

North Dakota Museum of Art

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Matthew Wallace

mwallace@ndmoa.com

701-777-4195

“Songs for Spirit Lake” Comes Home

The North Dakota Museum of Art, in collaboration with the Cankdeska Cikana Community College of Ft. Totten, ND, is pleased to announce the opening of “Songs of Spirit Lake.” The exhibition will open Friday, October 18, and run until Thursday, October 31. Exhibition hours will be 10 am until 7 pm, Monday – Friday.

“Songs for Spirit Lake” is returning home. The journey began in January 2012 when the Museum received a \$150,000 grant from the Rauschenberg Foundation to commission six artists to create art about life on this mixed race, multi-cultural reservation.

The artists arrived in Fort Totten in late July 2012, just in time to attend the Fort Totten Days Powwow, one of North Dakota’s most spectacular, celebratory events. They made their second trip in November, specifically to experience winter. That week an accommodating storm blew through bringing snow, whipping winds, and ice covered highways. They also participated in Cankdeska Cikana’s first Art Festival.

The six artists are John Hitchcock, a printmaker and installation artist from Madison, Wisconsin. Tim Schouten, a Canadian landscape painter known for his work about the so-called “treaty lands” given to various First Nations by the Canadian government. Mary Lucier, New York video artist who has completed two video installations about loss in North Dakota, *FLOODSONGS* and *The Plains of Sweet Regret*. Rena Effendi, a documentary photographer who comes from Baku, Azerbaijan and brings an outsider vision to Spirit Lake life. Bill Harbort, a long-time New Yorker who moved to Minot in 1996 to teach graphic arts at the college. Multi-media artist Terry Jelsing of Rugby rounds out the group.

In May 2013, the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation invited the Museum to open “Songs for Spirit Lake” in their New York Robert Rauschenberg Project Space in the prestigious Chelsea art district. Traditional regalia and pounding drums filled the gallery as the Cankdeska Cikana Singers opened the evening by honoring the late Robert Rauschenberg, whose grandmother was Cherokee, and his son Christopher, with a memorial song.

From the exhibition’s inception, it was evident both organizations would work to bring “Songs for Spirit Lake” back to the reservation. With few resources available, the Museum and the College turned to Kickstarter.com. As the College does not have a formal art gallery, Cynthia Lindquist, President of the College, decided the new maintenance bay, which resembles numerous New York galleries, could be converted into a temporary art gallery for the last two weeks in October before the trucks and snow removal equipment is moved in.

Kickstarter.com is a all-or-nothing, on-line funding platform for creative projects. In order to house the exhibition, the maintenance bay needed proper lighting, temporary walls needed to be built, and video projectors needed to be suspended from the ceiling—all requiring significant time and investment on the part of Museum and College staff. With this in mind, the Kickstarter campaign, with the goal of raising \$10,000, started. The Museum and the College compiled email lists and asked supporters to kick in \$5, \$10, \$25, or whatever they could give. The response was overwhelming and donations poured in from individuals and organizations from around the country. The Lannan Foundation, based in Santa Fe, New Mexico, came in with an additional \$20,000 Cultural Freedom grant to help with costs including bringing the artists in for the opening.

Recently, the Museum and the College received a National Endowment for the Arts \$150,000 Our Town Grant to plan a center for the arts on Spirit Lake. Bringing home “Songs for Spirit Lake” helps the Museum and the College to take their first steps.

“Songs for Spirit Lake” is opening in conjunction with the College’s fortieth anniversary and President Cynthia Lindquist’s tenth anniversary as head of Cankdeska Cikana Community College.