

**Editor's note:** *ELF is pleased to present the first in an occasional series of profiles on key speakers at the upcoming Radically Rural summit on Sept. 24. Experts in six track areas provide ideas and solutions in the areas of entrepreneurship, lands and community, main streets and downtowns, arts and culture, community journalism and clean energy.*

# EMPOWERING COMMUNITY THROUGH ARTS AND HUMANITIES

By Annika Kristiansen



Anthony Poore,  
Executive Director of New  
Hampshire Humanities



The arts offer a means to empower individuals and communities to overcome ingrained attitudes that create social and economic injustice, according to Anthony Poore, executive director of New Hampshire Humanities.

“When we effectively leverage the humanities, a community is able to cultivate a sense of place,” he said. “And [for] its members, a sense of belonging.”

Poore will speak at this year's Radically Rural Remote summit as part of the Arts and Culture Track. He has more than 25 years of experience in community economic development as a practitioner, policy analyst, researcher and executive. Prior to joining New Hampshire Humanities, he served as director of regional and community outreach at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, and before that was assistant dean at Southern New Hampshire University.

A common thread tying together his careers is an interest in forging partnerships among a wide range of key players to address the needs of urban and rural communities. Today, he finds the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and current social justice movement offering new opportunities to rethink and forge these new relationships while also questioning the systems and institutions from which they were born. As New Hampshire becomes increasingly diverse, Poore wants people to feel they are better represented in the places they choose to live.

“We must change the idea of belonging. People are coming into communities and don't feel like they fit,” he said. “Places today are informed by their economic history. When we work within a community to change it, we have to learn how to acknowledge its past in order to discover a natural course for the future.”

At New Hampshire Humanities, Poore works to offer programs that serve diverse people from the surrounding communities. Recently, a series of online presentations offered insight into “Black Perspectives on the Humanities,” including information on the Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire.

Additionally, the non-profit offers the only grant program in New Hampshire devoted to supporting the public humanities. Funds are directed toward cultural and civic organizations, museums, colleges, libraries, historical societies, theaters and other nonprofits around the state. The New Hampshire Humanities' website ([nhhumanities.org](http://nhhumanities.org)) shares, “In the past year, we funded events and activities about everything from Native American stories and who should tell them to what motivates inventors; from the values that shape human relationships to the environment to the role of diplomacy in history and today's world.”

With a strong belief that the arts help to communicate the culture of a region, Poore finds that encouraging human creativity and thoughtfulness allows communities to thrive. He sees the events of the day as a time to examine and acknowledge where the country stands, and then begin reparations. The work, he stresses, calls on community members as individuals to take on new roles that may have previously seemed too large. With the support of a community — made strong and resilient by a well-established foothold in the humanities — this work is made achievable, he said.

In May, New Hampshire Humanities was given \$400,000 from the CARES Act. This money was distributed to nearly 50 communities in the form of 64 grants to bolster key change-makers and support systems.

“Like life, art manifests itself in many different forms and mediums,” Poore said. “By leveraging the arts to support community development, identity and sense of belonging, we are working toward higher degrees of civil engagement and a democratic society.”

Poore's Radically Rural session, Community Connection Starts with the Arts, will be held on Sept. 24 at 11 a.m. He hopes to convey to his audience that no matter who they are or where they live, there is a path and a role for them in supporting the growth of society through the arts.

For more information on Anthony Poore, his session or to register for this year's event, visit [radicallyrural.org](http://radicallyrural.org).