

# Annual Report

Kalahari Peoples Fund



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# 2025

# About Us

The Kalahari Peoples Fund (KPF) is a non-profit organization formed for the benefit of the San and other peoples of the Kalahari desert region of southern Africa. KPF is a non-government advocacy group composed of anthropologists, development workers, and other interested individuals who have worked closely with the San or are familiar with the situations they are dealing with.

Since its beginning in 1973, KPF has responded to several requests for help made by San, Nama, and other rural southern African communities. We do this by raising funds and providing technical and advisory assistance. San and other Kalahari peoples are having to cope with rapidly changing conditions as populations have grown and development programs have expanded. Political, economic, and environmental conditions have changed significantly, and local peoples have undergone transformations in the ways that they live and interact both among themselves and with the governments of the states where they live.



A 501 (c)(3) Organization  
BENEFITTING THE PEOPLES OF THE AFRICAN KALAHARI AND OTHER ARID LANDS



Image Source: Megan Biesele



Art by KPF associate: Tsamkgao Cwi

# Our Mission

Supporting the rights of San communities to health, education, livelihoods, land, and language.

## Our Vision

To raise funds to help support community based and community driven projects that fit the mission of KPF.

To provide responsible information and research on the Kalahari peoples for lawyers, students, volunteers and eco-travelers interested in Southern Africa. We also give talks and workshops at many national and international venues to inform academia and the public about the current state of the Kalahari peoples.



KPF's function is to act as a channel of communication between southern African peoples and the wider world, bringing information about their hopes and needs to interested individuals, groups, and agencies who are able to help them.

# Our Team

## Board of Directors



**Jill Brown PhD**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**Megan Biesele PhD**

BOARD PRESIDENT



**Robert Hitchcock PhD**

BOARD SECRETARY



**Wayne Babchuk PhD**

BOARD TREASURER



**Dr.R. Fleming Puckett**

BOARD MEMBER



**Ted Bartholomew PhD**

BOARD MEMBER



**Ashley Hazel PhD**

BOARD MEMBER

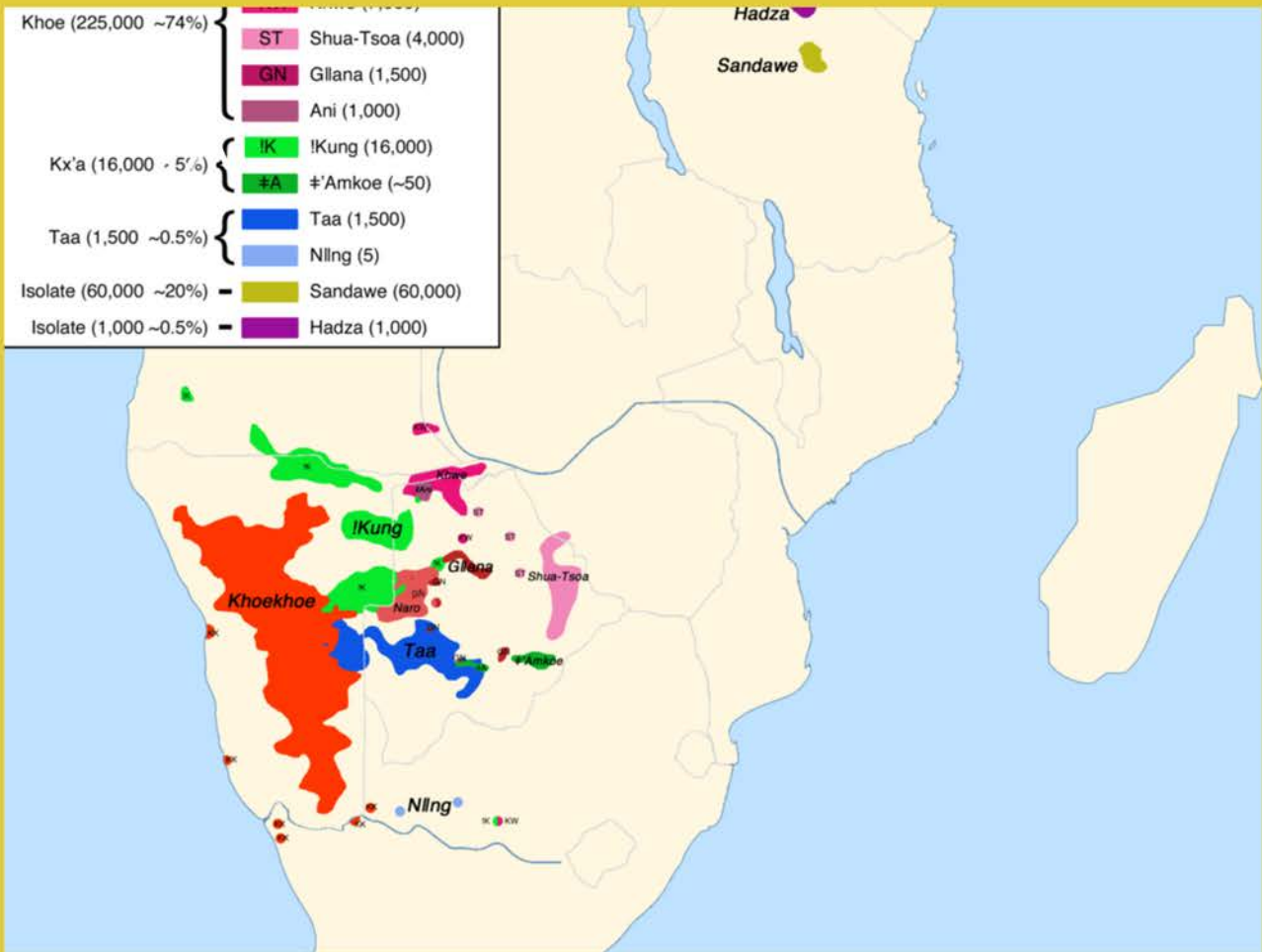


**Jennifer Hays PhD**

BOARD MEMBER

## Founding Members 1973

Irven DeVore  
Nancy DeVore  
Patricia Draper  
Nancy Howell  
Richard Katz  
Melvin Konner  
Richard Lee  
John Marshall  
Lorna Marshall  
Marjorie Shostak  
John Yellen



# A year in review

KPF had one of its most productive years of raising funds and supporting a diverse group of projects in the Kalahari. New this year were projects that communities created to support language learning in children, to build small shelters for the most vulnerable of members, to use traditional tracking skills, to maintain healing rituals, and to build up community based tourism connections.

# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**JILL BROWN**

Executive Director, KPF

2025 has brought many changes and challenges around the globe, and our hearts are in solidarity with the indigenous communities affected by them. For KPF, the year has been filled with steady progress and commitment to our mission and values. In my third year as Executive Director, I am learning more and more about the communities and people that work with KPF. There is so much more to learn, not only about the San communities, but about the intersection of forces that shape the reality of the oldest inhabitants of our world.

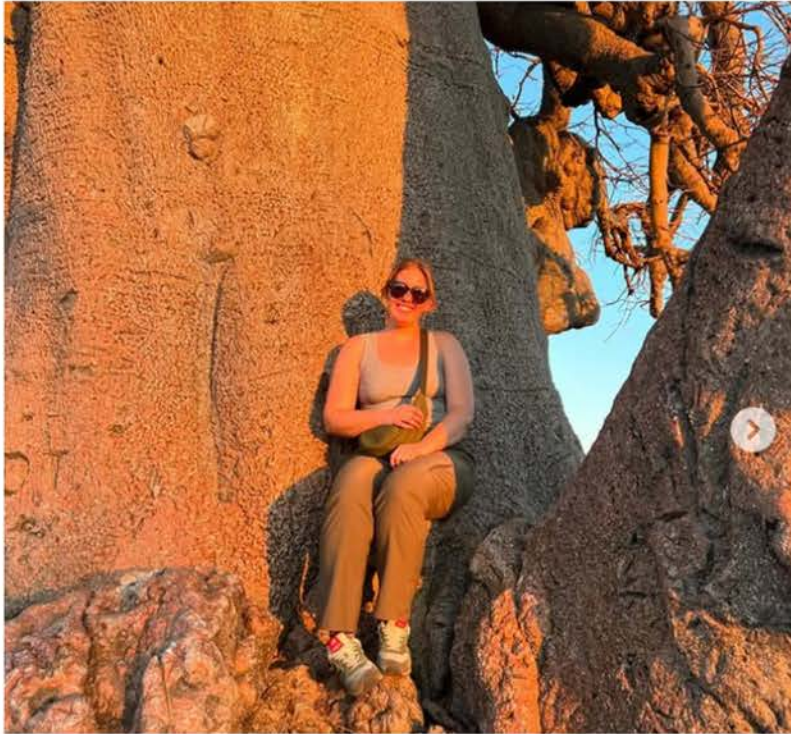
A highlight of mine this year was to collaborate with the Khwe community of Gumudame in Kavango East, to build seventeen small shelters and to meet Elisabeth Kasoro and Manuel Porous, the two living elders who still speak their mother tongue.

Over the last fifty years, our involvement with the peoples of the Kalahari has shaped our identity as an organization and has deepened our understanding of the power of long-term, trust-based relationships.

We enter 2026 more determined than ever to support the rights of San communities for health, education, livelihoods, land, and language. There are both innovative and timeless projects happening across southern Africa that KPF has the privilege of being a part of. Some of the most notable include a traditional healers camp that is teaching younger healers traditional healing skills and a tracking school organized by master trackers in Nyae Nyae to pass on skills to their communities.

Looking ahead, we will continue to be a trustworthy partner to the communities that we work with, undeterred to advance community justice, and strengthen human and environmental rights. Because we've learned around the fires at night, when we organize, act with courage and clarity, and practice solidarity, we all live with more affluence.

# Donations



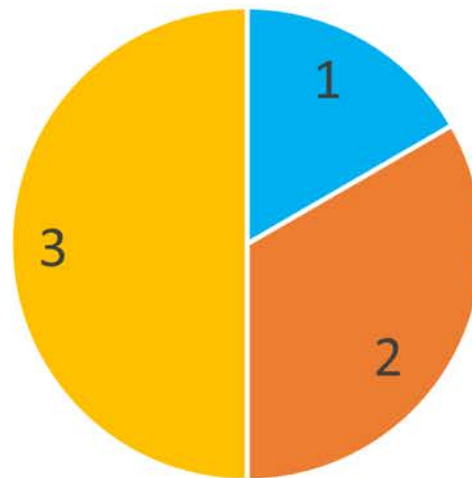
**9 one time donations**

**5 recurring monthly donations**

**Total Donations in 2025: \$62,956.20**

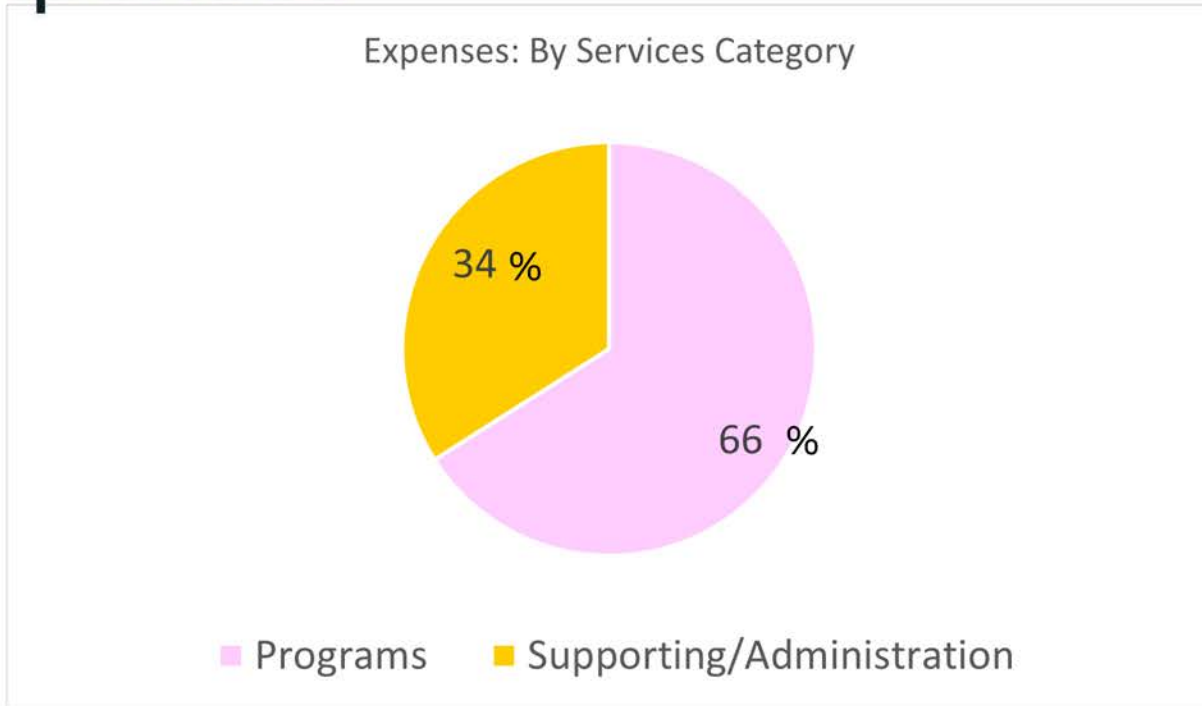
Emily Rogge: Recurring donor to KPF on a research trip to Namibia in 2024

Large Donations 2025: Total\$ 60,595.14

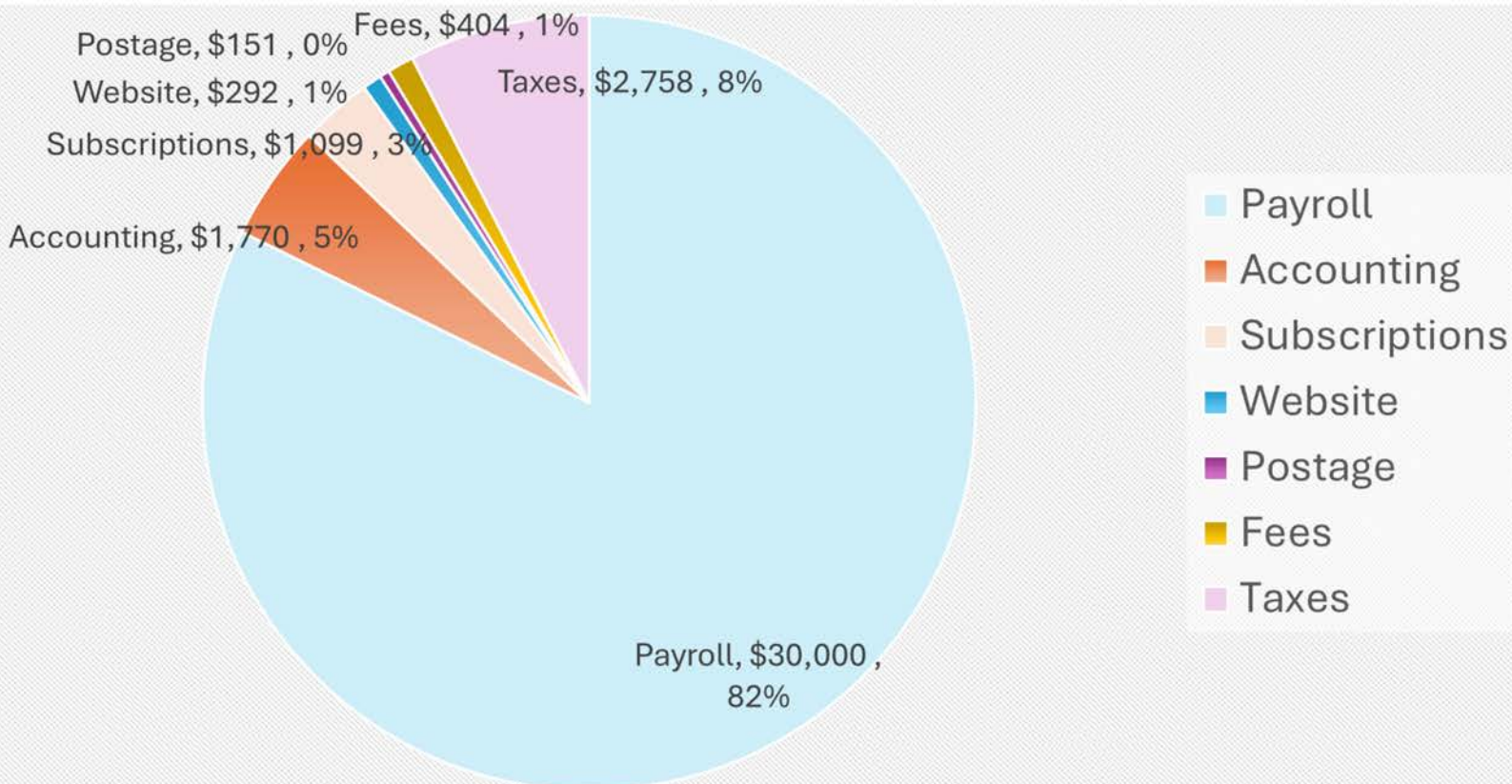


■ >30,000    ■ 10-20,000    ■ <10,000

# Expenses

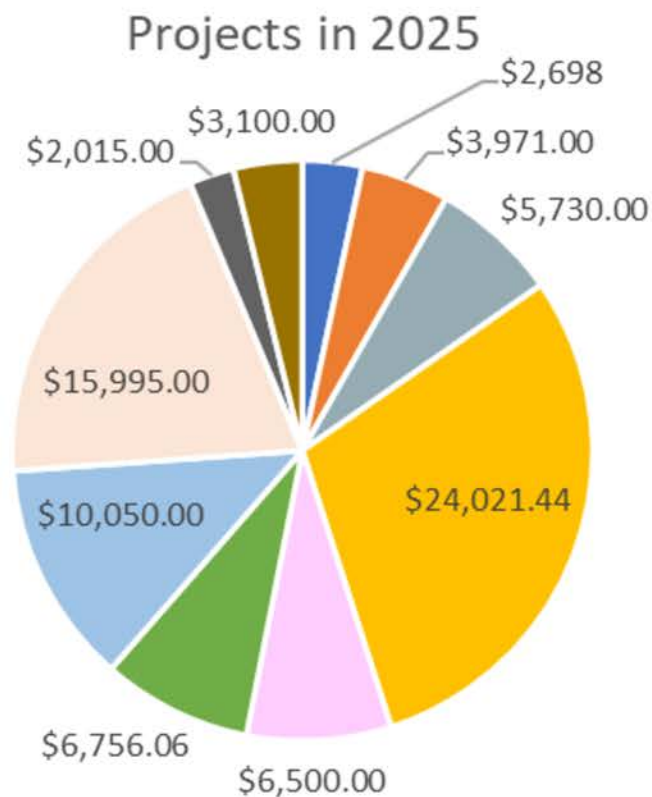


## Support Services Expenses



# Project Expenses

KPF ANNUAL REPORT 2025



- Education
- Cultural Archiving
- Hai//om Projects
- Khomani Projects
- Land Rights
- San Artisans
- Ju/'hoan Project
- Khwe Small Shelter
- Healer's Project

Income	FY 2025
Donations	\$84,562.00
Investment Income	\$42,840.00
Expenses	
Support Services and Administrative	\$36,476.00
Projects	\$106,250.00
Total Expenses	\$142,726.00
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>-\$15,252.00</b>

# VILLAGE PLAYGROUPS



**\$1,976.00**

Supported 4 new playgroups

IMAGE SOURCE: MELISSA HECKLER

Melissa Heckler and the village playgroups team (Festus Soroab, mentor teacher for the Village School teachers), /Ai!ae Fridrick, /Ukxa /Ai!ae, //’Aokxa , Xoan//’an /Ai!ae, Festus, and #Oma Leon made three visits each in 2025 to the four new village playgroups. The four villages selected for this year were Baraka, Xamsa, Maxamisi, De#ua. There are now over 30 villages that have playgroups. The project goal remains to introduce through play-exploration basic literacy and math materials to village children to lessen anxiety in the youngest children and their parents as they transition to the Village and Tsumkwe schools.

The playgroups developed a Ju/’hoansi language click puzzle that features the four unique sounds in the language. Last year the team was able to take the puzzle to all four villages, and it was a big hit. Everyone in the village, young and old, is invited to play and explore with the youngest children.

# KALAHARI ARTS AND HERITAGE FESTIVAL: NORTHERN CAPE, SA



**\$3,000.00**

Festival support

IMAGE SOURCE: KALAHARI ARTS AND HERITAGE FESTIVAL. ACCESSED AT [HTTPS://KAHF.CO.ZA/](https://kahf.co.za/)

The Kalahari Arts and Heritage Festival + ArtsMart is an annual festival aimed at empowering Khoi and San communities, particularly youth and women artists in the Northern Cape province of South Africa. KPF supported transport of the artists to the festival in 2025. The program entails the employment of Khoi and San artists who were trained to create immersive and interactive art installations. The installations were showcased in galleries, museums and festivals. In the same vein, Khoi and San theatre performers were employed to receive mentorship, working in teams to develop high quality productions that can travel both locally and internationally, earning income while showcasing the San culture and heritage.

The main event, a culmination of a two month program, happened January 24-25<sup>th</sup>, 2025 in Rietfontein, a San community, 280km west of Upington town. This community borders Namibia. San communities of Loubos, Andriesvale, Upington, Reitfontein, Groot Meir, Klein Meir and Platfontein attended the event and participate in the activities.

**KAHF.CO.ZA**

# SUPPORTING SAN ARTISANS



IMAGE SOURCE: OMBAARTS TRUST

KPF supported Omba Arts with delivering operational support to the rural artisans in its fold and giving them an entry point into global markets, but also a conduit for delivering opportunities to further improve their sense of agency and well-being.

Omba Arts has their roots back to the early 1990s when founding director, Karin le Roux, started traveling to rural communities around Namibia, researching the development of the local craft sector and providing training, whilst planting the seeds of relationships and networks that still remain strong today. These early years laid the foundation for the independent Namibian support organization that was to become Omba Arts Trust in 2004.

Omba supports more than 450 artisans and artists from nine regions, most of whom are women and many of whom are San artists. Omba Arts has a fair trade ethos in which they unequivocally subscribe to the fair-trade practices of building trusting relationships, skills development, promoting resilience, and addressing environmental concerns.

# HAI//OM COMMUNITY PROJECTS



IMAGE SOURCE: RINO TSAM

**\$3,122.00**

Sewing Circle Project

**\$3,600.00**

Decent Shelter Project

**\$2,629.00**

Kindergarten/Language school

**SEWING CIRCLE:** The goal or the aim of the Sewing Circle is to fund these women with the needed materials, so that they will be able to make more profit by sewing more clothes at a more productive, increased, rate. The longer-term goal is to deposit 40% from after cost profit, for every item sold, into a community account towards future expansion of the sewing project towards: Mentoring and teaching the young ladies that have a passion in sewing in order to create and strengthen self-employment initiatives and sustainability; and building a suitable shelter for them to do their work and to teach their craft in a group setting, for currently the women always meet at home and sew together as a group, sharing ideas and skills.

**DECENT SHELTER:** Community-based youth mobilizers with the Headman of Hai//om San communities in Oshivelo and Ondera resettlement farm, were conducting a wellbeing of our community households Survey/research, and identified a crucial need for providing a decent shelter for 6(six) different households, 3 Three households in Oshivelo and another 3 in Ondera resettlement farm. Unfortunately, these households do not have proper shelters during this rainy season and some households sharing a room with quite a number of people. Everyone knows that these are the ones who need help. We all agree. KPF provided support for the materials of the shelter and the community build them together.

**HOPE KINDERGARTEN** is a community-based school located in Oshivelo's Southern Location for the Hai||om San marginalized children, and has two Hai||om San teachers. The kindergarten was opened on the 1st of March 2021 in Oshivelo Southern Location, locally known as Hai||om Location. Currently the school is using a local church office as a classroom, rent free. Hope Kindergarten has been serving 30 Hai||om San learners by providing foundational education and care. In addition, it has also been sharing important traditional Hai||on San cultural and ancestral knowledge, to ensure that it is passed on, and sound traditional community-centered values and respect for elders and what they have to teach. KPF provided materials for the relocation of the kindergarten and the community rebuilt it.

# ‡KHOMANI COMMUNITY



**\$3,400.00**

Kitchen and Elder  
Circle

IMAGE SOURCE: FLEMING PUCKETT

**Community Kitchen:** The kitchen at Erin farm will open every day and be available as tourists pass by or stop into Erin Farm. (The farmhouse is right next to the main Erin Farm gates and is just across the road from Barbara & Arie Raats’s “living museum” activities, which KPF has supported in the past.) When fully running in the past, this restaurant – with traditional Kalahari meals cooked over open fires – was a great benefit to the community, as it was the primary ‡Khomani “attraction” open to the public and visible from the road. KPF is also supporting the creation of an elders’ meeting, sewing, and dinner series. Magdalena, a community leader would like to bring together the elder ‡Khomani San women to share clothes- and craft-making skills and also to show the community’s appreciation for these elder women for their contributions to the community and, in some cases, their continuation of the N/uu language. KPF provided materials to restart the kitchen.

# !XUN AND KHWE SAN HEMP GROWING PROJECT



IMAGE SOURCE: CANNABROKER SA.

**Hemp Farm:** The aim of the Hemp Growing project is to economically uplift members of the !Xun and Khwe San community in Platfontein. The Project would also help curb the high rate of unemployment in the community. The project has the potential to create jobs for many people. The !Xun and Khwe San Community which would benefit from the hemp project is situated nearby Kimberley in the Northern Cape Province of the Republic of South Africa. Platfontein is home to more than twelve thousand !Xun and Khwe San people. The residents of Platfontein are originally from Angola and Namibia. KPF provided start up funds to the community for the farm.

# ≠KHOMANI COMMUNITY



IMAGE SOURCE: FLEMING PUCKETT

**\$9,498.00**

Erin Farm Fence  
Repair and  
Marketing and  
Restoration

**\$6,975.00**

Wendy Tourist  
Houses

**Farm Restoration Project.** KPF helped provide support for the San owned Erin Farm Game farm as well as major restoration projects to the Khomani farms. The farm is a source of revenue for the community. KPF also supported the manager, to attend three trade fairs across South Africa to promote the Farm.

**Khomani Wendy House Tourism Project.** Community members build the floor for the Wendy's and are busy finishing the process of the rest of the work. KPF helped to supply bricks, steel wire, and cement to finish the rest of the building. KPF also assisted in providing toilets and showers at the buildings, and Solar system which can give all buildings power and light.

# TRACKING SCHOOL: NYAE NYAE



IMAGE SOURCE: JENNIFER HAYS

## TRAINING FOR MASTER TRACKERS

Rolf Dam, the n!orekxao of //Xa/oba village, a former teacher and Ju/'hoan activist from the Nyae Nyae community, is concerned about the fact that children from Nyae Nyae are not learning their traditional skills. Coming from a community that has a living museum and that often welcomes tourists, he can see the potential economic benefits that come from traditional skills. They also recognize the importance of the Master Tracker programme, but worry that if the youth are not learning their skills, there will not be people that can go through that program. Rolf and his team also readily articulate the cultural importance of traditional skills for general well-being of the youth. KPF is helping to support a tracking school that can affirm the value of traditional skills, and teach those skills, in the Nyae Nyae area. They also wish to eventually connect these schools with 'schools' for tourists that come to learn about traditional San skills.

## E KXA TSOSISI (‘OUR LAND RIGHTS’)



IMAGE CREDIT: JORGE FERNANDEZ GARCES. ACCESSED AT [HTTPS://PHOTOGRAPHERS.LIGHTROCKET.COM/GALLERIES/9652/BUSHMEN](https://photographers.lightrocket.com/galleries/9652/bushmen)

**\$4,500.00**

Resource Mapping, Training,  
Documenting, Preparing

E Kxa Tsosisi’s mission is to establish a robust foundation for youth activists from the San Community by providing comprehensive training, fostering community engagement, and leading advocacy efforts.

The vibrant group is committed to securing land and human rights while promoting sustainable resource management that benefits all community members. A database will be developed to track interactions with government entities, ensuring ongoing follow-up on raised issues. Through these coordinated efforts, the initiative aims to create a more informed and empowered community capable of advocating for their rights and sustainable resource management. KPF is providing support for the following objectives.

1. Educate Community Members about Their Rights Under Namibian Law
2. Support Sustainable Management of Natural Resources
2. Promote Fair and Equitable Land Distribution
3. Foster Collaboration Between the Two Conservancies

# HEALERS' CAMP



**\$2,015.00**

Healers' Camp

IMAGE SOURCE: JENNIFER HAYS

Traditional healers are vital in San culture for spiritual, social, and physical well-being, addressing holistic health through trance dances, herbal medicine, and connecting with ancestors to cure ailments, mend social discord (like "star sickness"), and maintain community harmony, often serving as primary caregivers for illnesses and spiritual issues. KPF is helping to support a community driven effort to support elder healers in the training of younger healers in Botswana. Healers are able to come together and learn traditional skills from the few elder healers still practicing in the community. KPF is planning to extend that healing work to the Namibian side of the border in the near future.

# KHAUDUM FILM PROJECT



IMAGE SOURCE: JENNIFER HAYS

This project seeks to document and reclaim the deep ancestral ties between the Ju/'hoansi people and the lands of Khaudum National Park. This initiative is not only a cultural preservation effort, but also a response to a painful colonial history.

In the 1970s, during the height of the South African Border War, many Ju/'hoansi were removed from their ancestral territories in Khaudum by the South African Defense Force (SADF). They were conscripted into military service, often as trackers and displaced from the landscapes that had sustained their communities for generations. This separation disconnected cultural continuity and disrupted their relationship with the land.

Today, the Ju/'hoansi enjoy no rights over the land. Through the film project, elders share stories about Khaudum, map sacred sites, and pass on ecological knowledge to younger generations. It is a powerful act of remembrance and restoration, reaffirming their identity and rights to the land.

# ELAND SCHOOL : †KHOMANI SAN



IMAGE SOURCE: ELAND SCHOOL, ACCESSED THROUGH [HTTPS://WWW.ELANDSCHOOL.ORG/](https://www.elandschool.org/)

**\$2,488.00**

Afterschool Homework Support

In 2015 the school was granted a section of the †Khomani San communal land on which to establish a school. A comprehensive survey was completed with every household in the community to make sure that everyone was on-board with the new school as well as ascertaining how the community would like the school to operate. The Community felt that school registration, with the Department of Education, would also help with recognition for the †Khomani San as a people with their own language and culture. The school was eventually registered in 2023.

KPF helped to support the after school homework programme that offers Learners from Grades 3- 7 (aged 8 – 14) the opportunity to get help with their studies and to do their homework in a controlled safe environment. Many learners in this community do not have a table or electricity at home. The teachers give lessons where needed, answer individual questions and check homework. The programme provides sandwiches and a fortified milk drink to the learners before they settle to their studies as some of the learners live beyond walking distance from Eland School, transport to these students is also provided.

# KHWE SMALL SHELTER COLLECTIVE



**\$15,595.00**

17 Small Shelters for Community

IMAGE SOURCE: JILL BROWN

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The Khwe community in Kavango East organized to provide simple, weather-resistant zinc housing structures for the community that has been very marginalized. The community worked together to build small family homes for the 17 households that are living at "Gumudame", meaning 'let the heart be at peace'. The families all worked together to assess and build therefore encouraging self-reliance and community togetherness.



IMAGE SOURCE: ELAINE HAMUTENYA

# TJU IHO BOOK PROJECT AND COBBLERATION CONFERENCE



IMAGE SOURCE: FUTURE FOOTWEAR FOUNDATION. ACCESSED THROUGH [HTTPS://WWW.FUTUREFOOTWEARFOUNDATION.COM/](https://www.futurefootwearfoundation.com/)

KPF helped to support the publication and launch of Tju|Ho - thoughtful ways of making and walking” - Making of the bilingual publication (English and Ju’|Hoan) with the editing team in Tsumkwe.

This book is a deep dive into stories of the eland, on the significance of re-creating the hunting sandal and envisioning how to bring the project straight into the future.

Future Footwear Foundation believe it is necessary to produce shoes in a way that respect body and planet, while also respecting the rights of those who produce them, and rewarding the Indigenous communities for the expertise and skills they provide.

The San-Dal is a minimal, natural leather sandal handmade by the Ju’/hoansi San people of the Kalahari Desert. Working in partnership with Vivo Barefoot([@vivobarefoot](https://www.vivobarefoot.com/)) and guided by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, they established a long-term collaboration with the Ju’/hoansi San people, to support the regeneration of a lost craft and preserve ancient (barefoot) wisdom. The launch was at !Khwatla in May 2025 where several Ju’/hoansi speakers attended.

# BOARD INVOLVEMENT

**THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS IS THE BACKBONE OF OUR ORGANIZATION. THROUGH YEARS OF ENGAGED PARTICIPATORY ACTIVISM AND SCHOLARSHIP, OUR BOARD ACTS AS A LIAISON TO THE COMMUNITIES THAT KPF SERVES.**

**PLEASE READ ABOUT THE WORK WE ARE DOING.**



## **Jennifer Hays**

I have been working with San communities in southern Africa since 1998, focusing on the complex issues relating to participation in mainstream formal education systems, traditional knowledge and practices, and land rights. One of my main case studies is the Ju/'hoansi of the Nyae Nyae Conservancy in Namibia, where I work with community members that are seeking to establish and control their own schooling processes. My research also examines the extent to which Indigenous communities in Namibia are still dependent upon, value, and maintain their traditional knowledge, and relationships between traditional land use practices and biodiversity. I am currently a professor of anthropology at the University of Tromsø - Arctic University of Norway.



## **Megan Biesele**

As the recently retired Executive Director of KPF, I remain a board member and am most active in the areas of education and language. I focus on two areas, 1) documenting cultural and linguistic heritage and 2) promoting continuation of the San healing dance knowledge and practice. Specifically, I manage, work collaboratively with, and raise funds for the Ju|'hoan Transcription Group of semi-professional native speakers who transcribe and translate verbal heritage materials such as folklore and oral histories for community educational materials and scholarly archives.

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## **Ashley Hazel:**

As a member of the KPF board since 2023, I have nearly twenty years of experience working with Indigenous Namibian communities (Himba, Ju/'hoansi). My research broadly measures health outcomes from ecological strategies. I am currently an assistant professor at the University of California, San Francisco, where I continue to build research that explores livelihood decision-making in the context of resource scarcity and health tradeoffs.



## **Robert Hitchcock**

As a long-standing KPF Board member (since 1979) I interact with NGOs and communities seeking KPF support. My work as a professor of Anthropology at the University of New Mexico allows me the opportunity to teach courses on Africa, hunter-gatherers, and Indigenous Peoples' rights. I am currently assisting on legal cases for land rights in Namibia (Nyae Nyae) and the Central Kalahari Game Reserve of Botswana. Much of my research and activist work relates to displacement and resettlement of Indigenous Peoples in Southern Africa.

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**Dr. R. Fleming Puckett**

I have been a KPF Board member since 2015. My research centers on two primary areas: philanthropy in US universities and South Africa's land reform program. I have been instrumental in helping KPF connect with fundable educational, cultural, livelihoods, and land-related projects among the =Khomani and Khwe San people of South Africa's Northern Cape.



**Jill Brown**

I have been on the KPF board since 2023 and am serving as the Executive Director. My first experience in southern Africa was as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ohangwena regions from 1996-1999. My training as a cultural psychologist has led me to explore alloparental care, kinship networks, and 'oketekula' (child fosterage) in the north of Namibia. I am a member of the Namibian Child and Youth Research Consortium, a group of Namibian and international scholars. I am currently working with colleagues at University of Namibia to longitudinally study the cultural logic of sharing and distributive justice within and across in communities in Namibia.

MELISSA HECKLER

# LESSONS FROM KALAHARI JU/'HOAN CULTURE

DEMOCRACY,  
CHILDBEARING, EDUCATION,  
AND COMMUNITY



## NEW BOOK RECOMMENDATION

CONGRATULATIONS, MELISSA

Jul'hoansi have occupied the Kalahari Desert in Namibia, Africa for at least 35,000 years and possess the oldest human DNA. Their traditional educational practices are the oldest curricula human beings have. Jul'hoan collective decision-making processes epitomize direct, participatory democracy: one person/one vote, enhanced by in-depth negotiations that lead to consensus. These practices are the basis for their education and culture. For Jul'hoansi, child autonomy is paramount and for democracy to thrive, children require independence to make decisions through play-exploration to experience multiple possible outcomes. This book explores how this egalitarian culture became the foundation of an enduring democracy.

MELISSA HECKLER IS A RETIRED PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARIAN FROM THE UNITED STATES. SHE SERVES ON THE NGO COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS, NY AND IS AN EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANT AND ACTIVIST FOR THE KALAHARI PEOPLES' FUND SINCE 1990.



A 501 (c)(3) Organization  
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**Email the Executive**

**Director**

[Jill Brown](#)

**Send us a letter!**

Kalahari Peoples Fund

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# Work with Us



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Website

<https://www.kalaharipeoples.org/>

KPF intern: Maria Christoffersen and Siwayi Koroneria, on visit in 2025 discussing the small shelter project in Gumundame. Siwayi built her own home in November 2025.