



# SHAVINGS

a newsletter from north house folk school  
summer 2022

# NORTH HOUSE FOLK SCHOOL

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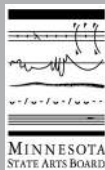
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**Front Cover:** *Fred Livesay has been teaching at North House since its founding in 1997. Read some thoughts on the last 25 years from Fred and other long-time instructors on page 8.*

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# A Letter from the Director

In the early years, we called it cozy. North House's little Yellow House was truly that, a little house that fit a bit of everything inside its walls. In the front rooms, desks for several staff, a round meeting table, and an eclectic closet. Through a narrow arched walkway, a small kitchen and a compact table for two. Opposite the sink, a low door opened to the basement (containing anything from schooner sails to paint cans to course catalogs), but beware the stairway's numerous "bump your head" features.

But perhaps most cozy of all was up the stairs around the corner from the kitchen, where a small bedroom with two single beds, a tiny bathroom, and a landing with an unrestricted view out to the harbor, all tucked under the eaves. While small and hidden, this space seemed to beckon to our creativity, inspiring the development of new classes as we hosted visiting instructors in this perfect bunkroom. And then our goals to create a new ten-week internship program took flight in 2002. Where would the interns call home? We had the spot and it had two inspiring benefits: cozy living, a great harbor view.

True, this added some interesting features to the intern program. Since they worked a Wednesday-Sunday schedule, breakfast on days off invariably included a conversation with the director (sometimes while sharing freshly-made pancakes). And on nights when catalog production or grant writing were in full swing, the sound of keyboards sometimes stretched into the wee hours. What did it take to move a young folk school forward? The cozy space the interns called home ensured they witnessed it all up close and personal.

Twenty-five years into North House's journey and more than 60 intern program alumni later, it is intriguing to marvel at the simple beginnings of the internship program. Naturally, as time moved forward and the program grew from 10 weeks to 12, then 16 and more, we recognized some features of our cozy reality needed to evolve. A door was added to the arched hallway so breakfast wasn't always a community event. As momentum grew, we knew we needed to do even more, and with the launch of 2007's Raise the Roof Campaign we committed to building a new Milling Shop Classroom building with a new three-bedroom intern loft above.

There is much more to marvel at than just simple beginnings. Currently, four past interns are part of our year-round staff team, many are involved as instructors and assistant instructors, others work in the worlds of education and craft for peer institutions, and we feel lucky to call many neighbors right here in the North. After such cozy beginnings, who would have imagined where the path would lead.

Today, our little Yellow House is as cozy as ever, but in a new way. Walk into the School Store and the sense of warmth and possibility seem to beckon from every corner, even if on windy nights the old windows still sing and rattle in the storm. Right next door, the intern loft, which now has four bedrooms, helps power our ten-month internship. Often its lights glow late into the evening. Cozy as well.

Opportunity has emerged in unexpected corners. Hard work, laughter, curiosity and occasional pancakes have nourished us. Programs have emerged, campus has evolved, community strengthened. Here's to all we have to celebrate and to the promise of the journey ahead.

Our journey together has touched the world in many ways—we have much to celebrate at North House!

Warm regards,  
Greg



# Getting Kids Into Craft

by Susan Ferguson

With a goal set to increase youth participation at North House, a part-time Youth and Family Program Coordinator position was created, and in June of 2021, I was hired to fill the position. With 43 years behind me as an elementary teacher, I was excited to get back to working with youth.

North House administration set four objectives for this position. The first was to coordinate partnerships and programming with local schools. For a number of years North House has offered unique programs on campus annually to the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students from the Cook County elementary schools. The Textile Traditions program for fifth graders allows students to explore fibers, the making of clothing and its evolution, and have hands-on experience making a felted container from raw wool. A Logging History program for fourth graders has students learning the early history of this industry, including the making of individual, miniature bateau

boats. In the Paddle to the Sea program, students learn about early Anishinaabe technology and birch bark canoe making, which includes carving a model canoe out of basswood. They also become familiar with our local watershed.

This winter North House added another connection and offered on-campus support to 3rd-4th grade students from one of Grand Marais' elementary schools with their annual Snow Snake Project by teaching them how to use a draw knife and shaving horse to debark their branches. With the exception of Paddle to the Sea where I was the lead instructor, these programs were taught by expert instructors and I assisted.

The second objective was to lead youth and family programming at each of North House's signature events. In 2021 children and adults made fish prints using lifelike rubber fish during the Wooden Boat Show. Family Weekend had children learning about how moose shed their

antler velvet by doing crayon rubbings on the bark of various local trees to determine what type of tree would be best for the job. At the school's annual Spring Break Camp this March, with the theme of "Lunch," students spent five full days carving a spoon and chopsticks, dyeing a napkin from natural dyes, building a wooden lunch box, and weaving a basket to carry everything in.

The third objective was to build strong relationships with local families and the Cook County community while also welcoming involvement from youth and families from further afield. Booths representing North House were set-up at an elementary open house and at Grand Marais' Healthy Families Day. I will also be a member of a newly formed group supporting local youth activities.

The fourth and final objective was to advance North House's overall youth programming initiatives. For several years, North House provided a thematic after school program once a week for local elementary students. In the fall of 2021 we offered two 10-week woodworking programs for elementary students. Each group of eight met once a week from 3:30-5:30, and every child had their own tool box with hand tools that suited youth-size hands. The children learned how to properly and safely use each tool through a variety of activities, and when this was accomplished, the remainder of the weeks were left open ended so children could tinker and create items from a large pile of wood scraps and two tables filled with things that they could use to embellish their creations.

Both sessions filled quickly and were highly successful. Given local interest in these programs, three sessions were opened

for winter registration. Unfortunately, due to the prevalence of Covid in the schools, these woodworking programs were canceled, and enrollment was rolled over to three 8-week sessions this spring. Two of the sessions were for beginners and the third was for students who participated in the fall programs. These children had time to creatively build as well as work on one collective project which was building individual wooden snack dispensers. This required a higher level of skill, and it allowed them to use power drills for the first time along with some more advanced woodworking tools.

Besides the sense of accomplishment that comes from learning how to successfully use tools and create unique projects, woodworking builds skills in a number of areas including math, creativity, problem solving, communication, social development, and self-esteem. Because of continued community interest in youth woodworking at North House, these after school programs will continue in the 2022-23 school year.

My position also has me developing and implementing new offerings for youth, including younger and older children from the community. In addition, I use my years of teaching experience to provide youth-focused teacher training for interns and other North House instructors.

With my one-year anniversary coming soon and reflecting back over the past eleven months, I feel that I have had a great year working with both the youth and families of this community, as well as the exceptional staff, interns, and instructors at North House. I'm looking forward to all the opportunities that this next year will provide.





# Hjørdis Takes to the Skies

by Matt Nesheim

The day before Christmas Eve, Matthew Brown was eating fish and chips at Fisherman's Daughter Restaurant in Grand Marais. He looked out of the restaurant window at Hjørdis—the beloved sailing schooner and unofficial flagship of the harbor—at her winter berth. Something didn't look right; she was riding low in the water. Very low. A life-long sailor and founder of the sailing program at North House Folk School, he would know. He ran over to the School Store at North House and alerted Cindy Hansen, one of the only North House staff members working that day.

Grand Marais lacks the infrastructure for hauling large boats. Hjørdis' steel construction allows us to keep her in the

water for a year or two at a time, while underwater aerators prevent ice damage to the hull. Every third year we run it down to Knife River where they have a lift with the capacity to haul the 10 ton vessel. Our system has worked for years. Until this winter.

When I reached the docks on December 23rd, Hjørdis was riding at least three feet lower in the water than usual. I opened the hatch and found the main salon submerged, and the few items we had left in the boat floating around like rubber ducks in a bathtub. The diesel inboard and battery bank were completely underwater. Matthew Brown, current Hjørdis captain Bill Hansen, and I bought every electric sump pump we could find to start draining the water, but

we didn't see progress until we sourced a gas powered "trash pump" from local contractor Anton Moody. At 150 gallons per minute, we (mostly) dried it out. There was an audible trickle coming in from an invisible set of pin holes under a seal in the aft bilge. The onboard bilge pump must have either failed or been incapable of keeping up. With the help of Mark Gordon of Amicus Adventure Sailing and friend Matt Morris, we had a temporary fix by midnight and had a space heater and backup pump with a float switch rigged up. Before New Years, Superior-based Viant Crane ran up with a 110 ton crane, unstepped the masts, and lifted Hjørdis out of the water just south of the Blue Building.

That was just the beginning. Once out of the water, we hand-cranked the water out of the cylinders, successfully fired up the engine, and gave the boat some additional upgrades. It's the first time the masts have been down since we've owned the boat, so volunteers gave them a fresh

coat of paint during Volunteer and Service Learning Weekend. Leatherworking instructor Beth Dow taught a class that covered the traditional mast hoops in leather to protect the new paint. Eric from Electroforge Welding in Two Harbors performed surgery by cutting a hole in the side of the boat and did a professional repair on the compromised stern-tube. North House Classroom Manager and amateur rigger Ben Byron lead a project to splice and whip a new set of halyards. And of course, interns Preston and Lin had the unenviable task of sanding the bottom paint. The crane came back in late May, and Hjørdis is afloat again (complete with a new, more powerful bilge pump).

The moral of the story: if you're gonna own a 50' schooner, make sure you have good friends, too. Thanks to everyone who lent a helping hand when we needed it. Costs associated with the haul-out and repair were generously underwritten by grants from the Pachel Foundation and Carl and Verna Schmidt Foundation.

*Freshly-leathered mast hoops installed on newly-painted masts awaiting reinstallation on Hjørdis*





*It's hard to fathom just how much sausage has been made by the Petersons and their students!*

# A Place Where I Belong

by Jessa Frost

Twenty-five years can go by in a flash: one day, the idea of a folk school on the harbor is just a twinkle in Mark Hansen's eye; the next, thousands of people gather here every year to embrace learning, camaraderie, and craft. We asked a handful of instructors who have been part of North House since the earliest days to reflect a bit on the last two and half decades: here's what they had to share.

**Craig and Dianne Peterson, Grand Marais, MN**

***Sausagemaking, Meats, Questionable Puns, Delicious Baked Goods (1997-2020)***

*How has being part of North House impacted your life?*

North House has provided a family for us. It helped us enter the Grand Marais community and is a big part of why we moved here in retirement. We have met so many diverse, creative, and outside the box thinkers at North House, from our students to other instructors. Everyone has a story to tell.

*What is most surprising about North House?*

Honestly, what surprises us is that it is still happening! We've known and worked with many other projects like this in other places where it just didn't take: North House had a vision—a nucleus of really creative people you just couldn't say no to—who brought tenacious selflessness to the project. There has been incredible growth with wonderful leadership, and North House has retained so many talented people that have benefited the whole region.

*What is your favorite North House tradition?*

Winterers' Gathering is our favorite event. After all, winter is why we moved North! We also value the complete lack of competition that is the culture of the school. All are welcome here, and everyone is treated like they belong. That is really special.



**Jon Strom, Cook, MN**

***Spoon, Bowl, Breadboard Carving; Log Cabin Construction (1998-present)***

*How has being part of North House impacted your life?*

Being a sculptor who never learned how to make a living at it, I resorted to log building and carpentry as a steady occupation. Having North House as a steady, reliable place to provide a creative space in my life has been a great gift to me. That gift is one that was not conceivable from the beginning, and is a constant experience of learning and surprise from exposure to craft and artisans from so many places.

*What is most surprising about North House?*

On the list of what is most surprising about North House is the growth of classes offered and the vision of the staff and directors that have expanded and improved the campus. What continues to surprise me is that I still learn and improve the things I do in and out of the class setting. That learning comes from interaction with other instructors, the students themselves, and of course the interns.

*What is your favorite North House tradition?*

My first thought of a North House tradition is the Pizza Bake and evening campfires, but I might say the Internship program and developing artist opportunities are the strongest traditions. Well Done North House!!!

**Paula Sundet Wolf, Lutsen, MN**

***Basketry, Twig Furniture, Stone Mosaics, Wattle Fences (1997-present)***

*How has being part of North House impacted your life?*

When Mark Hansen approached me about teaching, I remember being surprised. It was a good thing for me to hear that people would find this thing I do of value to learn. At that time, I was making baskets as subsistence, taking them to Duluth and selling them to buy groceries for the kids. Teaching was really elevating and inspiring to move beyond that. I feel like I'm part of a community of people worldwide who are artists and recognized by each other and the students who take the classes.

*What is most surprising about North House?*

People are stepping completely out of their comfort zones and trying something totally new. Another thing I really appreciate about North House is that it pushes me to learn new things about my craft. I've been doing this for 25 years and just last week learned some new stitches I've never done before so I can teach them in an upcoming course.

*What is your favorite North House tradition?*

I LOVE the Internship Program. It is so awesome that these amazing young adults, so passionate and intelligent, get so involved at North House, and many stay on to become fantastic additions to our community! They bring great energy and life to our region.

**Jo Wood, Grand Marais, MN**

***Mukluks, Bead Embroidery, Felting (1997-Present)***

*How has being part of North House impacted your life?*

Being part of the North House community for all these years has given my life some stability. There have been many changes but the folks at North House have always made me feel welcome and included. Being able to share my knowledge and skills with diverse groups of people from so many different places has been a joy.

*What is most surprising about North House after 25 years?*

The biggest surprise for me was how quickly North House has grown, not only in size but in the organization. Baby North House was flying by the seat of its pants, very “in the moment.” Over the past 25 years, it has matured. There are still hopes and dreams. These are now accompanied by very well thought out plans and staff that seems to make everything happen

*What is your favorite North House tradition?*

The staff WELCOME first thing in the morning when the class starts. It’s a great opening tradition. People can put a name to the face of someone who represents North House. They get some basic “what’s where” information and often are invited to share in an event. Whether it’s coffee and cookies or the world-famous wood-fired oven Pizza Bake, it makes a community!

*There is always room for laughter and fun in any course with Jo Wood*





*Jeanne Bourquin bending the ribs of a canoe*

**Jeanne Bourquin, Ely, MN**  
***Wood-Canvas Canoe Building & Repair (1997-2017)***

*How has being part of North House impacted your life?*

Personally, the friendships, support, encouragement, respect, and the high energy excitement of watching someone create something with their hands (often that they didn't know they were capable of doing) is a huge justification for what I have chosen to do with my life. North House brings alive for the wider population

all of the reasons why we as craft people have chosen to do what we are doing. Professionally it created another market for my canoes, and has given me a community of boatbuilders and other craft people to learn with and from.

*What is most surprising about North House?*

What's most surprising to me is that North House has evolved but stayed the same... and still works! The amazing bunch of people it brings together. The pride and commitment to North House that taking a class can generate in even first time students... It's like love at first sight. I would also add the degree to which it has impacted Grand Marais is surprising.

*What is your favorite North House tradition?*

Among so many other things I especially like the Directors Talk with staff at the Instructor Retreat, where they share and genuinely ask for input about directions the school is headed. As an instructor, this sense of collaboration in the running of the school makes me feel valued and greatly increases my commitment.

**John Beltman, Suomi, MN**

***Boat Building, Snowshoes, Workbenches, Windsor Stools, Gluten-Free Baking, & more (1997-present)***

*How has being part of North House impacted your life?*

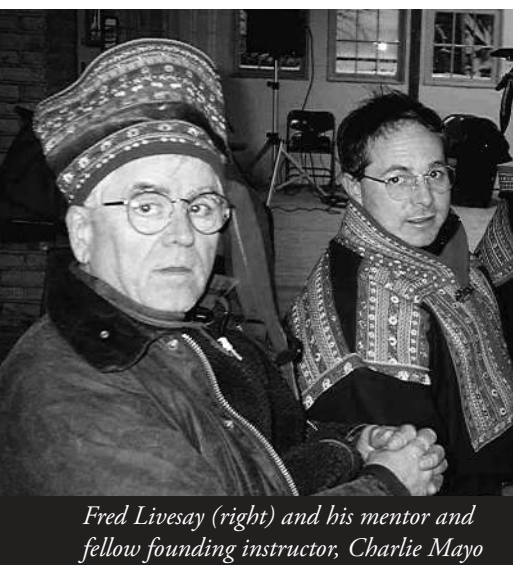
North House has allowed me to continue as a craftsman in a sustainable, financially viable way for years. I started out making things from wood for sale. Through my work at NH, I was able to transition from simply producing and selling products to teaching people to make things. When interacting with students the primary focus is not simply the product, be it chairs, snowshoes, or boats, but the process.

*What is most surprising about North House?*

In the early years, we could have never imagined what North House would become. It was more localized, with fewer instructors, and we often just camped out on site. We never thought it would become an internationally recognized institution that people would come to from all over. But while we never imagined the outcome, it's not actually that surprising that NH has become what it is today.

*What is your favorite North House tradition?*

It's hard to pick just one! I appreciate gathering with like-minded people anywhere at North House, but especially outside on the lake, around the fire, or at the pizza oven are where some of my favorite memories have happened.



*Fred Livesay (right) and his mentor and fellow founding instructor, Charlie Mayo*

**Fred Livesay, St. Paul, MN**  
***Spoons, Tables, Baskets, Planes, Snow Goggles, Birch Bark (1997-present)***

*How has being part of North House impacted your life?*

When we started North House, it was a big relief for me. It finally felt and it still feels like, “now I know I am not odd; I have a place where I belong—a community of similar folks.” Even today, 25 years later, I still sometimes feel that same way. Helping to create North House from the beginning has also meant “founding” my career as an instructor of a very broad range of handwork and has allowed me to help build a community of craft that is now worldwide in scope. How can that not be life-changing for the better in every way?

*What is most surprising about North House?*

What surprises me most about North House after 25 years is the next generation of craftspeople it has literally grown from the ground up. Twenty-five years ago, I was the new up-and-coming craftsperson, eager to learn and expand my skills. Now I am the instructor, and I have taught the next generation of up-and-coming, curious craftspeople. The cycle of deep learning and teaching with care is complete and will no doubt repeat.

*What is your favorite North House tradition?*

Open shop after class is my favorite North House tradition. This is where I get to know the really dedicated students on a more personal level. The Instructor Gathering is my second favorite. This last Instructor Gathering was especially good! I didn't feel rushed and there was the time to relax and really get to talk with other instructors.

**Harley Refsal, Decorah, IA**

***Scandinavian-Style Flat Plane Figure Carving, Bone & Antler work (1997-2020)***

*How has being part of North House impacted your life?*

We all exist independently of one another but having shared experiences and collective memory of 25 years, we have created a community where we feel both valued and encouraged. The satisfaction runs deep with relationships that have weathered the highs and lows of the life experience.

*What is most surprising about North House?*

The vision of the founders has been remarkable. North House was envisioned to give meaning to lives through learning art and handwork of the North... not as a competition but rather a framework of support. I think and hope the non-competitive component is still alive and well!

*What is your favorite North House tradition?*

Pizza nights tick all the boxes!

**Lonnie Dupre, Grand Marais, MN**

***Winter travel, Dovetail cabin construction (1997-2017)***

*How has being part of North House impacted your life?*

I'm very proud of North House Folk School in offering hands-on learning of Northern crafts and often in outdoor environments. The impact for me was meeting down-to-earth people with like-minded dreams.

*What is most surprising about North House?*

I'm surprised that it is now one of the largest folk schools in the country and has touched so many lives in such a positive and tangible way. I guess North House has created this large family tree of connecting folks and northern cultures.

*What is your favorite North House tradition?*

Wood-fired pizza...of course!



**Peter & Judi Barsness, Lutsen, MN**

***Freshwater Studies (1997-2019) & Cooking with the Seasons (2008-current)***

*How has being part of North House impacted your life?*

Peter: North House has continued to enrich my life as an educator after my retirement. It has been a joy to teach so many ages of students from children to seniors. Judi: It has brought me great joy to be able to continue to share my culinary passion, experience, and knowledge with my students and then to be a student myself as I learned from others.

*What is most surprising about North House?*

Peter: The growth and positive impact on our community and the lives of so many. Judi: The growth and sustainability in an era of instant technology-based education, as opposed to the hands-on, slower craft learning experience that North House offers.

*What is your favorite North House tradition?*

Both: The Wooden Boat Show and Summer Solstice Pageant!



*The beginnings of the North House Campus, before the Red & Blue Buildings found their colors*

**Mike Schelmeske Grand Marais, MN**

**Paddles, Crooked Knives, Stacked Handle Cutlery, Intern Slöjd Wizard  
(1997-present)**

*How has being part of North House impacted your life?*

It certainly has brought up a lot of connections over all this time. It's given me a large extended family.

*What is most surprising about North House?*

The expansion into so many areas of craft. Originally I would have thought it would be limited to some woodworking and traditional skills. Now, the wide range of where we've gone with this stuff is amazing, especially considering how we started.

*What is your favorite North House tradition?*

Winterers' Gathering has always been a favorite. It's a little more intimate and often had a lot of Canadian friends from afar in attendance. I especially like the film festival.



**Mary Schliep, Grand Marais, MN**  
**Rosemaling- Telemark & Valdres  
(1997-present)**

*How has being part of North House  
for 25 years impacted your life?*

Teaching has always been something to look forward to. I enjoy passing on rosemaling to the next generation so it doesn't get lost: it's part of my heritage. When I started I didn't know a whole lot but I enjoyed it very much and have learned as I go.

*What is most surprising about North House after 25 years?*

How the school has grown and other subjects have been introduced. We've offered a lot of nice classes. It is always gratifying that many of my students stick with it and progress year after year.

*What is your favorite North House tradition?*

Doing tree trims with my students. We do them in every class. People enjoy starting out small so they can develop toward more difficult projects.

# Postcards from Scandinavia

One exciting aspect of North House's Artisan Development Program is that participants get to spend some time in Scandinavia, taking in the landscape, spending time with mentors, and taking a deep dive into craft. Resident Artisans Emily Derke and Christine Novotny recently returned from their travels and shared some thoughts and images from their respective trips.







*Top left:* Emily weaving in the home studio of Danish basketmaker Steen Madsen. Travelling around Scandinavia to learn and visit craftspeople was an incredibly inspiring and unique opportunity. *Bottom left:* While spending time at ULU of Norway, Emily learned many new things about leather making traditions across Scandinavia

*Top right:* Christine visited the cloth fulling mill in Dala Floda, Sweden. Woven wool cloth would get beaten to timbers connected to a water wheel to agitate the cloth and felt the fibers into strong "vadmal" cloth for outerwear garments. *Bottom right:* Christine and Ulla Parkdal in her home, looking over a magazine article about her career as a lakan rug designer and weaver.



*A detail of the new timber framed bridge built by local high school students and North House instructors*

# What Story Will You Tell?

by **Tom Morse**

Everyone has a story to tell, values they hope to pass on, and ideals that they want to endure. Ask about these subjects with a partner or long time friends and you'll be amazed at the richness of the conversation and the memories shared. You'll hear about hardworking and humble grandparents that saved wisely but gave generously to friends and neighbors. You'll hear about teachers and friends who encouraged interests, hobbies, and travel. You might hear about rough patches, life changing moments, or personal tragedies. It's a conversation worth having.

One way to tell your story could be through a planned gift, or a bequest in your will. Many folks might assume that having an "estate plan" means that they need to have a lofty number in their bank account, but that is not the case. Everyone should have a will in place to make sure that their assets are distributed according to their priorities, and you can craft a legacy with any amount, it just takes a little planning.

At North House we are fortunate to have many families and individuals (including many instructors) that have decided to include North House in their legacy plans. For some that means contributing to North House's endowment

fund that supports the overall mission of the school, while others have worked with North House to create special funds that support a specific aspect of the mission that holds the most meaning for them—creating funds that support scholarships, continuing development for instructors, and funding the timber framing program for local high school students.

That is the joy and challenge of crafting a legacy—there can be so many options, but clarifying your priorities in a way that shares your story can feel so rewarding. After naming an organization (or several), people often find that their involvement in their favorite organizations takes on new meaning and their philanthropy feels more meaningful.

If you have questions or would like to learn more about legacy planning options at North House, please reach me at [tmorse@northhouse.org](mailto:tmorse@northhouse.org).

As you begin to consider your legacy, consider these questions to spark the imaginative process—Who taught you to be generous? What do you hope to see more of in the world? What gifts have you made that felt best to you? What lesson do you hope your friends and family will take from your life story? We'd love to hear your answers!





# UNPLUGGED 2022

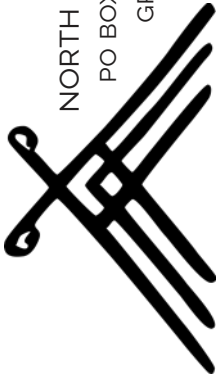
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Two great nights of music under the big top tent, a family concert, and a Flannel Formal with special guests that you won't forget!

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