



SILKROAD

August 5, 2019

Dear 100 and Change Grant Application Review Committee,

This letter is in enthusiastic support of the application by Montana State for mobilizing the arts and humanities across the state through cultural connections.

Silkroad seeks and practices radical cultural collaboration in many forms, creating and presenting new music, teacher and musician training workshops, and residency programs.

Since 2012, Silkroad artists have exchanged music, stories, and traditions with students and teachers at Lame Deer Junior High on the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation in Montana. The partnership was launched by Turnaround Arts, an initiative led by the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities that provides two years of arts education for the nation's lowest-performing schools. Collaboration has continued independently since June 2014.

The words of one Lame Deer student state simply the profound impact the arts have had on her life: "Art makes me feel like a human being." Located on Montana's Northern Cheyenne Reservation, Lame Deer is one of the country's most isolated school districts. The school's remote location has made outside partnerships unsustainable, created significant barriers to hiring and retaining faculty, and limited engagement opportunities for students.

Bringing new cultures to the students of Lame Deer has sparked curiosity, and ignited a sense of hope about what the world has to offer. A highlight of each residency is the co-creation of public performances that incorporate Northern Cheyenne traditions. These performances by students and Silkroad artists typically draw 100 or more people—the largest audiences for any community event at Lame Deer—and student attendance rates are at their highest.

Most recently, Silkroad artists composed and choreographed a piece connected to Promise Under the Morning Star, an art exhibit by Lame Deer students in collaboration with Lame Deer visual arts teacher Susan Wolfe and Crow/Northern Cheyenne artist Ben Pease and the Stapleton Gallery. Silkroad artists accompanied the students in their performance at the Stapleton Gallery in Billings, Montana, which brought together strangers across cultures in the state of Montana to form a new community for an evening. Art made us all feel like human beings that evening and we support every effort to make the arts and culture core to communities in Montana and beyond.

Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,



Lori Taylor
Acting Deputy Director & Director of Learning
Silkroad