



# Plains Talk

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NORTH DAKOTA • SPRING 2014  
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## Two New Galleries Now Open

By Kim Jondahl, Communications & Education Director

### We're Open!

On Monday, April 28,  
two of the four new  
museum galleries  
opened to the public!

Tour the Adaptation  
Gallery: Geologic Time  
and the Innovation  
Gallery: Early Peoples!

When David Swenson, owner of Makoche Recording Company in Bismarck, first stepped into the new Innovation Gallery: Early Peoples during a recent tour, he was silent for several moments, taking in the artifacts and sights. "Wow," he finally whispered with reverence. "This is far more impressive than I expected."

The Innovation Gallery: Early Peoples opened on April 28, along with the Adaptation Gallery: Geologic Time.

The story of this fascinating gallery begins more than 13,000 years ago when people

began to migrate to the land that would become North Dakota. This journey starts with Paleoindians, the first hunters. Visitors will see a *Bison antiquus* skeleton, spears and other weapons, and exquisite workmanship in their stone tool technology.

The space invites one to learn about the tribes of North Dakota as they



*Continued from page 1*

were before contact with European-Americans and the fur trade, and also view them as sovereign nations of today. The gallery offers an immersive visitor experience with opportunities for touching items, watching videos, listening to native languages and music, testing bows, and more. A number of murals depict the environment and activities of Native Americans throughout their



Devoted to the earliest people of North Dakota, the Innovation Gallery highlights the beauty and breadth of the State Museum's collections.

rich heritage. Many of these paintings are based on archaeological investigations at these sites.

Learn about hallmarks of human innovation during this time, including the atlatl used for thousands of years and the transition to the bow and arrow as the weapon of

## Security Staff Wins Excellence Award

Congratulations to the Security staff! The Security team members of the ND Heritage Center and State Museum were recipients of the 2013 Staff Award for Excellence. The award was presented at the agency staff's holiday party in January 2014. This honor is given each year to a SHSND staff member selected by his or her colleagues as an outstanding employee.



Tim Stock, security supervisor, accepts the award on behalf of the security staff from Merl Paaverud (L), agency director, and Dave Skalsky, assistant director.

choice. See fragments of the earliest known pottery vessels in the state. Envision North Dakota's earliest cities. Imagine a tipi as your home. Find items that relate to your own family tree. The Learning Lab offers hands-on experiences for everyone.

"This gallery is the culmination of many years of planning and work," says Fern Swenson, director of Archaeology and Historic Preservation with the Society. "There is so much to see and do, and something for everyone. Many of the artifacts have not been displayed previously."

The new gallery also offers expanded space to display the State Museum's outstanding Native American collections. Exhibits of dresses, pants, moccasins, shirts, saddlebags, and more will allow visitors to appreciate the artistry behind the quillwork and beadwork.

The Innovation Gallery features more than 960 carefully selected artifacts, pottery fragments, stone tools, and additional objects that date back several millennia up to current times—all drawn from the State Historical Society's collections. Stone tools from the Beach Clovis site that are 13,000 years old are among the oldest objects in on display. Visitors will be able to navigate the gallery according to personal interests, fashioning their own unique experiences while gaining insight into the beautiful exhibits.

"This is exactly what North Dakota needs right now," said David Swenson, "reminders of what a rich past we have."

# In the Limelight: A Paleontologist Who Digs Her Career

By Bonnie Johnson, *Communications & Education*



Becky Barnes has known exactly what she wanted to be since she was six years old. A light switch came on in her head when she saw a Dinamation (robotic dinosaurs) exhibit at the Hjemkomst Center in her hometown of Moorhead. “I knew then I wanted to study real monsters!” she said. From then on, she asked for dinosaur books for every Christmas and birthday. She spent hours in her bedroom uncovering fossil fish from stone, using a dental pick and a microscope. Becky was on her way to becoming a paleontologist.

Sitting in her new office in the lower level of the North Dakota Heritage Center’s expansion, Becky reminisces about becoming a female scientist in a field heavily dominated by men. “When I was 16 years old, Concordia College in Moorhead offered a Communiversity class called ‘Digging Dinosaurs.’” It was an opportunity to work with Dr. Ron Neller-moe, a biologist and paleontologist. “He was not thrilled; he did not want a 16-year-old girl going on digs with him. But we went to South Dakota, and by the end of the dig, he figured I’d held my own,” she said.

**“My heart is in digging in the dirt.”**

The budding scientist became a biology major at Concordia. Becky also continued to work with Neller-moe in the Concordia geology lab. She worked with the *Edmontosaurus* fossils in Concor-

dia’s collection, which has come in handy. “Dakota,” the famous duck-billed dinosaur at the Heritage Center, is also an *Edmontosaurus*, and Becky works on it as part of her current position.

Barnes earned her master’s in biology at NDSU and continued her work with the Concordia fossil collection. She also earned a teaching degree, but knew she really wanted to work for the North Dakota Geological Survey (NDGS) in the field of paleontology, where jobs are scarce.

Fortunately, Becky was hired when a position opened in the paleontology department at the NDGS in Bismarck for fossil preparation. “My heart is in digging in the dirt, fossil prep, and putting the bones back together,” she said. “I am exactly where I want to be – I have no interest in any other position,” she said. “I know how lucky I am.”



Becky Barnes, paleontologist with the North Dakota Geological Survey, Department of Mineral Resources, makes a mold of a *Titanoides* skull. *Titanoides* was the largest bear-like mammal that inhabited North Dakota 60 million years ago when western North Dakota was a subtropical swampland.

As fossil preparator and paleontology lab manager for the NDGS, Becky does everything from field work (digging and prospecting) to lab work (cleaning and repairing fossils, making impressions or casts of fossils) to drawing and painting images that show what fossils may have looked like. “The best part of my job is the variety. There is no typical day. One day I work on cleaning dinosaur skin, the next day I help design exhibits, the next I make casts of a skeleton, or any combination of those. I am never bored.” With the expansion of the Heritage Center came the opportunity to create ideas for an entire gallery dedicated to North Dakota geology, including her beloved dinosaurs.

“I love being able to bring to my job my random hobbies,” Becky said. “Things that you’d never think would help actually do. I love jigsaw puzzles, woodworking, sculpting, painting, and taxidermy. I love using my art background to put monsters back together.” She also enjoys yoga, Middle Eastern dance, riding her motorcycle, and tending her raspberries.

Becky Barnes is exactly where she wants to be.

## 2013 Theater Photo Contest Winners Announced



The Archaeology and Historic Preservation Division of the State Historical Society held a public photo contest in 2013 to gather images and information on theaters in North Dakota. The theme of the photo contest changes each year. “Theaters were chosen as the subject because these buildings are facing the challenges of converting to digital screening,” said Lorna Meidinger, architectural historian with the agency.

The overall winning photograph showcases the **Botno Theater marquee**, Bottineau, ND, submitted by Linda McNea of Bottineau. Kristine Harris of Gwinner was named a category winner for her photo of the **Elm Tree Amphitheater** at Fort Ransom State Park.

Both winners will receive a one-year membership to the State Historical Society of North Dakota Foundation, a one-year pass to all SHSND historic sites, and a personalized tour of the SHSND collections or the state historic site of their choice.

To view the yearly winners, go to [history.nd.gov/photocontest/past\\_winners.html](http://history.nd.gov/photocontest/past_winners.html).

### DID YOU KNOW?



The Former Governors' Mansion State Historic Site in Bismarck experienced record-breaking attendance in 2013. More

than 7,000 people visited the mansion for general sightseeing, tours, and special programs. Creative new programming ideas by Site Supervisor Johnathan Campbell and staff member Jessy Hegland drew larger crowds to the site.



Halloween scarecrows made at the Former Governors' Mansion.

## Volunteers at the Heart of the Agency Celebrate Valentine's Day

On Valentine's Day 2014, more than 150 Heritage Volunteers wore red and joined in the annual celebration to show gratitude for their thousands of hours of work. “Our volunteers are part of the heartbeat of this agency,” said Merl Paaverud, SHSND director. “We truly couldn't offer all of our services without their involvement and dedication.” Coordinated by Visitor Services Coordinator Beth Campbell and Toni Reinbold, guest services coordinator, the social featured goodies brought by staff members.



## Fort Buford/Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center Named Tourist Attraction of the Year!

At the 2014 North Dakota Tourism Conference in Fargo in April, Fort Buford State Historic Site/Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center, near Williston, was awarded as Tourist Attraction of the Year. We congratulate Site Supervisor Steve Reidburn, Assistant Site Supervisor Kerry Finsaas, and the staff at this beautiful state historic site!



Kerry Finsaas, assistant site supervisor

This site is a great family destination with year-round offerings that draw people from all 50 states and 30 countries. Visitors can delve into history with on-site tours, History Alive presentations, permanent

and temporary gallery exhibits, summer encampments, monthly concerts and more. The nearby walking paths along the river provide interpretation about the flora and fauna of the area.

"With the recent influx of people to the Williston area, Fort Buford State Historic Site and the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center have been a great discovery for the state's new residents," said Historic Site Manager Diane Rogness. "Not only does it give our new residents, visitors and long-time residents a glimpse into the state's history, but it represents North Dakota's superb quality of life."

The site's visitation numbers have been increasing every year since 2010. "Our industry partners across North Dakota are an important part of the state's tourism success," said ND Tourism Director Sara Otte Coleman. "Their passion for our state combined with our unique adventures is what makes visitors' experiences legendary. We're fortunate to have people in the tourism industry who go to work each day with enthusiasm."

## Birds in Art

Dominique Salm, *Rubbernecking*



A traveling exhibit of the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum/ Wausau, WI

**On Exhibit Through June 30**

Exhibit of 60 acclaimed  
international artists

**North Dakota Heritage Center & State Museum**  
Bismarck, North Dakota

# Fascinating Donated Diary Provided Content for New Book on World War II

By Emily Schultz, State Archives

The State Archives recently acquired the diary of World War II combat pilot Lt. Francis R. "Pinky" Register, a Bismarck native, and the research papers of Dr. William Franklin Hook. Hook's 2014 book, *Pinky: the Story of North Dakota's First Aerial Combat Ace on Guadalcanal*, uses the diary and historical research to tell the story of Pinky's feats.

Register's diary is unique because men in combat were prohibited from maintaining diaries during wartime. Moreover, Register's diary provides a rare snapshot into his daily activities and experiences during the war. The first entry dates from March 1941 when he reported for United States

Navy Reserve Training. The final November 1942 entry followed a four-day sea battle at Guadalcanal. Register distinguished himself by shooting down eight Japanese planes during

Register's extraordinary heroism and achievement earned him a Distinguished Flying Cross and numerous citations. He is shown in the cockpit of the plane bearing the nickname "Cash," a moniker given to him by his fellow servicemen.

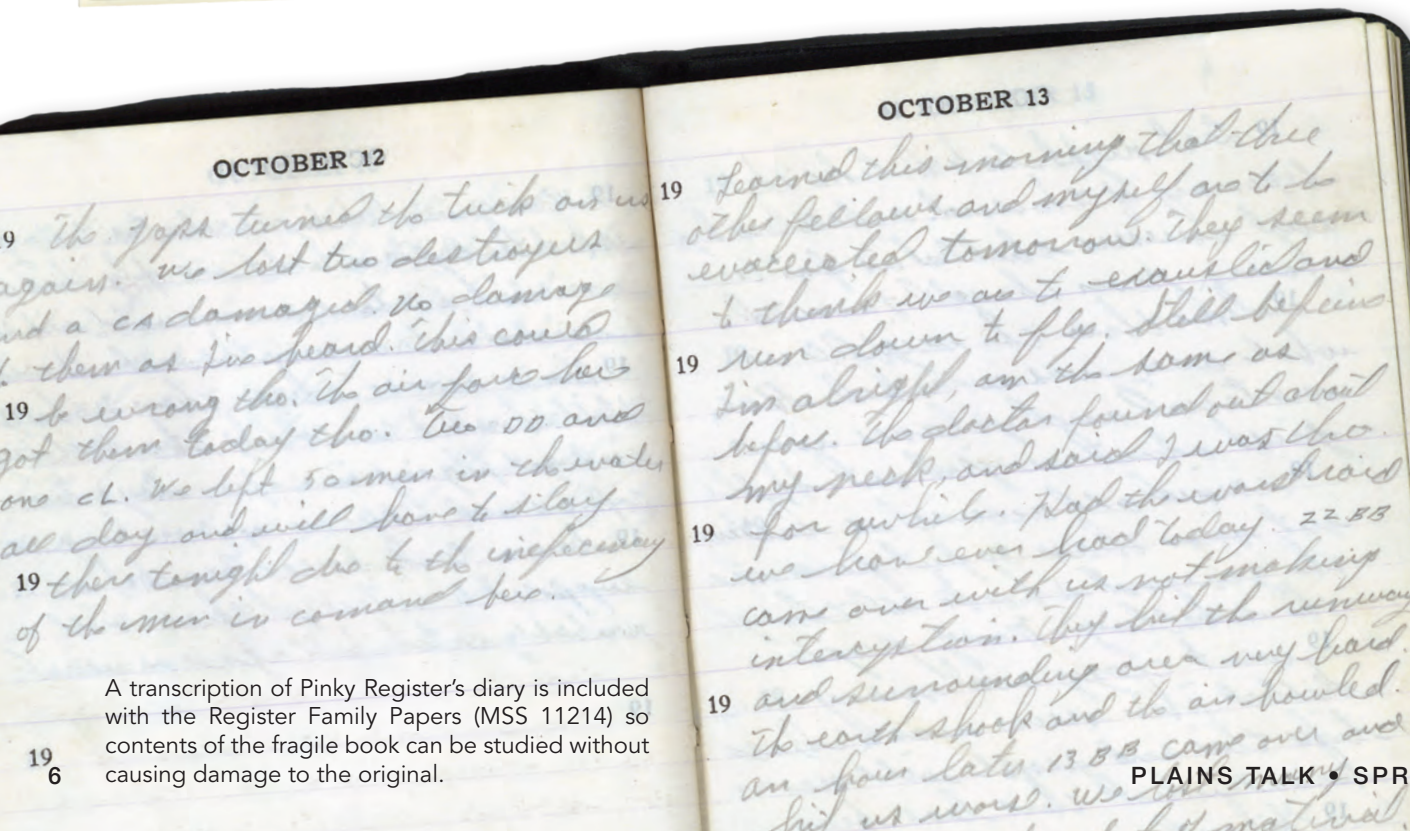
A 1935 graduate of Bismarck High School, Francis "Pinky" Register joined the Navy Aviation Cadet Program and was called into service in March 1941.

his short career. Tragically, he died in a plane crash on Attu, Alaska, during a larger army effort to drive the Japanese from the Islands. Register was awarded a Purple Heart posthumously for his service.



Lt. Francis R. "Pinky" Register

Register's military career was followed closely by *The Bismarck Tribune* and other publications in the state. The Register collection in State Archives is a rich resource for these articles, and also contains transcripts of radio interviews conducted with Register during a brief furlough in November and December 1942. The manuscript collection includes documentation of the service of Register's wife, Ruth (Christianson), who served in the Red Cross during the war, correspondence, telegrams, information about citations and awards Register received, and Hook's research on Attu, the Aleutians, the USS Nassau, and action reports.



A transcription of Pinky Register's diary is included with the Register Family Papers (MSS 11214) so contents of the fragile book can be studied without causing damage to the original.

## Highlights from the 2014 Recognition Event

The most important and fun work we do at the Foundation is to show how grateful we are for our donors and our members and our supporters. Every two years the Foundation hosts a Recognition and Thank You Event to honor donors, governors, legislators, special partners, Trustees and friends.

This year's event on April 24 honored Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of North Dakota and A. Kirk and Janet Lanterman with a special tribute from Governor George Sinner for the late Governor William Guy and First Lady Jean Guy. USDA Forest Service, Dakota Prairie Grasslands, Tesoro and other Trustee partners were honored for their investments in the Passport to North Dakota History project, and the 2001 to 2013 Legislative Assemblies were honored for their investments in the expanded North Dakota Heritage Center.



Mountrail-Williams Electric Cooperative members enjoyed great food and conversation.



A. Kirk and Janet Lanterman were honored at the April 24 Event for their \$500,000 donation for the Settlement Era exhibit in the Inspiration Gallery.



Former Governor George Sinner gave a heartfelt tribute to the late Governor William Guy and First Lady Jean Guy.



U.S. Senator John Hoeven made a special effort to give the welcome for this recognition event.



Dennis Hill, executive vice president and general manager of NDAREC, spoke about the impact rural electrification has had on the quality of life in North Dakota. "We (Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of North Dakota) have been such an integral part of this story called North Dakota....We're so proud to partner with the State Historical Society and its Foundation, our congressional delegation, our legislative leaders and our elected statewide office holders to keep writing chapter after chapter of who the RECs are and why we matter to the state's continuing growth," he said.



Virginia A. Nelsen, SHSND Foundation Executive Director



Marlo Sveen, SHSND Foundation Development Director



Karl Lembke, SHSND Foundation Fundraising Director



Bill Schott, leader of the SHSND Foundation's Trustee Membership Development

Check it out! *The SHSND Foundation's Expansion Campaign Website: [statehistoricalfoundation.com](http://statehistoricalfoundation.com)*

## May

**May 1-31**

**Birds in Art temporary exhibit** of 60 acclaimed international artists. Featuring beautiful original paintings and sculptures. Sperry Gallery of the ND Heritage Center & State Museum. Open 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday-Friday. 10 a.m.-5 p.m, Saturday-Sunday. Ends June 30.

**May 8**

**Fort Buford History Book Club**, 7:30 p.m. Join history buffs in a discussion of the month's selected book. Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center. Please call in advance, 701.572.9034.

**May 10**

**State Archives open** 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**May 10**

**Spring Film Festival** at Fort Totten Little Theatre. \$5 per person, ages 12 and up. For more information contact Nick Gronseth, 701.766.4441.

**May 13**

**Project Wet Water Festival** for 5th grade and home school students at the Fort Totten State Historic site. Hosted by the State Historical Society and the ND Water Commission. Preregistration required by calling 701.766.4441.

**May 14**

**Education Field Day** at Fort Totten State Historic Site, free of charge for area 4th grade students. For more information contact Nick Gronseth, 701.766.4441.

**May 16**

**North Dakota State Historic Sites** resume summer hours for the season, through Sept. 15. Find specific site hours at [history.nd.gov](http://history.nd.gov).

**May 16-17**

**Confluence Quilters**, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Join the *Confluence Quilters* for their monthly meeting at the Confluence. All experience levels invited and instruction provided. Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center, 701.572.9034.

**May 17**

**Spring Film Festival** at Fort Totten Little Theatre. \$5 per person, ages 12 and up. For more information contact Nick Gronseth, 701.766.4441.

**May 18**

**Free admission to all State Historic Sites** to celebrate International Museum Day.

**May 18**

**Free observation tower admission** in celebration of International Museum Day, Pembina State Museum, 701.825.6840.

**May 18**

**Concert at the Confluence.** Enjoy a concert at the Confluence while overlooking one of North Dakota's most beautiful natural sights. Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center, 701.572.9034.

**May 24**

**Spring Film Festival** at Fort Totten Little Theatre. \$5 per person, ages 12 and up. For more information contact Nick Gronseth, 701.766.4441.

**May 26**

**Memorial Day Observances** at Fort Abercrombie State Historic Site, 701.553.8513.

**May 26**

**Memorial Day Observances** at Pembina State Museum, 10:30 a.m., in conjunction with the Kern-Thompson American Legion Post 77, 701.825.6840.

**May 30**

**Bismarck/Mandan Summer Reading Kickoff.** 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., with activities for children. North Dakota Heritage Center and North Dakota State Library. Contact Erik Holland, 701.328.2792.

## June

**June to August**

**Living History Tour** on Tuesdays at 2:30 p.m. (MT) for senior citizens and Wednesdays at 2:30 p.m. for children, Chateau de Mores State Historic Site, 701.623.4355.

**June 1-30**

**Birds in Art temporary exhibit** of 60 acclaimed international artists. Featuring beautiful original paintings and sculptures. Sperry Gallery of the ND Heritage Center & State Museum. Open 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday-Friday. 10 a.m.-5 p.m, Saturday-Sunday. Ends June 30.

**June 7 - Sept. 6**

**History Alive!** every Saturday and Sunday 10:30, 1:30, and 3:30, Chateau de Mores State Historic Site, 701.623.4355.

**June 7 - Sept. 6**

**Recollections of Murder and Mayhem in Medora**, a 20-minute theater production dramatizing the conflict between cowboys and outsiders over land use and barbed wire. Courtroom of the Billings County Courthouse Museum in Medora, every Saturday and Sunday at 11:30 a.m., 701.623.4355.

**June 7- Aug. 30**

**Saturdays at the Site: Come Fly a Kite** at Fort Totten State Historic Site. Free of charge. For more information contact Nick Gronseth, 701.766.4441.

**June 11 - July 30**

**Kids Day** children are free every Wednesday, Chateau de Mores State Historic Site, 701.623.4355.

**June 12**

**Fort Buford History Book Club**, 7:30 p.m. Join history buffs in an interesting discussion of the month's selected book. Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center. Please call in advance, 701.572.9034.

**June 14**

**State Archives open** 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**June 15**

**Concert at the Confluence**, 3 p.m. Enjoy a concert at the Confluence while overlooking one of North Dakota's most beautiful natural sights. Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center, 701.572.9034.



**June 20-21**

**Confluence Quilters**, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Join the *Confluence Quilters* for their monthly meeting at the Confluence. All experience levels invited and instruction provided. Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center, 701.572.9034.

**June 29**

**History Alive!** featuring Theodore Roosevelt, portrayed by Gilbert Young, 2 p.m. Pembina State Museum, 701.825.6840.

**July**

**July 26**

**Opening Celebration**  
Adaptation Gallery: Geologic Time

**July 27**

**Opening Celebration**  
Innovation Gallery: Early Peoples

**August**

**Aug. 16**

**125th ND statehood anniversary celebration** with entertainment on the Capitol Grounds and a fine art exhibit in the ND Heritage Center & State Museum, Missouri River Event Center. All day.

**October**

**Oct. 16-17**

**North Dakota People Living on the Land:** a ND Studies workshop for teachers, introducing the new 8th grade ND Studies curriculum. Register in advance at [nhowe@nd.gov](mailto:nhowe@nd.gov).

**Oct. 18**

**Governor's History Conference**  
ND Heritage Center & State Museum, Russell Reid Auditorium. 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**November**

**Nov. 2**

**Grand Opening Celebration** of the North Dakota Heritage Center & State Museum and North Dakota anniversary of statehood from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Featuring entertainment and special programs. Ribbon-cutting ceremony at 12 p.m.

**150th Civil War Anniversary Commemoration Set for June 28 at the ND Heritage Center**

Did you know there are five Civil War battlefield sites in North Dakota? This generally comes as a surprise to most residents of the state. No, the Confederate States did not invade Dakota Territory, but the US Army did use resources and troops to battle with the Dakota or Sioux people to drive them west out of Dakota Territory. This was in response to the US Dakota War in Minnesota in 1862. In 1864, Gen. Alfred Sully made an expedition into western Dakota Territory and fought with the Sioux near Killdeer Mountain. His troops were also involved in the Battle of the Badlands near present day Medora, and at Fort Dilts near present day Rhame and Marmarth.



Fort Dilts State Historic Site is one of several areas impacted by the American Civil War. Find out more about the history of this site and its significance at [history.nd.gov/historicsites/dilts/](http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/dilts/).

This year marks the 150th Civil War anniversary in North Dakota. Commemorations will take place throughout the summer, beginning at the North Dakota Heritage Center. The public lands at the actual sites are too small to accommodate large numbers of people, so the State Historical Society, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, and the Fort Peck Tribe are planning a commemoration of these events on Saturday, June 28, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Heritage Center in Bismarck. Speakers will focus on the Northern Plains before 1850, the aftermath of the battles, and how that history affects the state today. This event will set the context of the 150th Commemoration of Killdeer Mountain Battlefield, Battle of the Badlands, and Fort Dilts. Additional events specific to those locations will take place throughout the summer. For instance, at Killdeer Mountain, Museum Division Director Chris Johnson will conduct his annual History Hike on July 26.

**Presenters on June 28 include:**

- **Kevin Locke**, well known performer and storyteller, will provide the opening prayer, storytelling, a flute performance, hoop dancing, and more. Locke has performed in more than 80 countries. In 1990 he was awarded a National Heritage Fellowship by the National Endowment for the Arts recognizing him as a "Master Traditional Artist who has contributed to the shaping of our artistic traditions and to preserving the cultural diversity of the United States." Locke has served as a cultural ambassador for the United States Information Service since 1980 and was a speaker at the 1996 United Nations Habitat II Conference in Turkey. In 2000 the release of his album *The First Flute* received the Native American Music Award for best traditional recording.
- **Dr. Raymond DeMallie** will be presenting "The Sioux from 1800 to 1851." DeMallie is chancellor's professor of anthropology and American studies at Indiana University. He also is the co-director of the American Indian Studies Research Institute at Indiana University.
- **Dr. Gregory Gagnon** will present "War by Other Means: Federal Indian Policy 1851-1900." Dr. Gregory Gagnon retired from the University of North Dakota Department of American Indian Studies but continues to teach courses at Loyola University of New Orleans and taught American Indian Law this spring.
- **Dr. Douglas D. Scott** will present "Battlefield and Conflict Archaeology: Perspectives on a Global Phenomena." Scott retired from the National Park Service (NPS) after more than 30 years with the Department of the Interior. His last position with NPS was as Great Plains Team Leader at the Midwest Archeological Center in Lincoln, NE. He has worked throughout the Great Plains and Rocky Mountain West on a variety of archaeological projects. He was awarded the Department of the Interior's Distinguished Service Award in 2002 for his innovative research in battlefield archaeology that started with his work at the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. Dr. Scott specializes in 19th century military sites archaeology and forensic archaeology.

## A Few Minutes with Artist Rob Evans

By Kim Jondabl, *Communications & Education Director*

Nationally acclaimed artist Rob Evans spent four months, from November through March, creating a large-scale cyclorama of Double Ditch Indian Village in 1550. Double Ditch was a major trading center built by Mandan Indians north of Bismarck. It's the largest painting Evans has created, stretching 6' by 50,' as a permanent addition to the Adaptation Gallery: Early Peoples at the North Dakota Heritage Center & State Museum. His beautiful work can be seen in additional world-class venues including the Smithsonian and the Estate at Mount Vernon.

Most murals today are displayed as prints that are shipped to a site and installed. But for this expansive mural, every brushstroke was painted by the artist on site. I visited with Rob during one of his final days on this project.

### How can a piece of art influence a person's perception of a historic event in a different way than reading about it?

There's the classic phrase, "A picture is worth a thousand words." I think that's true to some degree. A painting brings more into focus all at once, where reading a text is sequential and you may not absorb the whole thing. Just displaying (an event) in the pictorial form and in the context of its surroundings gives it a kind of reality. It maybe impinges on a mind and memory with a little more force. That's what you aim for.

With art, you only have a few seconds to hit the bull's-eye of a person's mind. If it doesn't work in the first few seconds, it's probably not going to work after that for them. The impact has to be fast. After that, you can spend time going into pockets of details if you make that initial impact. There's a lot of research to make a piece look natural and not arranged.

### What does it mean to you to create this slice of Mandan village life?

It's a slice of time that is gone, and a culture that was decimated by disease and contact with white culture. It's a great challenge to show a picture of what it was like as a dominant culture in this area.

After having spent a winter here, I have a great respect for them living in the earth lodges. I respect whatever technology they had to stay comfortable through the winter and to use the natural materials of the

earth itself. I'm learning a lot and also giving testament to something that is important and needs a record.

### Have you painted any similar works to this curved cyclorama?

Yes, it does resemble a little bit a large painting I did at the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle. That one did not involve human beings, but it was similar in scale and had a fair amount of wildlife detail spread over a curved wall. This is the largest ethnographic picture I've done.

### How do you paint a scene when there are no photos or footage to show the space or lifestyle?

You work with what exists. Karl Bodmer's version of an Indian village was a big piece of it, but those earthlodges were from a much later era. A lot of it is the archaeologists' research. They know the village plan. For determining fashions, it gets harder when you get back to pre-photographic subjects. The clothing was thought to be all buckskin and leather before trading with Europeans began. There aren't a lot of sources for that.

Fern Swenson and others have been very helpful in clueing me in to the details. Cory Spotted Bear has been here and also had input about details of how things were arranged and how certain activities were done. A lot of the details have evolved as we go. I go home at night, do research, come back and find a way to work in the new details. In fact, I could keep adding things, but there comes a point where you have to back off and just look at the painting for a while.

The most work was completed before I even got here, in doing the rendering. Trying to get the broad composition set with a fair amount of detail took quite a bit of time. I went through a black and white version, then a color version. A lot of time is spent not painting, but researching—probably about three months for this project. The painting does go faster if your research is done completely ahead of time. It almost paints itself if you know exactly where everything is going. In this case, because of the complexity, that was not really possible.

### How important is the lighting and the color in a painting composed mainly of brown tones?

The painting comes from the southwest and the sun's angle is a little lower than I had it in the rendering. When painting, I have to take into account that the light changes in different sections of the painting as the cyclorama curves and the visitor looks across the entire village.

The earth and the lodge colors are slightly different. You try to mix the palette up ahead of time so there are consistent tones. I do have piles of dirt for reference. The dirt color was different from what I had seen in any images and prints. I wasn't aware of the specific color at Double Ditch until I visited there. It was important to get the actual dirt from the site to get the colors right.





### How personal is this particular work of art for you?

You have your own handwriting, so there is a certain style there. In some ways, you have to try to be invisible as the artist. You get out of the way in this kind of exhibit art, as opposed to other sorts of museum art which are the ego displaying itself. This is more a case of trying to reveal something. In fact, I seldom sign the things that I do, mainly because it's just an intrusion. Inevitably, if someone else painted this, it would look different, so there is a personal aspect to it.

### When do you know that a painting is finished?

(Laughs.) You have to call it done at a certain point. For me, it's a matter of choreography—in the eye being led here and there without too many empty spaces. The more you add, the more you could add. In this scene, it's the middle of the day, so everybody's outside. You

don't want to fill a painting up just for the sake of filling it up.

I could call it done now, but there are a few things I still want to add and tweak. I think Sting or someone said, "No project is ever finished. It's abandoned." There is an aspect of that, too. You just have to call it done at some point, based on schedules and budgets.

### What is the most important message in this piece?

There was a remarkable culture here not that long ago. Today we are walking on land that was the world of another people. It says a lot worldwide about how cultures come and go, often not in the best circumstances. Appreciate what went before you. You are not just rootless and free-floating from history. You have a connection. That's what I hope people would go away with.

### Why did you choose acrylics for this a large-scale painting?

Acrylic dries so fast, you are just layering and layering and layering until you get it done. That's why you use it. A lot of times in these historical paintings you need to change things, so you need to be able to add paint infinitely. The beauty of this piece is that you can add forever if you want to. With oil, you are limited by the skin it develops after a while. There's no more adhesion, even though I like oil a lot as a medium.

### What do you listen to while you paint?

I listen to mostly classical music while I work. Classical has a longer scope and frame so you're not changing gears every two seconds.

### And how do you re-energize after a few hours of painting?

I usually get a Starbucks dark roast with two shots of espresso. I get a few of those a day, so I'm going to be deducting a lot of those.

## Donor Sponsors New Great Plains Theater



In December 2013, the Tom and Francis Leach Foundation gave a generous gift of \$600,000 to the expansion of the North Dakota Heritage Center. This gift will sponsor the new Great Plains Theater, located near the Heritage Center's new entrance. "The board of directors of the Tom & Frances Leach Foundation is very proud to make this grant to the Heritage Center. This beautiful new building is a testament to the importance North Dakotans place on preserving their history," said Brian Bjella, president of the Leach Foundation Board.

Pictured (front from left): SHSND Director Merl Paaverud; Gov. Jack Dalrymple; State Historical Foundation Executive Director Virginia Nelsen; Dalles Schneider of the Foundation Board; Rep. Diane Larson; State Treasurer Kelly Schmidt; and State Parks & Recreation Director Mark Zimmerman.

Back from left: Karl Lembke of the State Historical Foundation; Tom & Frances Leach Foundation board members Todd Steinwand, Executive Director Pam DesRoches, Bill Daniel, President Brian Bjella, John Roswick, and Chairman Frank Bavendick; and Marlo Sveen of the State Historical Foundation.

## SAVE THE DATE

North Dakota Studies Workshop  
ND HERITAGE CENTER - BISMARCK  
OCTOBER 16-17, 2014

Introducing the new 8th Grade

ND Studies curriculum

North Dakota  
People Living on  
the Land

More details  
coming soon

For more  
information:  
Neil Howe  
nhowe@nd.gov



## Society News

### Our Mission:

*To identify,  
preserve,  
interpret,  
and promote  
the heritage of  
North Dakota  
and its people.*

### Follow Us!



## Celebrate 125 Years with Us at Two Signature Events!

The public is invited to attend two signature events honoring North Dakota's 125<sup>th</sup> year of statehood.

- The first will take place on Saturday, Aug. 16, with a fun day of entertainment on the Capitol Grounds in Bismarck. This event will showcase the best of North Dakota with entertainment, food, crafts, and games. A fine arts display by North Dakota artists will debut in the Missouri River Event Center (lobby) of the North Dakota Heritage Center.



- The commemoration of the state's official 125<sup>th</sup> birthday on Nov. 2 will also coincide with our grand opening and dedication of the newly expanded North Dakota Heritage Center and State Museum from 10 a.m.-7 p.m. A ribbon-cutting ceremony featuring the state's governors will be at 12 p.m., with special entertainment, free films, a variety of programs, Museum Store specials, and more throughout the day.

*Plains Talk* is published quarterly by the State Historical Society of North Dakota (SHSND), North Dakota Heritage Center, 612 East Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck, ND 58505/701.328.2666/[www.history.nd.gov](http://www.history.nd.gov) Merlan E. Paaverud, Jr., Director; Kimberly H. Jondahl, *Plains Talk* Editor; Deborah K. Hellman, *Plains Talk* Assistant Editor; Kathleen Davison, SHSND Editor; Bonnie T. Johnson, SHSND Assistant Editor. *Plains Talk* is a benefit to members of the SHSND Foundation.

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