SDSHS Director’s Report

Ben Jones

26 July, 2025

We look forward to having the public back in the State Archives beginning Monday, July 7. During the renovations, 17,000 banker boxes of archival records were stored off-site at the Northridge Mall here in Pierre. Also, as David points out in his report, a large amount of the museum’s artifacts were also stored at Northridge Mall to protect them from the harmful dust due to construction. They too have been returned to the CHC and much of that archival and museum material is now housed in the new high-density shelving units. Those of you who are able to come to Pierre, we’ll be happy to show you the new facilities.

The first two phases of this long project are coming to a conclusion and now we can concentrate on the final phase – the museum’s new exhibits. Trustee Francis Whitebird, along with Violet Catches and other tribal historians and language advisors have been part of the Museum’s David, Dan, Katy, and Ronette’s efforts. We are now largely at the end of design phase four and awaiting the general contractor’s completed design for the non-exhibit parts of the museum spaces. Once that is done, hopefully by the week of our meeting on July 11th, Split Rock can finalize it’s CAD products. Once the State Engineer deems that is approved, Split Rock will begin fabricating the exhibits at their studios in St. Paul, MN. We hope then to install the exhibits and complete them in the museum so that it can be open in time for July 4, 2026, if not sooner.

Speaking of July 4, 2026, I plan on attending the Convening of States and Territories in Washington, D. C. July 28 – 30. The Semiquincentennial Commission is holding its second such event where the states will share their efforts with one another and hear from the national organization and the federal government agencies on their plans. The 250th anniversary events have already begun. As you may have seen, the Boston area marked the 250th anniversary of Paul Revere’s Ride and the start of the American Revolution on April 18-19. June 15th marked the 250th anniversary of the U. S. Army. The national efforts have also produced a second round of a grades 3 – 12 essay contest where the winners receive a free trip to a national park or historic site, such as the Smithsonian or Mount Rushmore. More things are coming and event news seems to be coming more and more in recent weeks. For info see America250.org and the state’s site: Americas250th.sd.gov.

The Deadwood Conference was a strong success and I want to thank Cassie and her team at ARC for all their hard work organizing it. Having the conference outside of Pierre was new to many of us, but it proved worth doing. Kevin and the team in Deadwood were great to work with. We are planning on next year’s conference being back in Pierre, in early June, with the theme, “Grit and Glory” with a temporary exhibit organized around items related to living out the ideals of the Declaration of Independence.