



# 2024 Cultural Heritage Awardees

## **Cultural Ambassador**

### **Charles Smith – Jens Jensen Gardens in Evanston**

For his highly influential and inspiring decades of dedication to the creation, interpretation, protection, and overall enhancement of Evanston's cultural heritage, Charles Smith is recognized as the 2024 Cultural Ambassador. This is the highest form of recognition bestowed by the Preservation Commission. Charles has worked tirelessly to call attention to, protect, and transform the Jens Jensen- and Alfred Caldwell-designed grounds of the Harley Clarke Mansion. This work, as well as his longstanding commitment to stewardship of the City's significant landscapes and built environments, have fostered community action, enhanced storytelling opportunities, and exemplified a sense of civic responsibility.

## **Outstanding Individual Achievement**

### **Blair Thrush Lele – 1228 Forest Avenue**

With an unwavering commitment to the restoration and stewardship of her 1897 home located at 1228 Forest Avenue, Blair has demonstrated a significant contribution to the cultural heritage of the City. The home, designed by Franklin Pierce Burnham, was one of Evanston's earliest landmark designations (1978). Over her more than three decades of ownership, Blair has embodied the responsibility that comes with taking title to a landmark property that is deeply associated with the community's memory of place. Her meticulous efforts have enhanced and given renewed life to her home for the enjoyment of future generations of Evanstonians.

## **Outstanding Group Achievement**

### **Shorefront Legacy Center**

The Shorefront Legacy Center stands apart for an exceptional commitment to preserving and interpreting the rich history of Black individuals in Evanston – a community inexorably linked with the broader history of the city and our unique identity. Shorefront's nationally recognized contributions have fostered social connection, identified less tangible histories, strengthened multicultural dialogue and understanding, and celebrated Evanston's diversity. Shorefront's breadth of work has stimulated conversation and deeply enriched the cultural heritage of the City -- laying a foundation for future generations to build upon.

## **Honor Award**

### **Evanston Latinos**

Since its formation in 2017, the work of Evanston Latinos has called attention to and strengthened a sense of community and civic responsibility. They have been instrumental in identifying, advocating for, interpreting, and celebrating the stories and heritage of the Latine, immigrant, undocumented, and mixed status community in Evanston. This work has benefited and enriched the entire community and strengthened our body of cultural heritage.

### **Northwestern University – Center for Native American and Indigenous Research (CNAIR)**

CNAIR is recognized for their extraordinary cultural heritage work, especially the collaborative land acknowledgement project that resulted in the creation of the wiigwaasi-jiimaan (birch bark canoe), now installed in the Segal Visitors Center. The work's cultural meaning and long-term contribution to the City of Evanston's diverse heritage is solidified by the transfer of Native American and indigenous knowledge and traditions. This, in turn, nurtures an expanded sense of place in Evanston that definitively and positively includes our city's Native American and indigenous cultural heritage.

## **About the Cultural Heritage Awards**

The Evanston Preservation Commission was pleased to receive twelve nominations for the inaugural 2024 Cultural Heritage Awards. This new program is unlike past Preservation Commission awards programs, which focused exclusively on built heritage and physical project design. By contrast, the Cultural Heritage Awards program and its nominees represent the breadth of historic preservation which – in addition to built heritage – includes living heritage, the arts, intangible cultural heritage, and less tangible stories and histories.

The purpose of the citywide Cultural Heritage Awards Program is to:

1. **Promote** best practices in historic preservation.
2. **Celebrate** those who embody, safeguard, or advance significant themes within the broader field of historic preservation and heritage conservation.
3. **Educate** and increase public awareness and appreciation for Evanston's cultural heritage.
4. **Encourage** future excellence through the power of example.

Rather than recognize specific objects or mediums, the new program celebrates the people and organizations who advance the City's broad cultural heritage through a variety of themes including research, education and advocacy, equity, design, climate resilience and stewardship, and art.

Nominations are reviewed and judged by an independent selection committee. These jurors are from outside the community and reflect varying professional backgrounds. Jurors for the 2024 awards program included:

- **Sholo Beverly**  
Sholo is a Chicago based self-taught mixed media artist and creative leader. Born on the Southside of Chicago in 1968, Sholo became an artist at a young age. She was influenced by her mother who was a floral and interior designer.
- **Justin Weidl**  
Justin is the Director of Neighborhood Services at Uptown United. With over 20 years of landscape architecture and urban planning experience in the Chicago area and the Midwest, Justin is a community organizer and critical thought and design leader. He brings diverse experience with regional land use plans, downtown and business district vision plans, arts and culture plans, streetscape designs, and signage and branding systems.
- **Julie Burros, AICP**  
Currently a Senior Planner at the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Julie was the director of Cultural Planning for the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events for more than fifteen years. Julie works at the intersection of planning, culture, community development, and capacity building with demonstrated success strengthening the arts community and improving cultural identity.
- **Nicholas Kalogeresis, AICP (in absentia)**  
Nick is an Associate Principal at MKSK in their Chicago Office. He has more than three decades of diverse planning experience, including in comprehensive plans, downtowns, commercial corridors, neighborhoods, and urban design interventions. Nick's background also includes expertise in historic preservation and arts and culture planning as well as an approach to planning that focuses on energetic community engagement and thoughtful storytelling in conveying planning possibilities and opportunities.