

**Spirit of Place:
Bismarck State College
Fall 2014**

Spirit of Place Project inspired by the BSC 2014 Campus Read book,
Dakota: A Spiritual Geography by Kathleen Norris
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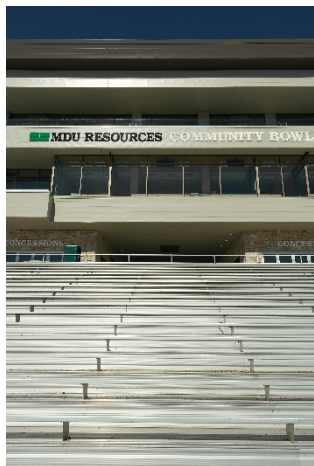
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#1

Memories of the Game

There is a crisp fall air in the Bismarck State College Bowl on a cool Friday night, the sun setting a bright yellow painting over the river. The loud rumbling comes from thousands of fans marching to their seats. Children scream and run around. A light breeze unsettles the trees



from the perfect game night. Walking out onto the field, everything is moving a hundred times faster. Your heart beats like crazy, your mind flares with emotions and adrenaline rushing through your body.

The crowd screams with excitement and to pressure the win. This last play is everything—it means the end of the season. For many, the bright lights of the football field make a perfect stage for the final seconds of the last game. With every last second, the scoreboard slowly counts down, with every drip of sweat and every run and catch; your team wins. After the win, the emotions run wild among the team. The crowd plows onto the field and lifts the team off the field with excitement.

Now after a long night, you come back to this bowl. For the moment, it is a peaceful, cool, foggy morning. Silence runs through the bowl, making the slightest sound noticeable. You can hear seed shells crunch with every step through the littered stands, birds pecking at leftover food, traffic sirens and honks from the interstate in the distance. It is unsettling going from a loud, packed bowl to this empty, quiet bowl. The emotions that are now lost become memories, memories made with a pass, tackle and score.



#2

Nature's Glorious Mysteries

We visited our location on September 5, 2014 to stop and observe our surroundings. In the early morning, buses and cars begin to pour into parking spots. The warmth of the sun's rays shines through the clear blue sky. Nature's music sings its glorious tune with the chirping birds high up in the trees on the calm day. We look from where we stand at the front of the Technical Center to see a solid building that looks like it will stand for decades, with students and instructors coming and going, and glass doors opening and closing allowing knowledge to pass in and out.

The green, luscious grass being cut adds a fresh smell into the air, reminding us of all the components of



the earth on which we stand, from insects to slimy worms that are busy deep in the soil, at work keeping the ground below us in a healthy condition. This makes us wonder how many millions of memories are imprinted into the ground, creating the history of our past, present, and futures.



We look upon the beautiful, pink flowers as they continue to bloom, reminding us that earth is made of such beauty, and all the while fall is drawing near around us. Anywhere you are can be a moment to take in another small piece of this big world we live in. We all disperse from the Technical Center, having gained an understanding on how magnificent and spiritual a small place can be when you truly look for it. We continue on our day with a new appreciation of our lives ahead.

#3

Construction Forms New Beginnings

Above me so blue is the sky that holds the bright yellow sun providing warmth on this cool September morning. The air around me is still humid from last night's rain. Birds are chirping their morning songs as they sit in the nearby trees. Here where I stand, nature and peace meet manmade chaos as renovation and construction are happening, and people are working busily to complete it. Trailers and building materials fill the majority of the parking lot with fences and pink flags surrounding it. Although it is morning, the site is busy with a Bobcat going back and forth, hauling wood and metal, a saw screeching as it cuts through metal pipes, and a



fan whirring in the background. Below me is cold concrete, a sidewalk, on which thousands have walked and left footprints, but also those who have walked to open new doors to life's many opportunities.

The building they are renovating is the Student Union, where students eat their meals and gather for different activities throughout the school year. This is where the journey begins at the start of the school year when students have to get books for all their classes. Many friendships are made and already have been made in this place where students can meet new people. It is the start of the next chapter in these young adults' lives that is very exciting. The Student Union is more than just a place on BSC campus, yet it is a place that holds memories of the past, and the renovation gives opportunity for even more memories to be made in the future, only now with a new structure, new twist, and new look on life.



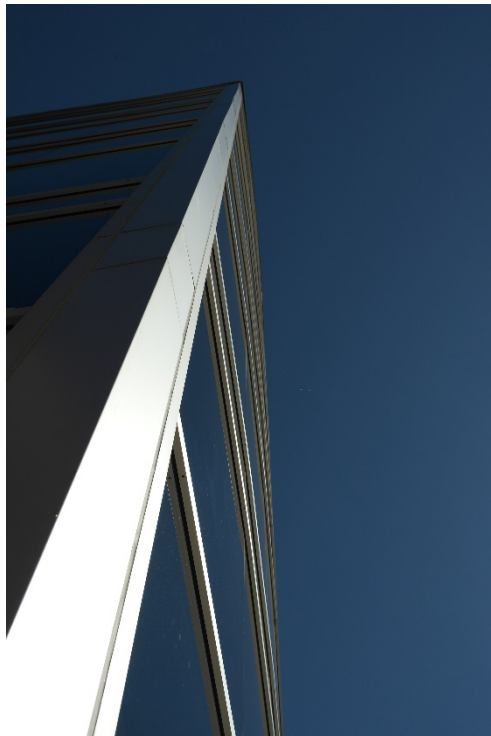
#4

Reflection

Here, in this place, the grass is finely manicured and the landscaping is well-planned. A bed of river rock cradles neat little rows of shrubs and perennials. The morning sky is clear, the sun is glaring, yet a chill remains in the fall air. Even above the dull hum of the interstate traffic, vocalizations from various critters can be heard. Large panes of glass band together to form a mirror-like wall that towers over all. Every aspect of the architecture is extremely precise. An almost miniature version, in the form of photovoltaic cells, resides just west of its gleaming big brother. Below, cottonwoods frame



the winding river with its glassy surface. Also in view, a barbed wire fence lies rusting in the wild prairie grass. It appears as though this is a junction for opposites. Man's progress collides with the resistance of the countryside. Society and nature are forced to cohabitate in a surprisingly successful way. The very landscape exhibits yet another comparison as the hazy hills of West River are contrasted against the flatness of East River. Ultimately, this spot represents a refuge for reflection. In



the middle of a bustling college campus such as this, serenity may still be found. It is possible for a person to gaze at the reflections on the river and at the reflections on the National Energy Center of Excellence, and simply reflect.



#5

The River Beyond the Knoll

The Missouri River. Stunning would be an understatement. The view from the hill on the southwest corner of BSC's campus is extraordinary. The feeling here is very easy and peaceful. Luscious green trees cover the river bank. Tall, grassy hills surround the trees. Reflections of trees and the sky dance on top of the water. Two beautiful bridges make up the radiant skyline view from either side. Boats are parked along the sandy shores of the river, just waiting to go out on the water. The smell of the weeds that are spurting up from the ground covers the faint scent of river water. Off in the distance, one can hear the sound of cars and trains crossing the bridges. The breeze swooshes through the trees and whispers in your ears.

This boundary of campus represents all who have come and gone throughout the area for ages. The river has played host to many travelers for centuries—Native peoples, explorers, homesteaders, fur trappers—seeking a home, seeking fortune, seeking adventure. The modern adventurers are the students of BSC. They have been filled with great knowledge in their years here and have accomplished great things in their lives after. This history of adventure is still present in this little bit of wilderness on the boundary of campus.



#6

Beyond the Hill

As you approach the hill, you can only imagine what is beyond it. Once you have reached the top, you can see as far as the horizons. The profile of the North Dakota State Capitol building beams in the distance. To the south and east, there is a beautiful view of the city of



Bismarck beyond the hill. Between the trees you can see cars traveling on Divide Avenue, trying to get to their next endeavor. Turning to the southwest you can see the mighty Missouri River that seems so calm from far away. If you face west, being on the highest point of campus, you can see most of the Bismarck State College.

On September 4, 1939, 104 students started walking through the halls of Bismarck Junior College. The college held

their first classes on the current campus in the fall of 1961, and the name was changed to Bismarck State College in 1987. Beyond the hill, it is if though you can see all 4,000 students going to and from classes, mirroring those before us. Students fulfill their dreams here beyond the hill, everything you need to know as you follow the path to your *beyond* is available at Bismarck State College.



We are sitting outside the Lidstrom Hall dorms on the steps near door C. The weather is blue skies with barely enough wind to move the leaves on the trees. The sun is shining brightly, and the birds are flying overhead enjoying the nice weather.

To the north are the Student Union parking lot and the Technical Center. There is also a 20 foot pine tree with colorful limbs, the grass around the base of the tree is dead from the acidic pine needles. There is a steel fence embroidered with orange and yellow tape. Trailers and construction supplies are also to the north with construction workers moving around frequently.

To the east is the Career Academy where we see students getting off the bus and entering the building. The AC units are also to the east of where we sit, humming loudly. The grass on the east side of the stairs is much patchier. The grass mounds surround the Lidstrom parking lot, acting as a fence or border around the vehicles.

To the south is the Lidstrom Hall parking lot, filled with yellow guidance lines. Piles of long lawn clippings lay atop the cement border encasing the landscape features. Cars are parked in the parking lot as the students get out and enter the building. Bushes hug the sides of the Lidstrom hall walls on all sides.

To the west is Swenson Hall, its lot also filled with cars with people entering the building. Trees separate both sides of the parking lot, making it difficult to see each side. The bookstore inside the Student Union is also to the west of where we are sitting. The Jack Science Center is also to the west, beyond the Union, and we can just see the tops of the building from the steps we are sitting on.

This is the place where students come to start out their future and get an education to continue their lives. To most people this is just a sidewalk that runs through the campus, but this is a place where people come to start their future. Someday our kids may walk these same sidewalks and experience college life on their own, ending the first part of their journey and beginning the next chapter from this crossroad.



#8

Bridging the Beauty

The Missouri River sunrise hovers over a web of bridges with intertwining traffic as if it were a community in and of itself. The new bridge calls this spot its home, though our minds still tango whimsically with the memories of the old bridge that once stood tall. The chill of early morning strikes our bones and sends shivers down our spines, reminding us that the warmth of the sun is just about to fade for this coming winter. Wet grass invites swarms of mosquitoes

to syphon our crimson tide and irritate our pleasant morning. A single wasp buzzes around our heads, quickening our heart rates.

Frost will take form soon, all of us understand this. Some of us are excited, while others of us dread its arrival. We bundle up more as the cold grows sharper. Short cut grass will turn mowers into snow blowers as the snow covers the ground. Once livened trees will become dormant and decrepit. Greens and blues will wither to

whites and grays.

Turning to the northwest, a crane with sun-faded, yellow paint rests outside the National Energy Center of Excellence. The large window panes of its towering structure reflects the rays of the sun, somewhat blinding to those that gaze. Blinking, we realize how incredible both the bridge and the building seem as if they were stitched seamlessly within the land. We are glad we have the chance to stand in front of this masterpiece, allowed to bask in the glory of the relationship between man and earth.



#9

Looking Beyond the Asphalt

As we stand in this place, we think of what it has become. We can't help but wonder what came before this location was just parking lot on the campus of BSC. As most people would see it as nothing, there is a much deeper meaning.

Looking beyond the parked cars, you can understand how beautiful the land was before industrialization. We can see how time has changed the function of the land into what it has become. Over time, the development of the parking lot shows the way technology changes the land.

Today, on this pavement, the sun is scorching down. In a couple of weeks though, there will be snow here and we'll be begging for the sun to come back! The light breeze gives a little break from the heat and fills the air with the smell of grass. The grass is green with a hint of brown, reminding us that the cold, long winter is creeping up on us. Then it is calm again, and we can smell the torrid tar on the pavement once more. To the southwest, just beyond the cars and yellow lines, there are more lines. These lines aren't for parking though—they are sidelines and field lines for games at the bowl.

Throughout the course of a day, this place hears and sees many things. It sees the birds above in



the sky, and it hears the cheering of the fans at the football field. Before this place was a parking lot, it heard, saw and felt more freely than it does being concrete, smelled something other than fuel from cars for the majority of the day.

Going back to before the land was a parking lot, we could see the beauty of the open hillside. When looking out we can bring ourselves back in time and we

can try to understand the hard times that people faced. There will be more students that will come to this parking lot and try to dig deeper into their surroundings.

#10

Landmark of Education

A time ago, as the sun rose and the warm air whiffed in the wind, these were prairies roaming with life; life such as the fauna that our ancestors used daily. People lived off the land and hunted the animals. As people settled in what is now North Dakota, history was created and memories were made. Time continued and life was lived. The land was shaped in many ways; eventually, Bismarck was created.

Today the spot no longer resembles the place or time before but shows the path ahead for a future desired by many. Generations will come after as they have come before, only to continue to experience life and learning. The Jack Science Center sits at the heart of Bismarck State College. This place is surrounded by rock gardens and foliage, flowers and bees, faculty and students all entering a building in order to learn.



The front of this building marks the milestone for all generations of students to come. At times it can be peaceful and serene, while certain hours of the day it can be hectic. The aroma of knowledge lingers in the air just like the free-spirited birds flying above in the clear blue sky. The three pathways in front of this building are like the veins of a leaf, letting people choose the direction they want to go, just like the decisions they will have to make all their life. So, the Jack Science Center and the spot in front of it will continue to change the lives of all who come here from all parts of the world and share in its beauty of knowledge and education.



#11

The Neglected Sand

Upon first arrival, walking down the hill, peeking through the tall green trees we spot the first glimpse of the sand volleyball court. The court lies in a low spot between Lidstrom Hall and



Swenson Hall, surrounded by small hills. The place is centered between Edwards Ave and a parking lot for the Student Union. In the center lies a small, desolate, and abandoned volleyball



court. It seems this way due to the lack of sand, and it has grass protruding onto the playing surface. The net has gone saggy with many holes in it. Someone chooses to ignore these problems. You can see signs of this because the grass that has grown onto the sand has been mowed over top of the sand. Instead of cleaning up the lines, freshening up the sand, and tightening up the net, the mowers choose the quick way and just mow over the top. Aside from lack of upkeep, the volleyball court is a rather beautiful place. Standing on the sand, we can hear birds, bugs like crickets and mosquitoes, and cars passing by on Edwards Ave. There is the strong smell of freshly cut grass, as well as a faint scent of the cafeteria.

Some things we couldn't see, things like fun times in the past that were shared at the sand volleyball court by students before us. We could only begin to imagine some of the times and stories that have originated here. But for now, the sand volleyball court lies unused until maybe one day when it's restored to its original state and can have more memories made once again.



#12

That Patch of Grass

The sun is beating down on that patch of grass that covers most of the space here. On this patch of grass, we have a variety of ways to take in such a place. The grass seems to be freshly cut, for the smell is very welcoming. Although its wetness isn't as pleasant, it provides us with a place to sit. Mosquitos are kind of in the way, but aside from that, the environment to study is quiet and peaceful. The shade also gives us a sense of reassurance, protecting us from the sun's beating rays.

Sitting on that patch of grass we look to the horizon where the cloudless, sunny sky meets the earth. We wander our eyes across the landscape to notice a seemingly calm and unmoving river dividing Bismarck from Mandan. Travelers cross the river on a bridge that is fairly busy on a beautiful day. In the distance, houses clumped into neighborhoods and businesses sharing the area tend to scatter the side of the river that Mandan claims. Power lines pass through trees. A fence runs down one hill and up another blocking off an untouched field. Leaves and pinecones scatter that patch of grass under trees of many kinds.

Although we have peace and tranquility at this patch of grass, the construction draws our attention as we hear the banging and clanging of hammers and equipment in the distance. The passing truck with its loud engine roars down the street. The breeze blows through the trees, making a rustling sound and bringing a smell of crispness in the air. The birds and bugs make a symphony of nature, bringing us to the realization that this place is important. This isn't just a patch of grass; it's a home. Not just for us, but for all organisms who live on this patch of grass.

