IJPS Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies
Volume 12, Issue 2
pubs.lib.umn.edu/ijps

RESILIENT LANDSCAPES FOR REIMAGINED FUTURES

Thana Zoske, Jothsna Harris, Julie Marckel, and Angelica Walton

Abstract

This article documents stories of the East Phillips community of Minneapolis, Minnesota, US, in their ongoing struggle for environmental justice and resilience in the face of historic redlining, industrial zoning, and cumulative pollution. Drawing from community-engaged storytelling, art, and collective organizing, the Resilient Landscapes for Re-Imagined Futures project illustrates how residents have resisted harmful development while envisioning healthier, sustainable futures, including proposals for transforming the Roof Depot site, a large former industrial roofing warehouse, into a community-driven space for urban agriculture, environmental healing, and long-term neighborhood resilience. The integration of intergenerational voices and creative practices demonstrates the power of arts-based approaches in fostering social cohesion, amplifying marginalized perspectives, and mobilizing collective action. By situating East Phillips within broader frameworks of environmental justice and planetary health, the article highlights how local movements can contribute to systemic change.

Keywords: Resilient landscapes, advocacy, environmental justice, community

Introduction

The East Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis, Minnesota, US has been a forerunner and change agent leading efforts for environmental justice. The Resilient Landscapes for Re-imagined Futures project amplifies the story of the East Phillips neighborhood by bringing forward intergenerational voices of a youth, Kamille (last name withheld for privacy) and an elder, Lois Long, two community members whose perspectives together illuminate the neighborhood's resilience and possibility. Kamille and Lois share what

has been and what they want to see for the community. This project seeks to recenter whose voices are included in shaping and reimagining the future. It is not only a call for climate justice, but it is a living story of justice in action. With shared love and steadfast commitment, amid ongoing environmental harm, a small urban community and its allies continue to stand together and advocate for justice, for the land and for the health and wellbeing of its people. The voices of frontline communities are not optional; they are essential to creating and sustaining equitable futures. This paper aims to amplify the visions and voices of Lois, Kamille, and other members of the East Phillips community through powerful stories of movement building and collective action, inspiring hope for the future. This project was made possible through the generous support of the Earth Rising Foundation (https://earthrisingfoundation.org), whose commitment to planetary health and social justice aligns deeply with the goals of this work. We also gratefully acknowledge our fiscal sponsor, *Oyate Hotanin* (https://oyatehotanin.org), whose guidance and stewardship have provided essential grounding in community values and relational accountability throughout the project.

The East Phillips Neighborhood

> Hope is a Cactus that stops cutting people, yet I have been taught all my life that hope is a pricked finger from the world's sharp edges, in which the blood spilled fabricates furious lessons, forcing all of her, me, to remember injustice by the memory of an enclosed fist. Hope has always been a cruel cactus to me, making people still in place with dry injustice because typically, justice lands flat (Kimimila Decory, Personal Communication, March 22, 2025).

These are remarks from Kimimila Decory, who is Sicangu Sioux, a high school student and a youth intern with Change Narrative, a climate justice storytelling and capacity-building organization. She reflects on her perspective before experiencing a movement that deeply altered the lived realities of the East Phillips community.

East Phillips is a neighborhood in Minneapolis of about 4,200 working-class, racially diverse, and intergenerational residents. Located south of downtown Minneapolis, it is one of the city's most diverse neighborhoods, with more than 70% residents of color. East Phillips also includes the Little Earth community, the only Indigenous project-based Section 8 housing community in the country. Moreover, 32% of households in East Phillips are below the poverty line. Historically, the neighborhood was *redlined*, a discriminatory real estate and lending practice in which predominantly Black, Indigenous, and immigrant neighborhoods were systematically denied investment and home loans based on race (Justice Department Sues KleinBank for Redlining Minority Neighborhoods in Minnesota, 2017) and subsequently zoned for industrial development, a legacy that has concentrated environmental burdens in the community. For generations, residents have lived with the health impacts of air pollutants from nearby asphalt plants, roofing facilities, and highway construction (Sunrise Macalester, 2023). The East Phillips neighborhood shoulders much of the city's pollution. Families have lost their children to toxic chemical exposures, and individuals have suffered from rising rates of disease and complex co-morbidities over time (Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, n.d.).

The Roof Depot. In 2014, a 230,000-square-foot warehouse for a roofing company, known as the Roof Depot, became available for purchase. Just two blocks away is Little Earth, a housing complex in East Phillips for Indigenous peoples established with the support of the American Indian Movement in the 1970s (Little Earth of United Tribes, n.d.). The neighborhood saw an opportunity for a multi-use space including urban farming. They envisioned that this could bring in more fresh food, economic stability, and health. However, the city of Minneapolis purchased the site for demolition and replacement with yet another environmentally harmful public works facility, disregarding residents' needs and backpedaling on its own commitments to reduce pollution under the Minneapolis Climate Action Plan and the Southside Green Zone designation. In response, the people of East Phillips rooted themselves in collective power and began organizing for environmental justice (Community Power MN, n.d.).

Little Earth of United Tribes. The U.S. Indian Relocation Act of 1956 encouraged Native people to leave their reservations and move to cities for vocational training and employment (Little Earth of United Tribes, n.d.). In the U.S., only 22% of people who identify as Native American live on reservations, and those who live in urban areas no longer have access to the federal and state funds originally reserved for tribal entities (Little Earth of United Tribes, n.d.). This 'voluntary' relocation was just another way to disconnect communities from their cultural and tribal identities, strip intergenerational knowledge from youth, and force "modern" assimilation onto Native peoples (Little Earth of United Tribes, n.d.).

Native people from all over the Midwest moved to Minneapolis. In response to housing discrimination and cultural disconnection, grass-roots activism led to the formation of Little Earth in 1973 to "seek resiliency and create systems change;" it has been recognized as a "leader and innovator in providing services to the American Indian community in South Minneapolis" (Little Earth of United Tribes, n.d.).

Little Earth is a Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-subsidized housing complex with 212-units on 9.4 acres. It houses one of the largest urban populations of Indigenous peoples in the nation, encompassing a rich diversity of cultures, communities, and tribal affiliations. Today, Little Earth is home to approximately 1,000 residents, and has become a bedrock in the Native community for rooting in self-determination, navigating environmental and social justice issues, and preserving cultural values (Little Earth of United Tribes, n.d.). The Little Earth Residents Association (LERA) was formed to represent residents with HUD and as a community center to provide programming and individual support (Little Earth of United Tribes, n.d.). It remains a core of political and community resilience as the developments and challenges of the Roof Depot project continue to unfold.

East Phillips Rises

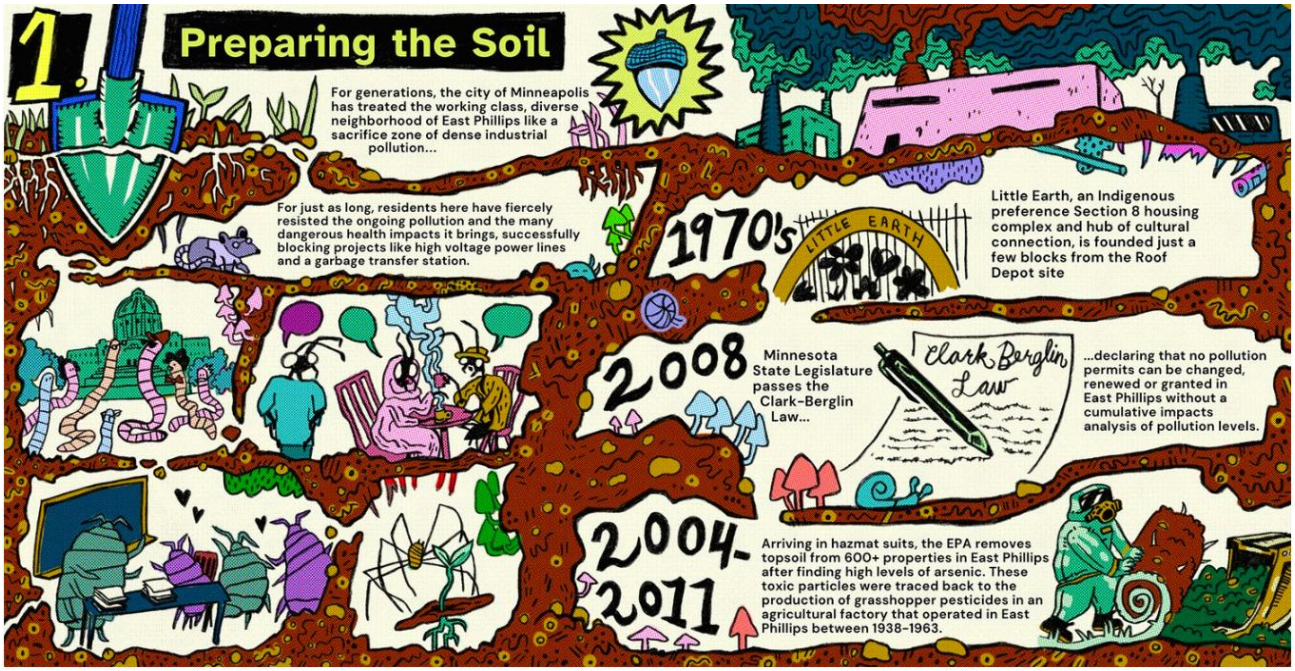
For over a decade, the East Phillips Neighborhood Institute (EPNI) has been resisting unjust city actions with lawsuits and other people-centered action. They have helped protect the neighborhood from proposed polluting industrial facilities, high-voltage powerlines, and other developments that would have increased environmental and health burdens. As the planned demolition of the Roof Depot site drew closer, activists and leaders of Little Earth, East Phillips, and allies peacefully protested in the street, Hennepin County District Court issued a halt to the demolition. In 2023, EPNI reached an agreement with the city council to purchase the Roof Depot site, with plans to convert it to a hub for community resources, connection, and farming.

In May of 2023, the Minnesota Senate failed to pass the bonding bill that included the second round of state funding for the Roof Depot purchase, which created a $5.7 million funding gap. By September 2023, the Minneapolis City Council gave EPNI an additional year to complete the purchase agreement, extending the deadline into 2025. Minnesota lawmakers held a session in June of 2025, but EPNI continues to fight for the promised funding to complete the Roof Depot purchase (Hazzard & Tu, 2025).

The Story

The story of the project can be seen outlined in the community-informed artwork of the visual timeline below. Figure 1 illustrates the long history of environmental injustice in East Phillips, including redlining, toxic industrial siting, and cumulative pollution impacts. It also highlights resident resistance, legal protections such as the Clark-Berglin Law, and ongoing organizing for environmental justice.

Figure 1. *Preparing the Soil*



Credit: East Phillips Timeline Art by Chanci

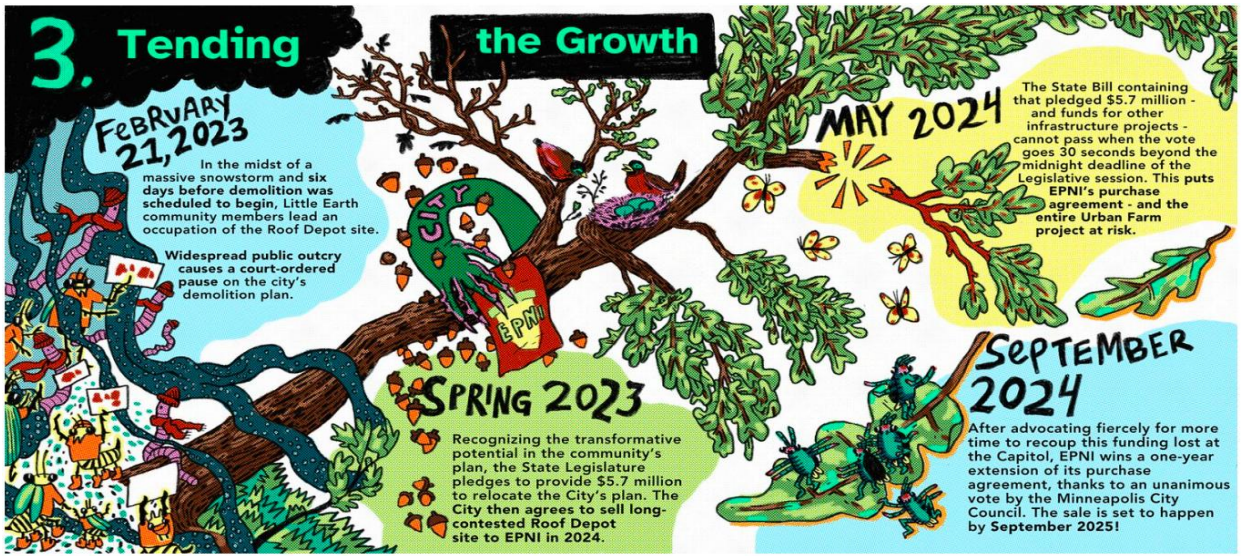
Figure 2 illustration depicts the community-led vision for transforming the former Roof Depot site in East Phillips into a space for healing, sustainability, and resilience. It traces organizing efforts from 2014 onward, highlighting proposals for an indoor urban farm and community hub, alongside the city's attempts to repurpose the site for industrial use.

Figure 2. *Planting the Seed*

Credit: East Phillips Timeline Art by Chanci.

Figure 3 illustrates recent milestones in the East Phillips community's struggle to reclaim the Roof Depot site. It highlights the 2023 grassroots mobilization against demolition, legislative victories recognizing the project's transformative potential, and the ongoing push for an indoor urban farm. The artwork underscores how sustained organizing continues to cultivate momentum toward environmental justice and community self-determination.

Figure 3. *Tending the Growth*



Credit: East Phillips Timeline Art by Chanci.

Reframing the Narrative

In the community's ongoing persistence to purchase the Roof Depot, an exhibition was held in March of 2025 with the intention of sharing history, visual art, and narratives to foster a space for cross-generational art, storytelling, and narrative sharing from the broader community. Visual art and storytelling as an approach to recenter in community is well supported by thousands of years of practice spanning cultures and time (Pin et al., 2024). The arts have been shown to be powerful tools for engaging communities around common issues and goals in support of resilience. Art and science both rely on exploration.

Visual arts create another way of seeing and communicating, offering alternative ways of interpreting and expressing issues, serving as a bridge between different disciplines and ways of knowing. Stories are embodied forms of information obtained through the experiences of living, passed down by generations (Whitson et al., 2025). Each story holds the wisdom that our systems need to thrive. When stories are exchanged, new innovations and pathways emerge. Visual art in partnership with storytelling provides individuals and communities directly affected by environmental injustice different ways to share their realities, their struggles, and their hopes. Visual interpretation of a part of a story can provide a powerful way to see and understand the story more fully. Visual art can be an alternative medium for communicating, and it often offers a means for connection and holistic conceptualization to be experienced and felt (Juhola et al., 2024). Information alone is not enough to change behavior; stories humanize the data and create relevance to our lives (Boris, 2025).

According to neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (1999), information only becomes meaningful to the extent that it evokes emotion. Our stories balance the information; they bring in our humanity, and illuminate the data in ways that are relevant to our lives. Climate storytelling is an approach that uses narrative to make the realities of climate change personally meaningful, emotionally resonant, and easier to grasp (American Public Health Association, 2019). Rather than relying on data alone, climate

storytelling weaves facts together with lived experience to help people connect to the human dimensions of environmental issues, combining both head and heart, which is necessary for sparking and sustaining action. For a long time, the narrative on climate change has been told almost exclusively from a data-driven perspective, which has set the tone that you have to be an ‘expert’ or ‘credentialed’ to talk about it. But climate change is all around us, in our backyards, and we are all living through the reality of it. Everyday people are ‘experts’ in our lived experiences, and we should all be part of shaping our shared future (Harris, n.d.).

Whether recounting experiences of extreme weather events, grappling with eco-anxiety, making life decisions based on a new climate reality, or living in proximity to the cumulative impacts of environmental injustices, each narrative speaks to the depth of the human experience. The stories we tell of these experiences, matter! According to neurologist Paul J. Zak (2015), hearing a powerful story about an experience lights up the same neurological regions of the brain as if the listener had experienced the events themselves in real life. In that way stories can spark our imagination. There is a need for new stories that share the path forward – stories that are vibrant and creative. Visionary stories have the potential to shift doom-culture on climate to depict big, bold, brilliant dreams about the world we want to live in (Harris, n.d.).

In addition, arts-based methods of building community also hold a unique capacity to transform environmental justice work by shifting how people see, feel, and act in relation to ecological crises. Public art installations, performances, and creative storytelling can reach broad audiences, sparking emotional resonance and moving individuals from passive awareness to active participation in conservation and advocacy efforts (ESG Sustainability Directory, n.d.). Art situates environmental issues in daily life, making abstract concepts, like climate change and pollution more visceral, embodied, and personal (Marckel, n.d.).

Many Minnesotans recognize the realities of climate change, yet sometimes feel uncertain about how to talk about it or take meaningful action. According to the Yale

Program on Climate Change Communication (2023), 72% of Minnesotans recognize climate change, yet 67% rarely discuss it. We have an opportunity to bolster public confidence by normalizing climate conversations and building public will for solutions. Public discourse on climate change has long been dominated by experts, but everyday people, through their lived experiences, also carry expertise and should all be part of shaping our shared future (Harris, n.d.). By amplifying diverse voices and perspectives, we expand understanding of climate change, its intersectionality, impact, and the solutions needed. The Resilient Landscapes for Reimagined Futures (RL4RF) project aims to amplify voices historically excluded from climate discussions and decision making, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), LGBTQIA individuals, people with disabilities, youth, older adults, and communities disproportionately impacted by climate change. These stories are critical testimonies that can share a perspective in proximity to the issues that will guide the just solutions we are seeking.

While technical expertise and scientific data remain essential for addressing climate change, they are insufficient on their own to mobilize equitable and lasting transformation. Recent scholarship emphasizes that resilient landscapes emerge not only from ecological science, but from the integration of science, community, and story. Rastandeh and Jarchow (2023) argue that learning, legitimacy, and durability in landscape-scale transformation depend on participatory, community-engaged approaches grounded in shared purpose, practices of care, and storytelling that connects human and more-than-human worlds. Stories, they note, are not ancillary to environmental change; they shape cultural values, guide collective action, and produce material ecological consequences over time. This integrated framing provides a critical foundation for reimagining resilience as both ecological and socio-cultural work.

Resilient Landscapes for Reimagined Futures (RL4RF)

Ecological and planning frameworks commonly frame resilient landscapes through the protection of biodiversity, water systems, and ecosystem services, alongside reduced dependence on external inputs and multifunctional land use. For example, *Greener*

Places emphasizes habitat connectivity, wetland restoration, and social, cultural, and recreational engagement within natural and heritage landscapes (Government Architect NSW, 2017). While these ecological and functional dimensions are essential, such frameworks often underemphasize the structural realities of environmental injustice and the socio-cultural conditions necessary for resilience to take root (Rastandeh & Jarchow, 2023).

Building resilient landscapes also requires socially cohesive systems grounded in well-connected people and places that are aware, adaptable, and empowered (Walton, 2025). As recent scholarship underscores, resilience emerges through the integration of ecological science, community knowledge, and shared stories that sustain practices of care, enable collective learning, and open pathways for equitable access to resources, information, and space to grow (Rastandeh & Jarchow, 2023). RL4RF advances this integrated approach by centering community-led storytelling as a catalyst for environmental justice, ecological restoration, and collective futures.

Existing climate resilience hubs are one example of resilient landscapes in action. These hubs are community spaces such as libraries, churches, and schools, where residents can learn and prepare for extreme weather events and other climate change impacts (Climate Resilience Hubs, n.d.). The Sabathani Resilience Hub at the Sabathani Community Center in Minneapolis is an example of one of these hubs. As one of Minnesota's oldest African-American founded nonprofits, the Sabathani Community Center benefits more than 50,000 South Minneapolis residents (Sabathani Community Center, n.d.). Their Energy Project aims to build resilience and fight climate change through several key actions: renovating the community center building for energy-efficiency by installing solar panels and geothermal, providing a laboratory and training center for clean energy careers, and expanding multi-family housing in the community.

Resilient Landscapes for Reimagined Futures (RL4RF) was a year-long pilot project led by authors Jothsna Harris and Julie Marckel. The project was designed to amplify elders' and youths' narratives and their cross-generational visions of climate justice and

resilience through written stories and visual arts (Change Narrative, 2025). In doing so, RL4RF challenged the mainstream definition of resilient landscapes through illuminating the climate stories, health impacts, and individual experiences of community members in East Phillips. The stories of those most impacted by climate change must be at the heart of climate resilience, with their voice and visions guiding a healthier and more equitable future. Project lead and article co-author Josthna Harris comments:

> Climate change is all around us; it exists in our backyards, and we are all experiencing its realities. In this critical time, finding ways to process our emotions and make meaning of our experiences is essential. Crafting powerful climate stories involves elements of identity, lived experience, and culture, which lay the groundwork for purpose, learning, action, and imagination for a better and more just world. When those most affected by climate change share their stories in the first person, it is a way of reclaiming power. Unfortunately, mainstream media often presents third-person accounts that extract bits to support a storyline, failing to honor the storyteller's full experience. This practice can portray frontline communities as victims rather than sharing the resilience, agency, and capacity to lead in climate solutions that reshapes the narrative and public perception of why a more inclusive climate movement is critical. To create meaningful change, we must expand decision-making tables by inviting those whose narratives enrich the conversation and whose identities and cultural experiences reflect the intersection of climate change with racial and social justice.

The RL4RF project was initially inspired by conversations with a major environmental organization around the concept of resilient landscapes. While those discussions helped shape early thinking, their definition of resilient landscapes failed to acknowledge Indigenous lands, which felt limiting; especially given the scope of environmental justice communities.

We ultimately chose to pursue funding and direction independently through the Earth Rising Foundation, which allowed for a more expansive view, greater clarity, and alignment with community values and storytelling approaches. The central question guiding both the storytelling and public engagement was: "What is a vibrant and bright future you envision for East Phillips?" As the project developed, the idea took clearer form: to amplify environmental justice efforts in East Phillips and contribute to a larger public conversation. The project is intended to amplify community voices while acknowledging that we as project facilitators are positioned outside the community. We see our role as thoughtful witnesses and collaborators, bringing creative support through story and art, without displacing local leadership.

Central to the project is the idea that *everyone* can contribute to environmental justice by responding to injustice, imagining new futures and shaping solutions. Though imperative in any environmental justice response is following the frontlines, and centering local knowledge, culture, and identity. Building an understanding of the nuances of the East Phillips community, its history, the impacts of climate change, the close proximity of polluting industries, and the ongoing struggles faced by residents (including crime, addiction, homelessness, poverty, and health disparities) was an essential early and ongoing step in this project.

This foundation of understanding allowed us to approach the work with deeper focus, intentional patience in our engagement due to increased systemic barriers, and a sense of urgency to elevate awareness about the East Phillips Roof Depot site. A general project timeline and set of phases were outlined to guide the year-long initiative. However, flexibility remained essential. Our approach was iterative and relationship-driven, shaped by ongoing dialogue and emerging understanding. Through our interactions with storytellers and community partners, we also came to understand a common pattern: external interest in environmental justice efforts often comes and goes with funding, leaving behind unfulfilled promises and fractured relationships. Rebuilding that trust and establishing a consistent, respectful presence required additional time, care, and accountability from us as facilitators. By highlighting the

stories of Lois and Kamille, RL4RF project staff invited the voices and visions of youth and elders to the climate discussion, demonstrating the need for intergenerational dialogue and knowledge sharing. The staff began by asking Lois (an elder) and Kamille (a youth) to share their climate stories, recording their first-person perspectives of Little Earth and their hopes for the future.

As the project continued, an event was held in March 2025 at the East Phillips Cultural Community Center to engage the broader community, hear stories and dialogue between cross-generational voices, and view artwork depicting an overlay of their visions for a new future (Change Narrative, 2025). The event was opened by Rose, a community elder and Kamille's Grandma, with a blessing and prayer. Change Narrative Youth Intern Kimimila Decory, Sicungu Sioux, shared a poem. Gathering together East Phillips community members, EPNI, and allies, the project created space for shared learning and collective action. At the event, people were asked to write on sticky notes what they envisioned for the future.

As their stories unfolded, Julie Marckel created watercolor depictions to help their stories come to life through art. This intentional approach providing historical context of East Phillips, space to hear from storytellers, and the opportunity to exchange in real stories. People were asked to write on sticky notes what they envisioned for the future. As their stories unfolded, Julie Marckel created watercolor depictions to help their stories come to life through art, as seen in Figure 4. It concluded with an intergenerational climate conversation between the two storytellers, a community

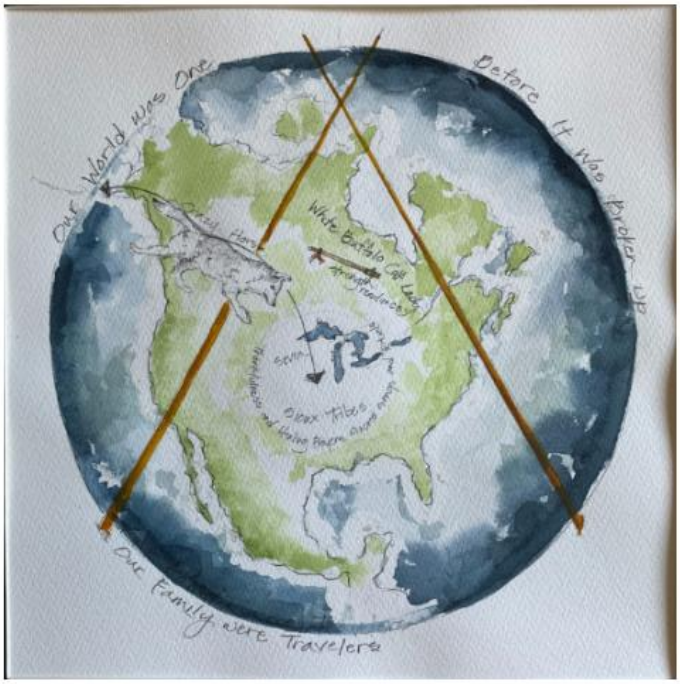


Figure 4. Lois Long's Story with watercolor by Julie Marckel

call-to-action, and an opportunity for everyone to enjoy food together and discuss their visions for the future.

Lois Long's Climate Story

Lois Black Cat Catches Long is a member of the Teton Sioux, a grandmother, a boarding school survivor, and resident of Little Earth, Minnesota. See Figure 5 as Lois shares her climate story.

Figure 5. Lois Long shares her story

> I was born during a January blizzard when the waters were frozen. My grandmother named me Chagaakonmani, which means, "walks on ice". My grandpa was Crazy Horse. I am a mother and grandmother, and I am raising my granddaughters. I am also a boarding school survivor. I come from a long line of medicine women, healers, and warrior protectors (Lois Long, Personal Communication, March 22, 2025).

> This place, Turtle Island, was never "discovered". We, the Native peoples, have always been here. We were created to be stewards of the land. To be healers (Watercolor seen in figure 6). We know how to live according to the cycle of the seasons. It is the past that informs the present and it is necessary to understand, to envision what will be.

Figure 6. Lois Long "Walks on Ice"

The World was one, before it was broken up. In this time, our family were travelers from one place to another. Grandpa Crazy Horse guarded and protected the people. These are the stories and knowledge shared, sometimes told through songs, prayers, and ceremonies. We always knew the earth. We knew the power of plants to clean the air and water. We gathered plants to heal us. Our stories carry the power to save the world. They hold the knowledge of what needs to be done to restore our bodies and our spirits. The Tipi represents this passage, the sacred journey between earthly life and the cosmos. The Tipi, and the sweat lodge, represent the womb—full of water, so when one is born, we are born out of that water.

When you grow old and pass away, you return home through the Northern Lights and the Milky Way (seen in figure 7). So, when we see the Northern Lights, we know those gates in the sky will open. I want to see a more sustainable life; gardening, making herbs and medicines that bring joy and health, and to see artwork in our community. God got tired of being in a dark world with stars. He said I am lonely and this darkness is not enough. So, He created people from clay, representing the many colors of humanity, made from different colors of the earth's clay.

Figure 7. Lois Long's story of Womb and Water. Watercolor by Julie Marckel

Kamille's Climate Story

Kamille is an artist, big sister, Miskwabinesikwe/Red Thunder Woman, and a member of the White Earth and Lac Courte Oreilles Tribes. Kamille's aunties have been fighting her whole life for environmental justice in East Phillips, Minnesota. She shares her climate story, see figure 8.

My heritage is Native, Black, and Mexican. There are older traditions and rituals that my family celebrates that bring me a lot of comfort, and there are new traditions that I am part of making. Recently, I moved from Little Earth to another place. The environmental pollution and concerns for our safety were affecting our lives on a daily basis. Our new home is someplace that feels safe and peaceful.

Figure 8. Kamille's Story Watercolor by Julie Marckel

There are no sirens to wake me in the night, and I don't feel scared. I hope I can stay here forever. As I think about climate change and environmental justice, I want to bring forward my ancestors' care, strength, friendship, and their fight. As an artist, I draw the hands of two different people coming together to show care and love for each other, even through their differences.

I love the community at East Phillips. My aunties have been fighting for environmental justice in East Phillips for a long time. I also know that being a

big sister is a big responsibility. I want my baby sisters and brother to be protected, to be healthy, and when I think about defending them, I feel courageous. When I see the pictures of what the Roof Depot could look like with solar panels, trees, and gardens, I am amazed. Instead of more pollution, we could have something new.

I want these special places to last forever. I want the Roof Depot to be made new, to be a place where youth of all ages can hang out, do arts and crafts, and play sports—mostly where we could be safe. [I want a] "Kids Imagine" - dress-up section to dream and imagine who we want to be, and to imagine a different world and future.

The Importance of Intergenerational Spaces

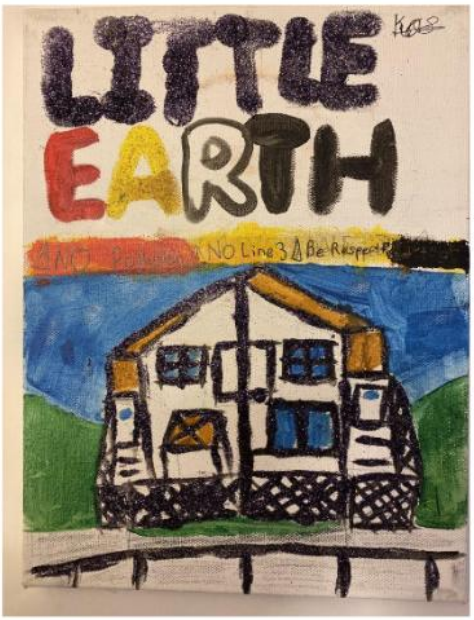


Figure 9. Kamille's story. Artwork by Kamille

Intergenerational spaces have long been vital in sustaining resilient communities (Kaplan et al., 2017). Across cultures, elders have passed down ecological knowledge, cultural practices, and values of stewardship through oral histories, rituals, and collective storytelling (Berkes, 2018). These practices not only preserve memory and tradition but also foster cohesion, giving younger generations a sense of identity and belonging rooted in community resilience. In Indigenous, immigrant, and marginalized urban communities alike, storytelling functions as both a method of education and a tool of resistance, ensuring that wisdom and strategies for survival persist despite systemic inequities (Potter, 2020).

The value of intergenerational exchange extends beyond cultural preservation. Research on resilience highlights that when communities create intentional spaces for multigenerational engagement, whether through shared community centers, intergenerational housing, or cultural programming, they strengthen trust, empathy, and the ability to collectively adapt to crises (Reitmaier et al., 2015). It is important to note that youth also carry knowledge and freshness of ideas and perspective due to their proximity to facing the future in a time of climate crisis. In this way, youth-elder conversation can and should be framed as co-mentorship or cross-generational learning. Storytelling is central to these spaces, acting as a bridge between past and future. Narratives of struggle and resilience not only preserve historical memory but also cultivate imagination for just and sustainable alternatives.

Envisioning the Future

EPNI is currently fundraising to purchase the Roof Depot, and residents are working together, though there have been significant barriers and feelings of discouragement (Timar-Wilcox, 2025). The visions of Lois and Kamille are two stories, and while individual, they echo a broader collective narrative of the community's desire to realize a better future. Kamille says, "I know that my ancestors fought for me to be here, they fought for me to be able to drink from the same faucet as other people and to sit in the same classroom as everyone else.…I know this fight is in me too."

Common expressions and hopes were echoed, from safe water to drink and air to breathe, to a future where the suffering of others cannot be profited from.

The story of East Phillips is not only one of resistance but of persistence. The bonds built across generations, cultures, and struggles have cultivated a resilience that reaches beyond one neighborhood, embodying the essence of environmental justice. Relationships rooted in care for one another and land were formed, and will continue to guide the community forward as it shapes healthier, more sustainable futures. In witnessing this work, we are reminded that such resilience is not singular. Every

community holds the capacity to nurture bonds of solidarity, to reclaim agency, and to imagine what justice looks like where they are planted.

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Thana Zoske, MN, RN is a graduate of the University of Minnesota's Master of Nursing program and holds a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. She became involved with this project through her work on the School of Nursing's Planetary Health Committee. Her interdisciplinary background informs a holistic, person-centered approach to care that centers on the connection between individual well-being, planetary health, and social justice. She is committed to seeking community-driven efforts that advance health equity and sustainability.

Jothsna Harris, BA, is the founder of Change Narrative LLC and through the power of storytelling she partners with frontline activists, artists, movement builders, and community groups to co-produce the tools to reshape climate narratives and advocate for justice. Her efforts ensure that voices historically excluded from climate conversations are heard, valued, and empowered to drive real solutions.

Julie Marckel, MLA, has sought, both personally and professionally, to learn about, participate in, or lead projects related to equitable engagement and access to natural spaces and experiences, environmental justice, and climate change. She has worked in education and non-profit program development and management for most of her professional career, focusing on work that has made the arts and sciences accessible to the broader community.

Angelica Walton, DNP, RN, RYT is Director of the Center for Planetary Health and a Clinical Assistant Professor at the University of Minnesota School of Nursing. She also serves as Research & Scholarship Director for the Planetary Health North America Hub. Her work bridges planetary health, healing justice, and regenerative systems design, integrating arts, storytelling, and place-based relationships to advance equity and resilience. She partners with the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and leads local sustainability initiatives that center cultural healing and environmental stewardship.

Correspondence about this article should be addressed to Angelica Walton at wils2316@umn.edu