



Wheelwright Museum
OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wheelwright Museum Director Retires

SANTA FE, NM, June 20, 2020 — The Wheelwright Museum hopes everyone in our greater community is well, and continuing to take all protective measures against COVID-19. As we continue to work behind the scenes, we think constantly of our community, family, and friends and send our best wishes for your health and safety.

The Wheelwright announces the retirement of its long-time Director, Jonathan Batkin. A search for his successor is well under way, despite the tumultuous events of recent months, including the closure of the museum.

Batkin retired on April 15th; because of the constraints of the pandemic, we regrettably could not properly recognize his many significant achievements with a public celebration. The museum is deeply indebted to him for his exemplary service and we wish him and his wife Linda the happiest of retirements. Batkin agreed to provide continued support through the difficult early days of the pandemic and support the museum's leadership transition. For his distinguished 30 years of service, the Board of Trustees has named him "Director Emeritus," the only time in the institution's 83-year history that it has done so. When the board can once again convene in person, we will formally present him with this honor.

Our quest for his successor is proceeding apace, despite the current complications. The Wheelwright board is concluding its search and selection process and we hope to name our new director soon.

In his place, the board is pleased to announce that Jean Higgins will serve as interim director until our new director arrives. Higgins has been tremendously important to the museum for fifteen years, initially as a volunteer, then serving as a trustee and officer of the board, and for the past five years, as assistant director and then as development and membership director. She knows well all aspects of the museum and has handled many diverse operational tasks.

Along with museums all over the world, we are discovering new tools to provide more dynamic messages, advance educational priorities and enhance our museum experiences. For eighty-three years the museum have been culturally aligned with Native people, especially as expressed through their art; we will continue to provide vehicles for their voices to be heard as we move forward toward new challenges.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the many Native communities across New Mexico and surrounding states, who have suffered in unprecedented numbers from the effects of the virus and continue to experience significant issues including sufficient critical supplies for survival. Please consider sending your generous support through the following resources to aid them in this time of great distress.

[Navajo/Hopi Families Covid-19 Relief Fund](#)

[Official Navajo Nation COVID-19 Relief Fund](#)

[Indian Pueblo Cultural Center and All Pueblo Council of Governors Pueblo Relief Fund](#)

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ABOUT THE WHEELWRIGHT MUSEUM

The Wheelwright Museum is New Mexico's oldest independent non-profit Museum. Founded in 1937 by Mary Wheelwright, the Museum presents exhibitions of contemporary and iconic Native American art. The Museum is home to the Jim and Lauris Phillips Center for the Study of Southwestern Jewelry, which contains the most comprehensive collection of Navajo and Pueblo jewelry in the world. Mission: To respect, support, record, and present the living traditions and creative expressions of Native American peoples.