



HOWL IN THE GRASS

Travelling Exhibition from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts collection

Don Cardinal, Gerry Dotto, Aaron Falkenberg, Gary Fryklind,
John Hall, Campbell Henderson, Philip Kanwischer,
Illingworth Kerr, Bryce Meyer, Blair Pinder, Thelma Manarey,
Jacques Rioux, Theodore Shehinski, Matthew Spidell,
Adrian Stimson, George Webber, and Tom Willock.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition program

Curated by Ash Slemming

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The Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Travelling Exhibition (TREX) program acknowledges that the artistic activity we support takes place on the territories of Treaties 6, 7, and 8. We acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit who have lived on and cared for these lands for generations, and we are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers, Elders, and those who have gone before us. We make this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthening our relationships with Indigenous communities and growing our shared knowledge and understanding.

Cover Image

Matthew Spidell
Grasses #4, 2005
Red Rock Coulee Natural Area, Alberta
Archival pigment ink on paper, 15 1/16 x 13 in
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

contents

about	3
exhibition statement	5
art and artists	7
education guide	27
discussion questions	28
learning to listen	29
group activities	31
art activity : draw a presence sound a call	33
art activity : paper prairie critters	35
art activity : textured encounters	37
resources	39
credits	41

about

Travelling Exhibition Program (TREX)

Since 1980, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) has supported a provincial travelling exhibition program. The TREX program strives to ensure every Albertan is provided with an opportunity to enjoy fully developed exhibitions in schools, libraries, healthcare centres, and smaller rural institutions and galleries throughout the province.

The TREX program assists in making both the AFA's extensive art collection and the artwork of contemporary Alberta artists available to Albertans. Four regional organizations coordinate the program for the AFA:

REGION ONE – Northwest: The Art Gallery of Grande Prairie

REGION TWO – Northeast / North Central: The Art Gallery of Alberta

REGION THREE – Southwest: The Alberta Society of Artists

REGION FOUR – Southeast: The Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre

The Alberta Society of Artists (ASA)

The Alberta Society of Artists is a large part of Alberta's visual arts history, through its members, its exhibitions, and other initiatives. The ASA was founded in 1931, making it the oldest society of juried professional artists in the province.

The ASA is an active membership of professional visual artists who strive for excellence. Through exhibitions, education, and communication the society increases public awareness of the visual arts. The ASA is contracted by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts to develop and circulate the TREX exhibitions to communities throughout southwest Alberta.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA)

Beginning in 1972, the Alberta Art Collection was proposed as an opportunity to support and encourage Alberta artists by purchasing original works, as well as creating a legacy collection for the people of Alberta.

As a crown agency of the Government of Alberta, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Act was later established in 1991 with a mandate to support the arts in Alberta. This mandate is accomplished by providing persons and organizations with the opportunity to participate in the arts in Alberta; fostering and promoting the enjoyment of works of art by Alberta artists; collecting, preserving, and displaying works of art by Alberta artists; and encouraging artists resident in Alberta to continue their work.



exhibition statement

Howl in the Grass is a group exhibition alluding to the mystery and aliveness of land and sky in the prairies. As any howl is a method of attracting attention, connecting with others, and announcing a presence – this exhibition invites viewers to listen, to feel, and to connect with the diverse calls of the land along the Great Plains in Alberta and beyond.

What is now commonly described as “the prairies” is far from a monolithic landscape. Just as we cannot blanket the Great Plains under one category of ecology (the region is host to a dynamic relationship of grasslands, boreal forests, foothills, and badlands—each shaped by distinct histories, ecosystems, and ways of life), the artworks in the exhibition are similarly varied, sharing a depth of emotive qualities and stories with us.

Howl in the Grass beckons viewers to imagine standing at the edge of an expansive rural landscape, taking account of each visceral call and feeling; perhaps listening to prairie winds howling across the horizon, watching the roll and tumble of a disembarked tangle of weeds, or searching for a coyote whose calls echo slyly through the land’s tall, soft, and swaying grasses.

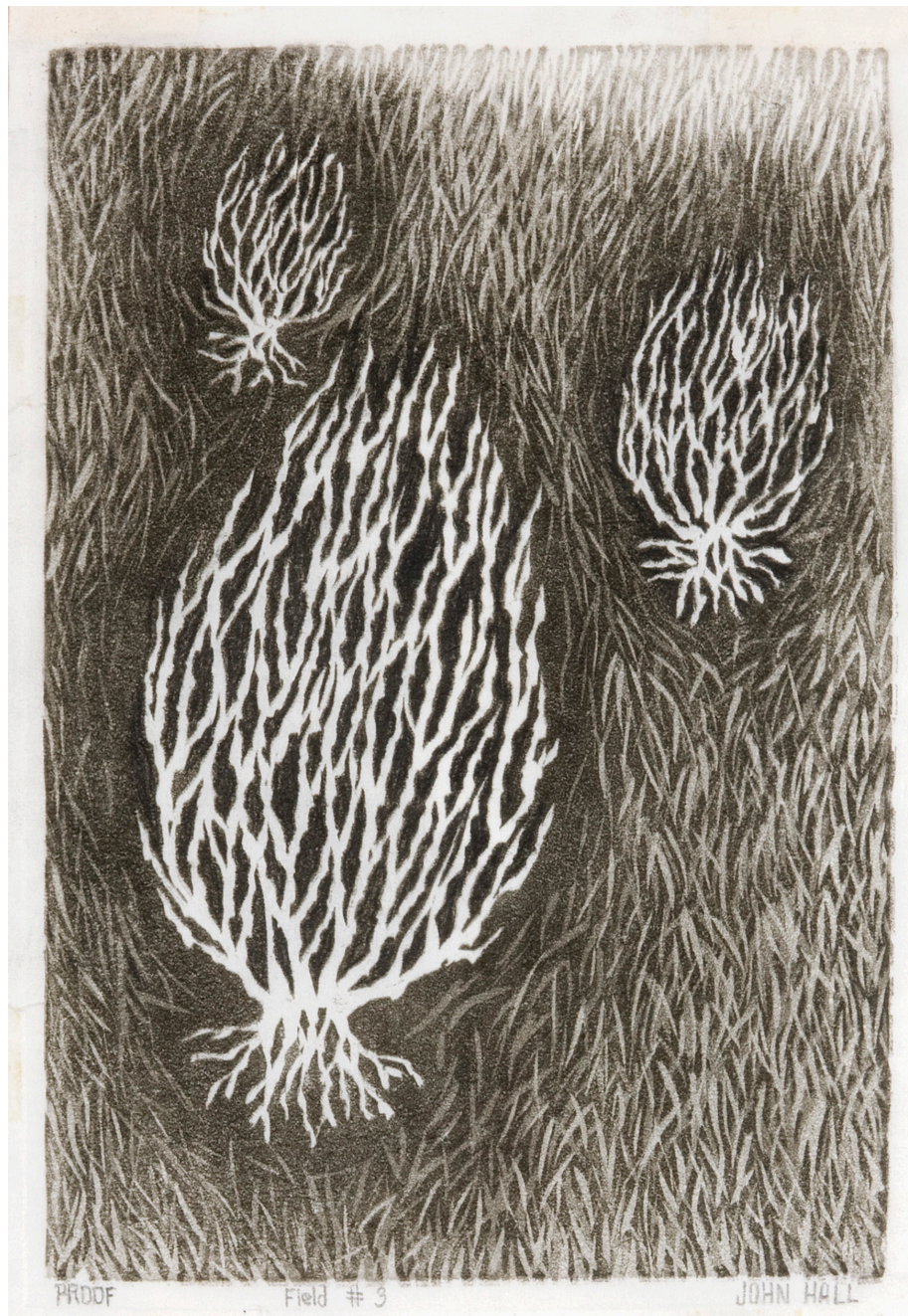
The exhibition features eighteen artworks from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts provincial collection by seventeen artists; Don Cardinal, Gerry Dotto, Aaron Falkenberg, Gary Fryklind, John Hall, Campbell Henderson, Philip Kanwischer, Illingworth Kerr, Bryce Meyer, Blair Pinder, Thelma Manarey, Jacques Rioux, Theodore Shehinski, Matthew Spidell, Adrian Stimson, George Webber, and Tom Willock.

– Ash Slemming, Curator



Thelma Manarey
Winter Trees, 1967
Lithograph on paper, 13 x 17 in
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

art and artists



John Hall
Field No. 3, n.d.
Woodcut on paper
12 5/16 x 9 1/2 in
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

John Hall is one of Canada's most established contemporary painters with a virtuoso reputation in hyperrealism and a contemporary approach to still life in particular. (This woodcut is possibly an early work, before Hall began leaning into hyperrealism paintings.) His practice also involves photography to aid in the realization of his compositions. Hall has been compared to an urban archaeologist whose radiant and dramatic acrylics comment on contemporary life and the material stuff of consumerism. (These drifting tumbleweeds are equally dramatic and contemplative of the land they drift across.)

His subject matter for still life is broad in scope. It includes images of friends' personal possessions to create a novel idea of portraiture and the more mundane matters of existence. This latter subject was summed up in a large 2002-2008 series, *Quodlibet* (Latin for "whatever"). Depicted are glass marbles, lollipops, peeled fruit, coffee mugs and a stack of CD covers. Mexican-themed works are also an important subject because he has resided in the country with painter Joice Hall, half of each year, annually from 1988 to 1999.

The artist graduated from the Alberta College of Art (now Alberta University of the Arts) in 1965, followed by post-graduate study in 1966 at the Instituto Allende (San Miguel de Allende, Mexico). He cites the mentorship of Calgary artists, Ron Spickett and Marion Nicoll, as well as the Pop Art of the 1960s, as having a particular influence on his work. From 1971 to 1998, Hall taught painting and drawing at University of Calgary; having a major impact on the development of contemporary realism in the province. Widely reviewed and acclaimed, John Hall has been featured in several exhibitions including a one-person show at the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa, ON, 1979), a travelling exhibition arranged by the Museo de Arte Moderno (Mexico City, 1992-94), and a 45-year survey organized by the Kelowna Art Gallery, BC (2015).



There is not much biographical information available about **Campbell Henderson**. However with some digging, one can find that Henderson likely lived in Grande Prairie in the eighties, as an artist and educator who was listed as a contributor to a number of curriculum guides for the Alberta Department of Education, part of the Secondary Art Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee, in the Grande Prairie School District.

Within these curriculum guides, the 'Alberta Art Foundation' (now the Alberta Foundation for the Arts) is acknowledged for providing, "the set of overhead projector transparencies designed to accompany the guide," and that, "Their efforts to bring Alberta artists to schools are appreciated."

We do not know the background information about this particular artwork, however, it was created in 1977 about five years after the Alberta Foundation for the Arts established the 'Alberta Art Collection' – proposed as an opportunity to support and encourage Alberta artists by purchasing original works, as well as creating a legacy collection for the people of Alberta.

There were quite a number of works acquired in this decade, many of which documented a deep appreciation for and awe of the rolling hills and grasses in the badlands.





Campbell Henderson
Landscape, 1977
Gum bichromate watercolour print on paper
7 1/2 x 9 5/8 in
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts





Thelma Manarey
Winter Trees, 1967
 Lithograph on paper, 13 x 17 in
 Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts



Thelma Manarey was born and raised in Edmonton, Alberta. As a young girl, Manarey received tutelage from Florence Mortimer, a well-known painter and teacher located in Edmonton. From 1939-1943, Manarey studied at the Institute of Technology and Art (today the Alberta College of Art & Design). At the Institute, Manarey had the opportunity to study with famous landscape painter, H.G. Glyde. Although Manarey is generally known for her small etchings, she explored many different types of mediums and artistic styles. Manarey tried her hand at: impressionism, realism, cubism, and abstract impressionism.

In the late 40's, she learned the art of the serigraph. Later, during the 1950's and 1960's, she studied etching with Harry Savage as well as stone lithography in Toronto, Ontario. Manarey, like so many other notable Albertan artists, was a great admirer of the Alberta Landscape and the natural and man-made icons of the province. These objects, such as trees and elevators, often became the subject matter of her etchings and paintings. In 1973, Manarey received the Performing and Creative Arts Award, from the City of Edmonton. Additionally, The Alberta Society of Artists honoured Manarey with the gift of a Lifetime Membership. Today, Manarey's works reside primarily at the Alberta Foundation of the Arts, the Nickle Arts Museum in Calgary, and the University of Calgary.

Illingworth Kerr studied at the Central Technical School, Toronto in 1924. From 1924 to 1927, Kerr studied under Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald, Frederick Varley and J.W. Beatty at the Ontario College of Arts. Kerr also studied at the Westminster School of Art, London, in 1936, as well as with Hans Hoffman in Provincetown, Massachusetts in 1954. In 1955 and 1957, he attended Emma Lake Workshops.

Kerr traveled the Georgian Bay area, Ontario, in 1927, and England and France from 1960 to 1961. He taught at the Vancouver School of Art from 1945 to 1946, and was head of the Alberta College of Art from 1947 to 1967. He was a great influence and friend to many artists of that era. As well, from 1952 to 1953, he was president of the Alberta Society of Artists. Kerr was also a member of the Canadian Authors Association; he wrote many short stories and illustrated many publications, including his autobiography, *Gay Dogs and Dark Horses*, in 1946. He received a Canada Council Award in 1960.

He painted portraits, urban views, wildlife, and the Prairie and Ontario landscape. He used the media of oil, acrylic, watercolour, charcoal, and ink, as well as woodblock, linoblock, monotype and silkscreen prints.



Illingworth Kerr
Wolf, Carcass, Sled Team, Owl, n.d.
For 'Travellers West' by Mary Quaile Innes
Pencil on paper, 9 7/8 x 7 15/16 in
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts



Gary Fryklind
Owl at Dusk, 1973
Colour photograph on paper
10 x 13 in
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Gary Fryklind's academic path led him to pursue a career as an art teacher. Graduating from the University of Saskatoon, he dedicated himself to sharing his love for creative expression with his students. As an art teacher at Western Canada High School and John G. Diefenbaker High School in Calgary, Alberta, Gary transformed his classrooms into spaces of inspiration. He emphasized not only technical skills but also the emotional and intellectual depth that art could unlock.

His influence on students went beyond the classroom walls. Gary's passion for the arts encouraged countless young minds to explore their potential, fostering confidence and creativity that extended into their personal and professional lives. For many, he was not just a teacher but also a mentor, shaping their artistic journeys with compassion and insight.



Jacques Rioux
Farm House, Alberta, 2000
Silver gelatin print on paper
13 7/8 x 19 1/16 in
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Jacques Rioux is a photographer who has been based in Calgary since completing a Diploma in Applied Photography at the CÉGEP du Vieux Montréal in 1979.

He has made photographs that seek to reveal the mystical qualities of Alberta's Badlands, and to share his own sense of discovery when he first saw this landscape. His black and white, high-contrast photos evoke the eerie qualities of the ancient geological formations, located "at the frontier of the real world," in his words – spaces sacred to the Indigenous populations. Big skies with dramatic cloud formations and textures, and empty roads leading to vast horizons communicate Rioux' sense of connection to the past. He has also photographed similar landscapes in the Southwestern United States.

Rioux's work appears in permanent collections in Canada and Europe, including at Red Deer College, the University of Lethbridge Art Gallery, the Glenbow Museum, Calgary; the National Gallery, and the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, Ottawa; the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris; as well as in galleries in Luxembourg and Belgium.



George Webber
Badlands, S. Alberta, Dinosaur Provincial Park, 1983
Silver Gelatin selenium toned on paper, 10 7/8 x 13 7/8 in
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

George Webber's work reveals his deep fascination and affection for the people and landscape of the Canadian west. Since the early 1980s he has photographed the Drumheller region extensively. "My concern is one of photography's most fundamental, the impulse to seize and arrest what is passing away," says Webber. "This desire seems to be felt most keenly when dealing with an aspect of one's own history and culture.

In the prairies, all that is human is ephemeral." Webber's photographs have been published and exhibited widely earning him numerous awards and distinctions such as induction into the Royal Canadian Academy in 1999 and the silver award for photojournalism at the National magazine awards in 2001. His work is found in major national and international collections including: The Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, and The Canada Council Art Bank in Ottawa, the Musee de la Photographie, in Charleroi, Belgium and the Bibliotheque Nationale, in Paris.



Theodore Shehinski
Water's Edge, 1986
Silver gelatin, selenium toned on paper, 14 x 10 7/8 in
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

No biographical information available for this artist.



Bryce Meyer
Treeline 2/5, 2006
C-print on paper, 24 x 24 in
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

No biographical information available for this artist.



Gerry Dotto
Empty Landscape, 2018
Digital photograph on paper, 24 x 34 in
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Gerry Dotto is an Edmonton-based artist whose photo-based practice explores the visual noise of modern life. Dotto captures sharp, often humorous works that question how we interpret the signs, packaging, and environmental graphics that surround us.

Graduating in 1981 from Visual Communications at the Alberta College of Art + Design (now Alberta University of the Arts), Dotto brings decades of design and printmaking expertise to his photographic work. His photographs have been featured in *PrairieSeen Notes*, *Camera Obscura*, *Blue Buffalo*, and *Other Voices*, among others.

Dotto's work has received several awards, including a gold medal from Gallery Photographica's New Images Photography Awards (2012) and an Award of Merit from Montreal's Salon d'oeuvres sur papier.



Blair Pinder
Untitled, n.d.
Silver Gelatin on paper, 11 3/4 x 9 15/16 in
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts



Aaron Falkenberg
Wheatland, 2008
Pigment print on paper
24 x 24 in
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Aaron Falkenberg is a landscape photographer from rural Alberta whose work explores the in-between space of the rural—where nature and human influence meet. Influenced by Ansel Adams and Edward Weston, his artistic approach shifted after reading Margaret Atwood’s *Survival*, prompting him to reject bleak or romanticized views of the Canadian landscape. His work has appeared in juried exhibitions across Alberta and is held in collections including Alberta Health Services and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.



Matthew Spidell
Grasses #4, 2005
Red Rock Coulee Natural Area, Alberta
Archival pigment ink on paper, 15 1/16 x 13 in
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Art

*No biographical information
available for this artist.*



Tom Willock
Bull, Buffalo Paddock,
Waterton Lakes National Park 1971, printed 2009
 Silver Gelatin on paper, mat board, 21 5/8 x 16 15/16 in
 Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts



Tom Willock was born in 1943, in Montana. He grew up in the Milk River area of Alberta. He received his training as a zoologist and a natural history photojournalist, attaining a B.Sc. from the University of Alberta and his Masters of Science from Carlton University in Ottawa. In 1990, he published a book titled *A Prairie Coulee* (Lone Pine Press, 1991), detailing the history, ecology and wildlife of the prairie coulees of the Milk River valley and Writing-On-Stone Provincial Park areas. He was the Director of the Medicine Hat Museum and Art Gallery (now The Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre) from 1978 to 1998 and served as a volunteer on numerous Alberta museums, heritage, and wildlife boards.

As a natural history photojournalist, Tom's vast variety of wildlife and landscape images along with portraiture, aerial, and industrial photography are widely held in numerous national and international public and private collections.

Adrian Stimson is a member of the Siksika (Blackfoot) Nation. He has a BFA with distinction from the Alberta College of Art and Design (now Alberta University of the Arts) and MFA from the University of Saskatchewan. He is as an interdisciplinary artist, working in painting, performance, installation, photography and sculpture.

Stimson's performance art looks at identity construction, specifically the hybridization of the Indian, the cowboy, the shaman and Two-Spirit being. Buffalo Boy and The Shaman Exterminator are two reoccurring personas. Stimson's installation work primarily examines the residential school experience; he attended three residential schools in his life. He has used the material culture from Old Sun Residential School on his Nation to create works that speak to genocide, loss and resilience.

His photography includes collodion wet plate portraits, performance dioramas and war depictions. His sculpture work has been primarily collaborative; he has worked with relatives of Murdered and Missing Women to create Bison Sentinels and with the Whitecap Dakota Nation in creating Sprit of Alliance, a monument to the War of 1812, in Saskatoon. Stimson was a participant in the Canadian Forces Artist Program in Afghanistan. He was awarded the Blackfoot Visual Arts Award in 2009, the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal in 2003, the Alberta Centennial Medal in 2005 and the Hnatyshyn Foundation's REVEAL Indigenous Art Award. Stimson is a recipient of the Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts (2018)

"...the multi-gendered Buffalo Boy—neither human, beast, boy nor girl—gives us access to the trans, to the crossing of boundaries, to metamorphosis and the hybrid."

- Lynne Bell, *Buffalo Boy at Burning Man*, Summer 2007 Canadian Art



Adrian Stimson
Buffalo Boy, 2004
 The Life and Times of Buffalo Boy Series
 Digital photograph on paper, 25 15/16 x 17 15/16 in
 Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts



Adrian Stimson
Shaman Exterminator, 2004
 The Life and Times of Buffalo Boy Series
 Digital photograph on paper, 26 x 18 1/16 in
 Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Adrian Stimson



Philip Kanwischer
Tranquil, 2016
Inhospitably Ours Series
Photograph on paper
24 1/16 x 24 1/16 in

Philip Kanwischer is an Alberta-based artist whose practice explores the complex relationships between humans and wildlife. Having worked closely with wild animals such as foxes, wolves, caribou, and bears, he uses photography to document and reenact encounters, while reflecting on how these animals perceive him. This experience led him to question his role behind the camera, and since then, his work has centered around examining human/animal interactions through a photographic lens.

Kanwischer's goal is not to capture aesthetically pleasing images of wildlife, but rather to create visual commentaries on the dynamics between wildlife and humans. Through compositing realistic, probable, and at times problematic scenarios, he uses his art to anthropomorphically advocate for animal territories, drawing attention to the moral status of animals and environmental politics. His work transitions this dialogue into the gallery space, encouraging reflection on broader social and ethical issues.



Don Cardinal
Stealing Some Fish, 1973
 Acrylic on canvas
 23 x 29 in
 Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Don J. Cardinal was a Métis artist. Cardinal's interest in art began in the Roman Catholic Mission residential school in Northern Alberta where he was placed at the age of two until he ran away at the age of 15. In 1963, he moved to Hay River, North West Territories where he began painting full-time in 1967 and met his wife and had two children. In Hay River, Cardinal took on odd construction jobs to supplement his income, and his talent later caught the attention of a CBC film crew on a northern assignment who encouraged him to show his work. This resulted in a brief stay in Edmonton but Cardinal soon found himself back home, in the NWT. His paintings explore his rich cultural traditions and demonstrate a love for northern life.

In an interview after his passing, and honouring his work, his widow Linda, who has since remarried and lives in Spirit River, Alberta, said "Donny" was never formally trained as an artist, but thought of the surrounding land and Indigenous communities as his greatest teachers. He knew that eventually all these wonderful people with their wonderful lifestyles, their family groups, their animals and their living off the land were going to change. He painted to show people what was within him.

education guide

This Education Guide consists of activities to move audiences through the various themes presented in *Howl in the Grass*. The content of the exhibition and the following lesson plans have been carefully developed and designed to enhance the curriculum set by Alberta Education.

The guide includes questions for discussion, engagement activities, and art lessons designed for the level of ability, understanding, and complexity of the participants. Each of the activities and art lesson plans can be altered to suit the appropriate level of learning that participants are coming from.

Additional links, books, and other sources related to the themes in this exhibition can be found in the resources section at the end of this catalogue.

discussion questions

Choose an artwork that captures your attention. What does it make you notice, listen to, or feel more deeply about the land or your surroundings?

Many of the works explore themes of memory, ecology, and transformation. What kinds of change do you think the artists are asking us to witness or consider?

What kinds of sounds, textures, or other senses do you imagine in the landscapes shown in this exhibition? If the artwork could speak, what might it say?

Do these artworks feel more grounded in the present, or do they gesture toward histories or futures? How can art help us trace time across generations and environments?

How do the artists in this exhibition portray the relationship between humans and nature? Do you notice tension, harmony, responsibility, or something else?

Many works in *Howl in the Grass* feature prairie grasses, animals, and rolling landscapes. What might these places, creatures, or plants mean to different cultures?

Think of a time when you felt deeply connected to a natural place. How does that experience shape how you view the artworks in this exhibition?

In what ways do you see the land as an active participant in the visual stories being told in the artworks, rather than just a setting?

Some artworks in the show might feel quiet or subtle, while others feel more visceral or unsettling. How do different emotional tones impact your interpretation?

How might listening—to land, to others, to silence—be an important way of learning or relating? What does it mean to “listen to learn,” as opposed to “observe to label”?

What role does imagination play in how we relate to environments? Could imagining different relationships with land inspire real change? If so, how?

How do questions—rather than answers—help us stay open to new understandings of art, land, and each other? How do nature’s ‘calls’ and ‘howls’ keep us curious?

learning to listen

A howl. a hoot, a scuffle in the grass.

The land speaks the language of many, and we are invited to listen, learn, and build relationship to each call and beckon.

Learning language is never static, nor should our approach to understanding grassland ecologies or our relationships with the creatures, winds, and roots that inhabit them. These landscapes are living stories, full of motion and memory, and they ask us not only to observe, but to participate and respond, with care.

To dwell in the grasslands is to dwell in multiplicity. Every rustle, every howl, every shifting shadow invites us into a layered world of meaning that cannot be easily pinned down. These are not neutral landscapes. Rather, these varied places amongst the prairie grasslands – rolling hills, coulees, sloughs and hoodoos, amongst others – are shaped by history, by culture, by memory, and by power.

How we come to know them matters.

In the same way colonial systems have codified human identities into fixed categories, most racial, gendered, or class-based, they have also sought to impose order on the natural world through taxonomies, property lines, and ecological hierarchies. But nature, like identity, is not a fixed archive. It is a living, breathing relation. It shifts. It hybridizes.

It resists.

Species cross-pollinate. Ecosystems move in unpredictable rhythms. A dandelion is weed or medicine depending on who is looking—and how. Lichens are not a single organism, but a collaborative entanglement of fungi and algae. They survive not because they fit a tidy definition, but because they are many in one. To reduce identity—or ecology—to a binary is not only inaccurate; it is violent. It severs kinship. It flattens complexity. It denies the possibility of evolution and growth, and change.

This is where *Howl in the Grass* begins: not meant as a spectacle, but as a sound and call. **An invitation to respond to the voice of the Great Plains.**

In the tall grasses of the prairies, where wind, insect, soil, and animal all move in slow, ancestral choreography, we are invited to hear beyond the surface. To listen is not the same as to observe. Observation often assumes a stance of distance, objectivity, and control. But listening requires proximity. Vulnerability. Surrender. When we listen, we do not simply study to classify, we learn in relationship and kinship.

When we learn from and *with* the land, rather than about it, a different kind of knowledge emerges, one that is seasonal, storied, and alive.

The howl, then, is not a cry for help, but a rupture in the silence of settler forgetfulness. A reminder that the grass still speaks, even when it may seem no one is watching. Land is not a backdrop, it is a protagonist, with a millenia of backstory. To howl in the grass is to join a lineage of wild knowing, to reject the colonial urge to categorize, and to choose instead a practice of embodied witnessing.

This practice asks: What if we stopped measuring the land, and started being measured by it? What if we let the wind braid our hair, let the scent of sage shape our direction, let the sound of coyote carry our questions deeper into the night?

What would it mean to replace surveillance with reciprocity, and to replace classification with kinship?

To listen deeply to the howl in the grass is to remember that not all wisdom is spoken in our language. Some of it moves underground. Some of it blooms in the periphery. Some of it arrives in the untranslatable feeling of being seen by a place that doesn't need your name, only your presence.



group activities

Howl in the Grass invites us to remember that a howl is both a signal and a response, a call to action, if you will.

It can be a cry for collective action, as with a pack of wolves or coyotes, or it might be a sounding gesture toward something unseen. If we think about what other kinds of creature calls exist, we might consider the buzz of insects, the rustle of a deer in motion, or the hum of wind through whispering prairie trees.

To engage with this exhibition is to tune in to those layered sensory calls of nature. What are we hearing? What are we feeling? What have we misheard, or overlooked? How might we practice listening in ways that allow new understandings to emerge?

The following activities offer ways to slow down, inquire, and reflect together. They invite students and groups to consider the land as a teacher, collaborator, and a close and connected relative.



A Sounding Journal

This activity invites students to slow down and listen closely to the sounds of the land. It can take place outdoors—on a walk, in a schoolyard, or on a field trip—or indoors using a recorded prairie soundscape. Ask students to sit or stand quietly for one full minute, paying attention to all the sounds they notice: wind, birds, insects, rustling grass, distant traffic, or even the quiet in between.

Afterward, students are invited to write down what they heard in a journal. They can also note how each sound made them feel—curious, calm, distracted, unsettled, peaceful, or anything else.

Facilitator note: For some participants, silence or unfamiliar natural sounds might feel strange, or even a little anxious. That’s okay. This activity isn’t about feeling any one “right” way, it’s about noticing. Creating space for students to express a range of responses helps normalize different relationships to land and listening.

What kinds of sounds did you hear?

Did anything surprise you?

How did the experience make you feel—emotionally or physically?

What might the land be trying to say through sound?

What did you learn by listening?

Field Viewfinders: Textures of Nature

This activity invites participants to slow down and look more closely at the world around them by using a simple handmade “viewfinder.” Give each student a paper towel or toilet paper roll to use as a focusing tool. As they walk through a natural area such as a prairie trail, schoolyard, or park, ask them to hold the roll up to their eye like a telescope, using it to frame textures they find interesting or unusual: the cracked pattern of dry soil, the weave of a spider web, the fuzz on a blade of grass, or the bark of a weathered tree.

Once they’ve spotted something through their “viewfinder” that catches their attention, they can take a close-up photo of it (using a phone or tablet, if available), or write a short description of it in a journal.

What kinds of textures did you find most interesting or unexpected?

Did using the viewfinder change how you looked at your surroundings?

Did a smaller viewfinder help you notice more details in nature? Why or why not?

Optional extension: Create a classroom collage or digital slide show of the textures captured, emphasizing the diversity and beauty of the land when seen up close.

art activity : *draw a presence sound a call*

Just as the artists in the *Howl in the Grass* exhibition have tuned into the layered stories of land, sky, and life across the prairies, you're invited to do the same through observation and imagination in this drawing activity meant to call attention to endangered species of prairie grasslands.

Across the Great Plains, many animal species once abundant are now threatened or endangered. Each has its own way of making a presence known through rustling, screeching, singing, howling, or other kinds of signal sounds. In this activity, participants will try to hone in on one of these creature calls by sketching a chosen endangered animal, and journaling about the sounds it makes and the ways it calls for attention.

Instructions:

Choose a Creature - Review threatened or endangered animals of the prairie grasslands (like the burrowing owl, swift fox, greater sage-grouse, plains bison, or northern leopard frog).

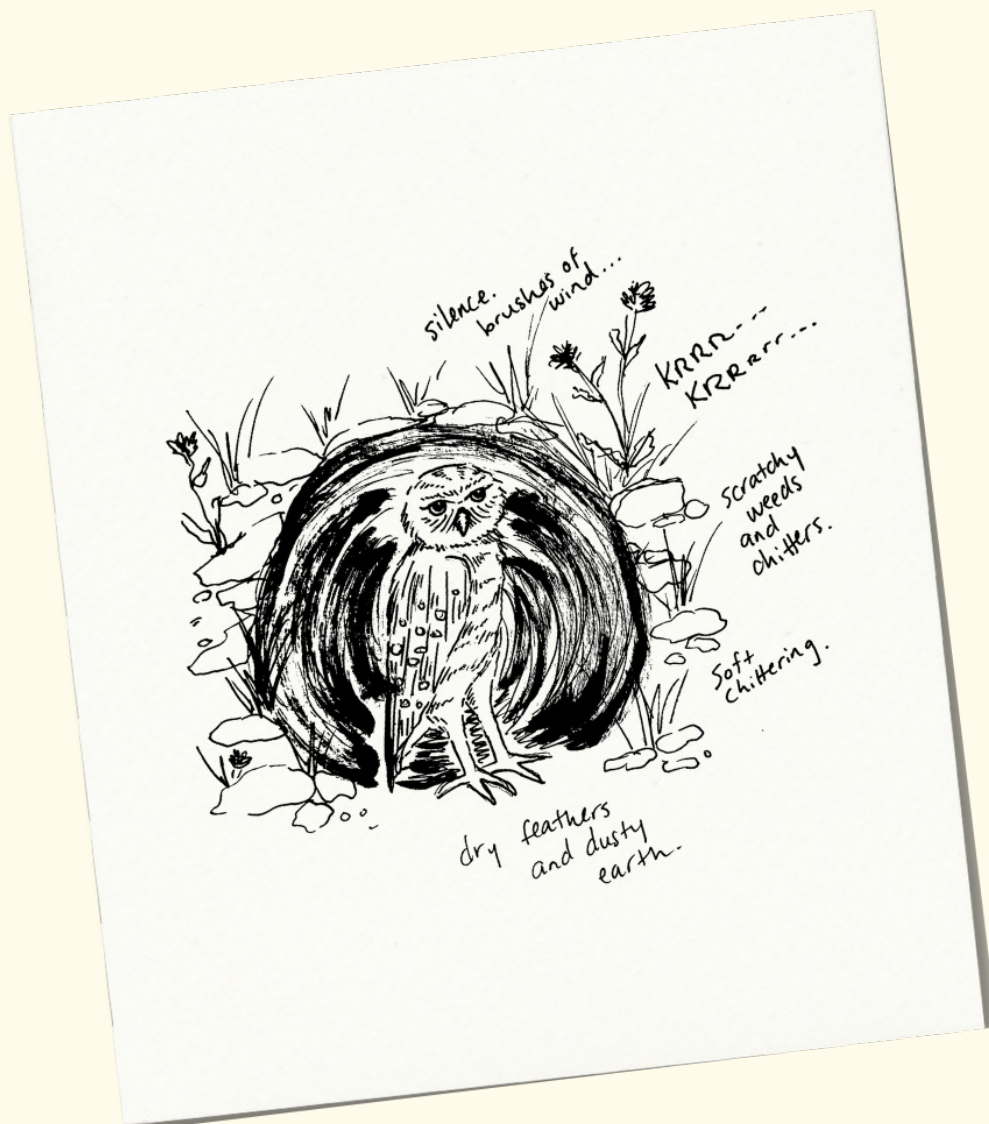
Sketch with Intention - On a sheet of drawing paper, make a sketch of your animal. Don't worry about it needing to be hyper realistic—focus on capturing the feeling, shape, or essence of the critter's presence. Might it appear nestled in grasses, crouched in a burrow, or gliding through sky or stream?

Add a Sound - What sound does your animal make? Is it a chirp, a growl, a rustle, a hoot, or a hum? Write the sound as a word or expressive lettering beside your drawing—feel free to invent your own onomatopoeia if needed. Imagine how their call travels across the landscape.

Feel Their Texture - Think about the animal's body. Is it rough like bark? Slick like water? Fluffy, scaly, smooth, bristly? Use descriptive words or lines to describe or mimic the animal's texture on the sketch page. You can also add marks to show where the animal lives—soft grasses, prickly thistles, rocky dens.

Reflect - (optional) on the back of your page, write one sentence about why this creature matters. What does its presence (or disappearance) say about the land? What might it be trying to tell us with its call?

This activity encourages listening, empathy, and a multisensory connection to our land co-habitants; mirroring the exhibition's invitation to "take account of each visceral call and feeling."



Burrowing owl example

art activity : *paper prairie critters*

This hands-on collage activity explores how prairie animals like field mice survive by hiding in tall grasses. Participants will build their own prairie habitat using layered paper grass and a small mouse cut-out tucked behind the blades. The result is a playful, tactile scene that invites closer looking and consideration of how animals stay safe and unseen in open landscapes.

Materials Needed:

- Brown kraft paper or recycled paper bags (for cutting grass strips)
- Cardstock or heavy paper for the background (8.5x11" or larger)
- Black construction paper (for mouse cut-out)
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- Markers, crayons, or pencils (optional for background details)
- Optional: Mouse template for younger participants

Instructions:

1. Tear or cut your brown kraft paper into long strips to look like blades of grass. Make them various widths and lengths.

2. Start gluing the grass strips to the bottom third of your cardstock. Leave the tops of the grass unglued so they can bend or lift off the page, and space some of the grass out so you can see through it a little bit.

3. Cut out a small field mouse silhouette from black paper. You can use a template or create your own simple shape. Tuck the mouse behind the grass so it peeks out from between the blades of grass

4. Optionally, use crayons or markers to draw seeds, or soil. You can also add other tiny insects or critters if you'd like.

5. Reflect (Optional) - On the back of the page or in your notebook, write a sentence or two: *Why do you think the mouse hides in the grass? What helps it survive? What do you think it hears or feels when it's still?*



art activity : textured encounters

This reflective photographic art activity invites you to slow down and connect with the land through the textures you observe. Rather than documenting grand landscapes, you will focus on small details—textures that ask you to pause, notice, and feel.

Using photography, found materials, and words, you'll create a collage that expresses your encounter with the land and your experience of being in relationship with it.

Instructions:

1. Go on a Texture Walk: Head outside to a natural area—a field, park, trail, or quiet spot with plants and natural materials. As you walk, look for textures that grab your attention. These could be zoomed-in closeups (like a cracked rock or fuzzy seedpod) or wide views (like tangled grasses or windblown trees).

2. Take Photographs and gather materials: Capture 5–10 images using your phone or camera. Try to take both close-up and wider shots. Collect natural materials that have fallen like pinecones, leaves, or grasses (don't pick live plants).

3. Reflect on Each Image: Choose a few of your favourite photos and write a short reflection or poetic line for each.

Ask yourself:

- What drew me to this?
- What feeling or memory does it bring up?
- What sounds or other senses did I notice when sharing space with this part of nature?

4. Create a Collage: Print your images and arrange them on a page, or create a digital collage artwork. Add some writing alongside or layered into the composition. Your collage is a visual and emotional response to the textures of the land. Feel free to add pressed leaves, flowers, or any of your gathered natural materials.

5. Title Your Work: Choose a title that reflects your experience.

Optional: Share your collage with others and reflect together—what did you learn by paying attention to texture? How did your relationship with the land shift in the process?



resources

Alberta Prairie Conservation Forum. "Prairie." *Alberta Prairie Conservation Forum*, n.d., albertapcf.org/about-prairies/prairie.

[This resource highlights the prairie as one of the most biologically rich ecosystems in Canada, home to a diverse array of grasses, wildflowers (forbs), lichens, shrubs, and wild-life. It emphasizes how prairie biodiversity has adapted to harsh environmental conditions like drought and fire, creating a resilient, interdependent web of life.]

Bell, Lynne. "Buffalo Boy at Burning Boy." *Canadian Art*, vol. 24, no. 2 (Summer 2007), pp. 44–48.

Belshaw, John, Sarah Nickel, and Chelsea Horton, editors. "Chapter 3: The Plains Peoples—Allies, Conflict, Adaptation." *Histories of Indigenous Peoples and Canada*, Thompson Rivers University, 2025, histindigenousspeoples.pressbooks.tru.ca/chapter/chapter-3-the-plains-peoples-allies-conflict-adaptation/

[This chapter examines Plains Indigenous societies as dynamic participants in continental trade, diplomacy, and conflict. It highlights how European commerce, technological change (like horses and firearms), and environmental transformations reshaped them into mobile hunters, mounted warriors, and fur-trading intermediaries, adapting culturally and politically to sustain their autonomy.]

Dietz, John L., and Elwyn B. Robinson. "Great Plains." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Accessed 12 June 2025, www.britannica.com/place/Great-Plains

[The Great Plains is a vast highland region in central North America, stretching from Canada to Texas. Characterized by grasslands, flat terrain, and a semi-arid climate, it has shaped Indigenous cultures, agricultural economies, and ecological systems. Britannica highlights its geographical significance, natural resources, and historical role in continental development.]

Least Heat-Moon, William. *PrairieErth: A Deep Map*. Houghton Mifflin, 1991.

[Through deep observation and storytelling, Least Heat-Moon maps the physical and spiritual contours of the American prairie, revealing how landscape shapes culture, memory, and identity. It's a meditative, immersive journey into place and presence.]

"Prairie Quotes." Webpages.acs.ttu.edu, Texas Tech University, n.d., webpages.acs.ttu.edu/nmcintyr/prairie_quotes.html. (webpages.acs.ttu.edu)

[quotes about various human experiences of the prairies]

Willock, Thomas. *Prairie Coulee*. Lone Pine, 1990.

[Enter the richly textured world of the coulee: a place of transition which contains a blend of animal and plant species found nowhere else on the prairie. These steep-walled ravines, or dry creek beds, unique to North American prairie regions, are systems of surprising diversity and appeal. Author Thomas Willock's lively text and remarkable photographs explore the evolution and ecology of prairie coulees, their flora and their fauna, and their relevance to the surrounding land.]

World Wildlife Fund. "Northern Great Plains, USA & Canada." WWF, n.d., wwf.panda.org/discover/knowledge_hub/where_we_work/northern_great_plains/

[This resource spotlights the Northern Great Plains as one of the largest temperate grasslands in the world, spanning five U.S. states and two Canadian provinces. It emphasizes biodiversity—bison, pronghorn, black-footed ferrets, birds—while describing threats like habitat loss, agriculture, and climate change. It highlights ongoing prairie conservation and restoration efforts.]

HOWL IN THE GRASS SOUNDSCAPES PLAYLIST - For listening activities

https://open.spotify.com/playlist/5gjPsaVT330IjTb1weVxoO?si=I9SUIVFNT2q25zRJGe_TFg

credits

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