



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Mary Louise Defender Wilson is the first ever North Dakotan to be awarded  
USA Fellows recognition**

The United States Artists (USA) recently announced the 37 new USA Fellows for 2015. Representing nine creative disciplines, each USA Fellow receives an unrestricted \$50,000 award and recognition as one of America's most accomplished and innovative artists. This award will support their artistic practice and professional development, opening up exciting creative possibilities through the transformative power of unrestricted financial support.

The North Dakota Council on the Arts would like to congratulate Mary Louise Defender Wilson on her USA Fellows 2015 award and recognition!

“Mary Louise Defender Wilson is a Dakotah and Hidatsa traditionalist and storyteller who grew up amongst a family of storytellers. She learned these ancient narratives as a child and as an adult, and at the age of 85 continues to share them with her community, our state, and our country. She is highly regarded and decorated traditional storyteller. The stories she tells speak to the human experience. Those ancient narratives continue today because they are just as relevant now as they were in centuries past – love and hatred, joy and sadness, unity and separation, peace and violence, truth and the desire to be better human beings. Mary Louise is a North Dakota treasure, and with this recent recognition, one of the nation's most competitive and prestigious awards in the arts, she is now solidified as a national treasure. Mary Louise is the first person ever from the state of North Dakota to be honored with this award, and the first person ever in the nation to be recognized with this award in the art form of storytelling,” says Troyd Geist, Folklorist with the North Dakota Council on the Arts.

This year's awardees were selected from over 400 nominated artists living in the United States and US Territories and were chosen by panels of expert peers in each artistic discipline. The USA Fellowship honors innovative, accomplished artists at all stages of their careers for their fresh perspectives, unique artistic vision, and impact on their field in the following disciplines: Architecture & Design, Crafts, Dance, Literature, Media, Music, Theater & Performance, Traditional Arts and Visual Arts.

With its signature Fellowship program, USA celebrates the breadth of American artistic practices from coast to coast, cultivating a creative ecology that is diverse in age, race, religion, gender,

and sexual orientation. Since their inception in 2006, United States Artists have awarded nearly 450 artists with over \$21 million in support.

To learn more visit <http://www.unitedstatesartists.org/fellows/?tag=2015>. To read more about Mary Louise Defender Wilson, visit <http://www.unitedstatesartists.org/fellows/2015/mary-louise-defender-wilson>.

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*The North Dakota Council on the Arts is the state agency responsible for the support and development of the arts throughout North Dakota, and is funded by the state legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts.*