



# Forward

## The Prairie Through New Eyes

### The Curriculum

This curriculum, *The Prairie Through New Eyes*, is a unique undertaking using art, humanity, and science disciplines to explore the many features and stories to be found in the multi-dimensional prairie of Kansas. Using the exhibition *Taking Root: The Art of Patricia DuBose Duncan* and the landscape itself that is found at the Konza Prairie, a curriculum has been created that will enrich and expand the educational possibilities for all schools in the state. This curriculum encourages an examination and exploration of the signature landscape known as Kansas.

Kathrine Walker Schlageck, the Education and Public Services Supervisor at the Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, initiated this project to provide interdisciplinary educational opportunities for students at a rural school as part of the Museum's outreach program. Working with Darwin Olson, the teachers, and staff at the Riley County Grade School in Riley, Kansas, a broad program was developed that ensured participation for students from kindergarten through eighth grade. Without their participation this project would not have been possible and we thank them.

Artists-in-residences programs developed for specific grades were a key part of the curriculum. The Prairie Wind Dancers, Jerri Garretson, Thad Beach, and Elizabeth Dodd participated enthusiastically and deserve a thank you for not only offering their creative ideas, but helping test and frame the curriculum. We also want to thank the Konza Prairie, Manhattan Sunset Zoo, and the Early Childhood Education and Art Education programs at Kansas State University, in particular students Anne Revere, Kristie Schemm, and Michelle Johnson.

Patricia Dubose Duncan needs to be recognized and thanked not only for her participation in visiting and talking to students at Riley County Grade School, but also for her wonderful paintings, drawings, and photographs of the prairie in *Taking Root*. An Arts-in-Education grant from the Kansas Arts Commission helped fund this program at Riley County Grade School and we thank the Commission for their support. The Dane G. Hansen Foundation has generously supported the printing and distribution of this curriculum to every school district in the state, and we sincerely thank them. Lastly I want to thank Kathrine Schlageck for developing and undertaking this project. It was an enormous commitment, but one that she willingly did. *The Prairie Through New Eyes* curriculum will enrich the lives of students throughout Kansas, and Kathrine's work has made that possible.

Lorne E. Render  
Director  
Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art

## The Tallgrass Prairie

The tallgrass prairie where we live, the few places and patches that still remain from the time of our forefathers, are now more valuable than all the gold, silver, and diamonds on earth. These natural prairies are more valuable than billions and billions of dollars. Why is this so? Because the prairies, along with the rest of the natural world, make our soil to grow our food and they make the air that we breathe. The prairies are the original home of some of the animals that are also our food. And last, but certainly not least, prairies enrich that part of us that we call our spirit. The prairies nourish our bodies as well as our minds. As an artist, I need to see a beautiful landscape about as much as I need oxygen and food.

The free, open, wild prairies, as they were when our forefathers first saw them fostered the unique idea of individual freedom, the idea of democracy. The prairies, with their great long grasses waving in the wind, their bright wildflowers, their open blue skies, their countless birds and mammals, their sunrises and sunsets, seemed endless. Now we know they are not.

Today scientists are learning and teaching how prairies completely managed themselves and formed the richest and deepest top soils in the world. They are learning how the prairies stayed in perfect balance and supported thousands of kinds of wildflowers, grasses, birds, insects, mammals and many of our Native American brothers. They are learning how the forces of the prairie such as wind, fire, and the seasons produced such things as pure water to drink. Perhaps, most importantly, scientists are teaching us the difference between a grazed pasture and a full, natural prairie.

We have lost most of the original prairies through carelessness and interruption of the forces needed to sustain them. Today we are learning and understanding and appreciating the few prairies we still have. I know as an artist I will always be inspired by the tallgrass prairies of Kansas.

Patricia DuBose Duncan

