



# Native Arts and Cultures

Research, Growth and Opportunities  
for Philanthropic Support



FORDFOUNDATION

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For more than four decades, the Ford Foundation has supported American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian communities as they shape their visions for the future. Continuing this collaborative work, the foundation launched the Indigenous Knowledge and Expressive Culture grant-making initiative in 2003. Led by Program Officer Elizabeth Theobald Richards, a member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, this work enhanced the foundation’s longstanding commitment in Indian Country with a specific focus on supporting artistic and cultural expression.

From 2003 to 2009, the grant making centered on supporting Native American artists and organizations in affirming cultural values, perspectives and leadership within their communities and the larger national arts dialogue.

The initiative acknowledges the centrality of art and creative expression to cultural, economic and political continuity. It also honors the value that, at its most basic level, Native American arts can be a powerful expression of community and spirit, whether the art arises as an individual creation or a collective undertaking.

Over the course of the initiative’s duration, the grantees not only were positioned to build the capacity of their arts and culture organizations but also played a vital role in enhancing the recognition of the value of Native American arts communities to the larger cultural landscape.

Three research reports were also commissioned by the foundation during this period. The cumulative results of this research indicated the inadequacy of philanthropic support for Native arts and artists, and also acknowledged that the support Native arts and artists do receive goes a long way. An evaluation of early grant making found that grantees were able to leverage funding and spread additional dollars—and artistic creation—among community members for greater economic and community impact. Grants also helped make possible new professional connections and professional development opportunities for individual artists and organizations.

Research into leadership development needs and opportunities of the Native arts and cultures field shows that current leaders possess diverse skills, passion and community ties, yet want to acquire more leadership capacity. Grantees shared experiences as leaders of both struggling and successful arts organizations. They expressed the need and desire for a greater depth of skill and knowledge, particularly with the growing acceptance of Native arts into the mainstream art community.

The foundation also explored the creation of a new philanthropic resource to support the diverse arts and cultures of American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian communities. A feasibility study ascertained that developing such a resource would be achievable and essential to growing the field. Study participants shared that funding of Native arts and cultures needs to be more robust. Moreover, grants that are made rarely reach Native artists at the community level. A Native arts and cultures fund would direct critically needed support to Native American artists and communities. Informed by this research, the Native Arts & Cultures Foundation was incorporated on Aug. 15, 2007. With initial endowment support from the Ford Foundation, the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation (formerly Rumsey Band of Wintun Indians) and the Wiyot Tribe, the foundation is permanently endowed and engaged in planning its grant-making strategies.

The Ford Foundation is issuing this summary of the three reports as a guide to those interested in funding and supporting Native arts and cultures and in collaborating with Native communities. This is an exciting time to invest, as grantees described that an artistic and cultural revitalization is taking place in Indian Country. New and continued support will sustain and promote Native arts and cultures to the benefit of Native American communities, the national arts community and our society as a whole.

# STRENGTHENING THE FIELD OF NATIVE ARTS AND CULTURES



Established in 2006, IllumiNation began as a \$1.9 million program that offered support to Native American visual and performing artists, encouraged entrepreneurship, and helped build networks between individuals and organizations across the country. Seven arts organizations—referred to in this report as the IllumiNation cohort or as intermediary organizations—were originally awarded two-year grants of up to \$250,000 for the purpose of regranting to individual artists, community groups and institutions (regrantees), as well as for their own capacity building and technical assistance. The grantee agencies were the recipients of an additional two rounds of grant making from the Ford Foundation.

“Because the artists got our grant, they went out and got other grants, and they ascended economically. It’s making a huge impact on respective artists. In turn, they mentor younger artists...There is a ripple effect across every indicator.”

—ILLUMINATION INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATION

## INTRODUCTION

From 2003 to 2009, the Ford Foundation’s Strengthening the Field of Native Arts and Cultures Initiative, part of its Indigenous Knowledge and Expressive Culture grant-making initiative, was a dedicated effort to support American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian artists and the organizations that support them. The initiative aimed to support the expression of cultural values, thereby strengthening communities and promoting the self-determination of Native nations. The initiative comprised two strategies:

- IllumiNation, a regranting program working through seven intermediary organizations (See Table 1.1)
- Creation of a new philanthropic resource for the Native arts and cultures field

Between 2006 and 2008, the IllumiNation cohort regranting their funding in 193 grants totaling \$973,687 to Native artists, culture bearers and community-based arts organizations. These regrantees are relatively new at engaging philanthropy and, as a result of their experience, say that it benefitted them, their professional lives and their communities.

The Ford Foundation engaged **Harder+Company Community Research** to conduct an initial evaluation of the initiative’s progress toward meeting its objectives and helping to support growth of the Native arts and cultures field during the first round of grant making. Harder+Company’s research consisted of site visits to each of the IllumiNation intermediary organizations; 22 telephone interviews with, and an email survey of, regrantees; a review of progress reports, annual reports and related materials from IllumiNation intermediary organizations; and participation in the annual IllumiNation cohort gathering at the Ford Foundation in April 2008. The initiative’s impacts and documented, visible short-term outcomes are highlighted in this chapter.

Table 1.1  
IllumiNation Intermediary Organization Regranting by Funding Program (2006–2008)

IllumiNation Intermediary Organization Name: <i>Funding Program</i>	Total \$ Awarded	# Grants Awarded	Grant Size Range	# Grants Indiv/Org
American Composers Forum: <i>FNCP's Common Ground</i>	\$74,000	17	*	14/3
Eiteljorg Museum: <i>Eiteljorg Fellowship</i>	\$100,000	5	\$20,000	5/0
Eiteljorg Museum: <i>Reaching out with Artists in Residence at the Eiteljorg</i> (RARE Residencies: 7-day and 30-day)	\$60,000	6	\$5,000/ \$15,000	6/0
Evergreen Longhouse: <i>Creative Development Program</i> (Regional: Oregon and Washington)	\$20,000	11	\$1,450- \$2,000	11/0
Evergreen Longhouse: <i>National Creative Development Program</i> (National)	\$71,157	36	\$1,667- \$2,000	36/0
Evergreen Longhouse: <i>National Master Artist Initiative: Artist Teaching Artist</i>	\$49,180	10	\$4,300- \$5,000	7/3
First Peoples Fund: <i>Community Spirit Award</i>	\$40,000	8	\$5,000	8/0
First Peoples Fund: <i>Advancing Business Leadership</i>	\$55,000	11	\$5,000	11/0
First Peoples Fund: <i>Cultural Capital Award</i>	\$50,000	10	\$5,000	10/0
National Museum of the American Indian: <i>Contemporary Expressive Arts</i>	\$72,500	7	\$9,000- \$13,000	0/7
National Museum of the American Indian: <i>Contemporary Visual Arts</i>	\$72,500	6	\$8,000- \$15,000	0/6
National Museum of the American Indian: <i>Community Services Native Arts Program</i>	\$16,000	2	\$8,000	2/0
New England Foundation for the Arts: <i>New England Native Arts Initiative</i>	\$84,000	28	\$3,000	19/9
New England Foundation for the Arts: <i>National Native Artist Exchange Program</i>	\$3,000	2	\$1,500	2/0
Seventh Generation Fund: <i>Arts and Cultural Expression Program</i>	\$172,500	22	*	0/22
Seventh Generation Fund: <i>Affiliate Projects Engaged in Arts and Culture</i>	\$33,850	12	*	*
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$973,687</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>131/50</b>

NOTE: "Total \$ Awarded" category reflects total grant dollars awarded by each program, not just Ford Foundation money. The only exception is for NMAI's Community Services Native Arts Program, which reflects Ford Foundation funds only.

\* Data unavailable

Table 1.2.  
Geographical Distribution of Regrantees by IllumiNation Intermediary Organization (2006–2008)



## FINDINGS

### The Economic Impact of IllumiNation Round One (2006–2008)

The research showed that the IllumiNation regranting program had a significant economic impact. Following are the highlights of the research findings.

**The initiative had a substantial economic impact.** Collectively, intermediary organizations and the regrantee artists and organizations they funded reported obtaining a total of \$989,480 in additional funding as a result of the initial Ford Foundation grants. This exceeds the amount of direct support Ford Foundation provided for regranting during the initiative.

**Every Ford dollar produced 89 cents in additional funding.** The IllumiNation intermediary organizations leveraged an additional \$875,953 in funding from other sources in the first two years of the program. Given that IllumiNation cohort members were awarded \$977,350 during the same period, every dollar Ford Foundation invested produced another 89 cents in additional support for Native arts and artists.

**Regrantees leveraged \$113,527 in additional funding.** Approximately 28 percent of all regrantee evaluation participants indicated they were able to obtain additional funding due to the grants they received from IllumiNation

intermediary organizations. They reported a cumulative total of \$113,527 in additional funds leveraged. The amount reported by individual regrantees ranged from \$225 to \$25,000.

**The multiplier effect spread funds through communities.** For many Native artists, the creation of their work is a community enterprise. The majority of regrantees served as a channel to share the artistic work and the financial award. Almost three-fourths (71 percent) of grantee evaluation participants reported they had collaborated with other Native artists in completing their funded projects, with an average of nine other individuals involved. Just over half were paid for their participation.

### The Grantee Experience

Although Native artists have long felt invisible to most national funders, regrantees reported that their awards helped them increase their national and regional visibility, marketability and influence. The awards also allowed them to deepen their work and increase their sense of being part of a community of artists.

**Native artists and arts organizations experienced increased exposure.** Grantees reported that the grants helped them market and obtain publicity for their art, participate in art shows, introduce their art to other Native communities, make connections with other tribes and reach new and larger audiences. This exposure increased sales, opened doors to gallery, exhibition and collaboration opportunities, enhanced the stature of their work and exposed more audiences to Native arts.

**Grants stimulated educational and professional growth.** Grantees reported that the funders and the grants motivated them and created access to new educational and professional opportunities. Social networking opportunities and doors to funders were opened. Learning opportunities enhanced business development skills. The grant funds allowed regrantees to experience greater economic self-sufficiency and use new artistic tools.

**Grants increased grantee ability to focus on art.** Grantees were able to focus on their art in a more sustained manner as a result of the grants. Their art flourished due to increased investment in time, focus and attention.

**Regrantees built new connections.** Valuing a culture of collaboration, many regrantees worked closely and developed deeper connections with other Native artists, non-Native artists and tribal organizations. A variety of collaborations were initiated that would not have been possible without the increased resources.

**Grants led to greater recognition.** The regrantees reported that a major benefit of the awards was the recognition that resulted. This was especially true for emerging regional artists. Aided by social networking technology, they felt included in a circle of peer Native artists. This, in turn, enhanced their recognition in their own communities. Experiencing this type of recognition and inclusion is likely to sustain the work that gives voice to artists' cultural values and personal visions.

**Regrantees gained validation.** Grantees consistently talked about how the grants gave them a “boost.” The grants served as a source of validation and an affirmation that their artistic work is valuable. Many regrantees reported a growth in confidence and a sense of finding their authentic voices as a result of their experience.

**Native communities felt supported and empowered.** In many Native cultures, artists are the teachers, role models and healers in the community—roles with great impact. Some regrantees claimed to find their authentic voice and step into this important role during the grant period. Additionally, the grants served to facilitate a transfer of knowledge between generations, empowering the communities as a result.



Wider American society gained more exposure to Native arts and cultures. All of society benefits from a flourishing Native arts and cultures field through increased cultural understanding and cultural wealth. The IllumiNation grants were catalysts for both of these, bringing Native arts and cultures to new and larger audiences. As Native American expression continues to be more visible, and conventional definitions of “art” broaden to become more inclusive, Native artists have the opportunity to be appreciated on their own terms and enrich mainstream society.



### Intermediary Organizations

During the first two years of the Ford Foundation initiative, intermediary organizations made great strides in using IllumiNation funding for its intended purpose. Members of the IllumiNation cohort:

- Strengthened internal organizational capacity.
- Developed or expanded grant-making programs to fund Native artists and communities.
- Increased sustainability to ensure the future of regrants programs.

Participating in the initiative also inspired an increase in organizational diversity and fostered a cultural awareness with the potential to benefit not only Native communities, but also other diverse communities of grantees.

IllumiNation successfully created a community of arts funders with deep

ties to the broader field of Native arts and cultures. As a result of working toward a common goal, intermediary organizations shared knowledge, learned from one another and created deep relationships that will benefit the field for years to come.

Intermediary organizations made many positive organizational changes. All of the grantees reported making positive changes within their organizations. Some of the changes came directly from technical assistance, while other changes can be attributed to the more indirect effects of doing something new. The intermediary organizations:

- Created opportunities for meaningful participation of Native Americans in boards of directors and advisory boards in non-Native-led organizations, enhancing the ability of such organizations to work effectively and appropriately with Native artists.
- Increased board involvement in Native arts and cultures programs by engaging them in gatherings, conventions, site visits, Native-led workshops, board retreats and outreach.
- Increased Native staff, supported current staff salaries and expanded the hours of current program staff.
- Deepened awareness, knowledge and sensitivity about Native arts and cultures among largely non-Native staff and board members within non-Native-led organizations.

Table 1.3 Changes in Governance, Non-Native-Led Intermediary Organizations (2006–2008)

Organization Name	New Native Members of Board of Directors	New Members of Native Advisory Councils
American Composers Forum: FNCI	2	15
Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art*	1	5
Evergreen Longhouse**	n/a	5
New England Foundation for the Arts	1	15

\* This figure includes two new members to the Native Council and three new Native members (including one artist) to the Museum’s board of advisors.

\*\* Evergreen is not a nonprofit organization and therefore is not governed by a board of directors.

**Intermediary organization built organizational capacity.** A range of organizations received grant funding and each grew its capacity from where it started at the beginning of the initiative. Some of the larger organizations developed capacity to begin directly serving the artists and organizations of the Native arts community. Smaller, Native-led organizations brought their work to scale through increased capacity in technology, communications, governance and planning.

**Intermediary organizations improved organizational culture.** Grantees reported a variety of cultural changes resulting from staff and board development activities and other organizational changes:

- Stronger relationships and increased rapport among board and staff members
- Increased awareness of Native cultures and Native arts
- Breakdown of stereotypes of Native Americans and Native arts
- More collaborative work style that engages Native staff and leaders
- Increased awareness of the challenge, as well as necessity and long-term benefit, of increasing board diversity

**Intermediary organizations benefitted from informal and formal networking opportunities.** As part of the first round of the initiative, grantees participated in three in-person meetings and a series of facilitated conference calls to encourage community and information sharing. Grantees also reached out to one another independently to discuss their programs, knowledge and ideas. These informal and formal networking opportunities served to build trust, facilitate information sharing, inspire collaboration and educate intermediary organizations about field resources.

**Despite differences, intermediary organizations experienced a deep sense of community.** Grantees describe their experience with the initiative as “deeply communal” and each other’s work with the affection and respect that come from personal knowledge. They developed deep relationships with one another over the course of the initiative, from 2003 to 2009, eventually collaborating in their regranting and even in their programming.

**Collaboration between intermediary organizations was and continues to be significant.** Participation in the initiative succeeded not only in fostering a sense of common purpose, but also in generating significant amounts of collaborative activity among the IllumiNation grantees.

Building trusted relationships and learning about one another’s programs laid the groundwork for the partnerships that developed over the two years. Collaborative efforts brought enhanced resources to projects and regranting activities. These efforts included:

- Serving on each other’s panels and advisory boards.
- Attending and collaborating on one another’s trainings, workshops and events.
- Developing partnerships with other Indigenous organizations and non-Native organizations to advance their work.

**Intermediary organizations made valuable ties to the philanthropic community.** As a result of their relationships with other philanthropic entities, such as Grantmakers in the Arts, funders are now more knowledgeable about Native arts and participate in efforts to promote the work.

“Having Native staff increases sensitivity to the job, but it also makes [the organization] more credible to Native artists. It shows there are opportunities for Native professionals.”

—ILLUMINATION INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATION

**IllumiNation bridged understanding and increased awareness of Native arts and cultures.** Non-Native-led intermediary organizations claimed to develop a deeper appreciation and understanding of Native cultures and artists. They also said they greatly appreciated the knowledge transfer and effort made by the Native-led organizations to teach and share, providing them with the expertise and credibility to expand their roles as resources for Native artists. Native-led intermediary organizations fulfilled their need to interface with partners that can help bridge understanding and bring Native arts and cultures to wider audiences in a culturally appropriate way.



**Intermediary organizations increased diversity and experienced growth in cultural competency.** The growth in cultural awareness is in part due to the initiative's insistence on increased Native representation at the board and staff levels,

which led to a more diverse set of internal perspectives. This internal diversity has increased grantees' capacity with Native artists and also helped them to focus on how to approach other populations with sensitivity and understanding. By encouraging a worldview that includes many perspectives, IllumiNation has advanced the cultural competency of its participants.

## OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE REGRANTEE PROGRAMS

Regrantees offered several recommendations for improving regrantee programs in the future.

**Hold more gatherings.** Interviewees discussed the need for more gatherings of Native artists and arts organizations at all levels to trade notes, discuss issues and learn from one another.

**Provide more opportunities to transfer skills.** Interviewees indicated a need for artists to teach one another, and to teach communities the various techniques and motifs associated with Native arts and cultures. They were especially interested in opportunities for emerging artists to work with master artists.



**Increase individual grant amounts and initiate long-term support.** While they were grateful for the financial support they received from grantee agencies, regrantees also noted that their project budgets were not necessarily covered by the grants. They also noted the need for long-term funding to sustain their work.

**Continue to support Native arts and cultures.** Interviewees were unequivocal that there is a need for continued funding of Native arts and cultures. Opportunities for capacity building are plenty, and philanthropic support would help grow and sustain the organizations—like those in the IllumiNation cohort—at the center of Native arts and cultures.

## CONCLUSION

The Ford Foundation's investment in strengthening Native arts and cultures was the first national funding initiative to seek change simultaneously at four levels: the individual Native artist, Native communities, Native and non-Native organizations serving Native arts, and the philanthropic environment for Native arts and cultures. This evaluation found the initiative began to achieve this change and profoundly influenced intermediary organizations, the regrantees, and Native American artists and communities around the country.

# SUPPORTING A BURGEONING REVIVAL OF NATIVE ARTS: LEADERS WANTED



## INTRODUCTION

Indian Country is on the cusp of a momentous cultural renewal. Artistic and cultural revitalization are reflected in expanding markets for Native arts and the increasing numbers of young Native artists and their use of new technologies. The Native arts and cultures field is populated with a growing number of organizations that range widely in stability and maturity. Their leaders are just as diverse, with an array of motivations, values, skills and experience.

The field depends on Native arts organizations to play many roles—promoter, connection facilitator, creativity nurturer, field development stimulator, manager and door opener to new opportunities. These many functions require skilled organizational leaders who can navigate complex relationships and manage competing demands and priorities.

Current leaders possess diverse skills, passion and community ties, yet the field demands more leadership capacity. The Native arts and cultures field needs new leaders and requires that current leaders have greater depth of skill and knowledge, particularly with the growing acceptance of Native art into the mainstream art community.

In 2005, the Ford Foundation engaged **Miriam Jorgensen and Rachel Starks of the Native Nations Institute for Leadership, Management and Policy**, at the University of Arizona's Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy. They were tasked with conducting a qualitative research study to identify the sector's leadership development needs and the appropriate strategies for developing new and talented leadership to see the renewal through. The intention of this work was to explore the needs and opportunities directly related to the foundation's initiative, Strengthening the Field of Native Arts and Cultures. The research consisted of 45 interviews with Native arts organizational leaders and funders in the field. The final research was disseminated as a knowledge-sharing report to inform others working in the field about effective programs, training and organizational strategies.

## FINDINGS

Field leaders are tied together by three common motivations

The motivations of the field's organizational leaders are varied and shaped by many factors. The following are the three most common motivations for leaders' work in the field and the values driving them to act.

- 1. To perpetuate Native cultures and communities.** Native artistic and cultural expression is a connection to community, history, tradition and the future. Leaders work to help artists retain and nurture their community roots and to encourage the community to engage with the arts in both traditional and innovative ways. Leaders view Native arts as having a major role to play in rebuilding and sustaining indigenous communities.
- 2. To educate the Native and mainstream public.** Many leaders describe their purpose as one of education and outreach to increase awareness of Native Americans and their arts, cultures and values as a distinctive part of America's past, present and future. Supporting artists and training new ones will sustain

indigenous arts and cultures practices, as well as foster valuable outreach to the mainstream. For some, practicing and sharing Native arts with the public is a way to demonstrate the relevance of Native ways of living and being.

3. **To act as agents of change and to promote inclusion.** Leaders want to see Native art in all its forms included as part of mainstream expressive art and culture.

## “Natives can take a leadership role and teach others another way to be in the world.”

—INTERVIEWEE

Having Native art as an accepted and respected part of the mainstream art world will allow Native artists to sustain themselves economically. It is difficult for many Native artists to make ends meet pursuing art alone and, as a result, they create art “on the side.” Leaders want to help Native people get their artwork into an arena where it can be seen, appreciated and purchased.

### Native arts organizations vary in size, sophistication and impact

Eight kinds of organizations are actively engaged in the arts and cultures field:

**Large and nationally visible Native-led arts organizations.** Examples include the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) and the Southwestern Association for Indian Arts. These organizations are well-established and serve as faces of the Native arts field. Although stable and connected to foundations and patrons of high art, they need more financial support.

**Smaller, established Native-led arts organizations.** These nationally oriented organizations, like the First Peoples Fund, have earned a reputation in the field for having a clear focus and goals, as well as stability in their leadership, board and financials. They frequently struggle to take things to the next level.

**Regional, Native-led organizations.** Examples include the Potlatch Fund, Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance and Alaska Native Heritage Center. These organizations have regional visibility, strong ties to local Native communities and well-established relationships with local and regional funders. They pursue

a range of exhibit, marketing and teaching goals. Some confront the challenge of “mission drift” and have need for clarity about their own purposes.

### Struggling or failing Native-led organizations.

These organizations struggle for various reasons, including dependency on a single funding source or high staff and board turnover. They may have flourished under leadership that has moved on without replacements.

**Emerging or grassroots Native arts organizations.** These organizations are typically struggling, fragile and lacking organizational infrastructure. Emerging organizations are working to implement the newest ideas for promoting, organizing and supporting Native expression and art. Many have just a couple of key leaders or staff and manage to do a lot with very little.

**Educational institutions.** Examples include the Institute of American Indian Arts, Great Plains Art Institute at Sinte Gleska University and Evergreen State College’s Longhouse. Embedded within larger educational institutions, their goals are largely defined in terms of education. They also serve vital community outreach purposes. These organizations are generally stable, yet confront demands unique to academic institutions. Leaders must justify their use of resources to other units in the larger institution.

**Tribal museums and cultural centers.** These institutions come in all shapes and sizes and typically share the commonality of



being tribal entities that fall under control of tribal governments. This tie brings both blessings and difficulties: Funding may be substantial but unstable, and leadership may be strong but subject to tribal politics. Leaders of a given tribal entity must manage the divide between serving the community and educating non-community members about the nation and its way of life.

**Non-Native museums with a commitment to Native arts.** These include organizations such as the Heard Museum and Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art. They can serve as a vital link between the Native arts field and the mainstream. Leaders are charged with representing and explaining Native art to non-Native audiences while simultaneously reaching out to Native artists and communities to promote a sense of Native ownership and access.

**“The effort required in changing minds can be substantial...Most Native arts and culture leaders are not thinking ‘globally,’ so moving them toward that viewpoint will likely require specialized and sensitive efforts to explain and justify it.”**

—INTERVIEWEE

**Leaders need new skills and knowledge to sustain and promote Native arts and cultures**

The field of Native arts and cultures is on the cusp of exponential growth, as more Native artists and art forms become accepted by the mainstream. Growing the field requires leadership development efforts that provide the skills and support to sustain the practices of indigenous arts and cultures, build organizational capacity and promote them to the larger arts world.

Conversations with field leaders point to a number of core leadership development needs. From fundraising and budgeting to board composition and organizational structure, field leaders need and desire training on an array of issues related to organizational development. With a range of sophistication and size of organizations, there are both “basic” and “advanced” versions of this need.

While many of their leadership-development needs seem generic, the reality is that uniquely Native concerns flow through them—from leadership style to the types of organizational structures that might work within Native contexts.

**Fundraising.** Fundraising skills development is needed across the board. More specifically, leaders need training in the particulars of raising money—from who the funders are and how to approach them, to how to network with them and successfully promote their organizations as equal collaborators.

Rarely did issues of funding diversification, budgeting and planning, grant writing or accountability arise in conversations. However, these issues are likely considered as part of the catch-all, “I need help with fundraising.”

Native cultural arts leaders realize they cannot wait for other people to educate funders about the importance of Native arts and cultures. Instead, they want to know how to take part in an educational process that will change the flow of philanthropic funding.

**Formal oral communication.** Leaders desire to hone their oral communication skills. They want to be more comfortable speaking in public about their organizations and would like to be better at communicating to funders about their organizations’ purposes. They also want to improve how they talk about the artists and cultural practitioners with whom they work and about Native arts and cultures generally, in order to broaden their Native and non-Native constituencies. Training must focus on promotion that does not appear to be self-promoting, which is cited as culturally inappropriate.

**Organizational development.** Leaders of less established organizations would like to learn the more technical and legal aspects of organizational development—from choosing and setting up the best organization type (e.g., nonprofit versus for-profit, 501(c)(3) versus 7871) to determining and communicating board and executive responsibilities. Training on how best to establish personnel policies and organizational protocols that last through leadership changes, funding changes or crises is also desired.

Topics more frequently mentioned by the leaders of mature organizations include how to work with their boards, clients, funders and other stakeholders to expand vision; how to solidify organizational values that support the vision; and how else to support forward momentum.

**Project management.** Project management skills are needed by individuals outside of leadership in order to grow more leadership talent. Having these skills makes it easier for an artist or field affiliate to imagine taking a job

with an arts organization, taking on a leadership role or starting an organization to fill a service or market gap.

**Training in arts marketing and business development.** Field leaders see the creation of market outlets as a critical means of increasing the visibility of Native arts, as well as diversifying their funding. Yet business development comes with its own set of challenges that need addressing. The Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance runs a gallery and struggles with questions of pricing, store hours, profit margins and how to decide whose art it should show.

**Balanced leadership.** Field leaders are searching for an organizational leadership model that fits their culture, life and values—one that is less hierarchical and more egalitarian or “balanced.” They are seeking a model that matches not only Native cultures but also their own lives, which they want to be well-rounded. They desire the time to be not only cultural arts leaders, but also parents, community servants and grounded individuals.

**Advocacy and activism.** Generally, there is a need for leaders to recognize the activist elements of their work and for them to be trained in simple and effective advocacy and activism strategies. Among field leaders whose art practices require the



use, and thus protection, of traditional materials and land, there is a strong desire for this kind of training.

### Leaders learn from community, experience and formal training

Organizational leaders in the field of Native arts and cultures bring an array of skills with them to the table. Their knowledge and experience come from both informal and formal learning opportunities and can be leveraged to create effective capacity-building opportunities in the future.

**Community as teacher.** A majority of field leaders cited their communities as the sources of their skills and knowledge—both artistic and leadership. Through their communities, some leaders have learned how to listen to many voices before making decisions, to reach out to others, to manage with limited resources by partnering, and to measure the success of their organizations.

Community-based arts programs are an important training ground for artists and for Native arts organization leaders. They are steeping themselves in community-based lessons in leadership and gaining the trust of authorities who will support them in leadership roles. Leadership development ought to support community connections and find ways to see, nurture and reinforce enduring community bonds.

**Learning through experience.** Field leaders also learn the skills necessary to do their jobs through experience and trial-and-error. Some leaders were called (or pushed) to make the transition from artist or activist to arts organization leader and had no choice but to learn the job. Experience-based learning is a necessity for many. Most field leaders pointed out that certain leadership skills required in the Native arts and cultures field are unavailable through training and only learned through on-the-job experience.

While experiential learning is valuable and often a necessity, classroom and workshop learning can complement and speed the process of learning by doing, helping leaders progress farther down the path through access to field-specific knowledge and wisdom. Mentoring or substantive networking are also valuable supports. Leaders reported much greater ease in learning how to do their jobs well when they were mentored by their organizational predecessors, knowledgeable board members or peers they sought out in the field.

**Formal training.** Field leaders also learn from formal sources of training, such as degree programs, workshops, training, and mentoring programs and consultants. While they have been innovative in accessing a broad array of learning opportunities, the diversity suggests there is no widely recognized program or opportunity viewed as fundamental for leadership development in the Native arts and cultures field.

Leaders disagree about how academia could be helpful. Some see arts administration skills and degree programs as key, while others highlight community and business development. Although few interviewees have experience in a degree-granting arts administration program, some current leaders still see them as important and would like to see more recruitment of Native students into such programs.

Single-topic, shorter-stay programs or on-site consultants are the best formal training options for current leaders. Longer-term certificate or degree programs take leaders away from their organizations for too long. Many organizations are already understaffed, and the absence of leadership would provide an extra burden.

Leaders found added value in engaging with and learning from other Native artists and leaders. There is a clear preference for formal programs and opportunities aimed at Native people or that integrate Native leaders into leadership development programs as trainers or speakers.

## OPPORTUNITIES: SEEDING AND SUPPORTING NATIVE ARTS LEADERSHIP

Key opportunities for expanding the capacity and number of Native arts field leaders fall into two general categories: skills development and experience enhancement.

### Expand leaders' skills with professional programs and support

#### **Organization-specific consulting.**

Organization-specific consulting can be tailored to meet each organization's needs. Making available funds for this purpose with a list of potential, vetted consultants would make the process easier and would address issues of mistrust.

#### **Short-duration certification programs.**

This format is ideal for topics such as fundraising, budgeting, board development and project management. It is potentially cost effective and offers the possibility of external validation or certification. Vary program length from a day to a couple days, or possibly longer, if the commitment of time is not burdensome.

#### **Professional staff pipeline development.**

The field may benefit from a greater connection with professional arts administration programs and graduates. Do more to encourage students to consider arts administration and related fields such as curation, nonprofit management and social entrepreneurship.



Provide incentives—such as scholarships to Native students and Native-arts-organization staff members, summer internships and national recognition programs for outstanding Native graduates intending to enter arts administration.



### Enhance leaders' experience through recognition and peer support

**Professional support networks.** Field leaders expressed a desire to gather with other Native arts organization leaders to constructively sort through their challenges and identify concrete solutions. To work well, focus professional networks on offering face time. Meet regularly and foster mutuality and trust among members. Hold meetings before or parallel to conferences that field leaders might already attend. Offer conference scholarships or travel stipends as incentives to participants. Launch such a network through an existing organization or trusted consultant.

**Fellowship award programs.** Fellowship awards and the accompanying recognition help recipients see themselves in new ways, take on still larger or more expansive roles, and hone the skills necessary to move into those roles. Programs like the Ecotrust Buffett Award and the First Peoples Fund Community Spirit Award could be expanded, and new fellowship programs could be developed as well.

**Mentoring and networking programs.** In many ways, this is the most full-bodied and intentional option for supporting leadership development: a program aimed at identifying and supporting emerging leaders by providing them with targeted training, mentoring or substantive networking opportunities and connecting them with a cohort of peers.

## CONCLUSION

The Native arts field in the United States is thriving. Yet there are too few leaders and the demands placed on them are many. Continued growth and vitality in the field requires renewing and re-energizing current leaders, as well as recruiting and developing more leaders. An intentional effort to build leadership capacity will ensure the field continues to grow and thrive.

# GROWING NATIVE ARTS AND CULTURES PHILANTHROPY: FEASIBILITY OF A DEDICATED FUND



## INTRODUCTION

One strategy of the Ford Foundation’s Strengthening Native Arts and Cultures Initiative was to explore creating a new philanthropic resource for the Native arts and cultures field. In 2006, **LarsonAllen Public Service Group** was hired to conduct an initial feasibility study to ascertain the need and interest in Indian Country for a Native arts and cultures fund and to provide recommendations on its potential structure and design elements. In addition to literature reviews, financial and operational modeling, and observation of seven Native gatherings in the United States and Canada, 60 in-person interviews were conducted with sources directly involved in the Native arts and cultures field and in funding Indian Country. From this research, LarsonAllen Public Service Group found that a Native arts and cultures fund is feasible and crucially needed to grow the field.

The following chapter reveals the highlights of the feasibility study, which informed the subsequent development of the new Native Arts & Cultures Foundation established in 2007 through an endowment from the Ford Foundation.

## FINDINGS

### Native artists need greater market access

Native artists say they experience a variety of challenges in finding a market for their art, such as:

- Domination of the Native arts market by non-Native individuals and businesses involved in the creation, marketing, distribution and sales of Native art (authentic and counterfeit).
- A lack of “business sense” by Native artists who may often give away their art, thus “undercutting everyone.”
- Limited access to market opportunities due to relative isolation of many Native artists.

“To get right to the point, Native arts and artists are not supported. We’re always on the back burner...For mainstream funders, we are not considered important enough. For the tribes, the arts don’t have as much urgency as other matters.”

—LONGTIME NATIVE ARTS ADVOCATE

- A lack of any kind of supplies-production-distribution-marketing-sales infrastructure to support Native artists.
- Limited market outlets for Native artists besides some tribal museum gift shops and occasional art markets scattered around the country.



Without an infrastructure of place-based markets, some younger Native artists are taking advantage of the Internet to show and market their work, allowing them to stay in their home communities while enjoying some economic reward.



### Native artists lack intellectual property rights at a time when they're becoming more critical

Native artists are increasingly challenged by a limited system of intellectual property rights with few protections in federal law for Native Americans. Where intellectual property laws do apply to the intellectual property of Native tribes, enforcement is weak and dependent on a significant investment of money and time. With a growing preponderance of “Native-inspired” art made by non-Natives and outright counterfeiting, intellectual property rights are becoming a critical issue. The only good news is that this implies consumer demand for Native art.

### The philanthropic support infrastructure for Native arts and cultures is weak

While funding for Native arts and cultures is provided by large foundations, federal, state and local governments, individual donors and the tribes themselves, the money rarely reaches the community level where artistic expression originates. Moreover, funding is typically insufficient and unsustainable.

The flow of funds from large foundations is meager and limited in its distribution. More than \$5 million (in 2002 dollars) flowed annually from large foundations to the Native arts and cultures sector between 1989 and 2002. In recent years, despite Ford Foundation’s portfolio, the amount of money flowing to the sector has been declining in both absolute and percentage terms (Table 2.1 and 2.2).

Table 3.1  
Categorical Rankings of Large Foundation Support to Native America between 1989–2002

Rank	Category	Total in 2002 Dollars	Percent of Funds	Average Grant
1	Education	\$199,984,272	24.5%	\$130,565
2	Arts, Culture & Humanities	\$131,035,952	16.1%	\$112,126
3	Community Improvement & Development	\$84,179,541	10.3%	\$124,979
4	Health	\$74,824,888	9.2%	\$152,884
5	Environment	\$54,903,495	6.7%	\$128,801
6	Public Affairs & Government	\$42,947,785	5.3%	\$142,015
7	Human Services	\$42,582,856	5.2%	\$64,213
8	Mental Health & Substance Abuse	\$35,777,250	4.4%	\$167,418
9	Civil Rights	\$35,332,969	4.3%	\$121,162
10	Crime, Courts & Legal Services	\$25,007,572	3.1%	\$133,480

The most active grant makers tend to be local or regional organizations with significant commitment to Native issues, yet they have fewer grant-making resources than national funders and do not provide funding in any focused or sustained way. Grants tend to range in size from \$2,000–\$20,000, with lower amounts more common.

Few tribes receive substantial support from large foundations for arts and culture. Instead, national Native American museums and institutions, such as the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art and the Smithsonian Institution, are typically the recipients of large foundation grants, in the millions of dollars.

Table 3.2 Recipients of Large Foundation Grants between 1989–2002

Recipient	Total Amount in 2002 Dollars	# of Grants
Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art	\$40,365,486	66
Smithsonian Institution	\$7,885,473	27
National Museum of the American Indian	\$5,437,693	45
Institute of American Indian Arts	\$4,450,110	28
School of American Research	\$3,955,541	38
American Indian Higher Education Consortium	\$2,831,281	2
Koahnic Broadcast Corporation	\$2,570,043	12
Southwest Museum	\$2,567,350	17
Heard Museum	\$2,476,191	9
Alaska Native Heritage Center	\$2,181,547	24
Unity: Journalists of Color	\$1,828,683	4
Middle Oregon Indian Historical Society	\$1,812,620	10
Native Journalists Association	\$1,752,249	36
Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation	\$1,551,513	6
American Indian Institute	\$1,375,920	1
Native Public Telecommunications	\$1,375,305	6
Museum of Northern Arizona	\$1,366,495	13
University of Illinois	\$1,213,900	1
Atlatl	\$1,184,397	18
Museum of the American Indian	\$1,127,033	3
National Indian Telecommunications Institute	\$1,124,537	10
University of Arizona	\$1,097,315	10
County of Dade	\$1,044,700	1
Migizi Communications	\$993,447	38

**Federal sources of funds for Native arts and cultures are also limited.**

- The National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) provides critical support through its programs, activities and purchases, but does not play a developmental role in the Native arts and cultures field as a whole.
- The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and National Endowment for Humanities (NEH) provide very little intentionally Native-directed funding.
- The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) directs approximately \$3.2 million annually to Native Americans through its tribal libraries program, and a newly formed tribal museums program distributed \$843,000 through a competitive grant program in 2005.

**State and local governments are not reliable sources of funding.** Due to a public mandate to serve all populations and regions within a certain geographic area, state and local arts agencies are usually considered reliable sources of funding for Native and other minority artists and arts organizations. However, only a handful of states have active arts agencies, and many suffered significantly from state, county and city budget cuts that have taken place in the past decade. These agencies fund Native artists mostly through grant programs for folk arts and traditional arts. While this support is welcomed, it leaves out contemporary Native artists and arts and perpetuates a false belief that Native arts are limited to one type of art rather than the vastly diverse field that it is.

**Individual donors can have impact.** Larger Native institutions are learning how to access individual major donors, but mid-size to small organizations have yet to fully access them. There is anecdotal evidence that individual donors can have a huge impact on Native arts and cultures, particularly if they focus their funding. One donor was the financial engine for the establishment of a Native program at the Sundance Film Institute, as well as the establishment of First Peoples Fund.

**The public mistakenly assumes tribal governments have the financial resources to support Native arts and cultures.** This misperception of Native nations is largely due to the visibility of tribal gaming operations. Most tribal governments face an array of competing spending needs, from tribal policing and court development to education and road building. With limited capacity to tax and challenging demands on existing resources, funding for arts and culture is low on the list of priorities. Except for the handful of Native nations whose revenues are quite high,

few tribal governments have enough financial flexibility to consider significant financial contributions to a national Native arts and cultures fund.

### A NUMBER OF TRIBES HAVE DEVELOPED CREATIVE AND DIVERSE PROGRAMS THAT SUCCESSFULLY SUPPORT ARTS AND CULTURE.

The **Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma** recently instituted a “One Percent for the Arts” initiative, setting aside one percent of all capital project budgets to purchase artwork from Cherokee Nation tribal members across the country.

The tribal gaming commission of the **Mohegan Tribe** in Connecticut has a cultural and community programs department to carry on traditional arts such as basketweaving, beadwork, drums and regalia; to provide access to cultural instruction and materials; and to coordinate cultural programs.

The **Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs** in Oregon opened the 25,000-square-foot, \$7.6 million Tribal Museum at Warm Springs in 1993. The permanent collection of treasured artifacts, historic photographs, murals, graphics and rare documents is a comprehensive chronicle of tribal history.

Although tribal gaming operations do create revenue, only a handful of the 562 federally recognized tribal nations are earning substantial revenues. More than half of all total gaming income is concentrated in 20 out of 198 tribes with casinos.

**Despite their limited resources, Native nations do give charitably but not necessarily to Native arts and cultures.** Native nations’ giving is frequently informal, unstructured and often determined through requests at tribal council meetings. In some cases, tribal philanthropy is aimed at the non-Native community as a means to mitigate the local impact of gaming operations. Native nations are still learning to become formal philanthropists and must continue building internal capacity for giving in general before they will be able to focus on arts and culture.

In addition to capacity building, tribal governments must be better educated about the importance of supporting arts and culture. Generally, interviewees describe strong community belief in the importance of arts and culture, yet see little financial support or recognition of artists from these communities. Some tribal leaders believe they “already have arts and culture through our songs, dances and

ceremonies.” They are not aware of the need for financial support to develop and sustain these artistic and cultural resources.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that non-tribal Native philanthropies have been increasing in number since 1994. Native philanthropies are said to have given away \$11 million in 2003, up from \$2.9 million in 1994. However, there is no data on how much of that has gone toward Native arts and cultures in particular.

### Native arts and cultures are revitalizing

**Over the past two decades, activity and connectivity around Native arts and cultures notably increased.** Increasing cultural transmission and preservation is taking place across the country in Native communities. The success and recognition of individual Native artists is inspiring younger generations of aspiring Native artists. As the value of diversity increases across sectors and in American culture more generally, opportunities for Native artists are increasing.

“Arts and culture are recognized more as a career. In the past, it was only related to ceremony...”

—NATIVE WHO WORKS WITH YOUNG ARTISTS

**Native arts and cultures networks are increasing.** In the first half of this decade, the growth of various Native arts and cultures networks accelerated. Spurred by national gatherings in the 1980s and 1990s, a number of networks for Native artists and funders to share practices and discuss challenges were formed. From a network of artist-focused organizations that were originally convened by Ford Foundation to an affinity group of Native arts funders within Grantmakers in the Arts, Native artists and their allies are finding ways to connect with one another.

**Native artists are leveraging their local and regional identities.** Native Americans are distinguishing region- and tribe-specific arts and cultures. The goal is to educate the public and arts consumers about the diversity of Native arts and cultures and to build more regional markets and artists’ economic viability. Already, successful efforts have been made in the Pacific Northwest and Hawaii.

**Native artists are developing valuable business and leadership skills.** Native artists and their allies share a strong belief that artists must become more savvy about business and marketing. Several efforts are underway, including some by the First Peoples Fund, to provide practical business training for Native artists in a way that is culturally based and artist-centered. Equally important as business savvy, leadership skills are also being honed among Native Americans. Arts and cultural leadership and leadership based on traditional ways of knowing are becoming a focus.

**Contemporary Native artists are challenged by stereotypes of Native art.** Funding for individual Native artists—where it does exist—is most often available for the traditional art forms and cultural practices that are being revitalized. Contemporary Native artists, however, experience difficulty in accessing funding. Many funders categorize Native art only as “folk art,” and contemporary Native artists must compete for the same scarce funds that are available to the gigantic pool of individual U.S. artists.

### A Native arts and cultures fund is needed and can be built

**A permanent fund will symbolize commitment to Indian Country.** A permanent fund may help allay the mistrust in Indian Country regarding funders’ commitment to Native America. The executive director of a national Native organization explains, “Once [big foundations] put the stuff in place for an Indian program, then it is not usually funded very well. It lasts as long as the program officer who had an interest and then goes away.”

The permanent fund should be a stand-alone organization, not part of a national Native organization with other focus areas. Its status as a national stand-alone organization will give it credibility and demonstrate an important commitment not only to Native arts and cultures but also to Indian Country.

**Native leadership is crucial.** Interviewees say the fund must be Native-led. They are ambivalent about whether that means that board and staff should be all Native. Authentic Native leadership could be accomplished through the governance structure and composition, staffing and advisors. Non-Natives can be included without sacrificing Native control and provide the benefit of their knowledge and perspective.

**Community access, participation and input are imperative.** Anxiety that the fund will not be Native-controlled is coupled with concern that the fund could be politicized. Even if it is Native-controlled, interviewees fear that it will be controlled by a small group, variously characterized as “elite,” “gatekeepers,” “clique” and “the same old people.”

“We have to walk in both worlds, so you can’t set this up in isolation. Just look around and see what/who is successful doing this. You need real experience on the board...someone who understands how to impact the markets, who has done this stuff, and they won’t all be Indians.”

—INTERVIEWEE

Engaging in a dialogue with the Native arts and cultures community, before the fund is established, was a suggested approach to addressing many of the community’s concerns. Having tough conversations about power and control and bringing together people of all races and perspectives will allow the community to work through existing anxiety and mistrust.

**Governance and staff leadership should be determined thoughtfully.** The governance structure for the fund is critical. Interviewees caution against the election of a representative board slate; rather, they encourage seeking board candidates who have been successful in philanthropic efforts and know how to successfully navigate political waters throughout Indian Country. A national fund will need a sense of community input and ownership without becoming divisive, and board members who can be community builders will be key. Suggestions for staff leadership revolve around being connected to and knowledgeable about Native arts and cultures at local and regional levels, as well as having experience in philanthropy.

**Partnerships and connections to existing efforts are key.** Many interviewees believe the fund should be a collaborative effort, perceived as a resource provider and builder of philanthropic resources, not just another competitor

for funds. Building the capacities of local and regional institutions and creating partnerships with other funders will achieve this and help build the field of Native arts and cultures.

“There are so many incredible artists and a small enough field that they are all connected to each other. To support Natives, you would support infrastructure for them to get together to collaborate and mentor each other.”

—NON-NATIVE FOUNDATION DIRECTOR

**Focus on artists and their communities to build credibility.** The fund’s credibility may rest on its authentic understanding of the connection of Native arts and cultures to community. It can demonstrate this understanding by:

- Emphasizing creative freedom for Native artists, thereby enhancing and expanding Native creativity.
- Reflecting Native cultural values by trusting artists while challenging them to give back to their communities.
- Funding at the community level rather than only at the institutional and national level.
- Ensuring financial resources go both into communities and to individual artists.
- Hiring staff with local and regional connections and credibility, as well as the ability to establish relationships with and acquire knowledge from many artists, tribes and communities.

**Grow the field with Native-centered capacity building.** The fund should build the capacity of Native organizations, tribes, artists and arts professionals using a Native American cultural lens. Mentorship and a focus on locally based organizations that can increase access to resources are mentioned as key to Native-centered capacity building. Working with reservations and with off-reservation Native groups will enhance opportunities for Native artists regardless of where they live or work.

## A Native arts and cultures fund should create connections

At least initially, a national fund would need to provide resources other than money to connect people and markets.

**Convene and connect people.** Bring people together to create, network and problem solve. It is one of the most important things a national Native arts and cultures fund could do. Convening and connecting those in the field will establish a robust infrastructure that strengthens connections among local and regional Native arts and cultures efforts.

**Educate and advocate to others about Native arts and cultures.** Workshops, marketing and positioning efforts, critical writing, publications and the greater visibility of a Native arts and cultures field will help educate the American public, consumers, Native and non-Native funders, and tribes.

**Expand the market for Native artists.** Interviewees envisioned co-ops and networks stimulated by a national fund as valuable strategies to expand the Native arts market.

**An inclusive approach to giving is important at the start**

**Be open to broader definitions of eligibility.** Most interviewees believe that a national fund for Native arts and cultures should be more open than restrictive in defining who is a Native artist. An established fund would certainly need to have more



discussion and consensus around the definition. Yet the preferred approach is to address complex situations on a case-by-case basis rather than apply blanket exclusionary policies.

**Support a wide range of Native art forms.** One of the important impacts of the fund should be to foster creativity through support of a wide range of art forms including both traditional and contemporary arts. The fund can also play a role educating the broader arts field about the close link between traditional and contemporary Native artistic expression.

“Be open to new generations. Mix traditional arts and contemporary concepts...Encourage artists to go out and portray their talents in new ways...The present and the future together are responsible for continuing the culture.”

—TRIBAL LEADER AND ARTIST

**Maintain a flexible approach to distributing funds.** A national Native arts and cultures fund should have flexibility to fund individual artists, organizations and tribal entities—although interviewees uniformly discourage funding tribal councils, stating their belief that funding an elected government body is not an effective way to get resources to arts and culture.

Philanthropists experienced in Indian Country emphasize how difficult it is to fund individuals. When one person receives money, it goes against prevailing cultures of community and, as a result, puts the recipient under tremendous pressure. One philanthropist advises making grants to Native artists through community organizations, keeping the funding local and connected to both community and artists.

Other Native philanthropists cite the need for technical assistance around the very issue of giving to individuals. It is an area where much could be learned from traditional arts funders who regularly provide support to individual artists. It is worthwhile to stay open-minded about non-Native involvement, as it can contribute strongly to the advancement of Native arts and cultures.

**Native contributions come in many forms.** Because financial resources are limited in much of Indian Country, the fund should consider different kinds of Native participation, such as:

- A syndicate of smaller Native donors who together could provide a total of \$1 million or more.
- A land trust that could become a reserve or retreat area for Native artists and cultural leaders.
- Artist residences or artist workspace provided by Native nations on tribal lands.

**The Seventh Generation view—looking at the impact seven generations to come—will ensure a legacy.** The fund should be mindful of creating a legacy for future generations. Experienced philanthropists interviewed for this study strongly encourage a long-term outlook from the very beginning of this fund.

“Establish a wide framework and a big enough vision so that, 10 years from now, people will still be able to work within it but provide their own interpretation appropriate for the times.”

—NATIVE ARTS LEADER

## OPPORTUNITIES: RECOMMENDED DESIGN ELEMENTS FOR THE FUND

Within the context of the current Native arts and cultures landscape and the findings of this feasibility study, particular design elements for a national Native arts and cultures fund emerged.

### Fund purpose

The fund would benefit the field by engaging in long-term asset-building to revitalize, strengthen and promote Native arts and cultures. Involve tangible and intangible assets such as increased financial resources, sustainable cultural organizations, new market networks, and successful generational transfer of artistic and cultural knowledge.

## Strategic goals

**Provide direct funding for Native arts and cultures.** Offer grants to individuals, unincorporated groups, organizations and communities.



### **Support leadership in Native arts and cultures.**

In addition to building capacity of current and potential leaders, highlight and recognize exemplary or innovative leadership to spur inspiration and creativity in others.

### **Build capacity and infrastructure in the field.**

Strengthen intermediaries such as Native arts service organizations, Native philanthropies and tribal initiatives that support Native artists, as well as networks that link these intermediaries and artists together.

### **Increase financial support in the field in a way that is “Native-led” or “Native-partnered.”**

Partner with or leverage the efforts of Native-led organizations, institutions or communities to increase financial support for the Native arts and cultures field.

## Structure and function

Establish the fund as a stand-alone, 501(c)(3) public charity with sufficient scale for grants, programs and philanthropic capacity-building of its own and for the field.

Set up a financial structure with both discretionary funds (through endowment earnings and fundraising) and donor-designated funds. Run one or two focused

program initiatives, engage in partnerships and converse with donors to ensure a coordinated and integrated influence on the field.

Initial investments by the fund should be in basic field infrastructure: new and existing networks, capacity building (philanthropic and organizational), leadership development and financial support of Native artists, arts organizations and communities.

This approach would require flexibility and openness in who, what and how the fund does its grant making and programming. It also implies a role for the fund that would extend beyond just providing money. It would require the ability to educate and advocate, convene and connect, and possibly have a direct hand in the creation of new market mechanisms for Native artists.

## CONCLUSION

There is enormous potential for philanthropy to provide significant leadership through a Native-led fund dedicated to Native arts and cultures. Outside of the National Museum of the American Indian, no national-level institution dedicates its work to telling the story of and strengthening the communities and cultural voices of the Native American people. In partnership with Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation (formerly the Rumsey Band of Wintun Indians) and the Wiyot Tribe, the Ford Foundation acted on the results of this feasibility study and created the Native Arts & Cultures Foundation ([www.nativeartsandcultures.org](http://www.nativeartsandcultures.org)) in 2007, helping to recognize Native creativity, heal the damage of history, and support cultural continuity for generations of Native artists and culture bearers.

# AFTERWORD



For 40 years, the Ford Foundation and its partners have worked to offer meaningful support to American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian communities. Over the course of our engagement, the foundation has developed an understanding of the centrality of art and culture in Native American communities. The Indigenous Knowledge and Expressive Culture grant-making initiative evolved with the goal of fostering a vibrant Native arts and cultures field, thereby helping to strengthen the infrastructure of Native American communities and promote cultural continuity.

While grant making for this initiative is now complete, our work in the community is evolving. For now, initiative participants continue to increase their capacity and develop new connections across local, regional and national art communities. As the initiative comes to a close, the Ford Foundation submits this summary of three research reports as a resource for those interested in funding and supporting Native arts and cultures and in collaborating with Native communities.

## Art and Photography Credits

### Front Cover:

“Platform,” by James Lavadour, courtesy of James Lavadour and PDX Contemporary Art; Photo by Chris Hollis of spoons, courtesy of Seventh Generation Fund; Photo by CMS photography of DANCING EARTH, Sedona, Ariz., for the Festival of Native Arts and Culture

### Page 2

“Flag” by Marie Watt (Seneca), 2004; Photograph by Tom Fields of the Mitchell sisters at Alabama Quarsarty Baptist Church, courtesy of Tom Fields

### Page 4

Photo by Patricia Ayala Rocabado of David Moses Bridges (Passamaquoddy), in studio, courtesy of New England Foundation for the Arts; “The River” by Anna Laura Hoover (Aleut), 2005, courtesy of Evergreen Longhouse; “Missing Glove at Red Lake” acrylic painting by Melanie Yazzie (Navajo), 2008, courtesy of Melanie Yazzie and Clark Barker

### Page 9

Photo by Joe McNally of Rulan Tangen (Métis), director/choreographer of DANCING EARTH

### Page 10

“From the Beginning” by Jo Montanic Lewis (Umatilla), five-color lithograph on Somerset Satin white, courtesy of Crow’s Shadow Institute of the Arts

### Page 14

Photo by Diane Badgley of David Moses Bridges (Passamaquoddy), Eiteljorg artist in residence, courtesy of the Eiteljorg Museum

### Page 16

Photo by Shirod Younker of printmaking workshop at Oregon College of Arts and Crafts (OCAC), courtesy of the A. Susana Santos’ Journeys in Creativity Program at OCAC, 2005

### Page 19

Photo by Chris Hollis of wood carving, courtesy of Seventh Generation Fund

### Page 22

Photo by Chris Hollis of group with canoe, courtesy of Seventh Generation Fund

### Page 25

Photo by Shirod Younker of printmaking workshop at OCAC, courtesy of the A. Susana Santos’ Journeys in Creativity Program at OCAC, 2005

### Page 26

Photo by Martha Hill of Anita Fields (Osage) in Eiteljorg Museum studio, courtesy of the Eiteljorg Museum

### Page 28

Photo of Dawn Avery (Mohawk), cellist, courtesy of Dawn Avery; “Canoe with strings” by Truman Lowe, courtesy of the Eiteljorg Museum; Photo of a boy carving a gourd, courtesy of the Dorothy Ramon Learning Center

### Page 30

“Pineapple Basket” by Jennifer Sapiel Neptune (Penobscot), 2006

### Page 39

Photo by Chris Hollis of girl with fan, courtesy of Seventh Generation Fund

### Page 42

Photo by Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie (Seminole/Muscogee/Diné) of Warm Springs elder Adeline Miller, courtesy of First Peoples Fund

### Page 44

Photo by Chris Hollis of canoe, courtesy of Seventh Generation Fund; “Eelgrass” by Joe Seymour (Squaxin Island/Acoma), 2008, courtesy of Evergreen Longhouse

### Back Cover:

Photo by Chris Hollis of the start of a basket button, courtesy of Seventh Generation Fund; Photo by Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie (Seminole/Muscogee/Diné) of David Moses Bridges (Passamaquoddy), courtesy of First Peoples Fund; “Forget-me-not” installation by Marie Watt (Seneca), 2008





# Native Arts and Cultures

Research, Growth and Opportunities  
for Philanthropic Support

The Ford Foundation's Indigenous Knowledge and Expressive Culture grant-making initiative (2003–2009) centered on supporting Native American artists and organizations and their role in the larger national arts dialogue. The initiative's work acknowledges the centrality of art and cultural expression to cultural, economic and political continuity of Native communities. Three research projects commissioned during this period confirmed the need for and significant positive impact of philanthropic support of Native arts and cultures. With the artistic and cultural revitalization taking place in Indian Country and the growing acceptance of Native arts into the mainstream art community, this is an exciting time to invest and offer support.

“Native art is not just turquoise and silver, buckskin and beads. It is so varied and so beautiful that people really need to know about this because their knowledge of Native art is so limited. I think they would gasp in wonder to see all the different tribal arts.”

—INTERVIEWEE, NATIVE ARTS AND CULTURES FUND FEASIBILITY STUDY



FORDFOUNDATION