



ANNUAL REPORT

TWO THOUSAND TWENTY FIVE



North American
BISON
Discovery Center

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LOOKING BACK (AND LOOKING AHEAD) ACROSS THE PRAIRIE

If 2024 was the year of putting down roots, 2025 was the year we began seeing that investment take shape in visible and meaningful ways. This year, we moved from planning to progress as our Master Plan came to life through expanded programs, stronger partnerships, continued organizational growth, and new ways of connecting people to the story of bison restoration.

One of the most important milestones this year was welcoming our new Curator, Madison Cáceres, whose leadership expanded our ability to grow the collection and strengthen educational programming and outreach.

In 2025, we launched new initiatives that deepened our connection to Jamestown and communities across North Dakota while also expanding awareness of bison restoration beyond our region. Programs like Critter Chats, Bison Bites, our Guest Curator Program, and the Traveling Trunk program created new opportunities for people to engage with the history, restoration, and cultural significance of the North American bison.

This year also marked important progress in fundraising and long-term sustainability. We revived our annual auction and fundraising dinner for the first time since 2019 with the launch of The Great Bison Bash, reconnecting us with supporters and partners across the community. We also successfully completed our first major fundraising campaign tied directly to our Museum Without Walls initiative, helping support the program's future growth.

Museum Without Walls reflects a broader shift in how we think about our role — not simply as a destination people visit, but as an educational resource and community partner that can share the story of bison restoration in more accessible and far-reaching ways.

Behind the scenes, we continued strengthening the organization through fundraising planning, operational improvements, expanded communication efforts, and continued investment in the physical presence of the Bison Center itself.

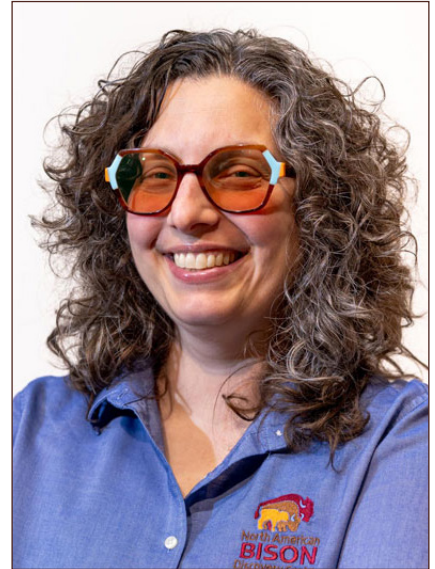
All of this work reflects something we have always believed: the story of the bison is not only about the past. It is also about the future — and that future depends on education, restoration, collaboration, and community.

None of this happens without you. Your support, membership, and belief in this mission make this work possible, and we are deeply grateful to have you alongside us.

Thanks,

Ilana Xinos

Executive Director



ACROSS THE FENCE LINE

Notes from Jarrod Starr, President

Along with my wife, I co-own a bison ranch in Ohio. I've served in the U.S. Air Force. I know what it takes to sustain something worth preserving, and I know that resilience isn't just surviving a hard environment. It's adapting to it. That's how I'd describe the North American Bison Discovery Center's theme in 2026: Rooted Here, Reaching Further.

Last year, we focused on foundation. This year, those roots reached. Our Board now includes several members from North Dakota, but also from Ohio, Illinois, South Dakota and candidates for this year from North Carolina and Texas. Technology made that possible — video conferencing lets us sit together from wherever we are. We shouldn't take that for granted. It's a tool we've deliberately embraced and that has truly helped us reach further.

We also didn't wait for the world to come to us. Our Museum Without Walls program, Traveling Trunk exhibits, and monthly Critter Chat webinars carry the bison's story directly into communities and living rooms across the country, made possible by the same technology that connects our board. That's what it means to be rooted here while reaching further.

And this year, we raised the bar internally. Fundraising became a formal focus, and board members didn't observe from the sidelines. We showed up, trained, learned new skills, and turned that knowledge into action. That's the kind of board that grows an organization.

In all of this, I see the bison. Ice age bison were massive. Today's bison are smaller, faster, and more adaptable. We're on a similar path. We evolved to meet our supporters wherever they are, and like the bison, we're building an organization designed to endure.

None of this happens without our supporters. Your generosity, your advocacy, and your belief in this mission are what make every program, every exhibit, and every outreach effort possible. We are genuinely grateful, and we don't take that for granted either. Stay with us.

The bison may never again number in the tens of millions. But here's what I keep coming back to: maybe the number we need to grow isn't only bison. It's bison supporters. Millions of people who love and understand what the bison represents, who share its story, who advocate for its future. That's the herd that ensures survival for generations to come. And growing that herd is exactly what we're here to do.

Jarrod Starr
President,
North American Bison Discovery Center



BOARD MEMBERS AND STAFF

BOARD MEMBERS

Arnell Abold

Finance & Grants Director, Complete Health
Rapid City, SD

Moritz Espy

Owner, Tres Ag Services
Hermosa, SD

Kelsey A. Krapp

Owner Operator, The Bison Ranch
Pingree, ND

Erin Lamp

Financial Advisor, Valley Wealth Advisors,
Jamestown, ND

Melissa Pardi, PhD

Assistant Curator of Geology,
Illinois State Museum
Springfield, IL

Rachel Short, PhD

Assistant Professor,
South Dakota State University
Rapid City, SD

Jarrold Starr

Owner, Bisun Consulting
Thornville, OH

Don Williams

Owner, Williams Construction
Jamestown, ND

Doug Woodall

Owner, Big Sky Ranch
Granville, ND

FULL TIME STAFF

Executive Director: Ilana Xinos

Visitor Services & Store Manager: Pat Taylor

Visitor Services Supervisor: Joan Foley

Controller: John Elhard

Curator: Madison Cáceres

PART TIME STAFF

Visitor Services:

Ivy Cordell

Coley Eagleson

Jaedyn Owens,

Isabel Vaca

Charitable Gaming Staff:

Josh Friebel

Herd Management Staff:

Justin Feight



ROOTED HERE, REACHING FURTHER

Growing the Herd, Expanding Our Reach

In 2025, we continued turning growth into action across education, outreach, exhibits, and community engagement.

Educational Programs

This year, we expanded how we educate and connect with the public through several new initiatives. We launched Critter Chats, a virtual educational series, and Bison Bites, a bi-weekly educational email program designed to make learning about bison more accessible and engaging for audiences of all ages.

We also began developing our Traveling Trunk program, which will bring hands-on learning experiences focused on bison history, restoration, ranching, biology, and cultural significance into classrooms and communities throughout Jamestown, North Dakota, and the surrounding region.

In addition, we developed and launched our Guest Curator Program, which invites people from all backgrounds to help develop exhibits, educational experiences, and programming that share the story of the North American bison through different perspectives.

To give the public a closer look behind the scenes, we also launched “A Year in the Life of a New Curator,” a YouTube Shorts series highlighting the day-to-day work involved in caring for, preserving, and growing the collection, including our bison herds.

We were also awarded a \$10,000 grant from Jamestown Tourism to bring BisonExhibit.org, a traveling exhibit experience, to the Bison Center in 2026.

Collection Growth

This year, the Center’s collection continued to grow with the addition of a signed fine art print by Dakota artist Ted Martin. Acquired directly from the artist, the bamboo paper print was created from a scan of Martin’s original drawing work. For more than 70 years, Martin has focused much of his work on the buffalo of the Dakotas, building a portfolio of more than 6,000 drawings. His work is also held in collections including the Jean-Nickolaus Tretter Archive and the State Historical Society of North Dakota Archive.

One especially meaningful addition to the collection was the return of longtime herd member Cow #100 as a full-body mount. For years, Cow #100 was part of the Bison Center’s North herd and became familiar to many visitors through tours, programming, and educational outreach. While her role in the herd has ended, her educational impact continues in a new way. Through future exhibits and educational programming, visitors will be able to connect more deeply with the history of the Bison Center and the ongoing story of bison restoration through the animals that helped shape it.

Museum Without Walls

Throughout 2025, we began planning and developing our Museum Without Walls initiative, a long-term effort to expand access to bison education beyond the traditional museum experience. The initiative focuses on creating more flexible, accessible, and immersive ways for people to engage with the story of the North American bison through outdoor and virtual programming, outreach, traveling educational experiences, and digital learning tools.

Many early elements of Museum Without Walls began taking shape throughout the year through programs like Critter Chats, Bison Bites, conference presentations, and expanded community outreach efforts across Jamestown, North Dakota, and beyond.

As part of this work, we also hosted a Sip & See educator event that introduced local teachers and educational partners to the Bison Center's growing educational programming and future Traveling Trunk initiative while creating new opportunities for collaboration with schools and community organizations.

Throughout the year, we also laid the groundwork for several major digital initiatives that launched in 2026, including a redesigned website and "Your Bison Buddy," an interactive educational tool designed to make learning about bison more engaging and personalized for visitors of all ages.

The Bison Center on the Road

This year, we didn't just bring people to the Bison Center—we also brought the Bison Center to them.

Through presentations at Rotary, Kiwanis, schools, community organizations, and regional and national industry conferences, we expanded awareness of bison restoration while strengthening relationships throughout Jamestown, North Dakota, and the broader bison community.

In April, Executive Director Ilana Xinos attended and presented at the North American Bison Summit in Loveland, Colorado, joining Tribal Nations, conservationists, ranchers, land managers, educators, and artists from across North America in conversations focused on bison restoration, grasslands management, climate resilience, and the future of Tribal buffalo programs.

Central to this work was collaboration. We continued building partnerships with educators, industry leaders, artists, conservation advocates, and community organizations while sharing educational outreach materials and introducing future Museum Without Walls programming opportunities at both the National Bison Association and Dakota Territory Buffalo Association winter conferences.

Together, these efforts reflect the continued growth of the Bison Center as not only a museum and destination, but also an educational resource and community partner working to share the story of bison restoration in meaningful, accessible, and engaging ways.

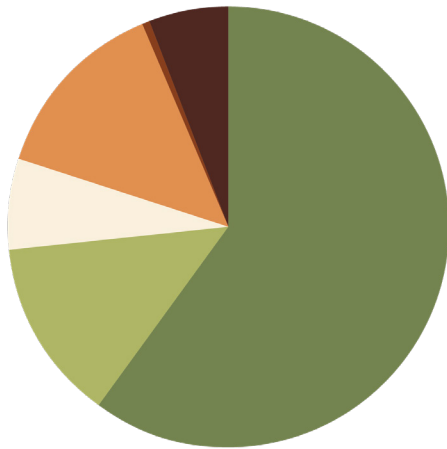
Community Events & Engagement

Community engagement continued to grow throughout 2025, including the return of *A Very Bison Christmas* for its second successful year. This year's event expanded to include *Story Time with Mrs. Claus* along with additional partner programming that created new opportunities for families and community organizations to connect with the Bison Center during the holiday season.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Income

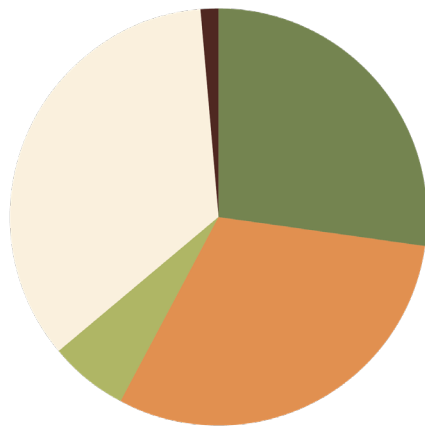
Where the Money Came From



Charitable Gaming Income	\$631,046
Museum Store Income	\$138,848
Museum Income	\$68,137
Support Income	\$142,443
Bison Sales	\$7,024
Investment & Interest Income	\$59,467
Total Revenue	\$1,046,965

Expenses

Where the Money Went



Charitable Gaming Expenses	\$631,046
Salaries, Wages & Payroll Expenses	\$138,848
Museum Store Expenses	\$68,137
Museum & Operational Expenses	\$142,443
Bison Herd Expenses	\$7,024
Total Expenses	\$1,066,965

2025 GROWTH HIGHLIGHTS

171%

Charitable giving increased by 171% over 2024.

273

Gifts received more than doubled increasing from 121 to 273.

79

Welcomed 79 first-time donors.

52%

Re-engaged 52 returning supports.

\$50,000

Reached our \$50,000 Museum Without Walls campaign goal.

CHANGE IN ASSETS | (\$11,003)

MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS: GROWING OUR HERD

In 2025, we:

- Reached 193 active members
- Increased charitable giving by more than 170% over 2024, raising more than \$100,000 in support of the Bison Center
- More than doubled the number of gifts received, increasing from 121 to 273
- Welcomed 79 first-time donors and re-engaged 52 returning supporters
- Received more than \$9,000 in in-kind contributions and secured more than \$11,000 in pledges supporting future initiatives
- Successfully completed our first major fundraising campaign, reaching our \$50,000 goal in support of the Museum Without Walls initiative
- Strengthened fundraising and donor stewardship systems through our partnership with Patrick Kirby and Do Good Better Consulting, including implementation of a new donor management system

Not a member yet?

[Learn more and join the herd today!](#)

Member benefits include:

- Free admission
- Discounts to the Bison Center and online store
- Passes to share with friends
- Archived e-newsletters
- Early-bird invitations to programs
- North American Reciprocal Museum Admission benefits (visit more than 1,000 museums!)

Did You Know:

The North American Reciprocal Museum Admission program allows members like you to visit more than 1,000 other locations, often at no additional cost! You may be interested in participating locations like:

- Plains Art Museum in Fargo, ND
- The Capital Gallery Society in Bismarck, ND
- Como Park Zoo and Conservatory, Saint Paul, MN
- Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, MN
- South Dakota Art Museum, Brookings, SD
- Adams Museum, Deadwood, SD

[Search the full list](#)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are deeply grateful for the generous support of the individuals, families, businesses, and organizations who contributed to the Bison Center this year. These donations help sustain our mission to preserve, educate, and share the ongoing story of the American bison with visitors from across the country and around the world.

Very special thanks to:

\$5,000+

Jim & Sherry Heyer
North American Bison LLC

\$2,500+

National Buffalo Foundation
Quality Auction Services
Tim Sather

\$1,000+

Black Kettle Buffalo
Dale Redinger
Dennis R. Murphy
Diana Robles
Don Erickson
Evan Bond Portraits
First Community Credit Union
Gayne & Corinne Gasal
Great Plains Housing Authority
I3G Media
Jon Lindberg
Larry & Judi Birger
Mike Lorz
Moritz Espy
Newman Signs, Inc.
Otter Tail Power Company Foundation
Scott Anderson
Steve Maier
Valley Bison LLC
Williams Construction

\$500+

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Conner Buchholz
Connor Elliott
Dale & Cheryl Lende
Diane Williams
Hannah Dunn

Hofmann Trucking LLC
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Lynn Lambrecht
Rod & Sandy Wilhelm
Sanford Health
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Tito's Vodka
Traci & Daren Peterka
Tractor Supply Company
Tyler & Erin Lamp
Wildhorse Graham Ranch





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