



# SHAVINGS

a newsletter from north house folk school  
fall 2023

# NORTH HOUSE FOLK SCHOOL

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**Front Cover:** *This summer we said goodbye to the Yellow House as we make way for the new Welcome Center. Read more about the Yellow house on page 4.*

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# On the Harbor

Looking down, I watched my fingers pausing in the afternoon sunlight. Above them, blue gems. It seemed like an impossibility. A small plant with tiny green leaves, bending over double until almost touching the ground, and bulging out on every side with clusters of blue. How can one plant create such abundance? I have always felt lucky to call the north home, and I knew this was one of the reasons – the timeless and miraculous joy of harvesting blueberries.

The day was an idyllic culmination after working two consecutive weeks as weekend campus host at North House. Leading student welcomes, hosting Friday's wood-fired pizza potluck, swinging into classrooms, serving cookies and coffee at Sunday's Fika – the days were full. From a first-time student from California to long-time participants from just up the hill; a new course offering (taught by a first-time instructor!) to core coursework offered at North House for more than two decades. Whether sharing a morning greeting or witnessing the rich silence when students are immersed in their work, the privilege of quality time on campus is always grounding.

As my fingers gently eased the berries into my palm, the sense of appreciation and connection ran deep. Just a day before, the willow basket class had encouraged these same hands to use a willow break and feel silky smoothness hidden beneath the bark. And earlier, students in the foraging class invited me into their efforts – first the taste of wild caraway, then the pepper-like seed pod of bladder campion, and finally, not just blueberries but service berries and dewberries. Curiosity and discovery shared with others is a gift that is timeless and miraculous as well.

This issue of *Shavings* goes to press as the second half of 2023 begins to unfold. Even as we set the stage for upcoming programs and events, we are poised to share exciting news about key next steps for North House. And as the stories above from recent weeks underscore, the power and purpose of North House's mission still shines.

Celebrations at Unplugged will begin to bring these stories to life. Four new Resident Artisans will begin their journey in the Artisan Development Program. Summer brought curious young crafters of all ages to campus, with more courses for kids happening at October's Family Weekend. Courses throughout the fall and winter offer opportunities to learn more. Remember, whether harvesting blueberries or shaping lives, our hands are an essential ingredient. There is clearly much to celebrate.

On behalf of the entire team, thanks for your belief in North House.

With appreciation,  
Greg Wright  
Executive Director



# New Home for the Yellow House

By Tom Morse

For almost a decade, North House has wrestled with a tough decision—the iconic Yellow House’s foundation was shifting in opposite directions, and the building used first as staff office and now as a school store was being ripped in half. Countless repairs to the roof had been made over the years, and the question became: how much money do you invest in a building that no longer fits your needs? And then, is there some way to give the building a second life?

First, North House reached out to Hamilton Habitat and the Cook County HRA to see if the building might be useful in the effort to add more housing in the community, but both organizations were unable to take on a structure that would potentially require significant work. It seemed like the best outcome at that point might be salvaging what could be reused before demolishing the structure—a fate for the building that no one felt good about.

“I love the little Yellow House,” said Executive Director Greg Wright. “When I first came to North House my office was on the main floor, and our interns lived upstairs. It was cozy, but you were right in the heart of the action. For over 21 years, that building has been part of my life every single day, and literally tens of thousands of students have begun their North House experience by walking through that front door.”

Eventually, the interns moved to the space above the Milling Shop, and the school store shifted from Blue North to the Yellow House as the staff offices moved to the Green Building, which has served the school well. But continuing issues with water leaking in through the Yellow House’s roof and the need to evolve campus highlighted a path forward was needed.

Then North House got an email from frequent volunteer and Grand Marais resident Dave Walter asking if North House was still looking for a new home for the structure: “Is this the case? Has anyone agreed to do this? If not, I’m interested.” Dave had recently purchased a lot on County Road 7 and had been considering building a home there that could be a medium to long-term rental that would serve families in the community.

“I so admire old buildings,” Dave said. “The Yellow House has so much character and charm that you just can’t replicate. I’m really excited about this project and being able to be part of adding more housing in the community. That building will have many more decades of life once it’s on a solid foundation.” Dave will be working with a moving company to relocate the structure later this August.

Dave’s project cleared an important milestone in June as the Grand Marais City Council approved the variance needed to make the project possible. The North House school store will be temporarily shifting back to the Blue Building to make way for the construction of a new store and classrooms starting later this fall.



**Above:** Some of the early North House staff in front of the Yellow Building.

**Below:** The Yellow House (right) before it was yellow. Prior to being purchased by North House, the building was owned by the Eckel family of Grand Marais.





# Craft as Connection

A conversation with award-winning basketmaker Kelly Church

What was it that first drew you to craft? For some, craft is a curiosity, a hobby, or a novelty. But for many, the experience of crafting runs a bit deeper. Craft has the power to connect us not only to the process itself, but to our families, our histories, and ourselves. It has the power to capture our stories and can even help us build a more sustainable future.

Kelly Church is a fifth-generation Potawatomi/Odawa/Ojibwe basketmaker and fiber artist from southwestern Michigan whose work exemplifies the power of craft to better connect us. Kelly is a National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellow, along with many other honors. She is also an activist and educator who has taught thousands about the implications of the emerald ash borer. This September, North House is thrilled to welcome Kelly to

campus to share her creativity and knowledge as a guest instructor and Unplugged featured speaker.

Kelly Church's connections to basketry run deep; growing up, she was surrounded by a family of skilled basketmakers and learned to weave from her relatives.

"I am part of the largest basketmaking family in Michigan, going back countless generations," she said. "My grandmother said once, 'We made baskets before they made cameras.' I started my weaving journey while caring for my grandparents. My grandfather often spoke of giving out baskets as thank you gifts for those who helped him."

Now an award-winning artist, Kelly's work has been acclaimed by numerous organizations across the country. But for Kelly, her craft is about more than creating

a beautiful product; rather, each basket she weaves tells a story. Just as historical crafts told a story of time, people, and place, so does each basket that Kelly makes today.

“When I weave a basket into a shape such as a top hat or an egg shape, I will incorporate stories with words or objects that pertain to my experiences today as a woman, Native, artist, and activist that I share with others as a way to collectively think about those who come after us and what we can do to keep the world sustainable for future generations,” she said.

And in the world of basketry, sustainability is a real concern. In addition to the threats posed by climate change, invasive species can devastate entire populations of trees, including those used for basketry.

One of the most prominent examples is the emerald ash borer (EAB), an invasive green beetle spreading across North America. As its name suggests, EAB bores into and feeds on ash trees, killing the tree in the process. All species of ash trees are susceptible to EAB, including the black ash trees traditionally used in basketry. It’s thought that EAB has the potential to wipe out all ash trees across North America. Over the last 15 years, Kelly has taught over 1300 people in 18 different tribes, as well as at universities, about black ash basketmaking traditions and the effects of EAB.

“EAB is a major concern due to its destructive nature and small size, making it harder to detect until trees are already heavily infected,” she said. “Seed collection will be very important to sustain not only the tradition of black ash basket making for future generations of Native communities, but the ash trees that are indigenous to North America and an important part of our wetlands and ecosystem.”



**A market basket made by Kelly Church. Kelly will teach Black Ash Baskets at North House September 12-14, 2023.**

This September, Kelly will bring her artistry and expertise to North House as a guest instructor and featured speaker during Unplugged. In the days leading up to Unplugged, she’ll be teaching Black Ash Baskets, a three-day course in which students will weave a miniature-style market basket. Students will use black ash harvested by Kelly and her family, and will also learn more about the basketmaking process as Kelly discusses biochemistry, forest management, invasive pest control, traditional language skills, and deep personal memories of family history.

“I will be sharing how the materials are prepared for the basket we will weave together,” she said. “I have a basket shape that each participant will use to transform their materials into a basket that shows their unique individuality and creativity as well as be a basket for everyday use. We will have a fun and relaxing time weaving together!”

Kelly will also be the featured speaker at this year’s Unplugged. (More details about Unplugged on page 13.)

You can find details about Kelly’s Black Ash Baskets course [northhouse.org](http://northhouse.org).



# Summer Youth Programs

By Susan Ferguson

North House was in full swing this summer, and that included a variety of programs and activities for youth.

This year we offered four 5-day youth camps in July and August. These included blacksmithing; woodworking for younger folks; the traditional Young Makers' Camp, which was taught by our four interns as well as North House staff, and offered a different activity on each of the five days; a boat building course where students constructed a skin-on frame 12' solo canoe and then got to test it out on the harbor; and finally, a makers' camp for outdoor kids where youth developed their outdoor skills with two seasoned instructors, one of them coming all the way from Sweden.

Besides our interns, new instructors to these programs include Anna Sharratt, who is well seasoned in youth programming; Andreas Sohlberg, who

hails from Sweden; and Lauren Newby, a woodworker and former intern. Lauren had previously worked with kids in an outdoor setting. She decided to become a Summer Youth Camp instructor because of her interest in working with kids as they take on new challenges.

"I was excited about how kids really focus their attention when they're doing something that challenges them," she said. "They also have a lot of creativity when working on other things, like art projects. With woodworking, they really have to focus and be aware of their tools and what they're doing, so it combines both of those facets—it's a balance of challenge and fun."

In addition to the youth camps, North House also offered drop-in activities throughout the summer for local and visiting youth. The Wooden Boat Show had an area set up for drop-



in family activities—this year’s activities included several types of weaving and an origami sailboat, with 170 crafters of all ages stopping by to participate. And new this season was “Craft on the Commons,” which was held on three different Saturdays in June and July. On these days, North House set up tables on the Commons and offered drop-in, creative activities for families to participate in. Many local as well as visiting families stopped by to take part in these programs.

Local youth also participated in craft through the Cook County YMCA. The YMCA has a summer camp for youth of varying ages. These campers came to North House four times over the summer for crafting as well as a sail on the Hjørdis in August. The kids had fun creating sculptures with colorful wire, wood and wool roving, making fish prints on paper and canvas tote bags using rubber fish and playing around with rock painting.

We’re grateful for a summer of engaging youth from near and far in craft!



**Above:** A student with a hook made during Blacksmith Camp.

**Below:** Instructor Lauren Newby works with a student during Woodworking Camp.



# New ADP Resident Artisans

This September, North House is welcoming four new artisans into the Artisan Development Program. These Resident Artisans will have a yearlong residency of living and crafting in Grand Marais, followed by a year of independent study. Please join us in welcoming these talented artisans to North House!

## Tara Austin



In 2014 Tara took her first rosemaling class at North House. Since then she completed a yearlong Rosemaling Apprenticeship with a Vesterheim Gold Medalist focusing on Telemark and Gudbrandsdal styles. In 2020 she received a Scandinavian Folk Arts and Cultural Traditions Grant from the American Scandinavian Foundation. Tara received her MFA from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and loves plants, painting, and her home on the North Shore of Lake Superior.

## Caroline Feyling



Caroline Feyling is a textile artist based in Oregon. She graduated with her BFA in Fiber and Material Studies from School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2020. Following her graduation she completed eight weeks of intensive study at Vävstuga Weaving School in Shelburne Falls, MA. There, Caroline began her practice of creating functional Scandinavian style weavings that serve to bridge the gap between the contemporary and tradition, as well as the distance between heritage and daily life.

## Liz O'Brien



Liz's interest and enthusiasm for fiber arts runs the gamut. Primarily self-taught, she has over ten years' combined experience in knitting, hand-stitching, decorative embroidery and natural dye work. She was first introduced to natural dyes while working as a naturalist and farm educator some years back. The magic of coaxing living color from plants was irresistible and natural dye work quickly became a cornerstone of her creativity. With an emphasis on using garden-grown or locally foraged dye materials, Liz's work reflects an intentional practice in slowing down and cultivating an ever-growing connection between self and sense of place.

## Mary Tripoli



Mary (she/her) grew up in a small town in southwestern Pennsylvania, but has been enjoying life in the Pacific Northwest for the last 20 years. After finishing a corporate career, she discovered green wood carving in 2014 and has not gone more than a few days without carving or turning something—a spoon, a spatula or bowl! She is part of a thriving carving community based at Pratt Fine Arts in Seattle, WA.

A 2021 North House Intern alum, Mary is thrilled to continue her craft practice in Grand Marais. She's looking forward to getting to know her ADP cohort and experiencing her first proper north woods winter. Mary plans to continue greenwood carving, learn new pole lathe turning techniques and forms, and take a deeper dive into chairmaking.



# UNPLUGGED 2023

SEPTEMBER 14-16

A CELEBRATION OF MUSIC, CRAFT, & COMMUNITY

Two unforgettable nights of music under the big top  
with Sean Carey, Pieta Brown, Mike Lewis, Jeremy  
Ylvisaker, Joe Rainey Sr., Dylan Jennings, and  
Barbara Jean Meyers

Free family concert featuring Justin Roberts  
Birch Bark Bash featuring dinner by Chef  
Scott Graden of the New Scenic Café

**TICKETS NOW AVAILABLE  
AT [NORTHHOUSE.ORG](https://northhouse.org)**

# Unplugged 2023

This year's Unplugged will continue the decades-long tradition of celebrating music, craft, and regional food and beverages as a community, with an incredible weekend of events you won't want to miss!

Thursday and Friday night will feature two unforgettable nights of music with Sean Carey, Pieta Brown, Mike Lewis, Jeremy Ylvisaker, Joe Rainey Sr., Dylan Jennings, and Barbara Jean Meyers. If you were with us last year, you know you'll want to make sure you have tickets for both nights.

Saturday morning will mark the second annual family concert, this year with five-time Grammy nominee Justin Roberts! Get ready for early morning ice cream,

family-friendly crafts, and a community celebration that packed the big top tent with dancing kids AND grandparents last year.

Saturday evening we'll be hosting the Birch Bark Bash. This special celebration will feature a delicious meal prepared by Chef Scott Graden of the New Scenic Café.

Throughout the weekend you can explore the Folk Artisan Marketplace, take a deeper dive into craft through the speaker series, and support North House while finding unique experiences and crafts in the Points North Online Auction, open September 8-17, 2023.

**Tickets are now available at [northhouse.org](https://www.northhouse.org).**



## Folk Artisan Marketplace

Unplugged offers multiple ways to connect with craft and regional craft artisans. The Folk Artisan Marketplace will feature a sampling of the instructors and Resident Artisans of North House. Meet the hands-at-work behind your favorite beautiful and useful items. At this year's Folk Artisan Marketplace you can find jewelry, rosemaling, woven goods, leather goods, and more.



# A Donor-Powered School

By Tom Morse

I hope you feel as excited and proud of the folk school as we do as you read through this issue of *Shavings*. So much happens each year at the folk school, and it's all made possible by donor support.

All of the youth and family programs are only possible because of the generosity of North House supporters. Their underwriting of the staff position makes it possible to keep North House's youth programming among the most affordable in the community for all kids. And the generosity goes even further: with support from folks like you, 35 scholarships were granted for this year's youth summer camps and many more were made available for after-school programs! Those are memories that will be cherished for decades to come, and skills that will serve them for life.

The Artisan Development Program's new participants are also connected to the donors who help power North

House. Tara participated in school field trips at North House growing up and has demonstrated at events; Mary was an intern in 2021 and has also been part of week-long Work Study opportunities the last two years; and Liz has been a regular volunteer at events and during weekly Work Study, where folks help to prepare campus for coursework. Those pathways were only possible because of the philanthropy of the North House community.

Finally, bringing culture bearers like Kelly Church and other guest instructors over the course of the year is enabled by the generosity of individuals and foundations. Bringing guests to campus to present their knowledge to the public and in coursework is only possible because people like you are involved.

Thank you so much to everyone who helps to make North House such a vibrant community!

# Family Weekend 2023

Autumn is one of the best times to visit the North Shore, and here in Minnesota kids get a long weekend in October known to most as “MEA.” This break from school is the perfect opportunity to come to Family Weekend at North House.

We’re offering over a dozen courses for curious kids and families to get their hands dirty and make the most of this time together. From cooking to fiber arts, woodworking to blacksmithing, there is a skill to learn for everyone. In addition to formal courses that require registration ahead of time, we’ll also have drop-in activities that are free and open to everyone.

## Friday, October 20

Family Fun Night: Games, S’mores, and Apple Pressing Demonstration, 5-7pm

## Saturday, October 21

Family Fun Night: Contra Dance, 6-9pm

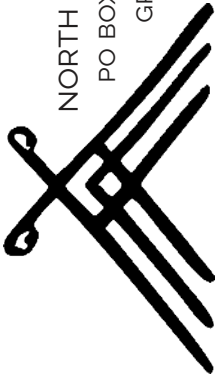
## Friday & Saturday, October 20 & 21

Drop-in Family Activities, 10am-4pm

**Mark your calendar:  
October 19-22, 2023**

More information available at  
[northhouse.org](http://northhouse.org)





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