

North Dakota Museum of Art  
Rural Schools Initiative  
March 2021

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to submit a written statement detailing the North Dakota Museum of Art's Rural Schools Initiative. My name is Matthew Wallace and I am the Deputy 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 School 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.

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 had to reprint *Snow Country Prison* in order to get it back into rural communities. For that we would like to thank you for the financial support. This exhibition has been a valuable education tool for teachers in the Visual Arts, North Dakota and World History, and English. In addition to *Snow Country Prison*, and *Shelterbelts* we added *Artists: Self Portraits*, an exhibition of 50 local, national and international artists making self portraits in various medias.

After *Shelterbelts* ended its tour the Museum added *Marking the Land: Jim Dow in North Dakota*, a photo exhibition dating back 25 years documenting the folk art, architecture, religious life, and hunting and fishing practices in the State. The Museum published a photo book to accompany the exhibition, and in 2007 American Photo proclaimed it to be one of the top ten photo books in the United States. Over the last few years, the Museum has added exhibitions such as *Animals: Them and Us*, *Fantastic*, *American Nile*, which tells the story of migrant farmers in the Red River Valley, BEADS, *In Our Own Words: Native Impressions*, an print exhibition by two North Dakota artists and one Philadelphia artist; *Beyond Home*, art from the permanent collection documenting the human experience; and *Nancy Friese: Encircling Trees and Radiant Skies*, landscape paintings and prints by Nancy Friese of Buxton, ND.

In the last two years the Museum presented exhibitions by or about North Dakota. The first, *Elmer Thompson: Inventor*, told the story of Elmer Thompson who was the official photographer for the State Normal and Industrial School in Ellendale in the early 1900s. Not only did he practice his skills as a photographer, but Mr. Thompson earned the first six of his ultimate thirty patents at the AT&T Headquarters at 195 Broadway. From there he moved to RCA Victor, then spent several decades at Philco, where he earned two dozen more patents, including the first wireless radio remote control (Philco's "Mystery Control") and a phonograph that transferred the signal from record to the amplifier by means of an optical sensor (the "Beam of Light" system).

The other North Dakota based exhibition was a painting show by North Dakota native Frank Sampson of Edmore, ND. Sampson left the family farm as a young man and spent his career teaching painting in Boulder, CO. At the age of 94, he still returns to the farm twice a year to paint for one month stretches. Sampson's paintings are rooted in the life he grew up with on the farm.

Components:

- Museum staff works with community volunteers in 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.
- Work to bring schools within a 50 – 60-mile radius of the exhibition site to the exhibition for educational purposes.
- Supply reimbursement money to schools that wish to participate. The Museum reimburses .80/mile, \$10/hr, up to three hours for a bus driver, up to \$75/day for substitute teachers if be need.

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, Cavalier, Stanley, Fargo, Steele, Bottineau, Linton, Hettinger, Ft. Yates, Cando, Pekin, Mohall, Langdon, Hankinson, Minot, Rolla, Westhope, Underwood, Bismarck, New Rockford, Wahpeton Minnewauken, and Devils Lake.

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

Last year the Museum installed an exhibition at the Peace Garden, the first in what is becoming a multi-year partnership. Museum Education Staff is working with the Peace Garden on a rotating exhibition schedule for North Dakota students visiting throughout the year. In May the Museum will return to the zoo in Wahpeton where nearly 10,000 students pass through in the month. Zoo staff members now say teachers call ahead to see what exhibition will be on display. School visits to the zoo now include arts education in their visit.

This year the Museum will begin touring an exhibition by Emily Lunde, one of North Dakota's most prolific folk art painters. Lunde's paintings detail life of the early settlers throughout the region.