Applications Reopen for Otter Tail Story Mapping Project: Funds Available

(St. Paul, Minn.—July 6, 2020) - The Otter Tail County Story Mapping Project is a pilot project by Rethos: Places Reimagined in partnership with the Otter Tail County Historical Society and Springboard for the Arts. The purpose of this project is to collect and map the stories of Otter Tail County by engaging community members through small projects led by local organizations, historians, artists, students, businesses, etc.

The story map will then become a local resource for Otter Tail County that may assist the following: economic development strategies, pathways to safeguarding heritage resources, future philanthropic investment, planning and other policy decisions and promotion, and partnerships and connections.

Education about the project and the first two rounds of applications for this project took place in early 2020, but with the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic plans were put on hold for a few months. The project is now moving forward as state guidelines have expanded and there are opportunities to safely hold information gathering sessions. However, Rethos will be following any future changes to state safety guidelines and any participants in this project will need to do the same. As projects continue, participants are required to adhere to safety precautions advised by the State of Minnesota Health Department.

In order to more fully include stories and places from all over Otter Tail County, Rethos is pleased to announce a new option for applicants interested in creating a story map project, but lacking a specific plan. Rethos will be offering “Ready Set Story Mapping” projects, which will be simplified, topical, and allow people to follow a more step-by-step process than the open-ended story map projects.

The Ready to Go project option can be used to create any sort of project—from photography exhibits to folklore gathering, cataloguing of buildings to recording stories of locals. Each project will receive limited guidance on how to complete the project, and funds of $1,000 per project is available. These projects can focus on any place in Otter Tail County, including towns and townships, unincorporated areas, rural areas, lakes or a combination of these places. These projects are meant to have a singular focus, and be more simple to gather information on than some of the larger, more involved projects that are taking place. To learn more about what these Ready to Go projects are like, visit www.rethos.org/community-engagement and click on the Otter Tail County link.
Otter Tail County residents participated in community story workshops in January 2020, where they learned about what story mapping is, methods of gathering community stories, and project ideas ranging from one-on-one conversations to more creative and public projects. By attending these workshops, participants became eligible to apply for project funds ranging from $500 to $2500 to implement a community story project. The total amount of project funds available from Rethos for Otter Tail County story mapping projects is $30,000. Projects can vary in topic and presentation, with participants encouraged to do any sort of creative initiative that will result in the collection of stories. This includes highly personal narratives or publically engaged events and projects. The first deadlines for these projects were in February and March, and several projects were awarded funds:

- **Story gathering focused on the lakes of Otter Tail County:** Fishing, Boating, and other memories set on the water
- **Businesses in New York Mills:** Highlighting new, longstanding, and closed businesses that were key to the New York Mills Community, which will culminate in a photograph and story based gallery show
- **Sauna Culture:** Sharing one family’s story of their smoke sauna and sauna culture in Otter Tail County

The third round of applications for the Otter Tail County Story Mapping Project are due on Thursday, August 6, 2020. Anyone who attended the previous community story workshops is eligible to apply for either type of project. However, if you are interested in the project but did not attend a story workshop and cannot attend the July 21 at 2pm Informational Webinar to become eligible to apply. If you cannot attend this webinar in person, starting on July 22, you can go to [www.rethos.org/community-engagement](http://www.rethos.org/community-engagement) and click on “Otter Tail County.” From there, you will see a link for the Informational Webinar, which you may view in order to learn more about the story mapping projects, and then be eligible to apply for funding to complete a project.

For more information, reach out to your local community partner, who’s contact information is listed below.

For questions about this project, please contact Tyler McDaniel at tyler@rethos.org.

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Project Partners

Rethos is the statewide, private non-profit organization advocating for the preservation of Minnesota’s historic resources. Rethos was established in 1981 as the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota by citizens concerned about the loss of irreplaceable segments of our state's heritage, structures, neighborhoods, and community fabric. Its mission is to "lead and inspire people to connect with historic places, promoting community vitality."

Otter Tail County Historical Society is a private, nonprofit organization whose purpose is the collection, preservation and interpretation of Otter Tail County’s history and heritage. This is achieved through a variety of services including the Society’s exhibit gallery, educational outreach program, special public programs, archival and object collections, and a genealogical and local history research library. The development of these services has made the Society an active partner in the educational and cultural life of Otter Tail County.

Springboard for the Arts is an economic and community development organization for artists and by artists. Springboard for the Arts’ mission is to cultivate vibrant communities by connecting artists with the skills, information, and services they need to make a living and a life. Their work is about creating communities and artists that have a reciprocal relationship, where artists are key contributors to community issues and are visible and valued for the impact they create. They do this work by creating simple, practical solutions and systems to support artists. Those programs support their goal to help create a local culture movement.