



## Spring Instructor Update

**Hello Everyone!**

Happy spring...or ongoing winter as the case may be! There is so much news to share from North House that we created a table of contents. We'd love to hear from you on a number of things, so please be in touch when you have a chance. Hope to see you soon!



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\*\*\* ***NOTE: Response For Above Requested***



## **Instructor Retreat Report**

So how was the first-ever Instructor Retreat many of you might want to know? Well, pretty good we think, and the 30+ instructors who braved the April snows seem to agree. In fact, we've included some reflections from those in attendance for you to chew on. Moreover, we plan to use the discussions from the Retreat to fuel conversations for the Instructor Gathering at the Wooden Boat Show on June 23.

In order to have more ideas on the table, we'd love to hear from those of you who weren't at the Retreat. Included in this update is a list of discussion questions that we tackled and a proposal for future retreats. Please, take a look and send any thoughts that strike you our way so that we can present a fuller picture of the instructor community at the Gathering. We'll also be discussing the plans and ideas for future retreats.

You can also see photos here: (no need to have a Facebook account), just paste this ungainly thing into your browser.

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10151425228603167.1073741828.64256823166&type=1&l=2b7a1e4018>

We will eventually have audio files from many of the sessions available as well.

## **Instructor Retreat 2013...in their own words**

There was a time when "craft" meant clever like a fox  
humans are clever  
these are instructors talking  
to make something is one thing, to instruct is quite another, that's me talking.  
these teachable moments are not like the Japanese boat builders who never say a word.  
the craft of which we speak may lean toward a paint by number, premeditated.  
crafting a satisfied customer  
accommodating "success" isn't the deep lesson, but who would choose to afford a mistake?  
Is it possible all the scars and calluses worn by an instructor could let the student/client skip  
some of the troubles of the cutting edge, the unknown?  
This is a shadow tribute to the seemingly boundless energy and enthusiasm and inclusiveness  
of those magicians who know what it takes to inspire and motivate, to get the word out, be  
cost effective, and even embrace growth.

-Kurt Buetow



WOW! That's the best one word summation I can make. It's difficult to convey in few words what a wonderful experience it was for me. As a new teacher to North House I was able to live and breath the mission statement of North House, and felt the deep generosity embedding in this place and the people who share it. Having the insights of seasoned teachers gave me new perspective on my approach to teaching my craft. And I was honored that North House values my vision for the future. I built new friendships and strengthened existing relationships and was nourished by the incredible support of the administration and staff of North House. What a way to start the Spring! (That is, if it ever gets here.) My heartfelt thanks to all.

-Cecillia Schiller

We were all buoyed by the feelings of camaraderie, the energy, and the stimulating ideas. At one point Lou asked how we could harness the creativity of the group, to make something collectively, something that could tangibly represent all of our work together... a collaborative sculpture? Right then the idea stuck in my head that this collaborative project already existed... it had been started years ago through the labor of love of those who have worked so hard to make the campus and the programs what they are now. Like any great collaborative project, the result is a collection of inextricably connected pieces, some large and some small, that have been contributed with generosity and with love from all of the individuals who are connected with North House.

I know the impact and the clarity of this beautiful collaborative project, I see it on the face of every single person who walks onto campus for the first time... just as they would be in the presence of any beautiful artwork, they are instantly mesmerized. They cannot wait to return and to find how they may contribute and be a part of it... I sure understand, I felt the same way. Watching others happily engaged in the work of creating something beautiful is somehow irresistibly attractive.

I understood this as a challenge to myself and to all of us who are connected to North House, what will be my contribution in the coming year to this ongoing and vibrant collaborative project? I am challenging myself to keep volunteering my time and by showing my love and commitment through work. I see this as simply as carving some small drawer pulls for the kitchen or chopping firewood, washing some windows or even engaging and connecting with visitors to the school. These things are all small but they are real... and they add up. They are also the tangible evidence that one small part of this collaborative project is *my* contribution... and that is something to be proud of.

-Paul Linden



The instructors retreat was great with lots of good ideas for the future of North House. Thanks to all who attended during the snow storm. Four board members were present so you can be sure the board will hear and discuss the ideas as we work on the vision for North House at the board retreat later in the year, and some of the ideas will be discussed for action. We look forward to a continuation of this interaction at the instructors gathering at the Wooden Boat Show in June.

-Lou Pignolet

The instructor gathering was a harmonious and energized pursuit to put art and craft and each other and region and tradition and preservation together under one roof, per se. Heart and mind were so apparently present in each conversation; instructors expressed responsibility to bestow each student with the vigor and/or the enjoyment and/or the work behind the craft.

Also, the conversations that took place between instructors I think left me feeling the breadth and the heft of this world-- that it requires our attention our vigilance and our spoken word to stay true/retain/protect the stories and the traditions and the handiwork which we teach. I left the retreat feeling invigorated and inspired to protect and to teach the craft which I have known, and also to continue that learning. It is obvious that the group of people gathered during the retreat are invested in this school, and this continued conversation; that was thrilling and heart-pumping to feel in community and word.

-Lucy Kruesel

As someone who has just begun teaching classes at north house, I found it very helpful to hear how more seasoned instructors approach the craft of teaching.

-Ian Andrus

As a young maker, student, and teacher of craft, it was extraordinarily inspiring and humbling to be surrounded by such passionate people. The thoughtful discussions and informal conversations brought together so many people excited about craft, its teaching and the vision of North House Folk School. It was such a wonderful event that left me energized and excited!

-Carolyn Fritz





## *Looking Forward*

### **2014 Special Project Weekends Proposal 2015 Instructors Retreat Proposal**

The first-ever Instructor Retreat was a resounding success: lots of great ideas, camaraderie and inspiration fueled the weekend, despite the less-than perfect weather conditions that caused a few cancellations. Of course, the question “should we do this again” came up pretty quickly, and across the board, the answer was “YES!”

#### **2014: Instructor Project Weekend**

**April 11-13, 2014**

While everyone enjoyed the conversation and learning that happened this year, a hunger to “build a collaborative project” and the need to keep our hands engaged pointed toward the vision of being of service to our North House facility. The idea for a “project” weekend in which instructors would stay on campus to build or create resources for the school had a lot of support. After all, in the words of one instructor “North House is our collaborative artwork.” What projects exactly? There is some pot-stirring to be done on this front, and ideas are always welcome. Two big ideas are tool storage for the Red Building and the building of new spring pole lathes.

- One or two campus improvement projects completed by skilled instructors over the course of a weekend.
- One or two lead instructors work with NH staff to organize and facilitate the project. Materials are purchased by North House.
- North House provides lodging, some meals and a small travel stipend to those who need it
- Multiple projects may be possible, depending on needs and interest. That said, projects could also leave room for other types of instructor engagement (i.e. some instructor-only coursework or evening show & share) that would also occur on campus during the extended weekend.

#### **2015: Instructor Retreat (our second!)**

**April 10-12, 2015**

Let’s keep the conversation happening: lead-in coursework, roundtables and discussions, mini-courses and potlucks will all be on the agenda again as we gather as a community to focus on the quality of and vision for our institution.

**Bring your ideas to Wooden Boat Show weekend and the Instructor Gathering on Sunday, June 23 at 9:00 am! Or send them our way via mail, phone or email!**



## **Discussion Questions from the Retreat**

### **Please Respond!**

Please add your voice and let us know what you think about these big questions. No need to tackle 'em all unless you want to; you can send an email to us, give us a call or sit down over coffee the next time you're on campus. Sharing your ideas will absolutely make a difference - our goal is to gather written ideas from as many instructors as possible so we can share ideas with the board and staff as work moves forward looking to the future.

#### **A: Turning Twenty:**

In four years, North House will turn twenty, marking the close of our second decade of existence and rounding an intriguing landmark on our journey. To celebrate our first ten years we created Celebrating Birch and hosted the All from One Tree Project/Exhibit.

**\*\*** What creative ideas could we begin work on as we approach the big 2-0 that would BOTH create an inspiring celebration AND generate a meaningful exchange between instructors, students and the broader community?

#### **B: Raise The Roof and Our Harbor-side Campus:**

In the past 4-5 years NH has invested \$850,000+ on our campus home, adding new classrooms, enhanced community space, creating space for our thriving intern program, etc. North House remains committed to the core concepts defined by the rest of the Raise the Roof vision - "Sharpening the Saw" by making significant investments in classroom resources/ tools, building a "Green Building" (replacing the yellow house) which would serve as a student center and administrative hub at the entrance to campus, and \_\_\_\_\_ (you fill in the blank!).

**\*\*** What wisdom, ideas, questions or recommendations would you share based upon the Raise the Roof's results to date and the tasks that remain ahead?

#### **C. Curriculum Innovation (and a Second Campus?):**

Many of the programs and themes that define North House have been clearly defined and shaped by our first sixteen years. That said, there are many dimensions to traditional craft and northern living that might be part of the future of North House, made possible either by creative planning or perhaps made possible by "just the right piece of property located nearby." Once you start brainstorming a list of ideas it's hard to stop - big organic gardens, extended-stay living space for instructors, experimental shelter building projects, a big pole barn to store everything from boat forms to sawhorses, studio space for floor looms, a wood-fired kiln, etc - hmm... **\*\*** What innovative coursework or themes would you dream of seeing in North House's catalog in the future?

**\*\*** What assets/features would "just the right piece of property located nearby" ideally possess to open the door to North House's future?

#### **D. Financial Accessibility:**

Over the years, North House has utilized a variety of strategies to make programs accessible. Locals have always received discounted tuition, a work-study exchange has long been part of our Earn & Learn program, 2012's launch of the Core of Craft Series reached out to individuals in Cook County (discounting tuition 50%-90%), and in 2013 a new summer-season Earn & Learns sessions offer a compact way to do work-study for visitors from afar. We even have a



scholarship program based on documented income. That said, these programs are rarely filled to capacity and North House continues to be perceived as being inaccessible.

\*\* What new ideas and strategies could North House use for reaching out more effectively?

### **E. Growing the Future:**

Instructors are the heart of North House. We meet instructors in many ways – referrals from friends, unexpected visitors walking through the door, young artisans gradually growing into the role. Each of these different “doors into North House” have their advantages and disadvantages. As North House matures, we are constantly reminded that our instructors are maturing as well and that some instructors some day really do hope to “enter retirement” (not too soon, please!).\*\* What strategies can we use to “grow” our community of instructors?

\*\* What 3-4 ideas or ideals could NH use to structure its orientation of new instructors so they can join “the family” and understand “our roots” as smoothly as possible?

\*\* If literally “growing our own” is part of the vision, what ideas could be used to shape a NH Assistant or Apprentice Instructor program?

### **F. Development:**

Of 2405 individuals who have taken one or more classes anytime during the past three years, a total of 466 gave a financial contribution (of any kind) to North House during the same three year period. Said differently --- 19% of students are financially active as donors.

\*\* How can NH and instructors work together to inspire more students to robustly invest in the future of craft and education?

### **G. Sustainability:**

A constant question on the North House campus shouldn't surprise any of us: “What IS happening to the birch trees along the North Shore?” There's no question that a changing world is having an impact on the northern landscape and thus a direct impact on the world of traditional craft and northern cultures.

\*\* How should North House through our courses and special events engage this issue both on a macro and micro levels (via speakers at events or in the classroom)?

### **H. Systems to Improve Campus & Classroom Management**

North House's educational efforts are thriving and our mission continues to draw more students to campus each year. This means each classroom and every resource on campus is in steady demand. Your classroom - a place we hope you naturally want to move into and truly call your own - needs to be ready to transition upon your departure, ready for next band of hands-on learners to grab onto with equal vigor and enthusiasm.

\*\* What “philosophy of campus care” can North House, its students and instructors work together to make sure the classrooms and campus thrive even as they are steadily used?

\*\* What systems can North House put in place that will help instructors keep classrooms organized and insure that tools are well cared for and not lost?



## **16<sup>th</sup> Annual Wooden Boat Show & Summer Solstice Festival June 21-23, 2013**

### **\*Craft on the Commons Demonstrations**

**Friday, June 21 noon-Saturday, June 22 at 5 pm**

Please come demonstrate! Enjoy good company and lots of interested visitors. Sell your wares if desired (10% to NHFS) and recruit future students for your coursework. Oh, and did we mention it's fun? If you have a small shade tent, we suggest bringing it, but we'll have space near the Blacksmith Shop and a couple of tents available as well.

### **\*Instructor's Gathering, Sunday June 23 at 9:00 am**

Mimosas, World's Best Doughnuts

**Reflections on the Retreat, Future Retreats & Responses to the Discussion Questions**

### **\*Steambent Brunch, Sunday June 23 at 10:00 am**

Please be our guest! All others, \$15, please reserve tickets

**\*RSVP to Jessa requested\***

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## **First Annual Instructor-In-Residence Program: June-Sept, 2013**

Enjoy campus in the summer! We're launching our first attempt at an Instructor-In-Residence program this summer. Why? We want to see more of you AND we want to help the many visitors to Grand Marais better understand what we do at North House. The scheduling for each session is flexible, but generally spans the weekend when we are most busy. You'll be located outdoors under the covered timber frame and serve as a welcoming committee for campus. You would be welcome to sell craft and if desired, teach a mini-course. To sign up and/or for more details, contact Jessa.

### **Sessions available:**

- July 11-14, July 25-28
- August 8-11, August 15-18, August 22-25, August 29-Sept 1
- Sept 4-8

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**Spring Gathering** was so much fun last year we're doing it again. If you live in the Twin Cities area or know people who do, please join us at board member Martha William's home in Plymouth on **May 11**. Courses, camaraderie and wood-fired pizza...see <http://www.northhouse.org/programs/events/springgathering.htm> for details.





## Course Evaluation Project

The evaluations that students fill out at the end of a course are so important to North House and (we hope!) to you! It's one of our best sources for feedback, ideas and constructive criticism that can help us all improve. However, we know its usefulness is limited by several factors, including students who are in a hurry to leave, the questions themselves, and our ability to get the results to you in a timely fashion.

In an effort to make these more efficient and effective, the program committee has led a major overhaul of the evaluation, both in content and delivery. We're hoping to implement it this spring, and we'd like your feedback.

We will now be sending students a link to an online version of the survey (using survey monkey) in the week following the course. This will allow students some time to reflect and be anonymous, and will hopefully generate more meaningful feedback for you. We will still have a paper copy (virtually identical) available for you to handout during class and we encourage you to do so. We'll let students know they can fill out the paper version or wait for an email to the online version.

You can test drive the online survey here: (doesn't matter what class you pick in question 1).

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/nhfs\\_student\\_eval](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/nhfs_student_eval)

The print version is available on the Instructor Update webpage:

<http://www.northhouse.org/instructorupdates.htm>

**We have completely re-written the questions, so please take a look and let us know soon if you have ideas, feedback or concerns.**

You made it all the way to the end! That's gotta be worth something....like a thunder cookie next time you're around? Remind me. -jf