

## **2013 National Medal Winner Video: National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library**

Narration: The National Medal for Museum and Library Services is the nation's highest honor for libraries and museums that are serving their communities in exceptional ways. National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library President and CEO, Gail Naughton, and community member Bob Schaffer traveled to Washington from Cedar Rapids, Iowa to receive the national medal and spoke to IMLS about how the museum impacts the community.

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Gail Naughton: The National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library was founded in about 1978.

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Gail Naughton: We serve a broad based community. Of course we have the Cedar Rapids community. We have the founders, the people of Czech and Slovak heritage, but in a city of Cedar Rapids' size which is about 125,000 maybe a larger metro area of about 250,000 we're a very important part of the cultural community. We are an anchor cultural institution. // But then we're a national museum and so we have a national audience across the country.

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Gail Naughton: Czech Village is an ethnic commercial district where all the people would come into town to do their business // They'd come into bring in their things to sell and they would come in to buy the things they needed for the next week. They'd probably stop in and have a little drink, they'd meet their friends, so it was a commercial area and it was also I think a social magnet.

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Bob Schaffer: Well that little commercial district in Cedar Rapids, the Czech Village had kind of fallen on decline as the heavy industry of Cedar Rapids declined, jobs went away. That first generation of immigrants aged, their kids went off to school, oftentimes didn't come back. // and that's when we bought our little building that used to be a pharmacy from 1901 so we bought that in 1975, opened up a store. Pretty quickly got drafted into the effort to revitalize this Czech Village>

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Gail Naughton: Well Czech Village was really part of why the museum exists. This is the area, this is the base, this is why they built a museum // so it's a very close relationship. We work together on things and try to improve, both of us try to improve each other.

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Gail Naughton: The flood of June, 2008 came about from a terrible winter. // We knew there would be flooding but there had been flooding when you have a river running through town.

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Bob Schaffer: Oh that flood was one of those amazing events. // They had talked about the chance of flooding but you know we weren't quite sure how bad it would be.

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And sure enough it inundated the whole neighborhood, multi-block area.

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Bob Schaffer: And if you can imagine that jumble after we came back into the building. It was a very surreal image with shelving tilted at odd angles. But strangely some things through the surface tension of water were just stuck to the shelves at an angle about like this.

10:03:00

Gail Naughton: There were very difficult times in the very beginning and getting back into the building, checking on artifacts that we hadn't removed to see what was safe, what was damaged.

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Gail Naughton: The building needed to get cleaned out so that mold didn't get into the building. That was our big concern.

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Gail Naughton: It was obvious quickly that we had massive damage that was going to cost millions of dollars to fix and I say that on one side, but on the other side we never hesitated. We never hesitated. We were always going to come back. There were lots of decisions to make to get there, but we were always going to come back.

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Gail Naughton: We found out very early that it couldn't be a museum again where it stood. We couldn't insure our artifacts. We couldn't insure anyone else's artifacts that would come from another museum. And in the end we actually moved it. We lifted it up and we moved it about 480 feet and lifted it up 11 feet higher than it sat when it was flooded.

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Bob Schaffer: The relationship I think between the // Czech Village and the museum has always been a great one and one that is I think it's been well self-supporting and we always felt that and that was one of the main reasons why it was pushed to open up a museum, was not only to preserve that culture, but also to give visitors to the area something more to do than just shop. // People want it all. They want the full experience. They would like to see a museum but they also want to shop, they want to eat, they want to taste every facet of the culture.

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Gail Naughton: The flood of 2008 changed the museum in dramatic ways.

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Gail Naughton: Our mission had been more about being the premier museum and library about history and culture of the Czechs and Slovaks in the United States but we dug down deeper into // coming with a mission that was to inspire people of all backgrounds. It's about Czech and Slovak history and culture, but it's about American too. It's about being an American. So we want people to take the stories to get the lessons and the values out of the struggle for freedom and identity and family community, human dignity that these people have had and learn from it.