White Bear Center for the Arts

White Bear Lake, MN

Grant request: $17,964
Book selection: *The Bear*

Project information:
Proposed programming start date: 09-22-2022
Proposed programming end date: 03-18-2023
Number of partner organizations: 12
Number of book discussions: 6
Total number of events: 30
Anticipated total participants: 2,927

Panelist notes:

Organization description narrative (one page)

- Briefly describe your organization's mission, history, and achievements.

White Bear Center for the Arts (WBCA), founded in 1968, has grown significantly over the last decade to become the largest arts services provider in Minnesota's Greater Northeast Metro region. After capturing White Bear Lake's attention with a prominent iron pour event in the late 2000s, WBCA secured funding for its first building, which opened in 2013. The facility, designed by and for artists, and exceeding ADA guidelines for accessibility, led to a flourishing of arts experiences for people of all generations and abilities. New exhibitions, classes, outreach programs, contests, and events expanded participation to 6,500 youth and 10,500 adults annually in the years leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, the Board, staff, and community invested over a thousand hours over nine months in a strategic planning process that reshaped WBCA's mission and defined strategic goals for 2020-2025. This work, led by an external consultant, helped WBCA remain on course as it closed its doors to in-person events during the pandemic, during which it completed an expansion to its building and campus before reopening in October 2021. WBCA's mission is to: ENRICH LIVES by Celebrating Art, NOURISH IMAGINATION by Inspiring Creativity, BUILD UNDERSTANDING by Connecting People.

- Describe the impact of your organization's experience with presenting community-wide programming that demonstrates an ability to conduct a successful NEA Big Read.

WBCA's history of community-wide programming has been successful because of long relationships with community stakeholders. The Arts in Elementary program that began in 2009 provides all 4,500 K-5 students in the local school district with visual arts lessons year-round, the only such classes the students receive through public schools. The program received the University of Minnesota Humphrey Insitute's Innovation in Local Government award, building connections that led to collaborative artist residencies with the district, services and events with the Extended Day and Cultural Liaison programs, and a regional annual High School Visual Arts Contest.

In 2016-2017, WBCA co-founded The Many Faces of White Bear Lake, an association of local organizations such as the historical society, community college, food shelf, homeless shelter, school districts, and city government, committed to align efforts (through over 50 programs annually) advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. In its first year, WBCA promoted two major community events through Many Faces. First was the work of Wing Young Huie's "What Do You See?" project, where 1500 high schoolers participated in challenging assumptions around self-expression. Second was a series of Hmong-American cultural programs, centered around the installation "Becoming American" by Sieng Lee. Over 1400 community members participated in the project, which also included a film series, hip hop dance, Hmong-Lao friendship play, and partnership with the Center for Hmong Arts and Talent (CHAT).

Project description narrative (no more than three pages)

- Provide a rationale for your chosen NEA Big Read book.

Take a stroll through White Bear Lake downtown and you will see more white bears than you can count: bear window displays, bear lawn decorations, bear statues, bear greeting cards. The bear is far more than a community symbol – it contributes to residents' sense of local identity. Most White Bear Lake residents are familiar with the story that gave White Bear Lake its name, in which an Indian brave rescues a maiden from a fierce white bear. But the origin of this story is a complicated one. Several versions of the legend exist in letters, guidebooks, and historical documents over the last two centuries. It has been altered, rewritten, popularized by Mark Twain, celebrated, scrutinized, and reclaimed in turn. Throughout all this history, the original Dakota legends and traditions that led to the naming of White Bear Lake have largely been erased or lost to popular memory. White Bear Lake residents are still untangling this knot. Andrew Krivak's haunting and moving novel will support a greater exploration of our relationship with the bear, and the way it has shaped community identity. This book asks us to consider the stories and mythologies we grow up with, how these are passed down, and what they tell us about our perception of ourselves and our relationship with the natural environment. It is the perfect conduit for scrutinizing our personal and communal narratives and histories. White Bear Center for the Arts connects many regions and neighborhoods. Luckily, the relevance of bear stories and traditions extends beyond White Bear Lake. In addition to kickstarting a deeper local conversation, *The Bear* gives us an opportunity to invite neighboring communities to consider bear symbolism throughout the various cultural histories that make up Minnesota. And across all regions, it offers a chance to connect more deeply to the local natural landscape: the woods, stars, lakes, and seasonal cycles so specific and elemental to Minnesota.

- Describe the community you plan to reach with NEA Big Read programming, including any specific targeted audiences.

Though located in White Bear Lake, WBCA functions as a connector between the Northeast Metro and the Twin Cities, Minneapolis/St. Paul. The Northeast Metro is a center for blue-collar jobs, and is both the fastest growing and most diverse region in Minnesota. Today, 350,000 people live within 12 miles of the shores of White Bear Lake. 53 languages are spoken in the homes of students in White Bear Lake Area Schools, where over 20% of students are on the free/reduced lunch program. White Bear Lake is also a thriving area for seniors over 65, who make up 19.4% of the local population. Big Read programs and partnerships tie together people of multiple generations and backgrounds across North Saint Paul, Mahtomedi, Stillwater, Mounds View, Hugo, and the six other cities that share the waters of the lake.

- Describe your programming plans in detail, including types of activities, locations, and dates. Explain how your activities will be inclusive and engage diverse audiences. Be sure that your plans meet the programming requirements and address the themes, writing, and content of the NEA Big Read book.

In honor of the reverence shown to solstice and equinox cycles in *The Bear*, the NEA Big Read period will **kick off with an equinox celebration** on September 22, 2022. Visitors will have a chance to pick up free copies of the book and learn about the programming offered by our

partner organizations. An equinox ceremony and pop-up art activities tied to the book will welcome community members to the Big Read and honor the turn of the seasonal wheel.

6 book discussions will take place over the course of the Big Read period, approximately one per month. Ramsey County Library, Century College Library, Community Services and Recreation**,** and Gable Pines at Vadnais Heights are among the organizations hosting discussions. WBCA will host two discussions at its expanded building. All facilities are ADA-compliant.

2 free community lectures will engage audiences in topics inspired by *The Bear*. The White Bear Lake Area Historical Society will coordinate a **community presentation exploring the ceremonialism of bears throughout Minnesota as well as the Native American legend that gave White Bear Lake its name** (date in fall, to be determined). To trace the journey of the bear through multiple ancestral threads, WBCA will also host a **lecture on bear folktales within the Sami tradition** in early 2023 with artist Kurt Seaberg.

Ramsey County Library's Kid's Library will host **a series of storytime activities and art projects** in October 2022, and will arrange **take-home Storytime Starter Kits** featuring related titles for elementary readers to read at home.

The Whitney and Elizabeth MacMillan Planetarium at the Bell Museum will host a **special presentation of "Minnesota Night Skies,"** a planetarium show that guides the audience on a live tour of the sky above Minnesota. This presentation will incorporate custom storylines and visuals inspired by *The Bear* (dates in late winter, still to be determined). In November, the planetarium will devote **one of its monthly Star Parties,** where they open the observation deck for telescope observing and additional astronomy activities, to *The Bear*.

White Bear Lake Area School District will collaborate with WBCA to **engage students in grades 9–12.** WBCA and the district will work together to integrate *The Bear* into the curriculum during the Spring 2023 semester.

Century College will incorporate Big Read and *The Bear* into their art and music classes and programming throughout the Fall 2022 semester. This will **culminate in a gallery exhibition of student work inspired by *The Bear* at Century College's new Niche Gallery** (date to be determined). In early 2023, a **performance** of a faculty-composed piece about White Bear Lake will serve as a Big Read event.

Throughout the Big Read period, WBCA will offer a series of **Big Read-related classes incorporating art and nature**. At least two classes per catalog period (2 months) will be devoted to Big Read, such as nature writing workshops, weaving on natural objects, woodcarving, forest bathing with artist Annie Hejny, and more. Gigi Stafne of Green Wisdom School of Natural & Botanical Medicine will host a **winter solstice herbalism class and lecture** in late December at WBCA. Classes will be free of charge for greater accessibility.

White Bear Center for the Arts will implement a **Big Read Arts and Research Program**. Residents from the Northeast Metro region will be invited to apply during the open application period from June 2022 to September 2022. Two artists and two scholars will be selected by a

panel of judges and offered a stipend of $250 to conduct creative exploration or in-depth research into “the bear” from November 2022 to March 2023, culminating in a panel discussion and gallery event hosted at WBCA in early March in which Artists and Scholars present their work.

Big Read will end on the **spring equinox** with an **installation and dedication ceremony for “Spirit Bear,” a white bear sculpture created by Robin Tost.** “Spirit Bear,” like all of Tost’s work, is made from discarded materials, tying in the theme of cycles, sustainability, and locality. Originally from White Bear Lake, Tost will return to give a talk and meet with the community.

ASL interpreters will be hired for lectures and speaking engagements.These will also be broadcast via Facebook live and uploaded to WBCA’s YouTube channel to accommodate any transportation or mobility issues among community members. Virtual versions of events will be available to welcome people from the wider community and to allow greater accessibility during the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

- Describe how you will promote your programming to a wide range of audiences.

We will begin our Big Read marketing and communications campaign in August 2022 across all platforms. The cover of our September-October catalog, which reaches 2700 addresses, will feature Big Read, and each proceeding catalog will feature a Big Read programs section. We will email events to our 7,000 subscribers throughout the activity period, and run a dedicated promotional campaign across our Instagram and Facebook accounts. To build excitement and a sense of community connection, we will install a Big Read billboard on a strategically located and heavily trafficked intersection of Highway 61 leading into White Bear Lake for the first 8 weeks of activities. Throughout the activity period, WCBA will participate in grassroots advertising by distributing promotional postcards and posters to local businesses and coffee shops. Partnerships with Press Publications and Suburban Community Channels TV will provide coverage of Big Read programs across the 9 member cities in the Northeast Metro. Mobile advertisements targeted by zip code will reinforce messages and generate registrations and engagements online.

- Explain how your program will distribute copies of your chosen NEA Big Read book and optional companion title(s).

Free copies of *The Bear* will be made available at in-person Big Read events and activities. During the month of September, 4–5 WBCA volunteers will distribute copies of the book to all Little Free Library locations within 6 miles of WBCA. Staff or volunteers will distribute free copies at local high schools during cafeteria hours or beginning-of-school events. Century College Library will circulate the book among their students, and Ramsey County Library in White Bear Lake will provide copies of the book and companion titles for young readers. The Ramsey County Library will also increase book circulation through their **Book Club in a Bag** program, which includes 10 copies of the book, discussion questions, an author biography, and a list of related titles. Lake Country Booksellers will provide the book at a discounted price.

Project partnerships description narrative (no more than two pages)

- Describe your partnerships with libraries (as applicable) and community organizations.
- Explain the role each partner will play in your program, the activities each partner will undertake with your organization, and whether these partnerships are confirmed or pending.
- Explain how your partnerships will allow you to reach your intended audience(s) and engage individuals of diverse backgrounds and ability levels. Discuss any proposed or existing partnerships with specific media outlets.

Ramsey County Library - White Bear Lake Branch will serve as a book discussion site, circulate additional copies of the book, and act as a Big Read information hub for the community. Branch Manager **Therese Sonnek** will coordinate book discussion activities, and will also include *The Bear* in the library's Book Club in a Bag program. Kids Librarian **Andrea Hermanson** will engage children from the community through storytime activities and Storytime Starter Kits with related, age-appropriate titles. (Confirmed)

Century College Library will host a book discussion and engage their audience of community college students. Faculty Librarian **Jane Young** will coordinate the book discussion and arrange for information on Big Read events to be advertised and circulated to students. (Confirmed)

White Bear Lake Area Historical Society connects the community to its past through a dedication to storytelling and historic preservation. **Sara Markoe Hanson** and **Rheanna O'Brien** of the **White Bear Lake Area Historical Society** will coordinate the lecture on bear ceremonialism. Additionally, Rheanna O'Brien will compile the over 30 source documents regarding the White Bear Lake legend from their archives, to ensure they are available to artists and scholars of the WBCA Big Read Arts and Research Program. (Confirmed)

The **Whitney and Elizabeth MacMillan Planetarium** at the **Bell Museum** will create an adapted presentation of "Minnesota Night Skies." This kid-friendly event invites families from the greater-Minneapolis area to participate in Big Read. The bear-themed Star Party will provide a platform to Native astronomers. Planetarium Manager **Sally Brummel** will coordinate with WBCA staff and the planetarium producers on both these events. (Confirmed)

The increasing diversity of the White Bear Lake area is nowhere more apparent than among students. The **White Bear Lake Area School District** shows a growing student population identifying as Black/African American (6.38%) Hispanic/Latino (7.78%) Asian (7.18%), or two or more races (6.46%). WBCA has already built relationships with these students and the district by sponsoring two student contests: the High School Visual Arts Contest and WriteNow! High School Writing Contest. Our partnership with the district ensures this diverse community of young writers and artists is part of the conversation. **Jen Babiash**, Director of Curriculum and

Instruction at **White Bear Lake Area School District**, will collaborate to put *The Bear* into the school curriculum. (Pending)

Century College is a 2-year community and technical college located in White Bear Lake and one of the largest two-year colleges in Minnesota, serving nearly 16,400 credit and non-credit students every year. These students, of whom 51% are first generation college students and 42% are students of color, represent the upcoming artists and leaders of our community. **Dawn Saks,** Drawing Instructor, will weave Big Read events into her class via extra credit assignments and will incorporate the concept of the Bear as it relates to art and drawing. **Melissa Borman,** Photography Instructor, will integrate the book into her class through an assignment about metaphor, fiction, and photography. **Shirley Mier,** Music Faculty and Composer, will work concepts related to locality and the bear into music programming at Century College in spring 2023. Academic Dean **Julie Zaloudek** will provide leadership on the curated show in the Niche Gallery featuring student work inspired by *The Bear*. (Confirmed)

Adult learners will be included thanks to a partnership with **White Bear Lake Area School District Community Services and Recreation.** Adult Enrichment Programmer **Michelle Hubbard** will coordinate a book discussion to engage adult community learners, to appear in their Spring 2023 catalog. She will also provide catalog space to advertise Big Read events across the district in their Adult Enrichment catalog. (Confirmed)

Seniors make up an essential portion of the White Bear Lake community. **Gable Pines at Vadnais Heights** will host a book discussion and advertise events to their senior residents. Adult Enrichment Coordinator **Cassie Pyka** will assist with coordinating a book discussion and advertising to the Gable Pines residents. (Confirmed)

Lake Country Booksellers will provide the book at a reduced price. (Confirmed)

Many Faces of White Bear Lake, which WBCA co-founded, is an association of local organizations committed to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. Residents turn to this organization for resources and events that educate and connect. **Many Faces** will promote Big Read events across all their platforms and on their website. (Confirmed)

Partnerships with local media outlets will connect cities surrounding White Bear Lake to Big Read. **Press Publications** operates the Northeast Metro's seven regional newspapers, and has agreed to promote the Big Read to its 225,000 subscribers through both news coverage and in-kind advertising. White Bear Press photographer **Paul Dols** and reporter **Deb Neutkens** will cover events locally. **Mary Kline** of **Suburban Community Channels TV (SCCTV)** has partnered with us to provide in-kind coverage of events with a September kickoff preview, broadcast of public programs, and a spring 2023 Bear story. (Confirmed)

				Match/Cost-share			Totals	
Expense	**Detailed description**	**Source(s)**	**A Big Read Gr**	**Applicant**	**Partner/Funder**	**In-kind**	**Match total**	**Sub total**
Personnel	*Detail the cost of staff for your NEA Big Read project. This can include fringe benefits.*							
Ramsey County Library - North Saint Paul Librarian Staff	7 hours, average $40/hour including benefits	In-kind: Ramsey County Library - North Saint Paul				$280	$280	$280
Ramsey County Library - WBL	10 hours, average $45/hour includng benefits	In-kind: Ramsey County Library - WBL				$457	$457	$457
Whitney and Elizabeth MacMillan Planetarium Staff	Staff salary including benefits	Grant + In-kind: The Bell Museum	$770			$580	$580	$1,350
WBL Area Historical Society Staff	17 hours, average $40/hour including benefits	Grant	$700				$0	$700
Gable Pines - Vadnais Heights Enrichment Staff	7 hours, average $40/hour including benefits	In-kind: Gable Pines - Vadnais Heights				$280	$280	$280
WBL Area School District Community Services and Recreation	7 hours, average $40/hour including benefits	In-kind: Community Services and Recreation				$280	$280	$280
ASL Interpreters	2 interpreters, $62/hour each, for four 2-hour events/lectures	Grant	$992				$0	$992
Volunteers	10 volunteers, $15/hour for 5 hours	In-kind				$750	$750	$750
Century College Niche Gallery Exhibit Guest Curator	Curation and Consultation for Niche Gallery Exhibit	Grant	$300				$0	$300
Century College Faculty	Incorporating Big Read title into curriculum, planning Niche Gallery Exhibit. 30 hours, average	In-kind: Century College				$1,200	$1,200	$1,200
							$0	$0
Program expenses	*Detail costs associated with your NEA Big Read.*							
Teaching Artists for Big Read-related classes	12 catalog classes, 2-3 hours, $35/hour + .5 hours class prep	Grant	$1,150				$0	$1,150
Speaker Fees	Two speakers (for kick-off and closing events) and two lecturers, average $250 per person	Grant	$1,000				$0	$1,000
Teaching Artists for Fall Equinox Kick-off Event	4 teaching artists to run pop-up activities, $120 stipend each	Applicant		$480				
Solstice Herbalism Class and Lecture	$500 instruction, $100 for mileage in kind	Grant	$500			$100	$100	$600
WBCA Class Catalog and Event Planning	200 hours, average $30/hour including benefits	Applicant		$6,000			$6,000	$6,000
Administrative overhead	internet, phone, utilities	Applicant		$100			$100	$100
Book Copies	550 copies of Big Read title at $8.50 each, 50 copies of audiobook at $6.50 each	Grant	$5,000				$0	$5,000
Planetarium Events Production Costs	"Minnesota Night Skies" and Star Party production costs and venue	Grant	$1,030				$0	$1,030
Ramsey County Library Book Club in a Bag costs	Book copies and bag supplies for three bags	Grant	$572				$0	$572
WBCA Big Read Arts and Research Program	$250 stipend for 4 Artists and Scholars, $100 for 3 judges	Grant	$1,300				$0	$1,300
WBCA Big Read Arts and Research Program Staff Costs	50 hours for application creation and review and gallery event planning, average $30/hour including benefits	Applicant		$1,500			$1,500	$1,500
WBCA Classroom Space for Big Read-related classes	$125/hour for classroom, 12 classes, average 2.5 hours each	Applicant		$3,750			$3,750	$3,750
Revenue from "Minnesota Night Skies" weekend show	$6.00 average ticket price, 90 seats, 2 shows	In-kind: The Bell Museum				$1,080	$1,080	$1,080
Artist talks - Niche Gallery Exhibit at Century College	Student stipends for artist talks: $50 each x 3	Grant	$150				$0	$150
Photographer to cover Niche Gallery Exhibit	Professional photo documentation of the exhibit	Grant	$350				$0	$350
Art Writer for Niche Gallery Exhibit	Art writer to provide essay on the work as it relates to the book = one essay of 500 words	Grant	$500				$0	$500
							$0	$0
							$0	$0
							$0	$0
							$0	$0
Promotion	*Detail costs associated with advertising and promoting your NEA Big Read.*							
WBCA Catalog Spread	2-page spread per bi-monthly catalog, 4 catalogs	Applicant		$900			$900	$900
Press Publications newspaper advertisements	8, split between private donor & Press Publications	Donation + In-kind: Press Publications			$1,000	$1,000	$2,000	$2,000
Equinox & Solistice postcards	3 total, 3000 distribution	Applicant		$2,750			$2,750	$2,750
Billboards & Banners	1 billboard, 8 weeks	Grant	$1,255				$0	$1,255
Posters	50 @ 18" x 24"	Grant	$320				$0	$320
Flyers & Copies	Leaflets distributed through volunteers & partnering organizations	Grant	$75				$0	$75
Mobile Ads	Customized for each program and delivered wtihin localized zip codes	Grant	$2,000				$0	$2,000
Suburban Community Channels TV (SCCTV)	September kickoff preview, broadcast of public programs, spring 2023 Bear story	In-kind: SCCTV				$2,500	$2,500	$2,500
							$0	$0
							$0	$0
							$0	$0
							$0	$0
							$0	$0
							$0	$0
TOTAL			**$17,964**	**$15,480**	**$1,000**	**$8,507**	**$24,987**	**$42,471**

If you'd like to offer further clarification on any expenses, please provide details below: