

## *Project and Program Profiles*

# **Stories from the Flood: Promoting Healing and Fostering Policy Change Through Storytelling, Community Literacy, and Community-based Learning**

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### *Author Contributions*

Gottschalk Druschke, Dean, and Higgins are listed as primary, secondary, and tertiary authors, respectively, to reflect their contributions to conceiving of, drafting, and revising this manuscript, as well as to curricular development and support for Stories from the Flood. Beaty, Henner, Hosemann, Meyer, Sellers, Widell, and Woser are included alphabetically after that to reflect their shared contributions to drafting and revising this manuscript, to curricular development, and to development of the Stories from the Flood project.

### *Abstract*

This profile features the authors' shared work to co-create both a community literacy project, Stories from the Flood, and the undergraduate community-based learning courses that supported the effort. Stories from the Flood works to assist community members in southwestern Wisconsin to share their flood experiences, aiming to support community healing and serve as a resource for future conversations about flood recovery and resilience. Our collaboration on Stories from the Flood demonstrates the importance of non-university expertise and aims to daylight and correct structural asymmetries that render these rural watersheds both particularly vulnerable to flooding and absent of government intervention.

### *Keywords*

community literacy, community-based learning, flooding, oral history, reciprocity, rural, trauma

Reciprocity is meant to sit at the center of community-university partnership (Powell and Takayoshi, Cushman et al.). Scholars over the last decade have done important work to articulate what reciprocity might actually look like

and mean in community literacy and community-based learning (Miller et al., Opel and Sackey, Carlson, Weir et al.). Here we build from a framework of dynamic reciprocity—what Sibyl W. Diver and Margot N. Higgins defined as an ongoing, reflexive, time- and context-dependent practice that aims for more equitable distribution of benefits—to highlight our own ongoing collaborative process. We take inspiration from the process-oriented and critical approach of Shane Bernardo and Terese Guinsatao Monberg, who recently argued:

Enacting reciprocity asks us to slow down in time and do the work repeatedly over long durations of time. To see ourselves as reciprocal beings means we see ourselves not as separate from and working with community members; we see ourselves instead as community members invested in making structural asymmetries legible and open to deep revision. (85)

Here we—a “we” that includes university faculty members, board members of a writing-focused non-profit, and former students involved in the first iteration of a university course based on this work together—detail our efforts at dynamic reciprocity as we collaborated to create a community literacy project, and the community-based university courses that supported it, to work towards community healing, student learning, and structural change.

That community literacy project—*Stories from the Flood*—was initiated by the all-volunteer non-profit Driftless Writing Center in southwestern Wisconsin in late 2018 after the latest in an accelerating series of catastrophic floods hit the area, leaving a trail of material and psychological damage in this rural and underresourced region. *Stories from the Flood* works to assist community members to share their flood experiences, aiming to support community healing and serve as a resource for future conversations about flood recovery and resilience. *Stories from the Flood* also serves as the central focus of a community-based writing course at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, two hours away in the state capitol, and a community-based environmental studies course at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, thirty minutes to the west. These courses center the goals of *Stories from the Flood*, while focusing on the intersectional drivers of trauma experienced and understood by those impacted by area flooding. In so doing, they enlist students in the ongoing support of the project, offering them unfiltered connections with community organizers and storytellers; opportunities for developing empathy and practicing collaboration; shifted understandings of universities’ often fraught impacts on community residents; and growing awareness of the responsibilities for undoing that damage and building partnerships that center community knowledge.

We argue here that the success of this community literacy project—and the community-university collaboration that supports it—has much to do with dynamic reciprocity: our shared work to slow down, do the work repeatedly and adapt flexibly over time, and build community together across community partners, community members, university faculty, and students. And we have been doing all this with a shared purpose to demonstrate the importance of non-university expertise and to support project goals—to aid community healing and advocate for the inclusion

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of these grounded stories in ongoing flood policy discussions—while exposing and working to revise structural asymmetries that render these rural watersheds both particularly vulnerable to flooding and absent of government intervention. We hope our collaboration might undermine these damaging and persistent realities.

### *Stories from the Flood and Catastrophic Flooding in the Upper Midwest*

Wisconsin's Kickapoo River and Coon Creek watersheds have experienced at least one one-hundred-year and two fifty-year magnitude floods in just the last decade, even as climate forecasts predict this pattern will intensify. The 2018 flood caused an estimated twenty nine million dollars in damage to businesses, homes, and public infrastructure in Vernon County, Wisconsin alone, almost one thousand dollars per person in a county with a 14.1% poverty rate (Lu, U.S. Census Bureau). Although the immediate aftermath of the flooding made state and even national news, external attention—and external funding—quickly turned elsewhere while residents continued the long process of recovery. In light of this flood damage, and because of their focus on providing literary and educational opportunities for writers in the area, board members of the all-volunteer non-profit Driftless Writing Center—all of whom were affected personally by area flooding—decided to intervene in flood recovery in the way they knew best: supporting their fellow community members to tell their stories. Board members Tamara Dean, Jennifer Morales, Lisa Henner, and Robin Hosemann hatched a plan to co-produce thorough accounts of what people, municipalities, and the environment in the Kickapoo River and Coon Creek watersheds have endured as climate change alters their lives and landscape, naming that effort *Stories from the Flood*.

*Stories from the Flood* took shape around twin goals: to promote community healing through storytelling and create the foundation for an urgent community conversation about flood resilience. *Stories from the Flood* aimed to support two hundred community members to share written and oral stories about their flood experiences; to create a public-facing booklet that highlighted those stories; to place the oral history audio files, transcripts, and related indexes with the Vernon County Historical Society and the Oral History Program at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse's Murphy Library; and to produce policy reports for area decisionmakers that better account for on-the-ground experience. The proposed gathering, archiving, and distribution of these stories was a massive undertaking that required support from individuals and institutions inside and outside the affected watersheds. And so, in late 2018, Dean reached out to UW-Madison professor Caroline Gottschalk Druschke to propose serving as the required university collaborator on the submission of a \$10,000 Major Grant proposal to the Wisconsin Humanities Council. When it was awarded in early 2019, that funding—alongside support from individual donors and from the John D. and Leslie Henner Burns Family Foundation, La Farge Lions Club, Vernon Communications Cooperative, Vernon Electric Cooperative, and Westby Co-op Credit Union—helped launch the project.

With initial funding in place, *Stories from the Flood* kicked off in early spring 2019. Licensed clinical social worker Gil Hoel, journalist Tim Hundt, and professors

Margot Higgins and Christine Lemley provided two facilitator trainings for volunteer story gatherers, and Hoel, Hundt, and Higgins, along with historian Brad Steinmetz and project manager Carly Frerichs, remained central partners on the project. Because many coordinators and volunteers involved in the project were novices in oral history, facilitator trainings featured an introduction to oral history methodologies and perspectives, including practices like pre-interview research, informed consent, ethics, and establishing rapport and trust, alongside strategies for eliciting detailed stories. Trainings also included a focus on critical oral history, which builds from perspectives in culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings), to consider how oral history practices can do more than simply record events; instead, oral history projects can offer opportunities for individuals to tell their own stories in ways that empower, humanize, restore dignity, and work towards transformative justice (Lemley). The project also benefited from the oral history expertise of the Wisconsin Historical Society, whose release form we adapted for the project, of Tiffany Trimmer, Director of The Oral History Program at the UW-La Crosse Murphy Library, and of Troy Reeves, Head of The Oral History Program for the UW-Madison Libraries.

In addition to this focus on oral history practices, trainings were grounded in informed responses to disaster, trauma, and recovery. For example, Hetti Brown of Couleecap, a non-profit that provides disaster outreach services in the Kickapoo Valley, offered foundational insight into community needs after historical and current flooding, with a particular focus on mental health imperatives. Hoel then presented on the psychological phases of disaster response, detailing Leonard M. Zunin and Diane Meyers' classic work on how people who have experienced such trauma individually and collectively respond, moving through the pre-disaster phase, to the impact phase, the heroic phase, the honeymoon phase, the disillusionment phase, and finally to reconstruction (qtd. in DeWolfe). Crucially, individuals and communities can cycle through these phases within and over years, a situation made all the more complicated, in our instance, by the imminent threat of additional flooding in the area. Discussion of the psychology of disaster response was followed by an emphasis on the connections between storytelling and healing, including the importance of taking control of traumatic histories through story (Pennebaker & Smythe, DeSalvo).

With that training in hand, focus shifted to the story gathering effort, which relied heavily on local libraries and historical societies. Twenty-six story gathering workshops were scheduled at the Vernon County Historical Society and libraries across the Winding Rivers Library System and Southwest Wisconsin Library System from April to July 2019, publicized through press releases, local fliers, and word of mouth; these sessions resulted in approximately thirty-five audio stories. Library partners and the Vernon County Historical Society acted as community liaisons and ambassadors, vouching for the project. In addition to publishing story gathering events, they also offered physical space for story sharing. Librarians knew their local patrons—after all, they were “local” themselves—and personally recruited individuals who had been affected by the floods to share their stories. Stories from the Flood grew very much as a community effort, with local contributors, volunteers, donors, educators, and storytellers working together to get the project off the ground, many of

them cycling between roles: story gathering volunteers and librarians recorded their own flood stories; flood storytellers educated others about the project; community members offered financial contributions large and small.

In summer 2019, to accommodate individuals interested in telling their stories in more intimate settings, the project moved to in-home story gathering. Dean gathered many of those stories herself in August 2019, at which point we shifted emphasis to university students as ideal collaborators. Since then, undergraduates in Higgins' environmental studies course at UW-La Crosse, "Occupying the Driftless: Culture, Place, and Environment," have continued to support the project. Further, Stories from the Flood has served as the central focus for Gottschalk Druschke's UW-Madison undergraduate English course, "Writing Rivers," taught each semester. We focus in this article on curricular details for Writing Rivers given its community-based writing focus, but we share lessons from both courses as they feature several overlapping projects, events, and outcomes, built upon a common pedagogical interest in the ways that communities form stories and values in place.

### *Community-Based Learning to Support Community Literacy and Flood Recovery*

Writing Rivers is a community-based learning designated section of ENGL 245 Seminar in the Major at UW-Madison designed around Stories from the Flood, with the first iteration taught in fall 2019. UW-Madison's Gottschalk Druschke and Driftless Writing Center's Dean talked frequently through spring and summer 2019 to consider how undergraduates in Writing Rivers could support the Stories from the Flood effort. With guiding input from Higgins, Steinmetz, Henner, Hosemann, Morales, and others, they worked together to shape the course around the community effort. In addition to students' contributions to the project, we sought to support the Stories from the Flood effort through an additional influx of funding from UW-Madison sources, including a Course Development Grant from the Morgridge Center for Public Service, an Outreach Fellowship from the Robert F. and Jean E. Holtz Center for Science & Technology Studies, and from the Department of English and the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences' Kickapoo Valley Reforestation Fund. Meanwhile, we wanted to position Driftless Writing Center volunteers, community members, and storytellers as expert teachers to guide student learning. We hoped the experience would equip and inspire undergrads to

- Ethically engage with off-campus communities;
- Hear and feel how people express the complexity of their relationships to their environments, and consider their own;
- Apply the tools of rhetoric to solve problems and take action;
- Partner with others to address timely problems and create change;
- Enact the Wisconsin Experience: cultivating empathy and humility; relentless curiosity; intellectual confidence; and purposeful action.

That fall 2019 student cohort, many of whom are included here on the authorship team, dealt gracefully with a huge amount of uncertainty. Their initial course syllabus

was extremely light on descriptive details and included a mention of a future grading contract that would be agreed upon in the second or third week of the semester. Students were essentially told on day one that they would be supporting and learning from a community-based project called Stories from the Flood, that Gottschalk Druschke couldn't yet tell them exactly when, where, and how that would happen, and that students would have to trust her and the unfolding partnership. It was a huge ask.

While we don't suggest that the vagueness of the first day syllabus was indicative of pedagogical best practices, we do think the story captures the very real uncertainty of trying to build a community-university collaboration in real time as events were unfolding. It speaks, also, to the labor of being intentional about the long, slow process of reciprocity. Gottschalk Druschke and Dean knew that there would be no shortage of writing and thinking work to be done by students, as well as a series of oral history story gatherings to be scheduled with community storytellers, but we simply didn't know exactly how that work would happen. There was value in emphasizing improvisation, flexibility, and comfort with ambiguity for students, and we tried to make space for students' own needs, interests, and flexible responses to the project so that students could pursue topics, approaches, and modes of expression that best suited them. Autonomy led to discovery and surprise, which we argue led to a more memorable and meaningful learning experience for students.

Ultimately, uncertainty was an ethical choice; we dismissed some of the structures, expectations, and demands of the university and prioritized the evolving needs of community members, the community literacy project, and students' responses to it. This purposeful decentering enacted dynamic reciprocity, prompting students to question the typical privileging of academic expertise and opening space for them to consider Driftless Writing Center partners and Stories from the Flood storytellers as the real experts in our partnership. Students who stuck with the course indicated that they did so because of their faith in the empathy and support of Gottschalk Druschke, Dean, and the full Stories from the Flood team. Through mutual trust, uncertainty became an opportunity to adjust to needs as they arose and to look forward to being part of something beyond the classroom. In other words, we worked, as Bernardo and Guinsatao Monberg directed, to model for students the capacity to see themselves, "as reciprocal beings ... not as separate from and working with community members ... instead as community members invested in making structural asymmetries legible and open to deep revision" (85). We tried to model that emphasis through concrete details of the course.

### *The Mechanics: What Students Did and What They Learned*

While admittedly light on specifics, the first semester syllabus of Writing Rivers offered the basic contours of a course structure that has persisted over time. Students were expected to:

Participate in

- **classroom sessions**, seventy-five minutes, twice per week
- a full-day weekend **orientation** trip to the Kickapoo River watershed

- community-based **story gathering**—at least two, in-person
- a **community celebration** of the project—optional

#### Complete

- **transcription** of at least one oral history recording
- comprehensive **thematic analyses** of the existing oral history archive to support the creation of a public-facing booklet
- a student-designed, collaborative **research-based intervention** based on the Stories from the Flood archive—e.g., a series of maps marking storytellers’ homes alongside FEMA flood designations, flood-related lesson plans for area schools, guides to mental health and flood-borne illness resources
- a **creative project**—e.g., original songs, artwork, playlists, dialogues
- a final course **reflection**

UW-Madison students—and their UW-La Crosse counterparts in spring 2020 and spring 2021—completed this work for Stories from the Flood while creating weekly pieces of reflective writing in response to prompts prepared by undergraduate community-based learning (CBL) interns from the Morgridge Center for Public Service, alongside learning from content prepared by the Morgridge Center including: introduction to different principles of community engagement; connections between positionality, knowledge construction, and intellectual humility; cultural humility and self-awareness; recognizing root causes; systemic and institutional bias; equitable partnership; active listening; applying an equity lens; and trauma-informed care. In both courses, students read an overlapping suite of offerings about the ongoing history of project watersheds, including explorations of their deep Ho-Chunk history, white settlement and settler impacts on land use and flooding, racial and political dynamics, and flood recovery and response. Writing Rivers students concluded the semester reading Elizabeth Rush’s *Rising: Dispatches from the New American Shore* and then tried their hand at writing a community profile that integrated demographic data, flood history, and Stories from the Flood narratives to highlight past and future challenges and possibilities for responding to area flooding.

The increasing formality of the course over time meant that we lost some of the organic magic of that first semester. This relative formality and structure also meant we were better prepared to ride through the massive disruption of COVID-19, which forced the spring 2020 sections of both courses online in mid-March, and demanded that the fall 2020, spring 2021, and fall 2021 sections of Writing Rivers be taught online. While a “community-based” learning course taught online—and asynchronously online in fall 2020 and spring 2021—may seem like an impossible contradiction, it has worked reasonably well by continuing to place students in close proximity to the recorded voices, if not bodies, of community storytellers; supporting the ongoing systemic goals of the project by shifting from story gathering to policy intervention; and offering the chance for students to grow as writers and humans in a project that is larger than just one student, class, or semester.

Semester to semester, in person and online, students have completed essential work to support Stories from the Flood. Spring 2020 and fall 2020 Writing Rivers stu-

dents, in tandem with Higgins' UW-La Crosse spring 2020 undergrads, quality controlled approximately seventy transcripts from approximately one hundred storytellers to prepare them for delivery to UW-La Crosse's Oral History Program and the Vernon County Historical Society. Writing Rivers students completed thematic analyses of the full Stories from the Flood archive and created community profiles that highlighted each community's flood response alongside flood stories gathered in each village, town, and subwatershed. In spring 2021, UW-Madison and UW-La Crosse students prepared indexes for each oral history to finalize the work necessary for archival placement in university and community libraries. They also prepared community profiles and short audio clips to be embedded into a public-facing map highlighting the outcomes of the project. At the time of this writing, fall 2021 students in Writing Rivers are generating thematic tags for the audio clips that will populate the public-facing map, creating audio transcripts for accessibility, and collaborating on project findings reports focused on various communities throughout the watersheds.

Students' continued focus on the needs of Stories from the Flood and community storytellers as the central compass for their academic coursework helped to reinforce the idea that project expertise lay primarily in the hands of community members and community-based coordinators of Stories from the Flood, not in the university. It also helped to reinforce the idea of dynamic reciprocity, emphasizing timely, contextualized response that encouraged a more equitable distribution of benefits across project storytellers, project coordinators, and university faculty and students. Project storytellers got the chance to tell their flood stories—some for the first time—to engaged and empathetic listeners, to take control of their stories, and to put them in community with so many others. Project coordinators got the chance to meet their goal of supporting community healing through interpersonal relations and systemic intervention. Faculty got the chance to be part of something larger than themselves and larger than academia, while supporting students' personal growth. And students benefited, as well.

Many students talked about the course as intellectually but also emotionally challenging and described their experience as both career-changing and life-changing. They continually discussed their gratitude at all they'd learned from Driftless Writing Center staff and community storytellers. As students explained, these face-to-face, intimate interactions with community storytellers were completely unique in their university experience and were, therefore, especially meaningful. Many students found this incredibly uncomfortable at first, but as community partners and storytellers welcomed students into their stories and lives, students committed themselves to the course and the project because, as one student put it, referring to community storytellers and organizers, "anything less was not what they deserved." Students weren't performing for the teacher or for a grade, they were trying to learn from, respect, and honor the experiences of community members and the labor and vision of Stories from the Flood founders.

This experience changed the way students thought about university—and community—expertise and highlighted for them the need to undo past damage inflicted by the university. While students had been taught to take pride in what's known as

“The Wisconsin Idea,” the long-standing tradition that work at UW-Madison should impact the lives of those around the state, they had never been presented with the real potential for university intervention to cause harm in off-campus communities or with approaches for minimizing those harms (Cruz and Bakken). “Writing Rivers” students became aware that UW-Madison participation in *Stories from the Flood* was charged for some residents because of the lasting damage of university intervention over 150-plus years. Community members had become understandably suspicious of university-types after a history of exploitative studies, so extra caution was important. As one student reflected on that process:

This course brought to my attention a lot of the bad parts about community-based research, then made every possible effort to avoid making the same mistakes. It showed me that a lot can get done when the university takes a back seat and allows community experts to call the shots, then points resources toward said experts’ decisions ... I think this project is a step in the right direction.

Meanwhile, student work on thematic analyses, the celebration booklet, community profiles, and public facing maps supported the project’s work to communicate to decision makers at the local, state, and federal levels that the residents of these vulnerable and economically underresourced watersheds are in desperate need of support, and that these communities also contain a huge amount of strength and that community members have created tightly knit, watershed-wide networks of mutual aid to support future flood resilience. Student contributions to this collaboration worked towards correcting the structural asymmetries that mark these communities as especially vulnerable in the first place. Students worked together with faculty, community organizers, and storytellers to strive towards a vision of dynamic reciprocity. That’s a huge task, of course, but this work is continually underway.

### *Lessons Learned and Future Directions*

Our collaboration has resulted in the gathering of over one hundred stories as of this writing. Our work has been featured by Wisconsin Public Radio, the *Wisconsin State Journal*, and the *La Crosse Tribune*, and in podcasts created by the Wisconsin Humanities Council (“Power of Experience”) and the online magazine *Edge Effects* (Wilson), and served as a foundation for a recently awarded National Science Foundation grant focused on community-based flood resilience in these watersheds. With funding from the Wisconsin Humanities Council, the UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, the Morgridge Center, and private donations, we have been able to professionally transcribe each of these flood stories, prepare them for archiving, and deliver that archive to both the Vernon County Historical Society and the Oral History Program at UW-La Crosse’s Murphy Library. We are working now on the public-facing map highlighting *Stories from the Flood* storytellers that will be included in the redesigned Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center in La Farge, Wisconsin and hosted online for wider access, as well as on a project findings report to share with local and state decision makers, highlighting urgent needs for mental

health resources, flood recovery funding, emergency communication, and flood-borne illness prevention across the watersheds. We plan to continue story gathering in person as soon as COVID-19 allows.

Meanwhile, many fall 2019 students continued their Stories from the Flood work into future semesters and beyond graduation. For example, Ben Sellers and Sydney Widell gathered oral histories after the semester ended, continued their mapping and analyses with funding from the Morgridge Center and the Kickapoo Valley Reforestation Fund, and are now pursuing graduate study (Widell) and research positions (Sellers) on flood recovery in project watersheds with funding from the Kickapoo Valley Reforestation Fund and the National Science Foundation. Marissa Beaty, Maggie Fullmer, and Julia Meyer all received funding through the UW-Madison Center for the Humanities Undergraduate Exchange Program (HEX-U) to continue their public-facing research projects into flood-borne illness, mental health resources, and photo-based storytelling for the year beyond their initial course enrollment. A number of UW-La Crosse undergrads, too, were inspired to embrace career paths that would allow them to continue to listen to people's stories and advocate for vulnerable populations. In spring 2020, the Driftless Writing Center was awarded the Outstanding Community Partner Award from the Morgridge Center for their "demonstrated excellence in partnering with a university entity to provide opportunities for students to engage in and learn from the community."

Ultimately, in the spirit of dynamic reciprocity, we want to argue that rhetorically informed, community-based work—when practiced mindfully and tactically and built over time periods that exceed university semesters—can offer an important model for community-university collaboration to support community literacy efforts and student learning outcomes, while critiquing and potentially upending structural asymmetries. The success of the Stories from the Flood project and of our collaboration—"success" as a constellation of the ability to gather one hundred oral history narratives about local flooding; to meet community-identified goals and student learning outcomes; to extend, deepen, and refine the relationship over multiple semesters and now years; and to generate significant media attention, political attention, and university and external funding—came largely as the result of our explicit decision to resist an academic impulse towards "data collection," a move that challenged academic structures that demand rapid productivity and continued enrollment in the research-making enterprise. Mindful of cautions from Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang that researchers should acknowledge and mitigate harms of potential community-based collaborations, remain accountable to community partners, and avoid research meant only to legitimize predetermined outcomes through the voices of community members, our collaboration turned the academic imperative on its head: slowing the process of collaboration; amplifying marginalized community voices; and channeling university resources towards community-identified needs. The primary goal of Stories from the Flood, after all, was to help flood-affected residents process their individual and collective trauma, and we kept that focus as our central imperative.

Only after story gathering was halted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and we had cultivated a long-term commitment to dynamic and reciprocal collaboration—through many hours spent together in these rural watersheds and not on campus, through simple favors and acts of support, through advocacy for increased mental health resources in the area, through the securing of lots of little and big piles of university funding for the project—did we begin to turn towards something that might more properly fall under the orbit of “research.” And even then, this was only because this research emerged organically and in concert with the secondary goal of the project: to create a historical record to inform future planning and support community healing. Local efforts to create a watershed-wide flood resilience plan seemed to demand this turn from trauma to recovery, and *Stories from the Flood* is beginning to serve as a touchpoint for conversations about flood resilience and as support for proposals seeking funding to make those important interventions. These flood stories address the rooted experiences, knowledges, and approaches to sudden, repeated, and ever-worsening floods among frontline communities, identifying everyday threats such as transportation access, food insecurity, and housing shortages. In this evolving context, the *Stories from the Flood* archive is becoming an invaluable resource for amplifying marginalized voices and fine-scale community stories that would not otherwise be included in formalized, science-based watershed planning processes.

Our hope is that this work offers a vision for the sorts of tactical projects proposed by Paula Mathieu in the context of community-based writing, working to create community-based partnerships that resist institutionalized, inflexible, and non-reciprocal approaches. Meanwhile, we want to argue that this work offers ways forward for engaged scholarship in rhetorical studies, composition, and technical communication centrally focused on social justice, as articulated by scholars like Natasha Jones, Rebecca Walton, and Kristen R. Moore (“The Technical Communicator as Advocate”; *Technical Communication After the Social Justice Turn*). One that takes seriously the idea that research—or at least a model of academic research as extraction of data, of networks, of knowledge—is not the way forward. In fact, much of the amazement that has unfolded from the *Stories from the Flood* collaboration has come from resisting the impulse to research. Instead, we focused on reciprocity by creating opportunities for collaboration, inspiration, and engagement; crafting grant proposals around community-identified needs; and generally working to create an infrastructure based on the idea of doing whatever *Stories from the Flood* and the wider watershed community needed at any given moment. That work is often chaotic, but it is also magical.

Our shared labor towards dynamic reciprocity enabled the project’s central goal: to create a means for flood-affected residents to respond, in community, to disaster by re-narrating their stories and transforming together through that process. As Robin Wall Kimmerer has argued: “Stories are among our most potent tools for restoring the land as well as our relationship to land. We need to unearth the old stories that live in a place and begin to create new ones, for we are storymakers, not just storytellers. All stories are connected, new ones woven from the threads of the old” (341). By sitting down, truly listening, and truly being heard, *Stories from the Flood* positioned com-

munity members, students, and faculty to create new stories together out of the old: about flooding, resilience, resistance, and university intervention. We came together to see ourselves—all of us—as “community members invested in making structural asymmetries legible and open to deep revision” (Bernardo and Guinsatao Monberg 85). And we recognize that this is ongoing work. As the CLEAR lab, directed by Max Liboiron, has insisted, “Collectivities are made, remade, and maintained—they are not born ready-made, and their continuity is a result of ongoing gratitude and reciprocity” (18). The continuity of the collectivity we call Stories from the Flood continues to depend on the shared labor that drives active, continued, ongoing gratitude and reciprocity. Together—over time, slowly, repeatedly, we hope, in community, and with an eye towards equity—we continue to explore how storymaking can move us forward together.

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Caroline Gottschalk Druschke is a professor of rhetoric and composition in The Department of English at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where her research and teaching focus on community-based learning, public engagement, and freshwater science.

Tamara Dean is a widely published writer of fiction and nonfiction, including a book about sustainable living, *The Human-Powered Home*. She has served on the boards of various arts and environmental organizations and teaches writing workshops independently and through The Loft in Minneapolis.

Margot Higgins is an Associate Teaching Professor in The Environmental Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, who conducted several interviews for Stories from the Flood (SFTF). She teaches a seminar on the Driftless region and has engaged students in SFTF by instructing them to conduct interviews, listen to and index transcripts for The Oral History Program at UW-L.

Marissa Beaty is the Program Coordinator for The South Asia Summer Language Institute at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She continues to participate in environmental research on her own time and has hopes to pursue further graduate work on environmental policy and protection.

Lisa Henner holds a BA from Washington University in St. Louis, and completed her graduate work at DePaul University, Chicago focused on the teaching of writing in a workshop setting. Lisa co-founded the Driftless Writing Center.

Robin Hosemann is a mental health counselor in Viroqua, Wisconsin. Prior to earning an MS in mental health counseling from Viterbo University, she was a classroom teacher and library media specialist in rural schools.

Julia Meyer is a middle school teacher in the Milwaukee Public Schools District. She is also a graduate student at Mount Mary University pursuing a Master of Arts in Education. Julia graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with undergraduate degrees in Political Science and English Literature.

Ben Sellers is a researcher with the Townsend Lab and Headwaters Lab at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is interested in stream ecology and remote sensing and uses drones to provide insights for natural resource management.

Sydney Widell is a master's student in Freshwater and Marine Sciences at University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her work is centered on flooding and community impacts.

Tenzin Woser is a User Experience Designer at Gigasearch. A graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in Journalism and Sociology, he leverages an understanding of and empathy for people to design products that help them accomplish their goals.