throughout Boston, such as Artists for Humanity and Save the Harbor/Save the Bay, to amplify the group's objective by engaging crowds experientially.

Funk music is a hybrid style of music and a powerful embodiment of Galan's mission. Galan hopes his work will help people "see more nuance in the world and move away from polarities" by providing opportunities for connection that catalyze civic engagement. He also hopes it inspires others "to tap into their own power."

[Learn more at a trike called funk.com](http://atrikecalledfunk.com)



# INVESTING IN REPRESENTATION

Kemba Douglas brings healing to marginalized communities in Boulder County

Multi-passionate Kemba Douglas (MA Mindfulness-Based Transpersonal Counseling, '20) is utilizing her education to step into her power and provide service to the Boulder community. Currently a travel therapist at Sandstone Care, Douglas also started Inner Movement Counseling LLC, a private practice, right after graduating, and recently contracted with the Boulder Valley School District. "I help support students and families of color that experience racial trauma in the school system," Douglas says. "I am not only doing individual therapy, but I get to shape my practice to fit my passions and skills while also giving back to my community. I have fallen in love with this work."



Douglas works to keep a current list of counselors of color updated and connects personally with each provider. She discovered the power of this resource after working for an organization that focused on serving the Queer Trans Black Indigenous People of Color (QTBIPOC) community.

Her personal experiences taught her the importance of representation for creating a safe space for the QTBIPOC community to feel seen and understood. "I hope everyone who needs this resource can use it because when I got a black therapist, a lot of my healing started to shift for the better, and I felt fully seen for the first time," Douglas says.

"I am very grateful for my transpersonal counseling education because it helped me step into my power when I was pushed at times to speak up for myself and about social justice. My experience attending Naropa and having to be around the Boulder community as a Black, queer woman, made me realize the community I want to serve and the work

I want to do. I also met amazing people who are still in my life now that I lean on as friends and colleagues."

Douglas says the mindfulness seeds from her Naropa education show up daily throughout her multiple roles, and she consistently uses her practices when in individual sessions, navigating group dynamics, and keeping herself safe and centered in predominantly white spaces like Naropa and her job.

"I knew that Naropa wasn't like many institutions, and that's what drew me to it. I appreciate that race, social justice, and other hard conversations were welcomed," Douglas says. "I think what sets Naropa graduates apart is our passion for what we do and the personal work we do while in the program and after. Being an activist is very draining, so I am learning to remember the joyful things in myself and my life that I have control over. I live my life in a decolonized way, the same way I do therapy, and will continue to live that way for myself and to help my community feel more human."

Learn more at [innermovementcounseling.com](https://innermovementcounseling.com)



# PSYCHEDELIC CHAPLAINCY

Daniel Rajunov seeks to bridge the worlds of the natural and the technological, the sacred and the mundane

Working as a chaplain at a prestigious hospital in New York City, Master of Divinity graduate Daniel Rajunov ('20) credits Naropa with not only preparing him for this very difficult healing work, but also fundamentally changing the way he thinks about life and death.

Part of Rajunov's research during his residency is centered on the emerging field of Psychedelic Chaplaincy. "I'm collecting data-driven evidence to explore the effects of spiritual guidance for people with depression and PTSD who are undergoing clinical trials of pharmacological substances, such as Psilocybin, MDMA, and Ketamine," he explains.

At Naropa, the value of ritual was emphasized, and he hopes to bring the sacredness of ceremony into the clinical setting in a way that honors the indigenous sources.

One of the most valuable aspects of the Divinity program was its emphasis on interreligious care. "It opened up my sense of faith and familiarized me with the beauty of different faith traditions," Rajunov says, "and I learned how to relate to people of different beliefs and how to take accountability for my power and privilege to serve diverse populations."

The divinity program's grounding in Buddhist philosophy and meditation helped prepare him for whatever he encounters in his daily work as a chaplain. "I learned how to be ok with not-ok and how to listen to the suffering of others, how to relate with it, how to validate it without trying to fix it," he says. "Buddhist mindfulness practices introduced me to different intense psychological states and taught me how to work and relate with my own mind from a place of friendliness. I learned about the importance of not-knowing and sitting with uncertainty and groundlessness."

Rajunov's dream is to contribute to the medical/psychological/psychiatric field by further establishing his career in psychedelic research in a hospital or other clinical setting. In his view, society desperately needs more heartfelt skilled practitioners. "My Naropa education inspired me

to live a life that's oriented towards the bodhisattva ideal," he says, "bringing benefit to all by being of service to others, not for personal gain but to help improve the difficult world we live in."



# COMMITTING TO BEING OF BENEFIT

How Emma Sartwell is finding purpose through the pandemic



looking for support that blended mindfulness, body awareness, spirituality, nervous system knowledge, trauma healing, and self-actualization. This virtual collective is comprised of seven therapists, coaches, and healers—including Naropa graduate Jessie Allee-Walsh and Master of Divinity intern Leslie Grasa—who offer a holistic approach to integrating mind, body, and spirit through a variety of approaches.

Reflecting upon her time at Naropa, Sartwell is grateful for how her education has invited her into her truth. “My favorite class was called Process Lab. We got together as a group of humans with no agenda, and I got to examine the roles I play in relationships; my fears and my strengths around others, what is helpful and what is not helpful,” Sartwell says.

“I see Naropa graduates as having more training in introspection (being), whereas a lot of other institutions put out students who are trained in extrospection (doing),” says Emma Sartwell (Master of Divinity, '14). “I think we need both, but training in the ‘being’ feels like a balance and an antidote to many of the current predicaments we find ourselves in as a species.”


The COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably invited us into introspection and Sartwell’s path demonstrates how different life can look when we focus on being in a world obsessed with doing.

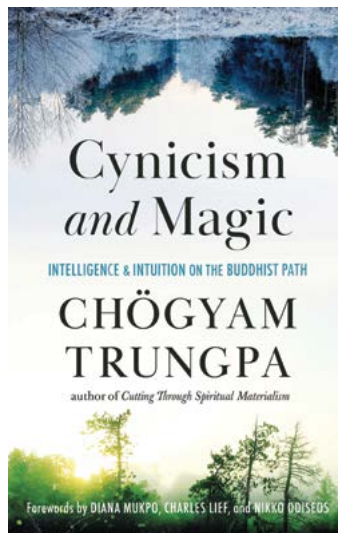
When the pandemic first began, Sartwell and her partner, Chris Cannon (MA Mindfulness-Based Transpersonal Counseling, '20) began seeing clients online and started traveling to try different environments that might support some chronic health issues they both struggled with. They found relief upon visiting humid, warm Hawaii, and decided to plant roots there.

They started Somatic Spiritual Counseling in response to folks

“To use Naropa language, you could call it relational aimless wandering. Curious exploration without attachment to the outcome is a goal and value of mine at work and at home.” Sartwell’s curious exploration also led her to join a small group of editors to work on the publication of *Cynicism and Magic*, a new book released from Shambhala Publications. Over the course of four years, the group took on the humbling task of translating raw, archived audio and video of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche’s first talks at Naropa Institute into polished book form. Sartwell credits her Naropa education for

preparing her for this project in terms of being able to wrestle with ambiguity in a way that honors the teacher’s intentions while translating its essence into impactful work.

“My time at Naropa was pivotal for me,” Sartwell explains. “It instilled a deep love of spiritual growth and a commitment to being of benefit. It opened my heart and gave me skills to help others in difficult or transitional moments.” 



# NEW FACULTY

Since the fall of 2021, Naropa has welcomed an exciting new group of faculty, all of whom are doing incredible work in their respective fields in the realm of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusivity. With backgrounds ranging from crisis response to disability advocacy to LGBTQIA community support, this dynamic group embodies Naropa's mission and values. The university is honored to have them here educating the next generation of contemplative activists.



## Linda Black, PhD, Dean of the Graduate School of Counseling & Psychology

Linda Black, PhD, has been a professor of Counselor Education and Supervision for more than twenty-four years at University of Northern Colorado. She serves as the co-editor of Counselor Education and Supervision journal and is a member of the Colorado Coalition for Children's Mental Health and the Colorado Crisis Education and Response Network. Black has served as an Associate Provost and Dean, where she supported two hundred graduate faculty, three thousand graduate students, and more than one hundred graduate programs and certificates. Her scholarly work focuses on counselor education, oppression, privilege, and mentoring. In 2020, she published her first book titled, *Crisis, Trauma and Disaster Counseling: A Clinician's Guide*.



## Jhan Doughty-Berry, EdD, Core Candidate Associate Professor, Mindfulness-based Transpersonal Counseling

Jhan Doughty-Berry, EdD, has twenty years of experience as a counselor, faculty member, researcher, university administrator, and a nationally recognized leader in diversity, equity, and inclusion. She is trained in mindfulness-based counseling, breathing exercises, yoga, and meditation, to help those with eating disorders, depression, and anxiety. Doughty-Berry is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor with post-doctoral training in Psychiatry and Public Health from Yale University School of Medicine. She has researched and worked with individuals who were coping with long-term physical illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, substance abuse, and HIV/AIDS and clients with great physical pain and is an advocate for those with disabilities.



## Loren Intolubbe-Chmil, PhD, Dean of Naropa College and the Graduate Collective

Loren Intolubbe-Chmil, MEd, PhD, is an educator and activist with more than thirty years of experience in teaching, administrative, programming, and research positions across diverse post-secondary and Pre-K-12 contexts. Her deepest interests encompass representative stakeholder engagement, education for change, and human rights-based initiatives. Intolubbe-Chmil earned a BA in Sociology with a minor in Women's Studies from Mary Baldwin University's Adult Degree Program and holds both an MEd and a PhD from the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia. She brings many years of experience in "social change—that education is a cooperative, shared journey of meaning-making and a sense of purpose." An enrolled member of the Choctaw Tribal Nation of Oklahoma, Intolubbe-Chmil has a robust record of teaching in higher education, with diverse student populations, including course delivery in multiple modalities. She has led equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts, and her skills include evaluations, assessments, collaboration, program and course development, accreditation, and supervision to enhance the capacity of others.



## M Saltis, PhD, Core Candidate Assistant Professor, Contemplative Psychotherapy & Buddhist Psychology

M Saltis (they/them) is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Registered Play Therapist, and has their PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision from the University of Northern Colorado. Saltis is a queer, nonbinary, white, mostly-able-bodied, neurodivergent, middle class, and spiritual counselor, supervisor, researcher, and educator who focuses on issues surrounding social justice and diversity, queer and trans folx, and creativity. They have worked in a variety of clinical settings, including intensive outpatient, outpatient, agency work, and private practice as a counselor, supervisor, and clinical manager. Currently Saltis is the co-founder and clinical director of the Rainbow Circles, an agency that specializes in care for the LGBTQ community in Northern Colorado. Their current research agenda includes the experiences of transgender and/or gender expansive youth, social justice and activist initiatives, counselor competencies around LGBTQ topics, and creativity in counseling, supervision, research, and teaching.



# Experience Naropa

VIRTUAL EVENT

Discover  
Connect  
Engage



## 2022 Event Dates:

Friday, April 24

Friday, June 21

Friday, August 5

Friday, October 21

Friday, December 9

Naropa University welcomes prospective graduate and undergraduate students to Experience Naropa—a dynamic, virtual open house event designed to open minds, spark creativity, and begin to create the bonds of community.

Attend a unique sample class and meet students and faculty who are changing the world for the better. Get answers to your questions, and enjoy an engaging afternoon full of lively activities and passionate people.

*For prospective students, family, and friends.*

**For more information and to RSVP visit:**

[Naropa.edu/experience-naropa](https://Naropa.edu/experience-naropa)

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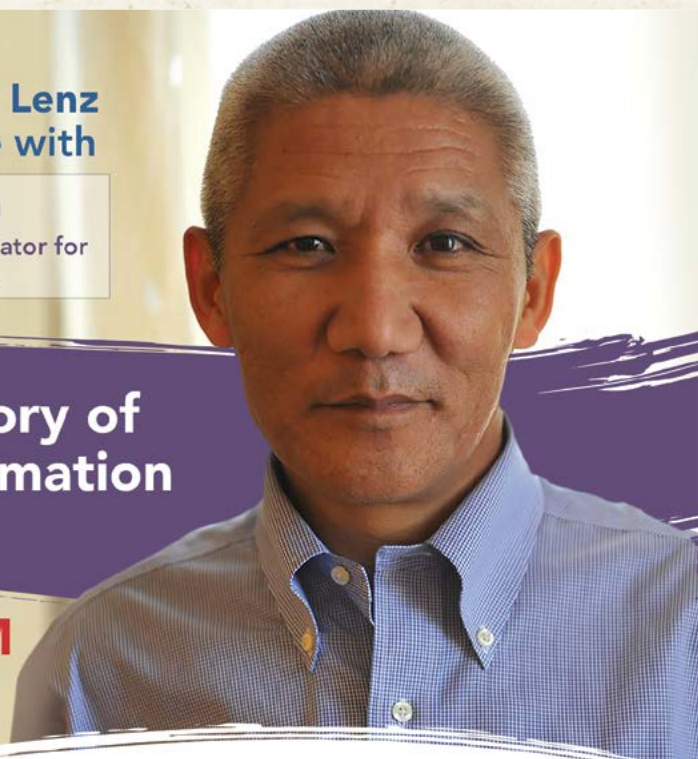
Join Us for  
The 2022 Frederick P. Lenz  
Distinguished Lecture with

**Thupten Jinpa**

Tibetan Buddhist scholar and translator for  
His Holiness the Dalai Lama

**A Buddhist Theory of  
Mental Transformation**

**APRIL 14 – 7:00PM**  
JOIN US ONLINE



Free for Naropa students, staff, faculty, and alumni.  
\$10 for general public. Register or purchase tickets:

[naropa.edu/lenz-lecture](https://naropa.edu/lenz-lecture)

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The Frederick P.  
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# IN MEMORIAM

Diane Joy Israel  
(1960–2021)



Longtime adjunct professor in the Graduate School of Counseling & Psychology, a member of the Naropa University Board of Trustees, and a graduate of Naropa, Diane Israel (MA Transpersonal Counseling Psychology, '91) died unexpectedly on November 23, 2021. One of the most generous and open-hearted people one could possibly know, Diane was connected to Naropa for more than thirty years, and she fearlessly shared her wisdom and passion with many hundreds of students, faculty, and staff over those years.

A world-class runner and triathlete, author of *Joy: Befriending Death* (2021), executive producer of the award-winning documentary film *Beauty Mark*, and board chair of *Queer Asterisk*, Diane inspired students, clients, athletes, family, and friends alike to revel in their true selves.

Diane's work was centered on breaking the stigma of "mental illness" by supporting the discovery of humanity's inherent genius and mental brilliance. She was very public, verbally and in print, about her struggles with her mental health, which was a profound expression of her generosity, and her candor and fierce acknowledgment of the suffering that all of us experience directly affected people who were then motivated to take their own private pain and to seek support and healing.

## Marathon of Adaptation

Remember, life is a constant marathon of change and unfamiliar territory.

There is no finish line.

The marathon of anxiety becomes a marathon of changing patterns.

So many.

So many that don't serve me or others.

Marathon of healing, yet not being a constant victim.

A victim of my mind, my family, my habits, my self-sabotage, my self-criticism, and illusions

It's all about love. As it always has been.

Now. Always

Marathon of LOVE.

Marathon of kindness.

Marathon of compassion.

Marathon of slowing. the. fuck. down.

Marathon of simply existing.

Marathons galore.

*Excerpt from Marathon of Adaptation  
By Diane Joy Israel*

A resident of Boulder since 1981, Diane made it her mission to discover joy and wellbeing by opening to the beauty of nature, something she practiced on her daily hikes. Diane was described by those who knew her as a "brilliant shooting star of a human being," "mystical as fuck," and an "f-bomb dropper and sage truth-teller," someone who was courageous, wild, visionary, vulnerable, salty, gritty, and fiercely compassionate. Diane left an indelible mark on our hearts, and Naropa will never be the same.





# Naropa

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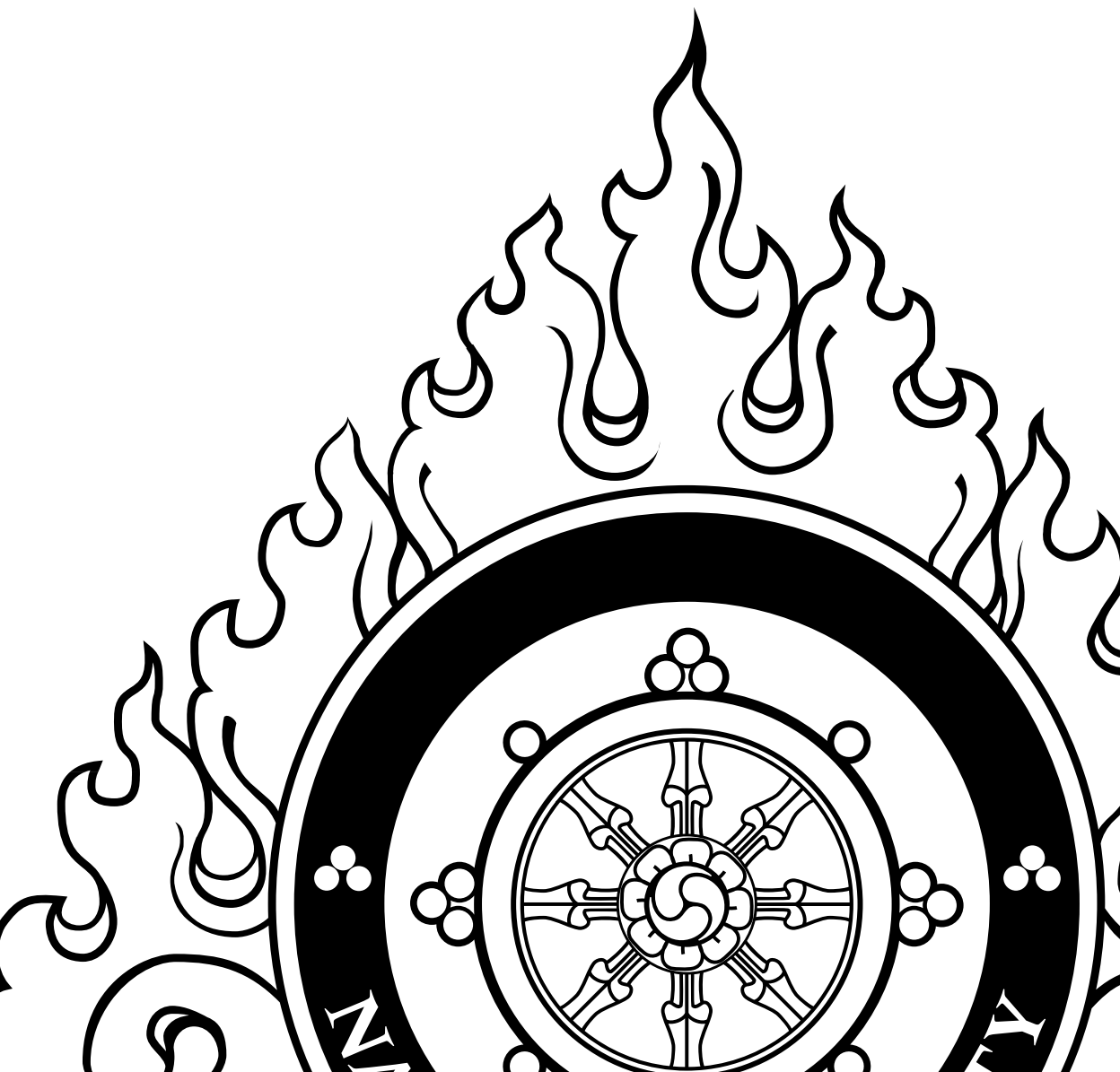
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