

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to speak about the North Dakota Museum of Art's Rural Arts Initiative. My name is Matthew Wallace and I am the Executive Director of the Museum. I left North Dakota upon graduating from the University of North Dakota, but returned in 2004 to start this program.

The Rural Arts Initiative began as a pilot education program for rural schools throughout North Dakota. The first exhibition the Museum toured was *Snow Country Prison: Interned in North Dakota*. This exhibition tells the story of Germans and Japanese nationals interned in Ft. Lincoln, at what is today the United Tribes Technical College just south of Bismarck. The exhibition proved to be a valuable education tool for teachers in the Visual Arts, North Dakota and World History, and English.

It is the Museum's intent to travel exhibitions of original artwork relevant to rural communities throughout the State. For example, in 2005 the Museum launched a group exhibition titled *Shelterbelts*, an exhibition by three regional artists that examines the changing landscape and farming practices in the State. From 2005 - 2008, the demand for exhibitions was such that the Museum decided to bring back *Snow Country Prison* and curate a new exhibition, *Artists: Self Portraits*, to allow us to tour multiple exhibitions at the same time.

Since 2004, the Rural Arts Initiative has delivered 24 exhibitions relevant to North Dakota communities including *Marking the Land: Jim Dow in North Dakota*, documenting the folk art, architecture, religious life, and hunting and fishing practices in the State; *American Nile*, which tells the story of migrant farmers in the Red River Valley; and *In Our Own Words: Native Impressions*, a print exhibition by two North Dakota artists, exploring contemporary Native American perspectives. Recent additions to the Rural Arts Initiative include *Uff-Da: The Folk Art of Emily Lunde*, which celebrates the folk artist, whose works document early Scandinavian immigrant experiences in the Red River Valley. Another highlight is *The Great Open: Photographs from North Dakota*, which commissioned artists, Alex Webb and Rebecca Norris Webb, to weave their distinct photographic styles into a multifaceted portrait of North Dakota. The newest touring exhibition, *Crossroads*, examines the intersections of community, culture, and history. This thought-provoking collection highlights shared experiences and connections, offering a dynamic exploration of the diverse stories that shape the state.

Since this program's inception, the Museum has installed exhibitions in:

Ashley, Grafton, Crosby, Bowman, Washburn, Cavalier, Cooperstown, Valley City, Jamestown, Dickinson, Casselton, Minnewaukan, Rugby, Edinburg, LaMoure, Ft. Totten, McVillage, Ellendale, Mayville, Stanley, Fargo, Steele, Bottineau, Dunseith, Linton, Hettinger, Ft. Yates, Cando, Pekin, Mohall, Langdon, Hankinson, Minot, Rolla, Westhope, Bismarck, New Rockford, Oakes, Wahpeton, Devils Lake, Enderlin, Williston, Fessenden, and Zeeland.

Many of these towns have hosted multiple exhibitions and numerous towns surrounding these communities have attended exhibitions.

Components:

- Museum staff works with community volunteers throughout the State to find a suitable space to host an exhibition.
- The Museum delivers, installs, and returns to take down the exhibition free-of-charge.

- Museum staff train community volunteers on exhibition content, conducting school tours, and on supplementary exhibition material.
- Museum Education staff creates numerous lesson plans for various school age groups and makes them available on-line.
- The Museum facilitates bringing area schools within a 50 – 60-mile radius of the exhibition site to the exhibition for educational purposes.
- Supply reimbursement money to schools for bussing, bus drivers, and substitute teachers.

Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Attendance: 5,901 – *Uff-Da! The Folk Art of Emily Lunde*

Medora - 4,000 (June 20) July 1 – August 26, 2022
 Hettinger - 223 August 29 – September 9, 2022
 Langdon - 236 September 12 – 23, 2022
 Ellendale - 389 September 26 – October 31, 2022
 Valley City - 252 November 1 – November 18, 2022
 Fessenden - 202 February 13 – 27, 2023
 Williston - 317 March 3 – 31, 2023
 Bowman - 282 April 1 – April 24, 2023

Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Attendance: 7,649 – *Uff-Da! The Folk Art of Emily / The Great Open*

Dunseith - 1764 August 2 – 24, 2023
 Jamestown - 287 October 2 – 20, 2023
 Crosby -275 February 28 – March 12, 2024
 Bismarck - 228 March 1 – 31, 2024
 Fessenden - 322 March 14 – 28, 2024
 Ellendale - 395 April 8 – 26, 2024
 Dunseith - 4378 May 15 – June 27, 2024

Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Attendance: Ongoing – *The Great Open / Crossroads*

Fargo - 236 July 1 – 30, 2024
 Minot - 623 August 8 – September 21, 2024
 Langdon - 264 September 24 – October 3, 2024
 Pekin - 219 October 8 – 18, 2024
 Fort Totten - 205 November 5 – December 1, 2024
 Valley City - 291 December 4, 2024 – January 3, 2025
 Jamestown 187+ December 20, 2024 – January 30, 2025
 Wahpeton January 27 – March 3, 2025
 Oakes February 4 – 26, 2025
 Crosby March 4 – 18, 2025
 Hebron March 24 – April 2, 2025
 Ellendale April 4 – 25, 2025
 Dunseith May 14 – June 30, 2025

Praise for the Rural Arts Initiative:

We are incredibly appreciative that we were able to provide this fantastic artistic opportunity to our town and the other neighboring communities, and we eagerly anticipate collaborating with the North Dakota Museum of Art and Rural Arts Initiative in the future to bring even more art programs and experiences to our area. We believe that exposure to art at a young age is crucial in fostering creativity and appreciation for different forms of expression.

—Allison Muncaster, Art Teacher, Divide County High School