

SCENE

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LABRE OF LOVE

Hezekiah Whiteman, a student St. Labre Indian Catholic Academy, waits to perform at The Brinton Museum Sunday, April 7, 2019.

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Brinton display features work from Montana students

BY RYAN PATTERSON

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BIG HORN — As long as she can remember, Sarah Sisolak loved art. From a young age, she enjoyed drawing or creating something artistic, especially in nature.

Sisolak mostly taught herself until high school, where she took a few classes and expanded her artistic horizons.

"I just see beauty and I want to capture it," Sisolak said.

Sisolak, a high school sophomore at St. Labre Indian Catholic Academy in Ashland, Montana, is one of many students with artwork featured in a current exhibit at The Brinton Museum.

"Connecting the Past to the Future" began March 15 and runs until May 15. It is the first exhibit at The Brinton consisting solely of artwork from St. Labre students. It features an array of art forms made by middle-schoolers and high-schoolers, including beadwork, sculptures, photographs and oil paintings. The museum also held a reception and dance April 7 with many students, families and teachers present.

Ken Schuster, director and chief curator at The Brinton, said the idea for the exhibit began more than two years ago when he and Barb McNab, curator of exhibitions and museum education at The Brinton, visited St. Labre and spoke with several art instructors about how to best set up a display.

Kate Ruland, a fine arts teacher at St. Labre, was one of three art instructors who essentially curated the exhibit with the pieces they thought worked most cohesively together. McNab and the educators decided on the theme.

Ruland said the artwork was characteristic of the type of instruction that occurs daily in the classroom. Ruland's favorite part involved walking into the gallery and seeing

the students' work officially on display. Her eyes welled up as she discussed her pride in her students.

Ruland said the exhibit was everything one can ask for as an artist and educator.

"Without art, cultures die," Ruland said. "... Especially learning historically where your art comes from, and then in the modern, contemporary world, how that all ties in."

Schuster agreed and said even though St. Labre is only located about two hours north of The Brinton, it can seem a world apart. He appreciated the importance and relevance of the exhibit.

"So many non-Natives think of the Indian population as being something that existed in the past," Schuster said.

For Sisolak, the exhibit meant the first time her work was publicly displayed, and she called it a bit overwhelming to have so many different people examining her art.

Sisolak had eight total pieces on display, including oil paintings, scratchboards, pen and ink and a sculpture. The oil paintings were her favorite because she had never done them before but was pleased with the end result.

"So many famous artists do oil painting, and I was just like, 'Alright I'm just gonna go in and do it,'" Sisolak said. "It turned out really great and I was really proud of it."

She enjoyed seeing her classmates' artwork as well.

"I'm just really proud of them," Sisolak said. "... They're really gifted."

Sisolak aims to work in art therapy in the future and help others heal by experiencing and appreciating her art in their own ways.

"I think that gives my art purpose," Sisolak said.

The inaugural St. Labre display at The Brinton provided students a chance to show off their artwork and culture in a unique, professional setting.



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Chitat Killsback, a student at St. Labre Indian Catholic Academy, waits to perform at The Brinton Museum Sunday, April 7, 2019.



Trivian Rides The Bear, high school principal at St. Labre Indian Catholic Academy, speaks at The Brinton Museum Sunday, April 7, 2019.