

FUNDING NATIVE ARTS

EMPOWERING THE CENTER OF TRIBAL LIFE



POTLATCH FUND

SEPTEMBER 2005

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Potlatch Fund acknowledges the Ford Foundation for providing the funding to support our Potlatch Artists project and this report. We especially thank Elizabeth Theobald Richards, a program officer with Ford who understands the significance of our work with Native artists and who invited the Potlatch Fund to submit a proposal.

We also thank the many people who contributed to the development of the report. Liz Woody (Warm Springs-Wasco-Watlala/Navajo) and Craig Jacobson with Ecotrust's Native Programs played invaluable roles as principal researchers and writers. They worked closely with Kathy Becker, a Potlatch Fund consultant who managed the project and joined Liz and Craig as a principal writer and editor.

Finally, we acknowledge members of our technical assistance team who provide valuable training to Native artists and arts organizations, members of our board of directors who generously share their time and wisdom, and our growing list of funders.

Potlatch Fund is committed to empowering Northwest Native artists and we are inspired by the incredible people, communities, and tribes we have the honor to work with and serve. Many people contributed to the research, writing, and images in this report. We look forward to sharing it with others to expand support for Native artists. Questions about the report should be directed to the Potlatch Fund office in Seattle at 206-624-6076; info@potlatchfund.org.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Native American art in the Northwest has always played a central role in all facets of tribal life. Artists are important educators and opinion leaders in tribal communities. Through art, people learn to imagine other ways of seeing, doing, and interacting with each other and the environment. Tribal artists play a critical role as bearers of tribal culture, connecting contemporary tribal communities to ancient tribal values, culture, and wisdom. Art plays an instrumental role in building bridges among tribal communities and between Native and non-Native communities.

Potlatch Fund was founded in 2002, the product of a series of talking circles between funders and tribal leaders examining barriers foundations experienced in their work with Native communities. Dedicated to inspiring and building upon the Native tradition of giving in Northwest Indian Country, Potlatch Fund spawned Potlatch Artists, a project to investigate opportunities to support Native Arts. *FUNDING NATIVE ARTS: EMPOWERING THE CENTER OF TRIBAL LIFE* was prepared to address this complex subject. Written in three parts, this report reviews the history of Native people and art, examines the program priorities of funders, and identifies strategies for supporting Native art and artists.

FUNDING NATIVE ARTS: EMPOWERING THE CENTER OF TRIBAL LIFE takes a look back in time at Northwest tribal communities and presents a case for why the arts are so important in Indian Country. It looks at the ongoing impact of poverty on generations of Native people and the struggles Native people have endured. It looks at how artists, like many other Native people, often still live in poverty.

The report challenges the funding community to move beyond the perception that Native art and artists are a special interest area—and instead challenges the funding community to make connections between Native artists and funding priorities that include economic development, art, culture, health, poverty, environment, community, education, and youth. The positive impacts of funding Native Arts reverberate throughout tribal communities—in benefits such as cultural renewal, poverty alleviation, environmental restoration, employment, youth education, community health, and leadership development. Tribal societies are organized holistically, in circular patterns of community that are often centered around Native Arts. Therefore supporting Native arts as a funding strategy strengthens the infrastructure of Native communities.

This report is designed to serve as a tool for funders who wish to target and maximize support. *FUNDING NATIVE ARTS: EMPOWERING THE CENTER OF TRIBAL LIFE* examines a dozen key obstacles facing Native artists and offers strategic recommendations for addressing these obstacles.



INTRODUCTION

My maternal grandmother, Elizabeth Pitt, told me while I learned how to tan hides, “Good, if you learn these teachings and be a maker, we will never be poor.”

The skills learned are all highly respected and exhibit the tenacious and thorough powers of observation of the maker and the mentors of the maker. Many times I retell the story of my grandmother’s query of my aunt, Lillian Pitt.

‘Honey, what do you do, now?’ asked my grandmother.

‘I make art,’ Lillian replied.

After a moment, Grandma Lizzie asked, ‘What is art?’

Lillian answered, ‘I make masks out of clay.’

‘Oh. You are a maker! That’s good.’ Everyone smiled.”

Although Northwest Native art has become a golden egg for many non-Native businesses, the Native artist does not necessarily benefit from this interest in Native art. Racism and inequities disempower the individual Native person—and likewise Native artists. It is crucial to allow artists to participate in the economy without the pressure of becoming something they do not want to become. Non-Native interests in the business sector also often control the type of artwork presented to the public, and ultimately the story that gets told about the artist and his/ her community. Native businesses must therefore reeducate the buyer and redefine the market to counter this imbalance.

Elizabeth Woody (Warm Springs-Wasco-Watlala/Navajo)
Beadworker, Root Bag Weaver, Painter, and Short Story Writer
Director, Indigenous Leadership Program, Ecotrust

POTLATCH FUND HISTORY

Potlatch Fund is a Native foundation and leadership development organization that serves tribes and Native people in Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and western Montana.

Founded in 2002, Potlatch Fund's mission is to inspire and build upon the Native tradition of giving in Northwest Indian Country to promote economic development, natural resource protection, education, cultural preservation, civic participation, and the overall health of Native people and their communities.

The organization grew out of a series of gatherings or "talking circles" between funders and tribal leaders. The talking circles examined barriers foundations experienced in their work with Native communities. They examined why Native Americans receive less than one half of one percent of philanthropic dollars, even though Native people represent a larger percentage of the population and also experience such disproportionately high rates of poverty, unemployment, and disease. Additionally, they explored strategies tribal leaders and philanthropic organizations can implement to strengthen organizations that address the social, health, and cultural fabric of the local Native community.

The gatherings concluded with a decision by Northwest Native leaders to take action. Native leaders believe they must have a seat at the table in forums where decisions are being made about how to support Native communities. The Potlatch Fund emerged as an entity to help develop and empower Native leadership and make the best use of our tribal resources.

POTLATCH ARTISTS

An important recommendation emerging from the talking circles was for the Potlatch Fund to expand support for Native art. Native art has always been integral to every aspect of tribal life. In tribal culture, art is not separate from everyday life but, rather art is the center of tribal life and everyday objects and tools are decorated beautifully with aesthetic designs that perpetuate tribal identity and culture. It could be argued that tribes may not exist today if art had not been valued, encouraged, and passed on from generation to generation.

Potlatch Fund accepted this challenge and created Potlatch Artists, a project to remove barriers that prevent funding to support Native art and artists. The project has four objectives:

1. Provide grant writing training for Native arts organizations and individual artists interested in improving their knowledge and skills on how to raise money to support their work.

2. Encourage training and technical assistance to individual artists to expand their ability to make a profit from the production and sales of their art.
3. Conduct research and produce a report for funders examining the roles Northwest Native art and artists play in Indian Country, the links between Native artists and the many different program priorities of funders, and strategic funding opportunities to support Native art and artists.
4. Sponsor a grant-making program using re-granting funding from other individual donors and foundations that results in small grants for Northwest Native artists and arts organizations.

FUNDING NATIVE ARTS: EMPOWERING THE CENTER OF TRIBAL LIFE is directed at Objective 3. The report is divided into three parts.

Part One: Native Art, Wealth, and the Pacific Northwest—reviews the history of Native people and art in the Pacific Northwest including incredible hardships endured, and argues Native art has always been central to tribal life in the region.

Part Two: Native Art as Part of a Funding Strategy—takes a more detailed look at links between Northwest Native art/artists and the many different program priorities of funders—economic development, art, culture, health, poverty, environment, community, education, and youth.

Part Three: Strategic Funding Opportunities—looks at obstacles Northwest Native artists face and provides recommendations for supporting Northwest Native art and artists.

FUNDING NATIVE ARTS: EMPOWERING THE CENTER OF TRIBAL LIFE draws from national, regional, and local research activities and findings from a series of regional meetings conducted by the Potlatch Fund in 2005.

The meetings brought together artists, arts organizations, academic institutions, tribal government and organizations, and business people. Participants were members of more than twenty different tribes. For a list of the meeting conveners and participants, view the meeting notes on the Potlatch Fund's website.





PART ONE

NATIVE ART, WEALTH, AND THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

“As a people, we have lived in this homeland from time immemorial. This land has formed how we as Indian people see and interpret and express ourselves in the work of our hands. Regardless of the medium—whether fine art, traditional art, or performance art—the work reflects a living culture, not a culture frozen in the past, but one that is being shaped by many forces. Everything we do is rooted in the sense of place, and our creativity reflects the land.”

Bill Quaempts,
Board Member, Confederated Tribes
of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

Native American art in the Northwest has always played a central role in all facets of tribal life. Artists are important educators and opinion leaders in tribal communities. Art plays an instrumental role in building bridges among tribal communities and between Native and non-Native communities. Part One takes a look back in time at Northwest tribal communities and presents a case for why the arts are so important to Indian Country. It examines the ongoing impact of poverty on generations of Native people and the struggles Native people have endured. It discusses how artists, like many other Native people, too often still live in poverty.



HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Native American art is unique in the world and is a valuable global cultural resource. Prior to European contact, Native American artists proliferated and traded throughout the diverse regions of the North Pacific Rim for centuries.

Native art from the Pacific Northwest is the very embodiment of wealth. It has perhaps always been this way, given the wealth of the lands and waters. People say there was a time when one could “walk across the mighty Columbia River on the backs of salmon,” because they were so plentiful. Peoples’ basic needs were met and there still was a wealth of time for the expression of dreams and visions in the articles and tools of everyday life. Material remnants of ancient America attest to the bounty and respect an artist received to produce incomparable art.

The Pacific Northwest, “Salmon Nation,” includes tribal ancestral homelands in areas of British Columbia, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Nevada, and Northern California. The gift economy, which was built upon cultural

standards of giving, redistribution, and shared abundance, was the original economy of these lands. Northwest coastal tribes use the word *potlatch*



“Fishing at Celilo Falls, 1901,” historic fishing and trading site dried up due to the construction of the Grand Coulee Dam

to describe communal gatherings where wealth is re-distributed through gifting. Other Northwest tribes reference these gatherings as giveaways. These communal gatherings meant beauty, wealth, sustenance, and resources. A person’s wealth or value to the community was not measured by what they had, but instead by what they gave away.

In the Pacific Northwest, sea otter and myriad species of fish filled estuaries and hid in the kelp forests that

counter balanced those seen on land. No one starved or lacked for materials with the beautiful cedar for canoes, clothes, and houses, and the abundance present on both sides of the Cascade Mountains. People knew each skill they acquired made life easier and provided time to reflect, be with loved ones, and conduct spiritual development.

Tribal languages and knowledge reflected the multitude of salmon that fed all. The people, wolves, bears, eagles, and the land all fed upon their flesh and bones. So intertwined was this relationship that ethnographers have found evidence of co-evolution of specific salmon stocks and distinct Native languages. The biodiversity of forests here is unrivaled by any other place on earth, even the tropical rainforests. The arid landscape of plateaus and plains ran with deer and antelope; the hillsides had condor and big horn sheep. People crossed into other territories to hunt buffalo and trade goods from here.

People at Celilo Falls (Wyam) welcomed visitors too. Inhabited for more than 12,000 years, Wyam was one of the heaviest trading centers of the continental routes. We can no longer see Celilo Falls—inundated by one of several Columbia River dams—or the excitement of a salmon run there among the whitewater and basalt. However, we are seeing once again cedar dugout canoes paddled on the waters of Puget Sound and in the Straits. We are hearing Native

languages spoken in public again, such as at Native-owned radio stations like KCUW in Pendleton (Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation) and KWSO in Warm Springs (Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation). And we are seeing a resurgence, rebirth and expression of cultural wealth through the arts in the tribal communities of the Pacific Northwest.

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ARTS IN INDIAN COUNTRY

The subsistence art of the indigenous people in the Pacific Northwest incorporated the exquisitely intricate and encoded artistry of the community's vision and culture into daily life. The fishers' netting and rope were of the highest quality and most effective design. Food gathering and storage produced the most abundant and beautiful array of basketry in the world. Artisans would devote years at a time to craft a single cedar dugout canoe from logs that represented perhaps 800-1,000 years of growth in the forest.

There was no dividing line between daily life and the arts. Daily life was simply not possible without the arts, seen in beautiful bone tools, canoes, harpoons, tule mats and bags. Ceremony and ritual inspired masks and rattles, drums and other musical instruments. Societal and clan structure inspired other expressions through totemic symbology in different parts of the Northwest Coast.

NATIVE ART—TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY

Native American art can be anything a Native person makes that is an authentic expression of their vision. Often it may not be identified as art, but as craft, or simply a tradition, ceremony, historical artifact, or even spiritual

idiosyncrasy. Native art is a collaborative process, and may or may not involve aspects of an elaborate ceremony. It is—in all its forms—a direct expression of the artist's experience, and the experience of the artist's ancestors. The ecstatic



Elakha Alliance Logo, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians

dance of the Pow Wow or Native American healing is Native art. Speaking Native languages—languages nearing extinction as a result of the passing of the elders who spoke them as a first language—is a form of Native art. Contemporary works of oil painting, glass sculpture, quilting, and

“My beadwork is my life, and that is what I’m about. And when I get into my beadwork, I don’t just sit there and bead. I tell stories. My elders did that with me. They told us our history, our family trees, our culture and our heritage.”

Wanda VanPelt (Warm Springs), Beadworker
Participant, Potlatch Artists Oregon Convening, 2005

beadwork—things one might see at a museum of truly “modern art”—these expressions are just as vital to the Native art milieu as the most traditional form of ancient crafts.

The struggles of self-determination through five hundred years of colonization affect much of contemporary Native art. Art is the record of this hemisphere from the beginning of time, through the invasions of the vast ancestral territories, to the reduction of indigenous presence and connection to lands.

A PEOPLE PUSHED TOWARD CRISIS

Pre-contact estimates of indigenous populations indicate there were 12 to 15 million people north of the Rio Grande in 1491. This large population was reduced to a low of 210,000 in the 1910 census. In northern Washington and British Columbia, pre-contact estimates range between 80,000 and 500,000 people, depending upon how one looks at boundaries and peaks. By 1929, the indigenous population dropped to 23,000, an astounding ninety-five percent reduction in the Northwest. Ninety nine percent of Native languages have, since European contact, become extinct in this region. Loss of tribal land tenure during these dark times, except in the most remote reservations, was nearly 100 percent.

The long-term implications of this history of loss are still felt. Native Americans have the lowest life expectancy of any group in the United States—an appalling six years less than any other group. Their average annual poverty rate is 24.5 percent. Many reservations in the Pacific Northwest experience unemployment rates of almost 50 percent.

Although treaties between tribes and the U.S. government have clearly defined federal obligations, tribal people have been treated like “invisible people.” This is discussed in a recent report by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights entitled “A Quiet Crisis: Federal Funding and Unmet Needs in Indian Country.”

The report chronicles the historic lack of federal funding and investment to address the substantial unmet tribal needs in housing, health care, natural

resource management and protection, education, language and the arts, as well as all other programs related to socio-economic and community health.

And at the same time that federal funding and adult life expectancy are declining, the population of tribal youth is growing quickly. Tribal communities have experienced a 72 percent population growth in the West between 1981 and 1998, an astonishing demographic change. This presents a daunting demographic storm in Indian Country—short life expectancy, growing population base of youth, and lagging funding opportunities for basic governmental and community services. Stress on the communities is felt acutely: Violent crimes affect Native Americans at double the rate of any other race and they are frequently victimized by another race.

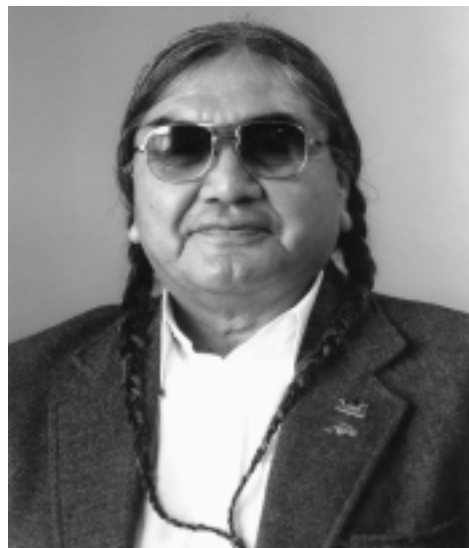
Today, approximately 170,000 American Indians/Alaska Natives reside in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, representing 6.8 percent of the nation's American Indian population. The Indian reservations in these lands are dispersed across immense distances in the Pacific Northwest, usually in isolated areas with sparse populations and diverse cultures.

Native American artists struggle to survive as living remnants of this history. They're contemporary people living in their tribal communities. They're also contemporary people who've left their communities—communities which have experienced breakdown during extreme stress and crisis.

SELF-DETERMINATION DRIVES TRIBES TO CREATE CHANGE

These socio-economic issues, particularly the cumulative unmet community and individual needs more than 150 years of difficult change brought about by non-Indian settlement of this region, cannot be discounted. Nonetheless, the region's tribes are not sitting idly and waiting for things to turn: tribal commitment to community-driven economic development and growth cannot be underestimated. Pacific Northwest tribes are working hard to make positive change happen, and this change is benefiting all of the region's residents, not merely tribal members.

Two recent studies in the Northwest support these conclusions. First, in 1997 a statewide analysis was completed in Washington State with partial support from the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs,



Antone Minthorn, Chairman, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

entitled *Economic Contributions of Indian Tribes to the Economy of Washington State*. This study discussed the key economic drivers in Indian Country in Washington: natural resources (timber harvest, agriculture and fishing are key elements); tribal government and other non-natural resource-related tribal enterprises (tribal economies are diversifying with time). The study also found that gaming accounted for close to 50 percent of the total economic impact of Washington's tribes within the state, creating jobs and contributing more than \$1 billion to the state economy from all sectors. However, this fact must be carefully qualified: the revenues of gaming do not necessarily return to tribes. Economic benefits can be diffuse; most important, tribal wages still lag behind the statewide average.

On the controversial subject of the economic benefits of gaming for tribes, in 2005 in Oregon, ECONorthwest published a more focused analysis, entitled *The Contributions of Indian Gaming to Oregon's Economy: An Economic Impact and Benefit Analysis*. Using data gathered in 2003, ECONorthwest estimates Oregon tribal casinos accounted for 35 percent of all the gaming conducted inside the state of Oregon. Tribal gaming alone generates more than \$1 billion dollars in total economic output in Oregon in 2003. This supports more than 10,000 jobs, directly and indirectly.

Again, clarification is necessary. These impacts are significant and gaming serves as an important economic driver for *some* tribes—particularly tribes located near urban areas. But as many of these same tribes will themselves point out, gaming is not viewed as a crutch to lean on permanently. This infusion of funds has only come about within the last fifteen years as tribal gaming

The majority of tribes, especially tribes located in rural areas of the Northwest, are not experiencing the significant profits and economic boost from gaming. They continue to face dire economic conditions.

developed. State and federal policy toward tribal self-determination efforts has, over the course of history, had brief positive peaks and long, deep, hard valleys. As such, many tribes look at gaming as a means to catalyze positive, expanding and diversified economies, not as economic solutions are necessarily permanent in nature. Also, it is important to point out that the majority of tribes, especially tribes located in rural areas of the Northwest, are not experiencing the significant profits and economic boost from gaming. They continue to face dire economic conditions.

In sum, the economic benefits of gaming ought not to be a factor when assessing long-term funding challenges faced by Native Arts.

ARTISTS PROMOTE HEALING

The fact that Native people have survived to this day and continue to produce their art is itself phenomenal and a testament to the power of creative human will and internal strength. Native art plays a central role in the healing process. The glimmers of hope and progress today underscore the need to support these

visionary leaders/artists who have been so instrumental in keeping Native communities together. For Native people, contemporary and traditional art is not limited to a focus on the past occupation of lands, social upheaval and loss, but also serves as a catalyst of human activity and cultural continuity. Vibrant individuals who make art are the leaders and the keepers of wisdom. Art in all its expressions is the energy of life which is constantly in flux, while remaining



Storyteller Roger Fernandes

grounded in human essence and need. Art provides creative aspiration and the will to continue despite all odds or atrocity. Native American peoples respect creative genius, specialty, and personal vision. They value the production of heirlooms for posterity.



SUMMARY

Part One has provided an understanding of the history of Native people and art in the Pacific Northwest and how Native art is central to all facets of tribal life in the region. The purpose for doing this is to help funders—Native and non-native, governmental and non-governmental, individuals and organizations—become more aware of the strategic role art and artists play in Indian Country.

Next, the report will take a more detailed look at links between Northwest Native art/artists and the many different program priorities of funders—economic development, art, culture, health, poverty, environment, community, education, and youth.





PART TWO

NATIVE ART AS PART OF A FUNDING STRATEGY

“I have done what was necessary to hold onto our culture. Songs and stories were taught to me by grandparents and my mother. I made carvings, bentwood cedar boxes, and dancing shawls. I find it hard to talk about myself as an artist. Growing up in the culture in Neah Bay, it was important that I carried myself through the community as a humble person.”

John Goodwin ‘Nytom’ (Makah)

Artist who does carvings, bentwood cedar boxes, dancing shawls, and more

The positive impacts of funding Native Arts spread throughout tribal communities—cultural renewal, poverty alleviation, environmental restoration, employment, youth education, community health, and leadership development. Native Arts, therefore, as a funding strategy, fits well with how tribal societies are often organized—holistic, circular patterns of community within which the arts often function as a center to the circle. Arts funding allows for philanthropic investment to impact communities across many different traditional funding categories, as discussed more fully below.



IMPORTANT ECONOMIC DRIVER—SOURCE OF REVENUE

The present day Native art market is part of the continuum of tribal experience; it is inextricably linked to the older system of a natural and gift-exchange economy. It is the idea and act of *potlatch*—a giving to and from the land and its peoples.

In the United States alone, Native American art is a \$3.5 billion dollar industry. Given the dire socio-economic history of Indian Country, as discussed more fully in Part One, art clearly can be, and is, a driving economic force in the lives of many Native Americans. However, as described more fully below, part of this “industry” is subsumed by imitation art, and the actual benefits of artists’ sales too often go unrealized to the artist him/herself.

In 2000, Ecotrust, a regional nonprofit organization working to improve the economic, ecological, and social conditions of the Northwest partnered with The Evergreen State College Longhouse on a project entitled the Western Indigenous Artists Network. The research found the majority of Native

American artists who were surveyed work part time in a career, and pursued their artistic interests as more of a hobby. It was also determined that, in these circumstances, the artists earn (in 2005 dollars) between \$5,000 and \$10,000 gross annually from their artwork. Art could not be looked to as a career. In reality, it was often a break-even or losing economic proposition when taking into account supplies, marketing, and travel expenses.



Every summer, people come into the Longhouse looking for places where they can purchase Native art. We steer them in the usual places, but always wish Native communities were in a position to build on the tourism trade more completely in this regard. I think British Columbia provides an excellent example of how profitable it can be as well as educational.

A couple weeks ago, I went up to Vancouver Island and visited the Cowichan Visitors Center, and then drove up further to go to Campbell River. A friend of mine and I went to Quadra Island and stayed at the Wei Wai Kum (Cape Mudge) resort called Tsa Kwa Lutén. I swear that, besides the staff, we were the only English-speaking guests. Everyone else was from Germany. The lodge is Native owned and run and includes activities for guests, including exposure to the culture. To me there is clear indication that at least on Vancouver Island, there is a market for Native tourism.

Laura Grabhorn

Assistant Director of The Evergreen State College Longhouse



The Institute of American Indian Arts conducted a study of full-time professional artists which resulted in a report of its alumni's impact on the state and national economy. In today's dollars, the average alumnus earns approximately \$40,000 a year, and, from this figure, those 3,200 alumni generate more than \$125 million in income annually.

More exact figures of income levels of Native artists are almost impossible to generate across the Pacific Northwest, because there is no system in place to systematically aggregate data about individual Native artists across all strata, geographies, and art media. We simply do not know the economic impact of Native arts in the Pacific Northwest. However, with data gathered through meetings of Northwest Native artists organized by the Potlatch Fund in 2005 and from talking directly to dozens of artists from the Northwest, we know that the Native Art market and the needs of the artists are growing as more and more tribal people seek to restore themselves and their culture through artistic expression.

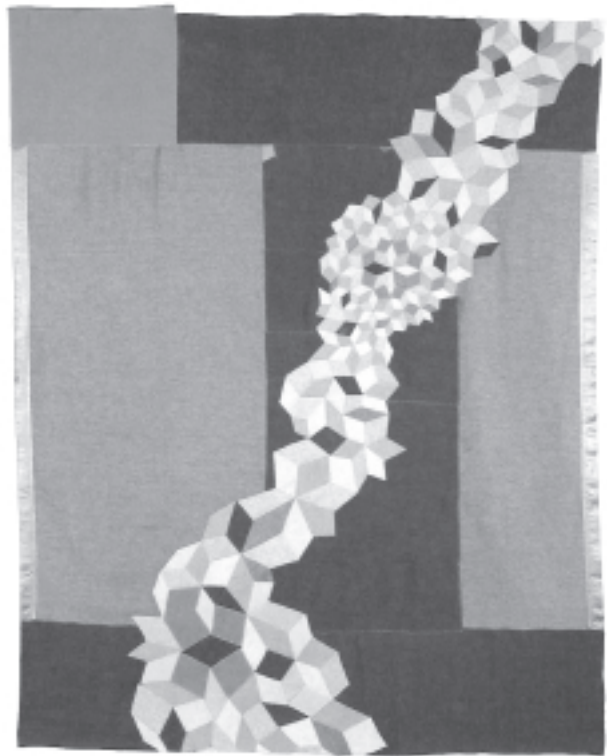
A recent Americans for the Arts study examined the national picture. *Arts and Economic Prosperity* is the most comprehensive arts study of its kind ever conducted. From 2001 through 2002, Americans for the Arts studied 91 communities in 34 states ranging in population (4,000 to three million), geography (Anchorage to Miami), and type (rural to large urban). Local arts agencies—public and public and private organizations working to increase community access to and participation in the arts—served as local research partners. The study found that funding nonprofit arts organizations generates \$134 billion in total economic activity. This spending—\$53.2 billion by nonprofit arts organizations and an additional \$80.8 billion in event/arts related spending by their audiences—supports 4.85 million jobs and delivers more than \$24 billion in total government revenue.

While the study does not focus on Native arts, it is a solid reminder that the Potlatch Fund, and other nonprofit organizations focused on Native arts and wealth generation, can and will continue to play a significant role in economic development and job creation in the Pacific Northwest, and that the multiplier effect for this investment will be significant.

CULTURE, TRADITIONS AND APPRECIATION FOR ART

Native American art, as discussed earlier, is an important way many people “discover” or “remember” that Native American people exist and are self-determined people. It is powerful that Native America is discovered in large part through its art.

Native American art is the conduit for those interested—regardless of ethnicity or connection to place—to have direct experience with tribal culture, often far from centers of Native American populations. The different forms and diversity of Native art is vital since it reflects the unique gifts of each Native American person and community. It is the experience these artists wish to convey, and most of all, their passion for heritage, the earth, and all life around them. The arts are an intellectual synthesis of contemporary and immediate experience. Native art plays an integral role in the ability of tribes to persist since art strengthens Native American life



Marie Watt, “In the Garden (Corn, Bean, Squash)”
2003, Reclaimed wool blankets, satin binding, thread

through performance, word, prayer, and material construction or deconstruction. Art holds the message of the past and proposes the continuity of the individual and communities of the Northwest.

Funders that already support the arts do so as an investment in beauty and the expression of the human spirit. The art of Native America is as important and vital today to its practitioners as it has been since time immemorial. Funding, support, and market development for Native art brings this beauty out of the artist and into the eye of many new audiences.

CONNECTION TO HEALTH, POVERTY, ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITY, EDUCATION, AND YOUTH

Legal historian and Dean of the University of Oregon School of Law Rennard Strickland (Osage/Cherokee) has made the observation that differences between tribal and non-tribal culture in the United States can be understood by contrasting “apple societies” and “orange societies.” Tribal societies and cultures are apples—community health and well-being are thought of in a holistic sense; in modern non-tribal society, there is a tendency to break everything into different segments, like slices of an orange. The “arts” are treated as wholly apart from economic development or the environment, or education, or health. When foundations and other funders marshal resources to meet specific categorical needs, Native arts often lands in a box labeled “special interest.”



Canoes arrive in Port Angeles, Canoe Journey, 2005

As discussed in Part One of this paper, the arts were historically, and are today, central to the tribal “apple society.” Arts were involved in daily subsistence, tools, trade, spirituality, community structure and governance, health, environmental balance, and management. This is still true today.

A good example of the impact of art in Northwest tribal societies today is the revival of the annual Canoe Journey. For many generations, cedar logs have been dug out by members of tribes to form canoes. These canoes were a critical part of a tribe’s existence. In the past century, the practice disappeared.

In 1989, the tradition was revived by a member of the Quinault Tribe who organized the “Paddle to Seattle” during the Washington state centennial celebration. Native Americans traveled by canoe from the Olympic Peninsula and Vancouver Island to Seattle.



Makah Nation gifts the Nisqually Tribe, Canoe Journey 2005

Canoe “families” now gather annually in the Northwest.

In early August, 2005, more than 70 canoes converged on Hollywood Beach in Port Angeles, Washington, representing 60 or more tribal communities from Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, and Alaska. They trace the paths used by their ancestors and use beautifully carved paddles to reach places where they potlatch—gather and share—with other tribes.

The “families” meet during the year to build their canoes, learn tribal history, and connect with their Native culture and traditions. The Canoe Journey creates an opportunity for youth to be mentored by adults who teach responsibility, self-reliance, and teamwork.

The Canoe Journey is living Native Arts—the canoes, paddles, regalia, and vendors. It is youth and cultural exchange, exercise and health, sobriety and mental health, environmental awareness, and leadership development. The Canoe Journey is also about economic development. In 2005, at least 5,000 people converged on the Lower Elwha Klallam Reservation. The Tribe funded the effort with a variety of grants, contributions, and investments that went toward infrastructure (roads, buildings, natural areas), programs and employment (youth dances, tournaments), meal provision (the Tribe fed everyone two meals a day for one week), and cultural events (daily paddle events, ceremonies, and protocols). The positive impact of hosting the Journey will be felt there for years to come.

The Canoe Journey is an example of the interconnectedness—the apple—of Native Arts in tribal culture. This annual event would not be possible without tribally managed forest lands that sustainably produced the logs for the canoes. The Canoe Journey would not be possible without the beautiful cedar dugout canoes, many that take a year or more for tribal artisans to create using traditional means. Paddles and regalia hold canoe societies together. They

create identity, community strength, and renewal through connection of past to present. Paddlers are required to adhere to cultural programs and sobriety is a mandate. From tree, to artist, to water, to community, the canoe brings all together.

Funders might not necessarily recognize the Canoe Journeys as “artistic expression” or “arts related”, or as having connection to the environment, economy, or health. However, Native Arts connects the whole together, and the Canoe Journey is both example and metaphor for how this is true: Funders must understand that support for Native Arts is itself a journey, which brings along the community, economy, health, and environment in a holistic manner.

ARTISTS ARE OPINION LEADERS AND AGENTS OF CHANGE

Native artists are visionaries, leaders, and change agents in their communities. Artistic expression happens, often, out of internal motivations and needs within the artist—a “need” to do something that has never been tried or done before in a certain way, or perhaps the “drive” to restore ancient rites, languages, or traditions. This type of leadership is necessary for a community to survive.

Elected leadership and business leaders in Indian Country serve a vital role in steering their respective communities and economies toward success in an ever-changing world. Artists present a different—and equally necessary—form of leadership in their communities. They bring people together at cultural events and provide a window into the methods and visions of a community’s ancestors through imagery, sculpture, and language. They question modern society and push against its limitations with poetry, beadwork, with weaving and paint, with film and media. For example, their role as a basketweaver may be to drive forest and wetland management decisions to maximize beargrass production and species diversity. Their iconography, such as “Northwest coast” designs, help communities such as those in the Puget Sound and north identify themselves with a sense of place imbued with Native history.

The role of artists as community leaders changes from individual to individual and community to community. However, support for contemporary “visionaries” and change agents is as necessary today as it was two hundred years ago when Native Artists literally created all community identity across the Northwest through their work.

ART BUILDS BRIDGES BETWEEN NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE COMMUNITIES

The film *Smoke Signals* was a unique moment in time in United States cinema: a popular Native American-themed film written, acted, and directed by an almost

exclusively Native American group of professionals. The film represented commercial success, artistic accomplishment, and a new bridge for understanding Native America through popular culture. As a work of art, the film offered new audiences across the globe a glimpse into Native American life. Native Artists, unfortunately, rarely find a national audience, so the bridge building mainly occurs at the grassroots level. Farmers



Ravens Tail Weaving by Teri Roskar

markets, artist gatherings, public art—local connections are repeatedly made through Native artistic expression. The hopeful message in the success of *Smoke Signals*, and an overall growth in Native film, literature, and visual arts, is that throughout the US more and more people are seeking out a greater understanding of Native America. And as the market for Native art grows and becomes stronger, new audiences for Native art will be found.

The arts bring people together and create positive change. When a tribal dance performance is shared publicly, the audience is forever altered as a result of the interaction. Movement, music and materials are fundamentally different than other forms of dance in the United States. Time stops, and the audience is brought into a new space and time that is tribally created.

This invitation for experience and connection is inherent in all the forms of Native Art. Artistic expression, once shared, extends to the audience the opportunity for understanding and growth. Whether through a poem, a piece of jewelry, a wooden paddle, or a contemporary painting, when the artist communes with an audience, both artist and audience are forever changed. Wearing the jewelry creates a bond, as does the display of the sculpture or painting. The dance between artist and audience/consumer is an ongoing one.

For Native America, this interaction is critical. The remoteness of many reservations away from urban centers creates challenges for inter-cultural interchange. The arts bridge this geographic and cultural gap as natural expressions of a people, a history, and a place are taken in by urban and rural audiences and varying forms and media. This can only further build cultural understanding and appreciation.

SUMMARY

Part Two explores links between Northwest Native art/artists and the many different program priorities of funders. It challenges the notion that only “art funders” should be interested in Native artists and arts organizations.

Next, the report will identify twelve key obstacles facing artists and offer recommendations for strategic funding opportunities to address each obstacle.





PART THREE

STRATEGIC FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

“I’m an artist; I’m a painter. I worked as a professional artist for more than 16 years. I’ve been advocating for Native artists to be seen and heard out there and to market themselves. We have a wonderful niche as Native artists, but we have a lot of non-Natives who know that there is a niche and have taken advantage by using Native American motif and symbols in their artwork. They do a better job of marketing themselves. I’d like to help improve the marketing skills of Native American artists so they can compete.”

Roxanne Chinook, Warm Springs

Artist who does painting

Part Three, Strategic Funding Opportunities identifies twelve key obstacles facing Native art and artists. Each of the obstacles is examined in greater detail, followed by recommendations for strategic funding opportunities to address the obstacle. The information and recommendations come from our research described earlier in the report, experts who have been interviewed, and ideas gathered at two regional meetings of Northwest Native artists and representatives of arts organizations.

Part Three builds upon the previous sections of this report and assumes the reader:

- a.) has an understanding of the history of Native people and art in the Pacific Northwest and how Native art is central to all facets of tribal life in the region; and
- b.) recognizes the many strategic links between Native art and philanthropic program areas such as economic development, art, culture, health, poverty, environment, community, education, and youth.



OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES

OBSTACLE 1—IT IS DIFFICULT FOR NATIVE ARTISTS TO SURVIVE WHEN THEIR ART BECOMES THEIR PRINCIPAL JOB.

PROBLEM: There is a need to address the challenges confronting Native artists who are not taking home a paycheck. Unless an artist can bring in a sustainable income, they won't have the ability to do their art work. This can take time.

OPPORTUNITY: Provide artists with a well-described network of advocates, organizations, and tools that will assist them in making a living from their art. Use these resources to help artists devise strategies to keep money flowing such as budgeting, advertising, producing bread and butter pieces, and diversifying their product. Artists need nuts and bolts guidance on how to get going.

PROBLEM: Higher rates of poverty, the isolation of many tribes in rural areas, and the lack of economic development and family wage jobs are daunting to anyone who wishes to become an independent artist. In order for artists to continue with their art, they need to sell some of it.

OPPORTUNITY: Help artists develop plans for career development. Work with professional artists and help them expand their work. Support artist-in-residence opportunities.

PROBLEM: The pressure of basic needs for survival can push artists to seek out pawn shops or other "quick cash" buyers who offer pennies on the dollar for an artist's work then turn around and sell work for the full market value of the art within hours or days.

OPPORTUNITY: Educate artists about strategies to use that result in more reasonable, yet still quick sales. Provide artists with credit counseling and financial education and offer them alternatives for addressing a cash flow crunch that doesn't require a complete disregard for the market value of their work.

PROBLEM: Artists often like to be left alone to do their art, yet they are culturally tied to their art.

OPPORTUNITY: Support opportunities to have artists featured at Native and mainstream cultural events, fairs, conferences, or other public gatherings.

Encourage artists to tell their stories along with showing their work. Help them appreciate the role their art plays in building bridges between cultures and communities.

OBSTACLE 2—TRADITIONAL NATIVE ART PRACTICES AND MATERIALS ARE BEING LOST.

PROBLEM: In the Northwest, many tribes are working to retain their cultures, languages and traditions. Tribal leaders must be reminded of the significant role Native artists play and the struggles they face to ensure traditional practices continue. Members of the public need to be educated about the role art plays.



Traditional basketweaving with cedar

OPPORTUNITY: Encourage Native arts organizations to advocate for Native artists so they are more visible and facilitate tribal leader understanding about the urgency of the needs and threats Native artists face. Support cultural events that encourage members of the public to be exposed to Native art and artists.

PROBLEM: Native artists need to pass on their skills and their thunder to youth.

OPPORTUNITY: If artists don't teach the next generation of Native people about traditional art practices of their tribe, these practices will not continue. This is evident from the languages that are already being lost in the region. Grants to support artists to teach children can help sustain artists by providing income, help preserve the arts, and help children with valuable cultural, social, economic, and life skills development.

PROBLEM: Successful marketing of Native art often forces artists to pursue business opportunities and material purchases away from their traditional lands and homes, impacting cultural and familial loss. Those who lack

access to viable markets for their work or the resources for developing markets will pursue other means of income generation and leave the arts.

OPPORTUNITY: Create smaller-scale art markets and opportunities for artists near rural tribal communities and establish larger, regional markets in urban tribal communities and mainstream cities. Find economies of scale in artist cooperatives or collaborative efforts.

OBSTACLE 3—NATIVE ARTISTS DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH ACCESS TO ART GALLERIES, ART MARKETS, AND OTHER VENUES TO SHOWCASE THEIR WORK AND SELDOM ARE NATIVE PEOPLE ABLE TO CAPTURE THE MAJORITY OF PROFITS FROM NATIVE ART SALES.

PROBLEM: Artist and gallery relationships are limited because the galleries represent a defined number of artists. Galleries are protective of their artists because they have invested so much in their artists and they are hoping to get a return on their investment.

OPPORTUNITY: Help artists pool and leverage resources so a business manager/agent can represent multiple artists and make strategic investments in marketing and providing visibility for these artists. (Note: This could present difficulties around how one person can represent multiple artists in a fair and representative way.)



Rick Bartow, “Standing Hawk”, 2005, acrylic on board

PROBLEM: Northwest Native Americans and Native artists need to capture more of the profits from the sale of Native art. They should challenge socioeconomic inequities which indigenous peoples in North America face.

OPPORTUNITY: Help bring together partners who could join together in opening and owning Native-owned galleries. Support Native arts organizations that sell art produced by their members using e-commerce retail outlets like a joint website with links to member artists who have websites.

While Native American art sales are a multi-billion dollar industry nationally, a recent study of counterfeiting of Native Arts also found profits from sales of Native Art tend to accrue predominantly to non-Native owned businesses, galleries and brokers (USA Today, 1998).

OBSTACLE 4—NATIVE ARTISTS FACE CHALLENGES WHEN TRYING TO MOVE INTO THE MAINSTREAM MARKET AND TO HAVE THEIR WORK VIEWED AS “FINE ART.”

PROBLEM: There is a need to educate art galleries so they recognize contemporary Native art as fine art. When Native artists submit a proposal to mainstream galleries and funders, they are too often placed in the folk art category instead of fine art.

OPPORTUNITY: Encourage new venues that are generally limited to “fine art” such as public arts projects, high end auctions, or corporate art collections. It is important to link Native artists to art institutions, museums, and academic institutions. Currently there is not a good bridge between Native artists and art institutions. The Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission has made progress both with its high end Wy-Kan-Ush-Pum Art Auction Gala, which is growing, as well as their recent collaboration with the Portland Art Museum to develop an arts marketplace tied to a world class Columbia River art exhibit.

PROBLEM: Native artists face a dilemma when they must categorize their work as “either” traditional “or” contemporary.

OPPORTUNITY: Support education and outreach by Native artists and arts organizations to encourage cultural awareness among people who influence mainstream art markets and challenge the “either-or” classification process.

PROBLEM: Having Native art identified as “Native American made” is important, but it can also diminish the focus of a buyer about the individual artist.

OPPORTUNITY: Assist artists in preparing an artist profile piece so buyers become aware of them as an individual artists, in addition to being a Native American artist.

“Many of the challenges Native American artists face in marketing their work in the mainstream are different than those non-Native artists face. These challenges are rooted in an art history “created” by dominant European culture that has just recently “allowed” Native American made art to be thought of as legitimate in the fine art world.

“Currently established and emerging Native American artists are the first and second generation to become a part of the “mainstream” art community. Therefore, these artists face obstacles inherent in being only recently legitimized and categorized by people outside of their culture. To achieve success in this particular venue, Native American artists have to overcome these built-in challenges created by people with artistic values and belief systems often different from their own.

“The structure of this mainstream art market also creates expectations and standards of what Native American fine art is, classifying it differently than art that has European origins. The constructed view of Native American art as “different” when compared to the mainstream has persisted into today’s fine art market. Native American artists that enter the mainstream art setting are usually “determinedly self-trained or have acquired degrees in mainstream institutions, but in either case, recognize that their cultural background sets them apart.”

“Seeing the Whole Picture: An Investigation of Factors that Influence Contemporary Native American Artist Participation in “Mainstream” Fine Art Market,” by Staci Golar, presently working for the Southwest American Indian Arts.

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OBSTACLE 5—FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, MARKETING, AND OTHER ESSENTIAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SKILLS AND TOOLS ARE LACKING AMONG MANY NATIVE ARTISTS.

PROBLEM: Artists need to develop a professional look using biographical statements, business cards, and brochures, and they need to document their work with digital photos and slides.

OPPORTUNITY: Create a website with downloadable professional examples of artist bios and business cards, which can be adapted and used by other artists.

PROBLEM: Artists need to have the skills to manage and market themselves. Some artists don’t like to market themselves. It may be every artist’s dream to be able to do their work while someone else promote their work, but the reality is most artists need to promote their own work.

OPPORTUNITY: Expand support for organizations that provide business development training and technical assistance to artists.

In Washington State, The Evergreen State College's Native Economic Development Arts Initiative works with individuals and tribes to promote entrepreneurial development, supporting artists as they become independent working businesses. They provide venues for performance, tour art exhibitions, provide Native arts marketing services, conduct workshops (provide artists with a stipend to attend and pay honoraria to artists to teach), and offer business management skill-building, Native art sales opportunities, and a tribal mini-grant program.

The Oregon Native American Business and Entrepreneur Network is a nonprofit organization that provides technical and financial training, and access to micro-loans, for Native artists and other businesspeople.

PROBLEM: Artists need better access to technology and to better use available technology to make use of slides, digital images, and payment systems. They need to use websites to promote their work in diverse marketplaces, including international markets.

OPPORTUNITY: Support Native-run organizations working to address the “digital divide”—lack of access to the Internet and technology—and encourage them to offer technical assistance and support website development for Native artists.



Beaded Bag, Middle Columbia River art, ca 1940

Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Economic Development Corporation, a nonprofit organization serving Northwest tribes has a technology program to support access to information and communications technology in Northwest tribal communities.

OBSTACLE 6—NORTHWEST NATIVE ARTISTS ARE NOT ACCORDED THE SAME “STANDING” OR “VISIBILITY” IN THE MARKETPLACE THAT HAS HAPPENED IN THE SOUTHWEST OR BRITISH COLUMBIA.

PROBLEM: Encourage a regional approach to promoting and strengthening Northwest artists and arts organizations and emphasize the unique qualities of art produced by Northwest tribes located along the coast, as well as tribes located inland along the Columbia River—“plateau” tribes.

OPPORTUNITY: Investment and funding at the regional level may be the most efficient means to bring attention to individuals. The regional approach should educate the public about the distinctive features of art among tribes—both coastal and inland. “Plateau” tribal art features can be mistaken as Plains or Southwest art. Group promotion—i.e. regional efforts of an identified group—may provide the initial push and exposure for artists that need encouragement.

In the spirit of the potlatch and giving, Potlatch Fund has provided direct training opportunities for artists and arts organizations, as well as tribal government/employees on grantsmanship and grant funding. The Potlatch Fund has identified the need to approach resource needs and fundraising efforts from a truly regional perspective, which may provide a vital milieu for funders to gain an understanding of how all of the pieces fit together and what is working well on the ground.

OBSTACLE 7—ACCESS TO LOAN CAPITAL AND GRANT FUNDS TO SUPPORT NATIVE ARTISTS AND ARTS ORGANIZATIONS ARE FAR FROM ADEQUATE.

PROBLEM: There is an incredible need for access to capital. Without capital, artists cannot purchase raw materials for volume production or support marketing and business development costs.

OPPORTUNITY: More innovative models of business assistance are needed. One of these models is a Native-run nonprofit community development financial institution (CDFI). Native CDFI’s can be certified by the US Treasury and offer loan products and technical assistance tailored to the needs of local reservation communities. Funding is needed to capitalize Native CDFI loan programs and support technical assistance activities to enable artists to qualify for loans.

Many Native Americans do not fit the business profile or possess collateral to obtain small loans, let alone a major loan from traditional lending sources. This is especially true for Native Americans living on reservations. Banks are often too many miles away, and those that are available find the lack of individual land ownership on reservations to be incompatible with their

loan policies. Small Business Administration lending, which is an important part of lending in Indian Country, too often fits a mainstream business model that can't accommodate the situations facing many artists.

Native CDFIs in other parts of the country are playing an important role in assisting artists. For example, Four Bands Community Fund, a CDFI serving the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation in South Dakota was founded in 2000 and within the first five years of operation has provided technical assistance to more than 100 artists and loans to 21 artists.

PROBLEM: Some funding needs of artists and arts organizations fall outside of what a loan can support. These activities need support through grants or individual donations.

OPPORTUNITY: Foundations, tribes, and individual donors can support Native grant making organizations or offer funding directly to artists and arts organizations to expand resources for Native artists and organizations assisting artists.



Potlatch Fund grantwriting training program.

PROBLEM: Even when grants or donors are available, many arts organizations and most individual artists do not have expertise in preparing donor letters or foundation proposals.

OPPORTUNITY: Support grant writing training and technical assistance activities targeted at raising grant and donor money.

OBSTACLE 8—FEW NATIVE ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS KNOW HOW TO OPERATE A BUSINESS AND RAISE MONEY FROM FOUNDATIONS, TRIBES, INVESTORS, AND OTHERS.

PROBLEM: Artists need help accessing grant money for critical and strategic moments, not as a substitute for sustainable income.

OPPORTUNITY: Potlatch Fund and others are working to provide grants training and technical assistance on reservations in the Pacific Northwest. Some of the same skills that come through this training—budget and business plan development, and planning—are helpful for entrepreneurship and business development.

PROBLEM: Arts organizations need to better know how to gain support from tribes and from outside funders for work in Indian Country. Cultural funding in philanthropy is undergoing significant changes and funders may have difficulty understanding how funding for Native American causes creates measurable outcomes that can be replicated.

OPPORTUNITY: Regional, multi-organizational collaborations can provide better assurances for tribes and individual artists that opportunities to get technical assistance, training, micro-lending, and grants will not evaporate overnight. Better communication materials and metrics should be used by those Native organizations working with the arts to educate the philanthropic community about how Native arts funding impacts individual livelihoods as well as community needs, such as culture, education, health and healing, the environment, and the economy.

OBSTACLE 9—IMITATION NATIVE ART AND COUNTERFEIT ART REDUCE AVAILABLE MARKETPLACES FOR NATIVE ARTISTS AND “CHEAPEN” THE PRICE PEOPLE EXPECT TO PAY FOR NATIVE ART.

PROBLEM: Buyers of Native art for resale at gift shops and galleries need to be educated to recognize counterfeit Native art and motivated to buy with integrity. This education even extends to gift shops that are tribally owned, such as at casinos and other economic development ventures.

OPPORTUNITY: Support efforts to educate buyers for gift shops and galleries. Conduct a full-scale educational campaign targeted at tribally owned retail outlets—especially casinos.

In 1990, Congress amended the Indian Arts and Crafts Act (P.L. 101 – 644) to prohibit the sale of art marketed as “Indian Made” by non-Indian producers. Nonetheless, sales of counterfeit Native art continues. According to the Indian Arts and Crafts Association, a national trade organization located in Albuquerque, New Mexico, about half of all Indian jewelry sold in the market today is non-authentic.

In the Southwest, the Southwest American Indian Art Market takes on a regional role in supporting authenticity programs. In 1998 in Alaska 1.35 million visitors spent close to \$1 billion dollars. Native culture ranked second in importance to tourists (wildlife and nature ranked #1) as destinations. Due to the prevalence in imported knock-offs and counterfeits, Native artists there created the Silver Hand authenticity label. In both cases, the widespread appropriation of indigenous intellectual and cultural material for commercial purposes, whether in the form of arts, stories,

performance or other forms of knowledge, has compelled people to turn to the domain of intellectual property rights for protection. (2-4 Zimmer).

In the Northwest, work is needed to pursue Native art authentication and additional art buyer education. The work ahead must take into account what has been referred to as a “K-Mart mentality” to Native art where buyers only want a deal and do not understand the intrinsic value of a Native art piece or what it represents historically, culturally, ecologically, and/or economically to its producer (5, Zimmer).

PROBLEM: Systems and people to authenticate Northwest Native art are very limited.

OPPORTUNITY: Support regional authentication tools as well as collection mechanisms for art market data.

OBSTACLE 10—NETWORKING IS LACKING BETWEEN NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE ARTISTS, ARTS ORGANIZATIONS, AND PROFESSIONALS WHO SUPPORT ARTISTS AND ARTS ORGANIZATIONS.

PROBLEM: Non-Native artists and arts organizations often don’t know how to connect with Native artists. Too often Native artists are the least known of the artists groups.

OPPORTUNITY: Artists need better communications with each other—a self-help network. They need to share successful networking ideas that are producing sales and results—gift shows, Indian art market circuit, relationships with patrons and buyers, public art, and relationships with particular galleries or organizations. Central websites can facilitate artist networks. Youth programs, humanities and arts commissions, artists in school programs, and many more venues can serve as places where artists are invited to come together to share ideas. Targeted funding could support Native artists making educational presentations in libraries, or other speakers’ bureaus and panels on Native arts and culture.

“I’m an urban Indian, born and raised in Seattle. One of the challenges is getting artists to work together. The term “organized artists” can be an oxymoron sometimes. Artists have individual visions. How do we find common ground? Artists create the vision for our people.”

Roger Fernandes, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe
Executive Director, Southwind Native American Foundation
Artist who does printmaking, painting, carving, photography

OBSTACLE 11—SOME COMMUNITIES ARE MORE SUPPORTIVE OF NATIVE ARTISTS THAN OTHERS BUT NO ORGANIZED EFFORT IS HAPPENING TO SEE WHY THIS IS HAPPENING AND WHAT STRATEGIES CAN BE REPLICATED.

PROBLEM: In the Seattle area support for Native artists does not seem to be as organized as it is in Oregon. In Canada it is much more organized than in Oregon.

OPPORTUNITY: Encourage additional research activities to help identify where the threats and opportunities exist for Northwest Native artists.

PROBLEM: Native artists have a wealth of information to share about the challenges and opportunities for artists in their communities but few forums exist where they come together to share their stories.

OPPORTUNITY: Support “talking circles” or gatherings that bring together artists who can share their stories and offer their ideas for promoting artists and arts organizations.

OBSTACLE 12—CHANGE TAKES TIME. PROGRAMS AND FUNDING TO SUPPORT NATIVE ART AND ARTS ORGANIZATIONS ARE TOO OFTEN SHORT-TERM AND NOT PART OF A STRATEGIC PLAN FOCUSED ON PRODUCING RESULTS.

PROBLEM: There are organizations in the region that can assist artists and arts organizations, but most efforts are fairly new and will require significant, long-term investment to ensure training and education and lending capacities do not suffer the “boom-bust” cycle of grant-funded/then unfunded projects.

OPPORTUNITY: Identify Native organizations/collaboratives based in the Northwest that have the commitment, capacity, and a strategic plan for empowering Native artists and arts organizations and provide them with significant long-term investments.



SUMMARY

Part Three offers strategic funding opportunities for funders who are ready to take action now. The list of obstacles and recommendations are by no means exhaustive. Although the recommendations are based on research and expertise, additional research and pilot testing of ideas is also important. The Potlatch Fund looks forward to sharing this report with funders, tribes, artists, and many other constituencies committed to the protection and empowerment of Northwest Native artists.

CLOSING MESSAGE FROM POTLATCH LEADERSHIP

“The Potlatch Fund has been created by Northwest Indian people because we have a responsibility to expand opportunities for our communities. Our people face real challenges that need funding from lots of different sources. We need to develop and empower Native leadership and make the best use of our Tribal resources. We need to remove barriers that are limiting contributions from private and corporate foundations. We need to encourage more effective grantmaking from public agencies. It is time to get beyond the talking stage. It is time for us to take action and use our combined energy, resources, and cultural traditions to inspire giving among and to Northwest Indian communities.”

Antone Minthorn,
Vice President, Potlatch Fund
Chairman, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
Boardmember, Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians EDC

The Potlatch Fund team believes long-term improvements in the lives of Native people can be best achieved through the ingenuity, resilience, and traditional ways of our people. Gifting, otherwise known as philanthropy, is a long held tradition in Native communities, and by investing in this tradition and in our own people, we will achieve our mission of promoting the overall health and self-determination of Northwest Native people and communities.

The grassroots efforts that began this organization have coalesced into a strong organizational structure. In 2004, Potlatch Fund received a 501(c)(3) IRS tax determination letter from the IRS enabling the organization to begin operating as a nonprofit charitable organization. Contributions to the Potlatch Fund are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Our organizational development builds upon a traditional kinship structure of Native people who have volunteered their time, expertise and personal funds to develop a foundation to serve the Northwest. We built an infrastructure and organized a community of Native grassroots leaders and non-Native resource people to join with us in achieving our ambitious programmatic goals in the upcoming years.

Finding long-term solutions to systemic challenges facing Northwest Indian people requires a community-based, holistic approach. It requires focusing on the root causes of problems, not just symptoms.

Potlatch Fund will encourage efforts that:

- Evaluate the problems and needs of a community by also evaluating its existing assets.
- Promote community organizing, community building, and community celebration.
- Recognize problem prevention as a key to long-term problem solving.



Three Potlatch Fund founders, Natalie Charley (Quinault), Aurolyn Stwyer-Watlamet (Warm Springs), and Potlatch President, Andrea Alexander (Makah)

We will employ innovative strategies and culturally appropriate models in our grantmaking. In addition to seeking out new initiatives, we will honor established programs, demonstrated leadership, and already-achieved accomplishments. We will be flexible and responsive to change.

The Potlatch Fund is delighted to have begun operating our grantmaking program. We are actively working to attract re-granting money and to build a permanent endowment. Our expectations are high. So is our confidence. Our capacity to award grants is directly tied to our ability to bring in these resources.

The Potlatch Fund has identified three small grant program areas. The types of grants available will vary in geography, issue, and size based upon strategic goals set by the grant committee and the criteria of a tribe, foundation, or individual donor who is the source of the funds.

The three program areas are:

1. Community Building: Grants to support work that advances the Potlatch Fund's mission.
2. Northwest Native Arts: Grants and scholarships to organizations or individuals working to promote and strengthen Northwest Native art and culture.
3. Leadership Honoring: In the true spirit of Potlatch, monies will be gifted annually by the board of directors to individuals showing strong leadership in their Native communities.

POTLATCH FUND BOARD OF DIRECTORS - AUGUST 2005

Andrea Alexander (Makah), President
Executive Director, Potlatch Fund

Antone Minthorn (Umatilla), Vice-President
Chairman, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservations

John Chess, Treasurer
Development Director, Tamastsluk Cultural Institute

Sonny Davis (Quinalt)
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Chandra Hampson (White Earth Chippewa/Winnebago)
Vice President and Relationship Manager for Native American Banking
Services, eliWells Fargo Bank

Kirby Jock (Mohawk/Iroquois)
Administrator, Puyallup Tribe Board of Trustees

Colleen Jollie (Turtle Mountain Chippewa)
Tribal Liaison, WA State Dept. of Transportation

Deni Leonard (Warm Springs)
Chairman and CEO, Indigenous Global Development Corporation

Darrell Phare (Lummi)
Transportation Permit Efficiency and Accountability Committee Liaison,
Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission



ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

FUNDING NATIVE ARTS: EMPOWERING THE CENTER OF TRIBAL LIFE

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PART TWO: NATIVE ART AS PART OF A FUNDING STRATEGY

Important Economic Driver—Source of Revenue

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PART THREE: STRATEGIC FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

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p. 21: "In the Garden (Corn, Bean, Squash)." Photo courtesy of the artist, Marie Watt, and PDX Contemporary Art. 2003, reclaimed wool blankets, satin binding, thread.

p. 22: "Canoe Journey, 2005." Photo courtesy of Ecotrust.

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p. 37: "Potlatch training, 2005." Photo courtesy of the Potlatch Fund.

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