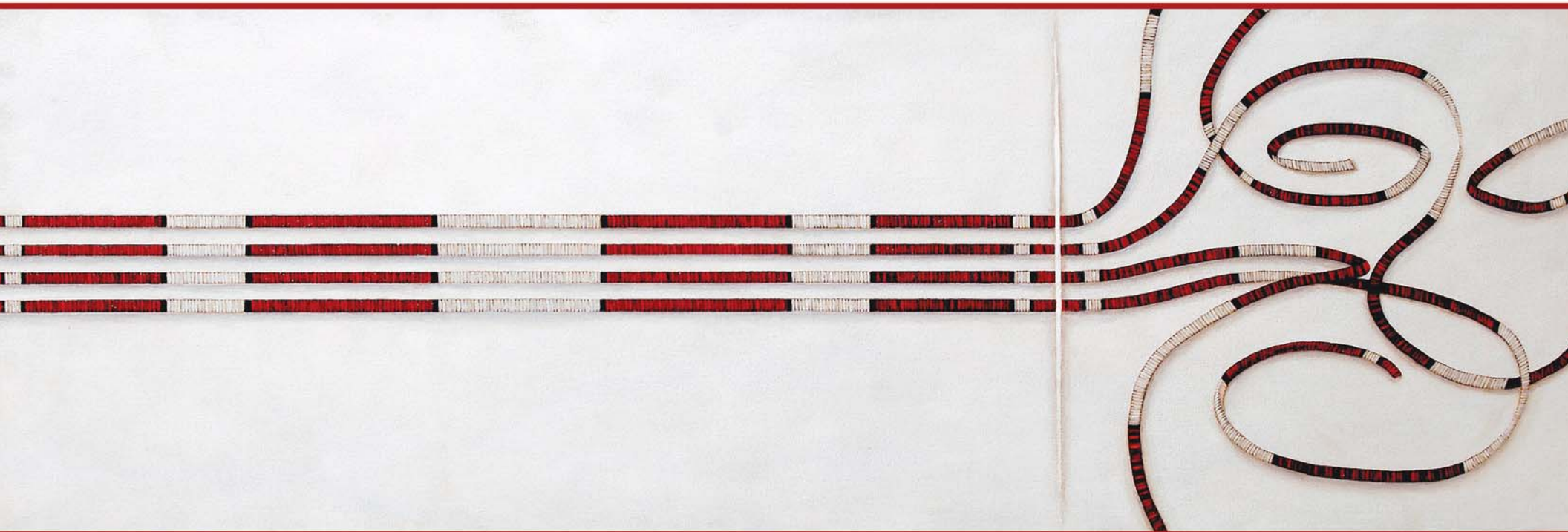


**First Peoples Fund**



*Investing in the Indigenous Arts Ecology*







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*Let Me Tell You A Story,*  
Wesley May (Red Lake Band of Chippewa)





# Foreword

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF KNOWLEDGE, DATA AND INFORMATION: A CONTINUUM

By Sherry Salway Black (Oglala Lakota), Chair of First Peoples Fund Board of Directors

In Indian Country, first and foremost, data is about sovereignty. Sovereignty is making decisions for ourselves, about ourselves. And what do we need to make informed decisions? We need information and knowledge from our own quality data. To control our futures, we must first control our own data and information, and have the capacity to use this to build our knowledge to make life better for our peoples.

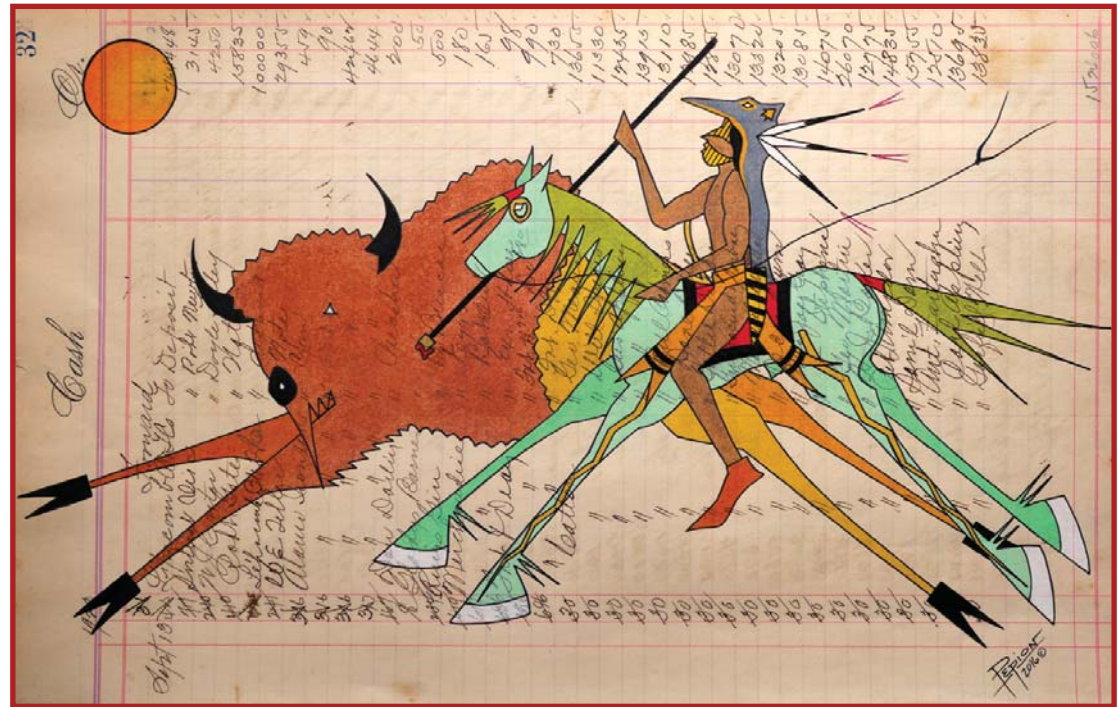
When I started working in Indian Country in the mid-1970s, after decades of efforts by many, many people to get control, the passage of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act in 1975 was seen as a formal start to re-exerting our sovereignty — of making our own decisions, taking control of our lives and lifeways. And over the past 40 years many people have been part of regaining control in our communities, with our tribes, our institutions — the true exercise of sovereignty. This is true of government. It is true of education. It is true of health care. It is true of our cultures.

Our families and communities have been the beneficiaries of the exercise of sovereignty and getting control over our own futures. We have witnessed and are witnessing profound social change in Indian Country. Today more than 60% of the 567 federally recognized tribes are self-governing. There is a growing Native nonprofit sector working in and for our communities, and many vibrant urban Native communities as well.

We have traditionally used data to form knowledge of the world — and shared it through what now might be called *art*, although there is not a word in Native languages for art. As First Peoples Fund's President and CEO Lori Pourier says in the opening paragraphs of *Investing in the Indigenous Arts Ecology*, in Native communities art is a way of life, so integral there is no separation. Think about how we acquired our data, how we gained knowledge and how we assured conveyance of this knowledge and understanding

across generations. We experienced, we observed, we counted. We told stories. We made our robes, winter counts, totem poles, danced, sang, conducted ceremonies — ways of life that told stories with information and knowledge contained within them. We had knowledge about our own lives and we made our own decisions. That stopped.

Someone else took control of our lives, our institutions, our economies — the federal government. Our lifeways, our systems were disrupted. Today we hear a lot about dealing with historical trauma — there are many causes, one of which is the loss of control. Data and information were extracted from us like the buffalo, coal, oil, trees, and our cultural assets were



Buffalo Hunt, John Isaiah Pepion (Piikani)



extracted. (In *Investing in the Indigenous Arts Ecology* you will read about Tlingit weaver Lani Hotch, who like most of First Peoples Fund's Community Spirit Award honorees, works in her community to restore those cultural assets.) Data was collected and used to make decisions in far off places, and to tell someone else's story about us. This is the genesis of the "the poor Indian" story that we are all familiar with, possibly told with good intentions but devastating in its consequences.

There is another very necessary component of control. When you do not have control, you are not accountable or responsible. The federal government was in control — were they responsible and accountable? We already know from *Cobell v. Salazar* that they were not. But when we do have control over our cultures, our programs, our institutions, our data — when we make our own decisions, we must recognize that we are accountable and responsible. The consequences of our decisions based on this information are on us. We can no longer blame the feds for making mistakes or mismanaging resources if control, and the capacity to control, rests with us. This has consequences in governing, in leading a community and in managing an organization, and in the case of First Peoples Fund, in being responsi-

ble, accountable national leaders in helping Native artists expand their businesses, grow as leaders and assure ancestral knowledge is passed from one generation to the next.

Another responsibility that comes with having control of our data is giving back information to the communities that generated it. I know firsthand the power of sharing data with communities from my years with First Nations Development Institute. In the mid-80s, the Pine Ridge Reservation was the "poorest" place in the United States. Yet an economic impact study conducted by First Nations showed that \$80 million was coming onto the reservation in a year. That money, primarily from the federal government, leaked right through the reservation and benefited the border towns, generating more than double the original amount. This information was shared with the community at a reservation-wide business conference. The community was astounded, first that that amount of money was coming into their community, and second why didn't it benefit the community more. One answer was that there was a low turnover in the community because of the limited number of businesses and other economic activity. The community



*Prayers for the People*, Lauren Good Day (Arikara, Hidatsa, Blackfeet and Plains Cree)

asked how they could change this. One of the answers was to increase the number of businesses on the reservation so that the money circulated more before it left the reservation. How can we have more businesses? One answer was that to start businesses, potential entrepreneurs needed capital and credit and some technical assistance. That was the start of the Lakota Fund (now Lakota Funds) which, 30 plus years later has helped develop the Pine Ridge economy through loans, technical assistance, now

a federal credit union, and many more business and financial services.

In 1985 local Native communities, and even tribes, were never able to learn from the data and information that was collected about them, to take action — they did not control their data and information to make their own decisions.

So where are we today and have we progressed? We have come a long way with much yet to be accom-





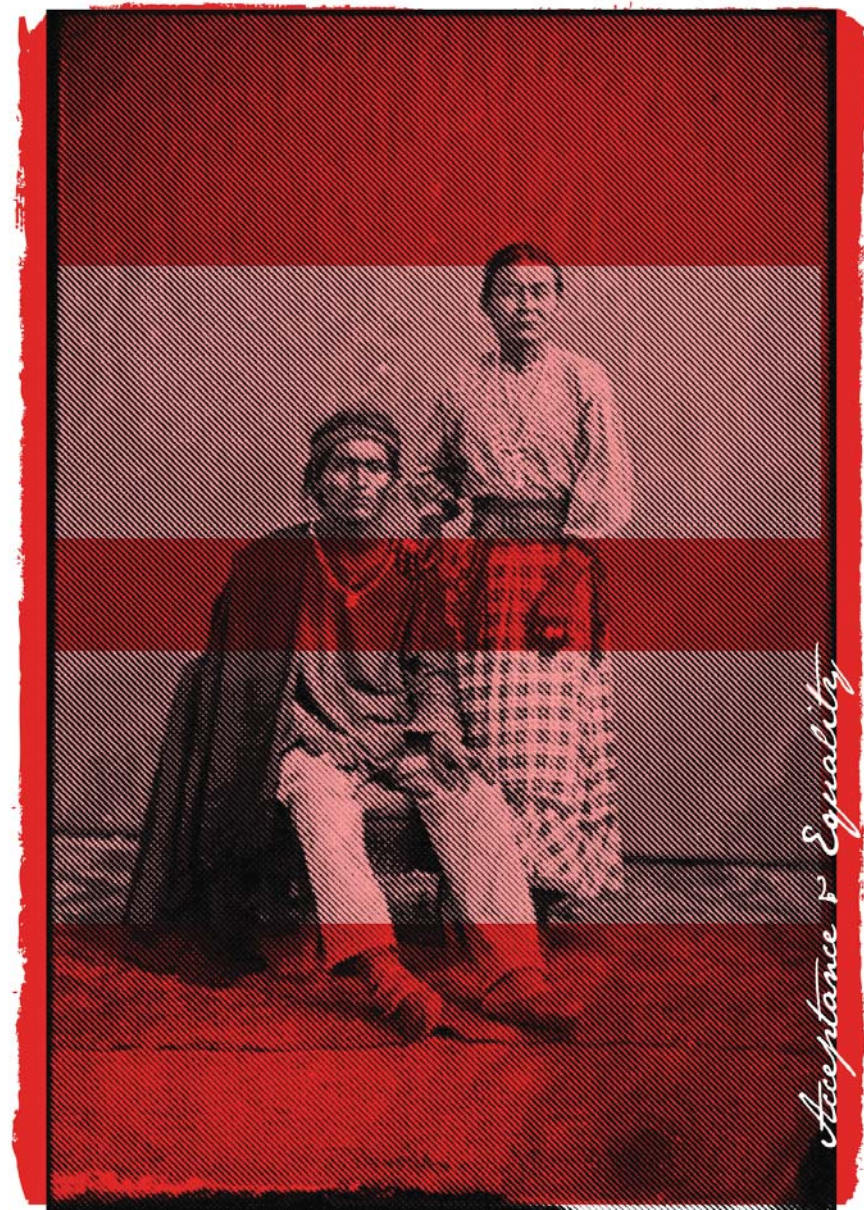
plished. Native people continue to be invisible to most other Americans – because of an absence of data, accurate media images and stories, or any awareness about Native peoples in their daily lives. State and federal agencies and other policy makers including other nonprofit organizations leave us out of data collection, reporting and analysis and public media campaigns citing “small sample size, large margins of errors, or other issues related to the validity and statistical significance of data”<sup>1</sup> on Native peoples. We are the “Other” category, or the Asterisk Nations that Malia Villegas, former Policy Research Council director, coined because an asterisk, instead of a data point, is often used in data displays when reporting racial and ethnic data.<sup>2</sup>

This marginalization is very real and happens all the time, and we must confront it. Through *Investing in the Indigenous Arts Ecology*, First Peoples Fund is helping fill the pervasive data gap about Indian Country with accurate, meaningful, and timely data collection about Native communities. This report is an important example of a Native organization working to claim a seat at the table where decisions are

made based on data and information. The extensive data collection and analysis would not have happened without the commitment of foundations such as the Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, the Surdna Foundation, the Bush Foundation and the Northwest Area Foundation, all of which believe that evaluation and data are important in helping nonprofit organizations evolve and in moving the field forward.

If we, or our friends, are not at the table, we are invisible. Why is this critical? To make change, to justify budgets, to allocate resources, to conduct strategic planning, to affirm if a strategy is working. This is critical at the community and tribal levels, and at the state, federal, and organizational levels. First Peoples Fund’s research, data, and stories about the work of culture bearers and artists and the critical role they play in communities highlight the value of Native cultures and need to be included in discussions and decisions among tribal leaders, policy makers, funders, and state and federal government.

*Equality II*, David Bernie  
(Ihanktonwan Dakota)



<sup>1</sup> National Congress of American Indians Policy Research Center <http://www.ncai.org/policy-research-center/initiatives/data-quality>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid



# Introduction

## RECLAIMING OUR WAY OF KNOWING

By Lori Pourier (Oglala Lakota), First  
Peoples Fund President

First coined by the National Endowment for the Arts, creative placemaking emphasizes the rightful place of the arts, artists and nonprofit arts organizations in community development.

In 2010, the NEA launched its creative placemaking initiative, starting with research and policy followed by additional investment from the philanthropic sector in two separate funding initiatives, NEA's Our Town and Artplace America. While the majority of support has gone into urban based neighborhoods on the east and west coasts, tribal communities and Native arts organizations have benefited from 13% of the NEA's \$30 million in Our Town grants, as well as 13% ArtPlace America's \$85 million in funding.

In 1995, well before the creative placemaking movement began, independent philanthropist Jennifer Easton founded First Peoples Fund as a donor advised fund of the Tides Foundation and began providing support to Native artists and culture bearers in tribal communities. Since then, First Peoples Fund has invested more than \$3.5 million in fellowship grants and Community Spirit Awards and offered direct capacity



Julianna Brown Eyes-Clifford (Oglala Lakota) and Scotti Clifford (Oglala Lakota), Photo by Shannon Burnette-Meek





building support to nearly 350 individual Native artists and their families across the country. We have certified more than 50 Native artists and business coaches who have in turn trained more than 1,500 emerging artists through First Peoples Fund's Native Artists Professional Development workshops.

Over a decade ago, First Peoples Fund's board and staff came to realize that we must go beyond simply providing support at the individual level if we are going to create real and lasting change. We needed to also invest in strengthening the ecosystems that support artists. When relationships between community organizations and artists are woven more tightly together, the entire local arts ecosystem is strengthened, allowing the Indigenous Arts Ecology to fully take root and generate impact. As community-based organizations, especially Native community development financial institutions (known as Native CDFIs), grow their capacity and understanding of how to better serve artists, artists' incomes also improve, benefiting their families and communities.

In order to create these supportive ecosystems, First Peoples Fund began partnering with Native CDFIs to provide services tailored to the needs of artist entrepreneurs and culture bearers. The past 17 years have seen a surge in

the number of Native CDFIs operating in rural and urban Native communities, growing to 75 certified financial institutions that offer a range of business development and financial capability products and services to the communities they serve. Early in the growth of the Native CDFI movement, FPF began offering a cohort of Native CDFIs based in rural reservation communities grants, training and technical assistance, and helped them develop community-specific programming that gives artists access to what they need to develop as entrepreneurs. Our work converged with the broader creative placemaking field, and for more than a decade First Peoples Fund and the artists and communities we serve have benefited greatly.

Four years ago, in line with the cross-sector nature of the creative placemaking field and based on results of our 2013 market study, *Establishing a Creative Economy: Art as an Economic Engine in Native Communities*, First Peoples Fund began deepening our partnerships with Native CDFIs. Our 2013 study found that artists can make up a third or more of the population of Native communities, but those communities often lack necessary resources or infrastructure to support artists. In 2014, supported by the New York-based Surdna Foundation and the Minnesota-based Northwest Area

Foundation, we piloted the Native Arts Economy Building grant program to leverage the potential of Native CDFIs to support artists in tribal communities. Over three years, 17 \$20,000 seed grants were coupled with technical assistance and given to Native CDFIs and other Native-artist serving organizations as a way to strengthen both their understanding of the critical role Native artists and culture bearers can play in building vibrant economies, and to develop services and products that are specific to their needs.

This report, *Investing in the Indigenous Arts Ecology*, evaluates the impact and effectiveness of our pilot Native Arts Economy Building grant program as part of First Peoples Fund's ongoing efforts to refine a model of creative placemaking, especially for building creative economies, that is unique to tribal communities. The results are promising. At the end of the grant period, Native CDFIs nearly doubled the percentage of their artist clientele, in some cases mirroring the percentage of artists in their local population. Similarly, surveys of more than 70 artists from the communities in which we worked showed that artists also view CDFIs as a critical source of support. This is significant considering a decade ago most of the Native artists entering our Artist in Business Leadership fellowship program did not

know what a Native CDFI was or if one existed in their community.

As we evaluated the data that emerged from the Native Arts Economy Building Grant program in the context of the larger trajectory of First Peoples Fund's programs, the conception of our approach to creative placemaking shifted. When the data were collected and analyzed, we immediately noticed better outcomes for artists and partners with whom we have long-term relationships. We also saw that partner organizations and leaders who placed value on their community's cultural assets and culture bearers and who are committed to upholding the traditional values of generosity, integrity, wisdom and fortitude, achieved stronger results. The Indigenous Arts Ecology — a more holistic model for the field in which we work — began to emerge.

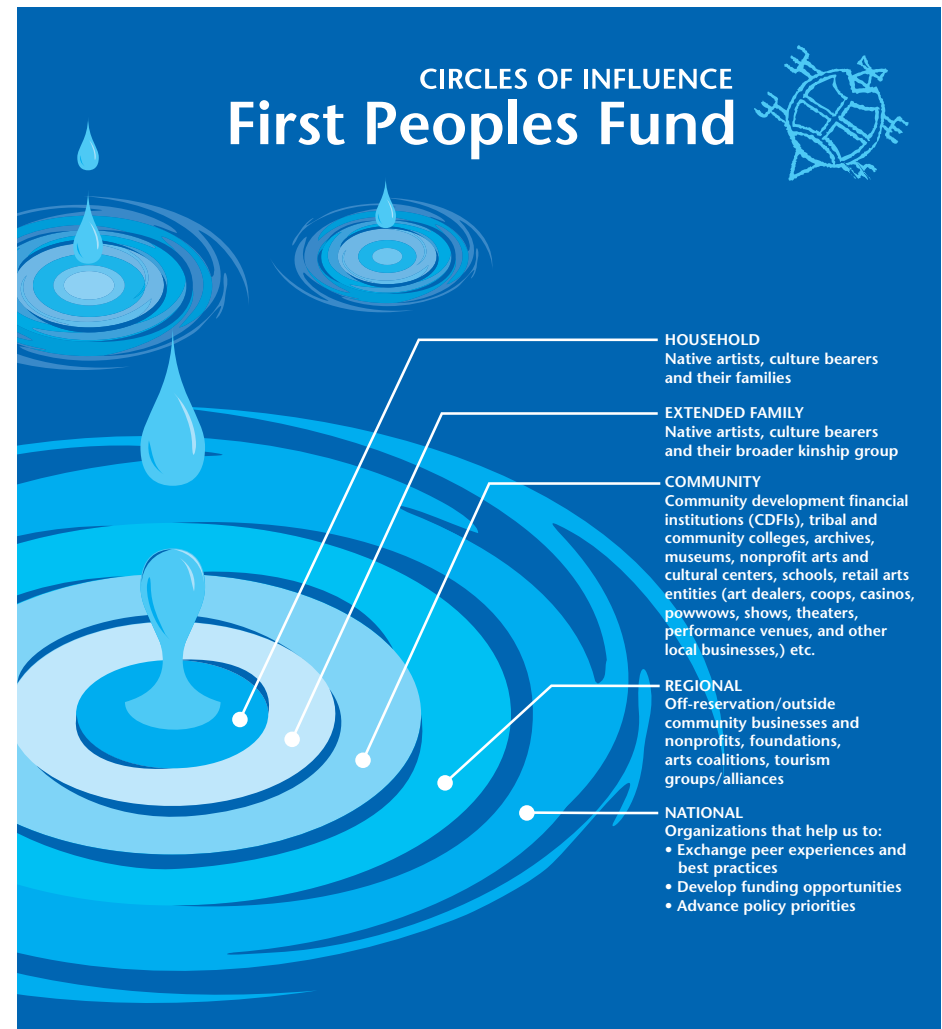
The Indigenous Arts Ecology model is more than a relationship-based model. It is propelled by the Indigenous value of *making relatives*, where we invest in long-term relationships, cherishing them as though they are family. It values art and culture well beyond their worth as commodities, and simultaneously taps into the innovative and generous spirit that has always guided the inter-tribal ecosystems and trade routes that existed long before Indian

reservations. The Indigenous Arts Ecology is held together by culture bearers, the carriers of ancestral knowledge who connect Native communities to their cultural assets and their collective identity, enabling them to envision a future in which they are strong and whole. The Indigenous Arts Ecology also includes and values modern institutions like tribal colleges and governments, Native CDFIs, youth services organizations and businesses. It honors the Native artist's leadership journey from an internal focus *within* to gradually turning outward to build partnerships *together* with others in their communities to a *collective* way of life in which they are working as culture bearers for the benefit of their community and others. It is the embodiment of Collective Spirit®, that which moves each of us to make a difference in our communities.

In 2017, First Peoples Fund revamped our pilot program, implementing the learning described in this report and launched it as the Indigenous Arts Ecology grant program. We have long recognized the exceptional potential of small investments in Native artists and their families to create meaningful gains in income and business practices as well as cultural regeneration and intergenerational mentoring. We are delighted at the prospect of exponen-

tially multiplying this impact through continued and deepened partnerships with Native CDFIs and other community-based organizations. As federal funding support shifts under the current administration and ArtPlace America begins to sunset, and as the creative placemaking movement expands and matures, First Peoples Fund will continue honing our understanding of the dynamics within the Indigenous Arts Ecology.

With no separation between a way of life and art, the only way to do the work, and to do it deeply and meaningfully, is collectively. How we approach the work is in fact equally important to what we do. Our founder Jennifer Easton knew the power of relationships and the power of how work guided by our hearts creates tangible change. First Peoples Fund continues to deepen our investment into the Indigenous Arts Ecology, knowing that art, culture, values and how we make relatives propels our people in significant ways.







# Part 1

## I. PURPOSE

Art and culture are the roots that have kept Indigenous societies grounded and are integral to every aspect of ancestral and modern life. In tribal communities art and culture reflect human relationships to land, water, plants, animals, and one another. They are and have always been tied to the functional and spiritual practices of surviving, flourishing and bringing meaning to life.

First Peoples Fund President Lori Pourier, a member of the Oglala Lakota tribe, explains the integration of art and culture, noting that there is no word for art in Lakota or in any Indigenous language in North America. “We cannot separate art from how we live. Perhaps the closest concept is *wolakota*, meaning in peace or a way of life,” Lori says. “It is how we acknowledge each other and all of creation as our relatives. It is how we contribute to the Collective Spirit®. It is our cultural way of life that we, as Native people, strive to hold onto for sustenance. Art grounds us and exemplifies who we are. Art is *wolakota* and central to our way of walking and living in the world.”

For generations, ceremonies, language, and cultural practices deeply rooted in ancestral knowledge and ways of being were prohibited by law, stripping Native peoples of their rights to carry on the traditions and lifeways of their ancestors. Destructive federal policies, Indian boarding schools, racism and entrenched inequities fractured the connection between many Native people and our cultures. It wasn’t until 1978 when the Indian Religious Freedom Act was enacted that Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians reclaimed the right to practice our cultures and spirituality freely and independently. The myriad challenges that have impacted Native communities for generations and continue today are in many ways a consequence of this fracturing from identity, culture and art.<sup>3</sup>

This bond to art and culture is what is **most** vital to strong, vibrant Indigenous societies. Through art, stories are shared, ancestors are honored, ceremonies are held, and culture is lived. Art exists at the nexus of the material and spiritual worlds, and in the context of modern Native communities, its prevalence makes art a potent economic engine. Without a strong connection to our cultures, histories and Nations,

**Collective Spirit®:** That which manifests self-awareness and a sense of responsibility to sustain the cultural fabric of a community. Collective Spirit® moves each one of us to stand up and make a difference, to pass on ancestral knowledge, or to simply extend a hand of generosity.

Indigenous peoples, especially youth, are often left feeling disconnected and out of balance and their spiritual health is deeply impacted. Thus, strengthening the connection between Native people and the art and culture of their tribes is vital to the future of healthy Native communities and economies.

For decades, passionate individuals and community-based organizations have been working alongside tribes to address the many socio-cultural, ecological, and economic challenges facing Native communities. Working alongside those organizations, First Peoples Fund has taken an arts and culture-based approach to advancing Native communities and economies. It has developed deep relationships and offered direct support to Native artists and culture bearers in Native communities across the country. First Peoples Fund’s focus strikes a balance, uplift-

ing artists and culture bearers as teachers and leaders, while also building the creative economy of tribal communities.

Recently, First Peoples Fund developed the Indigenous Arts Ecology model to guide its work. This new model is based on First Peoples Fund’s research, data and nearly 25 years of experience. It encompasses the organization’s extensive knowledge of creative economies in tribal communities and an understanding of the six key resources that artists need for success: credit and capital, markets, creative space, networks, training, and supplies. The Indigenous Arts Ecology model is also grounded in First Peoples Fund’s values that are reflective of Indigenous values universally — generosity, respect, strength, wisdom, integrity and humility. Art and culture are valued well beyond their worth as commodities, and are at

<sup>3</sup> “We Also Have A Religion”, Native American Rights Fund, Winter 1979 Vol. 5 No. 1 <https://www.narf.org/nrl/documents/nlr/nlr5-1.pdf>

the center of a system of people, partners, resources and networks that is breathing new life into Native communities. Supportive relationships among artists, culture bearers and their communities are central to a healthy Indigenous Arts Ecology, which includes all artists, from young and emerging, to those building their culturally relevant practices into their arts

businesses, to experienced elders, and is tightly woven together by culture bearers. Culture bearers are the carriers of traditional knowledge who connect Native communities to their cultural assets and their collective identity, enabling them to envision a future in which they are again strong and whole.

First Peoples Fund defines the **Indigenous Arts Ecology** as a relationship-based, collective system of arts ecosystems. The Ecology is grounded in ancestral knowledge and is inclusive of environments, spirit, people and lifeways. Indigenous *arts ecosystems* are local or regional communities of individuals, formal and informal networks, resources, cultural infrastructure, and organizations and businesses that interact as a system and provide support to Indigenous artists and culture bearers. Indigenous arts ecosystems are led by the artists and culture bearers whose art and lives embody the values, traditions and aspirations of their communities.

*“All Native models exist because of culture bearers, including Native business models. They are the nucleus of culture that all of our art, modern and traditional, flows from, and none would exist without the traditional ways and belief systems. Identity, knowledge, teachings, traditions — that stream that exists without the individual people — they all emanate from the beliefs and practices held and passed on by our culture bearers.”*

— Alfred “Bud” Lane III, Vice President Siletz Tribal Council, President Northwest Basketweavers Association and First Peoples Fund board member

*Investing in the Indigenous Arts Ecology* report introduces First Peoples Fund’s holistic, relationship and values-based community development model rooted in the art, culture and ancient traditions of Indigenous peoples. This report examines the components of healthy, thriving arts ecosystems, in particular the artists and culture bearers at the heart and center; their families, communities, and tribes; and the community-based organizations that offer support and resources. The second part of this report discusses the evaluation and analysis of First Peoples Fund’s pilot Native Arts Economy Building grant program, aimed at strengthening the

Indigenous Arts Ecology as a whole. Through that evaluation, many of the dynamics within the Indigenous Arts Ecology are explored, showing how one element impacts the other. This report highlights wisdom gained over nearly 25 years of work in the field, and the potential for exponential benefit by strengthening and tightening the interaction and relationships among the interdependent components within individual ecosystems.

Throughout this report, First Peoples Fund seeks to underscore the potential of investing in the individuals and organizations that make up the Indigenous Arts Ecology as a way to





*“My grandmother taught me what she had learned from her grandmother. She gave me her songs, the rules about how to make things and the prayers that go along with them. These are things I hold really dear to me, they were handed down from my ancestors. First Peoples Fund helped me connect the past to the future. They let me see that artwork is something you can do as a career, something you can do to support your family. First Peoples Fund helped me make my dreams a reality.”*

— Lauren Good Day, (Arikara, Hidatsa, Blackfeet and Plains Cree), Artist in Business Leadership and Cultural Capital fellow alumna and certified Native Artists Professional Development trainer

uplift, honor and recognize Native artists and culture bearers as viable leaders in tribal communities and economies. As these leaders go on to strengthen cultural ties in their communities, they re-connect people to their tribal traditions, values and identities. This approach is giving Native artist entrepreneurs and culture bearers

additional tools to advance their professional goals, increase their household incomes and grow their arts businesses. At the same time, it strengthens sustainable systems of support for artists and artist-led initiatives within and among Native communities.



Lauren Good Day (Arikara, Hidatsa, Blackfeet and Plains Cree),  
Photo by Steve Wewerka

## II. First Peoples Fund's Theory of Change and Investments in the Indigenous Arts Ecology

Historically, Indigenous communities had vibrant economies buoyed by complex intertribal trade routes, hubs and centers. Native nations and their people traded assets such as horses, hides, tobacco, and shells, and often bartered the functional and adornment objects they created. This trade and barter system established distinct social and diplomatic ties and relationships throughout the continent.

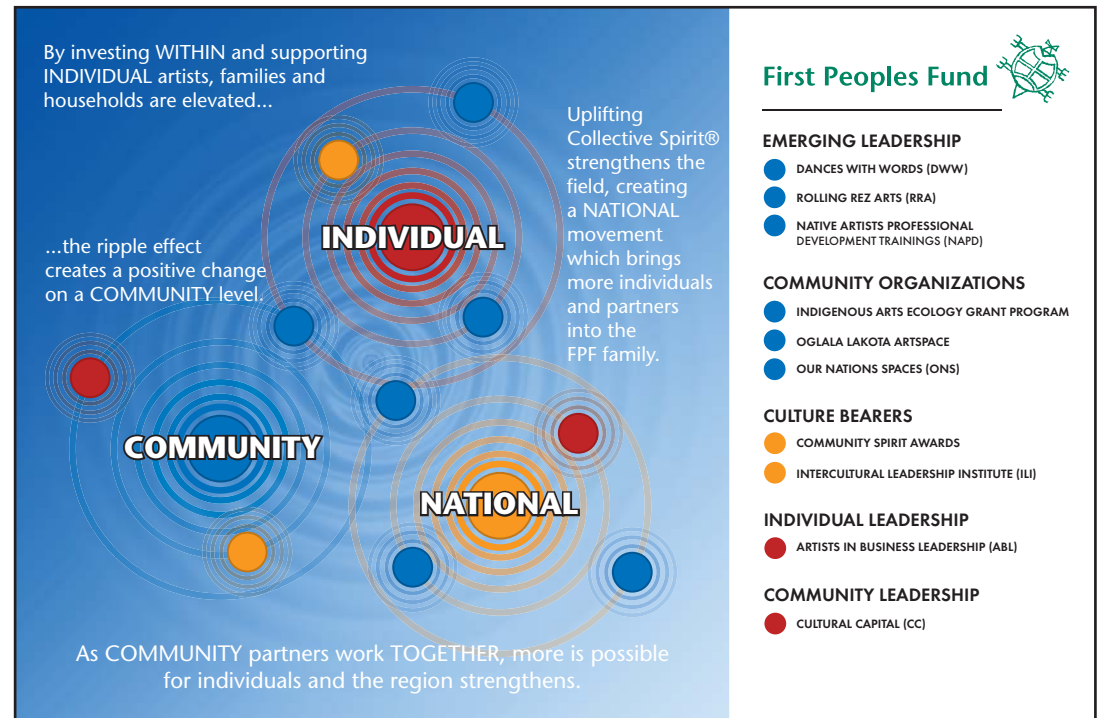
The Indigenous Arts Ecology is anchored by the ways of knowing, honoring and sharing inherent in these ancient systems. Restoring and reconnecting Native peoples to these artist-led, tradition-based practices and lifeways is at the center of First Peoples Fund's every effort to regenerate Native communities and economies. Its Theory of Change works to strengthen and activate local, regional and national arts ecosystems and the Indigenous Arts Ecology as a whole and is powered by relationship building and investments of funding, training and other resources.

Through its body of work, First Peoples Fund has distilled its Theory of Change: *By investing holistically in **individual artists**, families and households are elevated, creating change on a community ecosystem level. As **community** support for artists and artist-led initiatives grows and partners work together, more is possible for individuals and the regional Indigenous arts ecosystem is strengthened. These investments uplift Collective Spirit® and strengthen the **national** Indigenous Arts Ecology, bringing more individuals and partners into the FPF family of programs.*

The work of Lani Hotch, Tlingit weaver and First Peoples Fund Community Spirit Award honoree, Cultural Capital fellow alumnus and Our Nations' Spaces grantee, is a lesson in the transformative potential of strengthening local Indigenous arts ecosystems. Lani, living in the remote village of Klukwan in southeastern Alaska, exemplifies First Peoples Fund's Theory of

Change. Lani comes from a long line of weavers, primarily in the Tlingit style of Chilkat and Ravenstail. The woven ceremonial robes of her ancestors have always communicated the relationship to land, people, animals, and Indigenous plants. They are an ancient form of expression and identity. This artform and the distinguished lineage of weavers behind it nearly ended in

Lani's lifetime. The 20th century history of Klukwan is a story of the extraction of natural resources and cultural assets. When the last master Chilkat weaver, Jennie Thlunaut, passed away in 1986, an enormous cultural void was left in the midst of ongoing cultural devastation and political turmoil.





# SUMMARY OF FIRST PEOPLES FUND'S PROGRAMS

## GRANTS FOR NATIVE ARTISTS

- Artists in Business Leadership Fellowship - Working capital grants, mentoring, training, networking and access to new markets.
- Cultural Capital Fellowship Project grants - to support the design and implementation of community projects that strengthen and revitalize tradition-based practices

## COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVES

- Native Artists Professional Development training (NAPD) - Artist-entrepreneurship and arts business development curriculum delivered through two-day workshops
- Train-the-Trainer Workshops - Certified Native Artist Professional Development instructor training workshops for artists and staff of community-based organizations
- Indigenous Arts Ecology Grant Program - Grant and capacity building program for community-based organizations, primarily Native community development financial institutions, to assist with supporting artists as entrepreneurs and leaders
- Our Nations' Spaces - Grants to arts and cultural organizations to foster support for and advance Native arts
- Dances with Words - Spoken word youth leadership program enables the next generation of artists to become leaders grounded in ancestral knowledge
- Rolling Rez Arts and Oglala Lakota Artspace - Mobile and fixed arts classroom, studio, gallery and banking center on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in partnership with Lakota Funds and Artspace Projects

## NATIONAL INITIATIVES

- Jennifer Easton Community Spirit Awards - Financial awards that honor and provide resources to culture bearers based on exceptional ability to pass on cultural knowledge and sustain community spirit
- Intercultural Leadership Institute - Also known as ILI, a collaborative effort with Alternate ROOTS, the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures, and the PA'I Foundation, which share a commitment to pursuing cultural equity and to supporting artists, culture bearers, and other arts professionals as change-makers in their communities



Beverly Bear King Moran (Hunkpapa Lakota),  
Photo credit: First Peoples Fund

Inspired by efforts within the Jewish community to heal from the horrors of the Holocaust by creating museums to honor this memory, Lani envisioned helping her own people and community heal from the generations of trauma that came with the settling of America. This healing took the form of a Klukwan Healing Robe. Lani engaged the community — youth, adults and elders — in her effort to revive the weaving tradition through the Healing Robe. During a community gathering marking the beginning of the project, elder Joe Hotch remarked that the Healing Robe was symbolic of an ancestral story that marked the end of the long, cold journey of cultural oppression. In 2000, the Healing Robe was completed and a ceremony and celebration were held. Songs were sung, healing prayers were offered and old cultural weavings were present to honor and welcome the new one into the community as a way of displacing the legacy of trauma with love, honor, respect and hope for the future.

That same year, Lani created the Klukwan Traditional Knowledge Camp to perpetuate the knowledge of her ancestors. Seasonal harvest camps such as Hooligan Camp in the spring, Salmon Camp in the summer, and Moose Harvest Camp give young people an opportunity to reconnect with their traditional lifeways. Locals and families of

Tlingit descent living elsewhere pack the camps each summer with their children. The camps were followed by construction of a ceremonial dance house and a canoe carving lodge. Traditional fine arts workshops such as Northwest coast carving, woolen weaving, basketry, skin sewing/beadwork and felt applique are taught throughout the long winter months. Lani was also instrumental in the planning and construction of the \$8 million Jilkaat Kwaan Heritage Center in Klukwan that opened in 2016 to preserve, protect, and perpetuate the cultural heritage of the Chilkat people. The Center provides a home for precious clan treasures. Its first cultural tourism efforts in 2016 resulted in sold-out summertime performances. Youth dance in regalia they made alongside culture bearers, sing songs in their own language, and hotels and other businesses are full.

While Lani Hotch, her family and community members were quietly rebuilding the village of Klukwan, First Peoples Fund published its 2013 report, *Establishing a Creative Economy: Art as an Economic Engine in Native Communities*.<sup>4</sup> The report laid the foundation for the concept of creative economies and provided evidence that culture bearers like Lani, when well supported, could play a viable role in restoring strong and

resilient Native economies. The study focused on the Pine Ridge and Cheyenne River Indian reservations in South Dakota, both struggling with the impacts of very high poverty and generational trauma. The report identified six key resources that artists need in order to be successful as entrepreneurs and community leaders: credit and capital, networks, markets, creative space, business training, and

supplies. The study found that as artists gain sustainable and consistent access to these resources, they are better equipped to develop and grow their arts business, placing them on a path out of poverty. The Indigenous Arts Ecology model recognizes the network that is necessary to provide these resources and support the artists and culture bearers who are at the center of thriving Native communities.



*Midnight Summer Sunset*, Crystal Worl (Athabascan Tlingit)

<sup>4</sup> First Peoples Fund, "Establishing a Creative Economy: Art as an Economic Engine in Native Communities" First Peoples Fund, July 2013, <http://www.firstpeoplesfund.org/market-study/>.





### III. ECOLOGY

#### A. INVESTING IN INDIVIDUALS

Indigenous communities require artists and culture bearers to assume leadership roles to form the center of a thriving local arts ecosystem. Through their art, they revive and share traditions, inspire social change, and engage youth who are the next generation of leaders. Artists and culture bearers are also key drivers of household incomes and consequently are a strategic investment for economic development efforts. In 2009, Colorado State University's Dr. Kathleen Pickering (Sherman) published *Cash and the Social Economy of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation*. This study found that nearly 40% of the Pine Ridge reservation's population are practicing artists.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the 2014 Cheyenne River Voices Survey Executive Summary Report reported that 43% of the Cheyenne River reservation population are artists.<sup>6</sup> These studies are significant as they suggest that capacity building and investments into a single sector, Indigenous arts, could potentially impact 40-43% of household on these reservations.

Knowing and valuing both the economic and social benefits, First Peoples Fund has made investments in



individual Indigenous artists for nearly 25 years. Its approach is always grounded in honoring artists' connection to their culture and traditional values. Since 2000, First Peoples Fund has invested \$3.5 million in direct sup-

port for artists and culture bearers, offering over 350 Artist in Business Leadership fellowships, Cultural Capital fellowships and Community Spirit Awards, as well as significant fees and honoraria. These fellowships

and awards provide the funding, training, mentoring, public recognition and network development that artists and culture bearers need to develop their leadership capacities, businesses, and community involvement. Analysis of First Peoples Fund's fellows' data (2004-2016) demonstrates that participation in fellowship programming fueled a rise in household incomes by an average of 18% or nearly \$11,000 in the year of the fellowship. Further, First Peoples Fund has impacted more than 1,000 additional artists through its Native Artist Professional Development trainings, two-day workshops grounded in Indigenous values that teach the business side of Native art and which often serve as the entry point into a local arts ecosystem. Finally, through Dances with Words, an emergent youth development program focused on poetry and spoken word, First Peoples Fund has deeply impacted the cultural, artistic and academic growth of dozens of young people on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

#### B. INVESTING IN COMMUNITIES

First Peoples Fund recognizes that investment in community-based organizations can scale up the resources, education, training and assistance artists need to be successful entrepre-

<sup>5</sup> Sherman, Kathleen. "Cash and the Social Economy of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, 6/15/01-6/14/08" National Science Foundation Career Grant Final Report (2009) .  
<sup>6</sup> Eileen Briggs and Dr. Kathleen Sherman. "Cheyenne River Voices Our Survey, Our Voice, Our Way, Executive Summary Report," Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Ventures (2014) .



Lani Hotch Gathering (Tlingit), Photo by David Cournoyer (Sicangu Lakota)

neurs and cultural leaders. Native community development financial institutions (Native CDFIs), community development corporations, youth organizations, tribal colleges and universities, cultural programs and museums, Indigenous owned businesses, and local arts organizations are all critical to local arts ecosystems and to the overall Indigenous Arts Ecology.

In many reservation communities, Native CDFIs are the only source of business development and entrepreneurial support, and hold unique potential to serve artists. First Peoples Fund made a conscious decision to work with Native CDFIs, beginning with its participation in the First Nations Oweesta Collaborative. The Collaborative worked to understand and support the members' potential to work with artists in their communities and strengthen local arts ecosystems. Beginning in 2013, First Peoples Fund piloted the **Native Arts Economy Building Grant Program**, providing grants, training and technical support to Native CDFIs and other select community-based organizations to better equip them to work with artists. (As it entered its second phase in 2017, the program was revamped and renamed the **Indigenous Arts Ecology Grant Program.**)

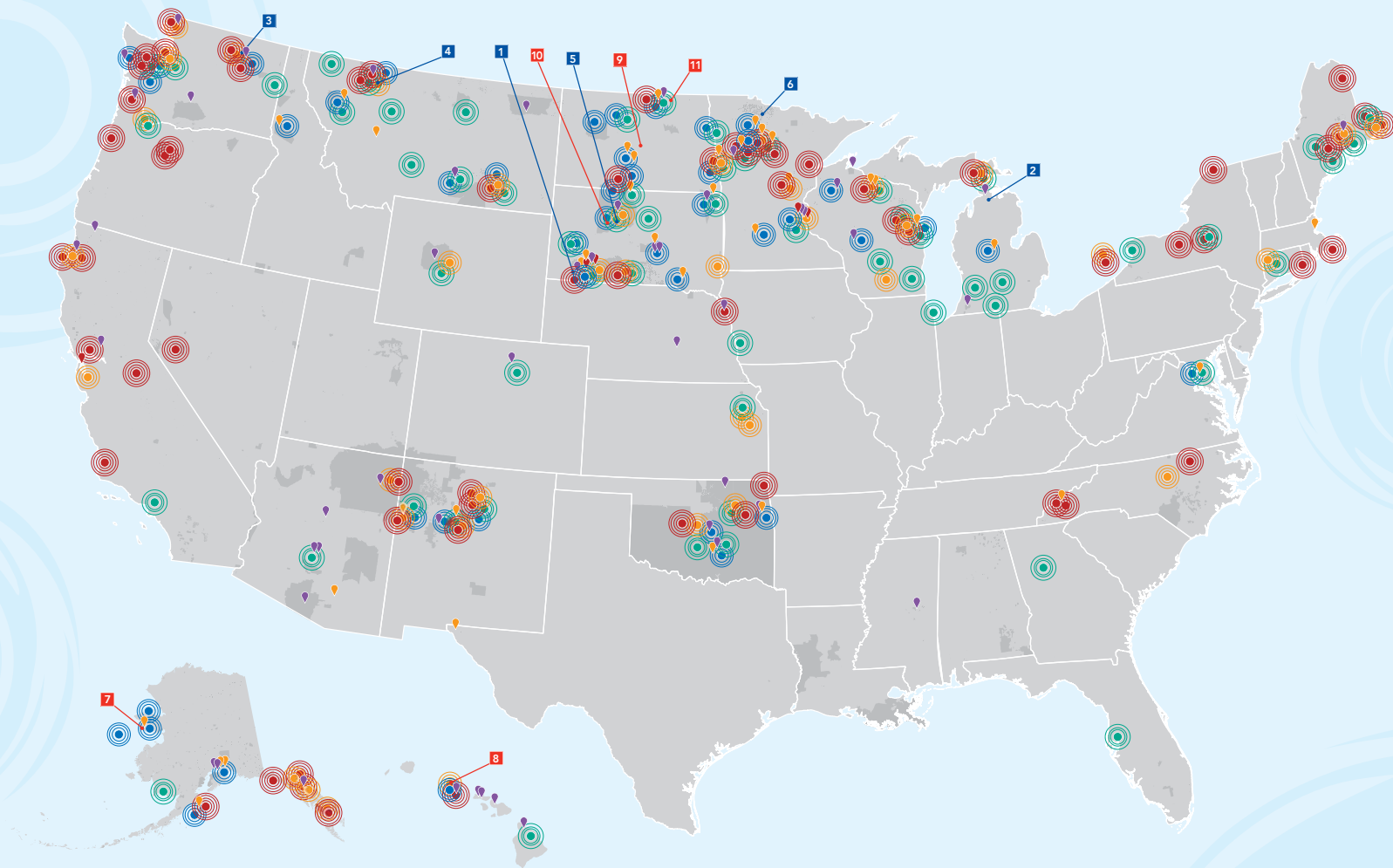
### C. INVESTING NATIONALLY

The broader intercultural arts field including arts service organizations, federal and private philanthropic funding agencies, policy makers, and more are the national stakeholders in First Peoples Fund's Theory of Change. Creating partnerships within this sphere promotes knowledge sharing and influences the policies that are important to creating favorable environments for a thriving, equitable and far-reaching Native arts movement.

First Peoples Fund partners with Native CDFIs and national organizations to create awareness of the critical role artists can play in community and economic development, and to grow regional and national networks to support them. A growing number of foundations and donors across the country have made this possible. First Peoples Fund was recognized as a leader in this work in *Access to Capital and Credit in Native Communities*,<sup>7</sup> a 2016 report commissioned by the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Community Development Financial Institutions Fund. The report examines recent economic development successes in Native communities, and points to First Peoples Fund's innovations working at the nexus of Native arts and CDFIs.

<sup>7</sup> Native Nations Institute. 2016. *Access to Credit and Capital in Native Communities*, digital version. Tucson, AZ: Native Nations Institute. [http://nni.arizona.edu/application/files/8914/6386/8578/Accessing\\_Capital\\_and\\_Credit\\_in\\_Native\\_Communities.pdf](http://nni.arizona.edu/application/files/8914/6386/8578/Accessing_Capital_and_Credit_in_Native_Communities.pdf)





- Community Spirit Award Honorees
- Artist in Business Leadership Fellows
- Cultural Capital Fellows
- Native Artist Professional Development Trainings
- Native CDFI's (financial institutions)
- Community Partners
- Organization Partners

### Native Arts Economy Building Grant Partners

Partner	Community	Location
<b>Native Financial Institutions</b>		
1 The Lakota Funds	Pine Ridge Reservation	Kyle, SD
2 Northern Shores Loan Fund	Michigan	Harbor Springs, MI
3 Northwest Native Development Fund	Colville Reservation	Nespelem, WA
4 Native American Community Development Corporation	Blackfeet Reservation	Browning, MT
5 Four Bands Community Fund	Cheyenne River Reservation	Eagle Butte, SD
6 Red Lake Entrepreneur Program	Red Lake Reservation	Red Lake, MN
<b>Native Arts Organizations</b>		
7 Kawerak, Inc.	Bering Strait	Nome, AK
8 PA'I Foundation	Hawai'i	Honolulu, HI
9 Five Nations Art	Mandan, ND	Bismark, ND
10 Cheyenne River Youth Project	Cheyenne River Reservation	Eagle Butte, SD
11 Turtle Mountain Tribal Arts Assoc.	Turtle Mountain Reservation	Belcourt, ND

## Part 2

### I. THE INDIGENOUS ARTS ECOLOGY GRANT PROGRAM APPROACH

In 2013 when First Peoples Fund launched the Native Arts Economy Building Grant Program (now the Indigenous Arts Ecology Grant Program), it was seeking to strengthen its investments and relationships at the community level. First Peoples Fund invited Native organizations from within its network to apply for the pilot grant program. The objectives of the program were to 1) Increase understanding and awareness of the critical role Native artists can play in building economies and cultural assets, and constructing effective and culturally appropriate networks; and 2) Increase organizational capacity to provide artists access to the resources they need for success.

Grant projects were based on local needs and assets, and structured to increase local artists' access to two or three of the six resources First Peoples Fund has identified as critical for success—credit and capital, networks, markets, creative space, business training, and supplies. Projects ranged in focus from launching local Native arts markets, to providing professional development and training for artist entrepreneurs, to creating loan and savings products tailored for artists' needs.

*"Art is the greatest asset Indian People have in our communities, yet it is the most underdeveloped."*

— Elouise Cobell (Blackfeet),  
1945-2011

During the three-year pilot phase, First Peoples Fund distributed grants totaling \$295,000 to 11 grantees in Alaska, Hawai'i, Minnesota, Michigan, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Washington. Grantees included six Native CDFIs, two Native arts service organizations, and three Native nonprofit organizations serving tribal communities, including youth. Organizations received funding from one to three years. The average grant size for CDFIs was nearly \$30,000 (largest grant was \$40,000 and smallest was \$15,000) and Native nonprofit organizations received an average grant size of \$24,000 (one grant at \$40,000 and four at \$20,000). In addition to funding, First Peoples Fund staff, artists and consultants worked closely with each organization. Depending on the project, technical support included developing partnerships, holding artist-centered community meetings, training staff and artists, creating programs, and developing

strategies to better understand and address the needs of artists and culture bearers.

### II. ASSESSING THE INDIGENOUS ARTS ECOLOGY GRANT PROGRAM

In September 2016, following the conclusion of the pilot phase of the program, First Peoples Fund conducted an in-depth evaluation of its impact on grantees and artists living in their communities. First Peoples Fund's assessment of the Indigenous Arts

Ecology grants sought to understand the following:

- The impact on grantees' capacity to serve artists
- Artists' perceptions within partners' communities regarding resources and services available to them
- How the partners' initial organizational readiness or capacity affected their progress
- Implications for future First Peoples Fund programming



*Bandolier Beauty* (Smithsonian NMAI permanent collection),  
Leslie Deer (Muscogee), Photo by Bo Apitz





Among the objectives of the study was to build knowledge regarding how Native CDFIs and other grassroots organizations can and do address access to resources for Native artists.

The assessment was built on several assumptions. First and foremost, based on First Peoples Fund's long-term partnerships with Native CDFIs, the program assumed that quality of relationships matters and impacts results. Second, when adequately supported, Native CDFIs have strong potential to provide access to all the resources that Native artists need for success, not only credit and capital, access to markets, and arts marketing training but also space, supplies and informal networks. And third, that an organization's internal capacity going into the program affects its potential for impact.

The four-part assessment encompassed:

- **Final Reports** completed by grantees that assessed outcomes against stated grant objectives and goals.
- **Indigenous Arts Economy Data Surveys** completed by grantees assessing their current capacity to meet the six needs of artists, and their commitment and capacity to work with partners to build the Indigenous arts ecosystem and contribute to the national field.

- **Site Visit Assessments** completed through on-site interviews by staff and consultants which evaluated the work of grantees with artists.

- **72 individual community-based artist surveys**, conducted in-person or over the phone, that assessed need and access to the resources necessary for success.

### III. KEY FINDINGS

The assessment of the pilot grant program demonstrates that investments of funding and technical support in community-based organizations have the potential to substantially strengthen local systems of support for Native artists. Furthermore, these investments can be an effective means of rapidly building partners' capacity to reach artists in tribal communities. Another important highlight shows that the majority of artists (57%) who were interviewed said they view the First Peoples Fund grantee organization as an important source of support. Given the context of the artists' lives, this support is critical. Nearly half are living in households at or below the federal poverty level and one-third rely on art for most of their income. The majority of artists living in reservation communities where levels of poverty and reliance on art for income are highest identify Native CDFIs as important sources, and in some cases the only source, of support.



Nora Dauenhauer (Tlingit) and Richard Dauenhauer,  
Photo Credit: Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie (Seminole/Muskogee/Dine)

#### A. INCREASE IN ARTISTS SERVED

One of the strongest indicators of change in grantees' interactions with artists is the increase in the percentage of total clients who are artists. **Over a one-year period, the percentage of grantees' total clientele who were artists grew by an average of nearly 13%, bringing artists, on average, to just over 29% of their total clientele.**

Among all grantees, artists comprised 1,072 of 4,351 total clients at the end of the grant period. This means that through one or two years of support, partners were able to nearly double the percentage of their clientele who are artists. These figures are significant as they are approaching parity with the percentage of the population that self-identifies as artists as reported by market studies of reservation-based

informal economies.<sup>9</sup> As a subset, the six Native CDFIs participating in the program also doubled the percentage of their artist clientele, beginning at an average of 10% of total clientele and growing to 20%. These numbers demonstrate that community-based organizations can rapidly reach far more artists when artists are recognized as viable entrepreneurs and community leaders with specific needs, and community-based organi-

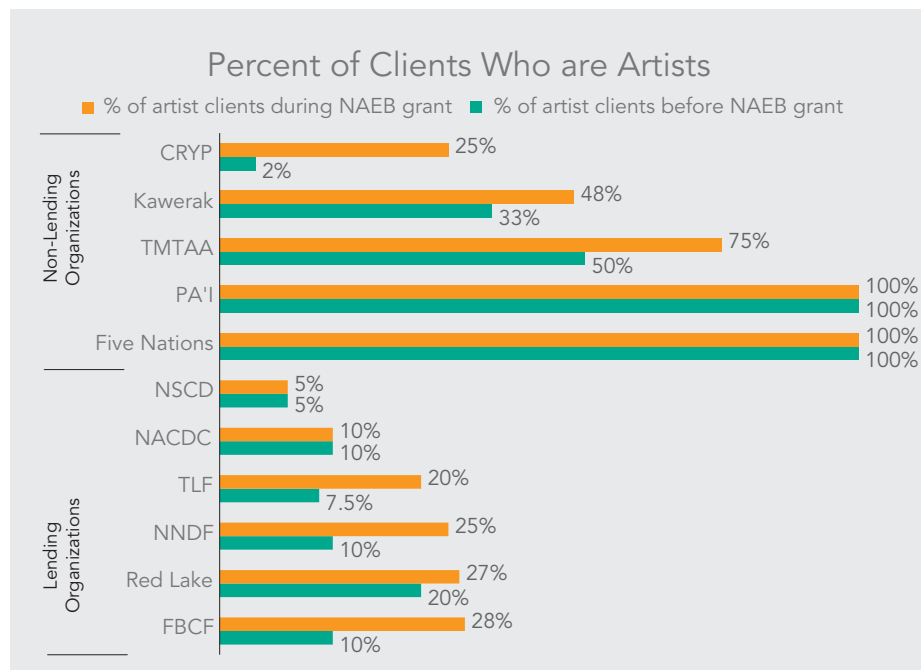
zations are supported in their efforts to develop products, services and educational programs aligned with those artist needs.

#### B. INCREASE IN ARTISTS' INCOME

Among the 72 artists who were surveyed as part of the study, 40% are living in households at or below the federal poverty level. Annual incomes range from below \$10,000 to above \$100,000, with average income in the

*"Native communities are vibrant and vital places. They are impoverished, but there is a vitality there of growth and change, and First Peoples Fund is a critical part of that. Growing the arts economy in tribal communities will make a meaningful contribution to helping Native Americans catch up to average U.S. income levels over the next 40 years."*

— Miriam Jorgensen, author *Access to Capital and Credit in Native Communities*, 2016, and Associate Director for Research in the Native Nations Institute for Leadership, Management, and Policy at the University of Arizona and Research Director of the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development.



\*The arts organizations, PA'I and Five Nations served 100% artists at the onset of the grants. See page 34 for full partner names and organizational summaries.

\$25,000 - \$40,000 range. Among all artists interviewed, art is an important source of income with nearly one-third (29%) of artists interviewed relying on art sales for the majority of their income. Of those artists for whom art makes up the majority of their income, poverty is even more prevalent, with 65% living in households with income at or below the federal poverty level. Of the three grantee partners that tracked change of income for their

artist clients, the average increase in income was \$1,211 annually, a significant increase in the context of the high rate of poverty among the artists. The data is an indication that investment into Native organizations that serve artists can lead to increased income for those artists.

<sup>9</sup> First Peoples Fund. "Establishing a Creative Economy: Art as an Economic Engine in Native Communities" First Peoples Fund, July 2013, <http://www.firstpeoplesfund.org/market-study/>. Eileen Briggs and Dr. Kathleen Sherman. "Cheyenne River Voices Our Survey, Our Voice, Our Way, Executive Summary Report," Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Ventures (2014).

<sup>10</sup> Among single race American Indian and Alaska Natives the poverty rate is 32% and among Native Hawaiians it is 18%, according to *Access to Credit and Capital in Native Communities*. In this report, income ranges were used and poverty percentages are estimates.





### C. INCREASE IN COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR ARTIST SUCCESS

The assessment found that community-based organizations' potential to provide access to resources for artists depended greatly on their level of organizational readiness and development when the grant began. Generally, the more established organizations with greater internal capacity, stronger partnerships and networks, and a larger existing role within their Indigenous arts ecosystems were able to more rapidly grow their services for artists. As First Peoples Fund sought to understand the variables that contributed to this effect, it turned to its Theory of Change and the knowledge that only deep and long-term relationships can produce the transformational change that is needed in Native communities. These relationships create networks that hold *individual, community, and national* elements together and investments in each element of this network form a stronger Indigenous Arts Ecology.

Using the grantee reports and the artist surveys, the assessment looked at how well grantees understood and addressed the six resources for artists identified in First Peoples Fund's 2013 report. These resources served as a framework for the grant projects.

#### i. Business Knowledge and Training

First Peoples Fund's Native Artist Professional Development training helps Native artists connect their business goals to their closely held values, and is specifically designed for emerging and seasoned artists. Partnering with First Peoples Fund to deliver this training program to artists at the local level is often the first step Native CDFIs take in a relationship with First Peoples Fund and into their arts ecosystems. Over the grant period, each grantee worked with First Peoples Fund to deliver Native Artist Professional Development trainings. In total, 139 artists received training and 18 staff were certified as trainers, helping create ongoing and sustainable opportunities for artists to access the business knowledge they need.

#### ii. Capital and Credit

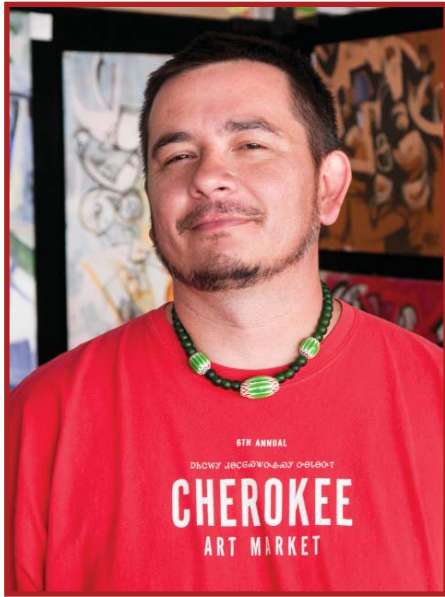
Several Native CDFI grantees developed financial products specifically for artists, including unsecured microloan products up to \$500 and Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), matched savings accounts with financial incentives tied to training programs. These programs contributed to the Native CDFIs building their artist client base, with artists representing an average 20% of borrowers by the end of the grant period. (Data about percentage of borrowers at the start of grant period is not available.)

*"Without a doubt, First Peoples Fund's Native Artist Professional Development training is the most comprehensive and thorough training an artist, at any level, can benefit from attending. It is unlike any other professional development training, in that it utilizes a simple approach which forces you, as an artist and a Native person, to look seriously into yourself and identify who you are, what values do you hold strong, and what is it that makes that inner drum beat. These questions are emotional, and are rarely asked, but answering them is huge. I admit, my lips quivered, but I needed that introspect. As an artist, I'm at a higher level in my professional development due to First Peoples Fund. My life vision is very clear. I thank First Peoples Fund for giving me the tools to find, recognize and realize that I can and will get to where I want to be."*

— Ryan Lee Smith, (Cherokee/Choctaw), First Peoples Fund Artist in Business Leadership fellow and Native Artist Professional Development trainer.

Of the artists surveyed, less than half reported viewing access to credit and capital as important to their work. Only 12% had ever applied for a loan to support an art business. Those who had applied for loans are among the more established entrepreneurs with reliable access to markets and longer-term relationships with their CDFI.

This data should be viewed within the context of the trajectory of the relatively new Native CDFI field. In 1986, First Peoples Fund's long-time partner Lakota Funds was established on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation as one of the first Native CDFIs in the country. Fifteen years later, in 2001, there were only 14 certified Native CDFIs. Today,



the field is burgeoning, with nearly 75 certified Native CDFIs operating in 2017. Yet, even on Pine Ridge, home to one of the longest running Native CDFIs in the country, access to financial services of any kind remains a new and untested resource for most people. Lakota Funds reports that 60% of the Pine Ridge population is unbanked or underbanked, meaning they have never had a relationship with a financial institution or have only a savings account.<sup>11</sup> Within this context, and understanding

that building relationships takes time, the data is promising. With investments of funding, time and targeted technical assistance, Native CDFIs can and do develop productive relationships with artists in their communities.

### iii. Markets

The development of local arts markets was the most popular focus of grantees, and their efforts were successful. Grantees hosted, funded, and/or organized a total of 26 art markets over the course of the grant period. In total, 601 artists participated in these events as sellers. Nearly 18,000 visitors attended the events, and while only 65% of the 601 participating artists reported sales numbers, nearly \$185,000 in gross revenue was earned.

#### iv. Networks

Data gathered through the artist surveys indicate they need networks. Over 80% said they value interaction with other artists as important to their work, and only half feel they have enough interaction with other artists. Many grantees focused on building networks for local artists; 474 artists were represented in artist directories and informal arts associations were developed or expanded through their projects.

There were other, largely unrecognized ways that informal networks were

being developed. In one site visit interview, it was noted that “within the group discussions of the [Native Artist Professional Development] trainings there are more conversations and opportunities to get together and talk about pricing, networking, and marketing”, indicating the value of Native Artist Professional Development trainings goes beyond providing access to business knowledge. Bringing artists together for meaningful conversations about how to build their businesses in alignment with their values is an effective way to begin to build artists’ networks.

Indeed, this concept is exemplified by the success of grantee Kawerak, Inc., based in Nome, Alaska, with its Bering Strait Arts and Crafts Facebook page. This page started organically as a place to offer training to artists and grew to be used and managed by more than 4,000 members selling and purchasing Alaska Native arts and supplies in the Bering Strait community and beyond. Kawerak continues to leverage the visibility of this page to promote arts and culture in the community.

## v. Space

While the amount of funding available to grantees was not sufficient to directly build out creative space for artists, working together with partners,

grantees were able to leverage other resources to address this need in creative ways. One such example is the Waniyetu Wowapi (Winter Count) Graffiti Art Park operated by the Cheyenne River Youth Project, which was able to turn unused land adjacent to its facilities into an outdoor art park with modest investment. The park is a community space where youth and others can freely express themselves.

## vi. Supplies

Three grantees regularly provide some access to supplies, however the majority of grantees did not actively address this resource through their projects. Artists living in rural areas without access to the Internet, or in urban or rural areas without access to the natural resources they need to create (sweetgrass, hides, walrus ivory, etc.), identify access to supplies as a challenge. Together, these findings demonstrate the need for stronger networks and partners within each community's ecosystem to provide access to the supplies artists need to create their work. It also indicates the need to advocate at the policy level for improved broadband access in tribal communities and for protection of and access to natural resources for Indigenous peoples.

11 [https://www.lakotafunds.org/docs/Lakota\\_Funds\\_2012\\_Market\\_Study\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](https://www.lakotafunds.org/docs/Lakota_Funds_2012_Market_Study_Final_Report.pdf)



## Wesley May (Anishnaabe), Artist, Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians, Minnesota

Wesley May is a visual artist from the Red Lake Indian Nation in Minnesota and exemplifies how an artist can move through the trajectory of First Peoples Fund's Theory of Change to impact his or her own community. In 2013 and 2014, Wesley, already an accomplished artist and owner of Wesley May Arts, participated in several Native Artist Professional Development trainings. The trainings were held in partnership with 4 Directions, Inc., now an emerging Native CDFI based on the Red Lake Indian Reservation. The trainings allowed Wesley to access the knowledge he needed to further his business and career. Wesley then applied and was chosen as a First Peoples Fund Artist in Business Leadership fellow in 2015 to help grow his business, and in the past two years he has developed as a business owner, artist and community leader as he accessed the knowledge, capital, networks and markets he needed to become a stronger entrepreneur.

At the same time Wesley was accessing First Peoples Fund's programs, the relationship with 4 Directions, Inc. was also developing. Wesley became certified to teach the Native Artist Professional Development course after participating in a train-the-trainer session and has been a great attribute to the work of 4 Directions, Inc. as it launched an Arts Initiative with support from the Indigenous Arts Ecology pilot grant. This partnership is building the arts ecosystem in Red Lake, and is creating a strong foundation for growing the Indigenous arts ecosystems across several tribes in northern Minnesota.

While working with 4 Directions, Wesley continues to become more active and prominent as an artist leader within Red Lake and surrounding communities. He is building his arts business while helping emerging artists gain their footing, and recently received a \$200,000 loan through 4 Directions, Inc. to open his Wesley May Studios, accessing the capital he needed to start a new business venture that employs five families who are creating reproductions of his work on clothing merchandise.



Wesley May (Red Lake Band of Chippewa),  
Photo by Monte Draper for *The Bemidji Pioneer*



## THE LAKOTA FUNDS, PINE RIDGE RESERVATION, SOUTH DAKOTA

Since 1986, Lakota Funds, one of the oldest Native community development financial institutions in the country, has worked to create small businesses and improve the financial capability of Oglala Lakota tribal members on the Pine Ridge reservation. Lakota Funds has disbursed over \$10 million in affordable business capital to Native entrepreneurs, helping create nearly 600 businesses, and continues to provide innovative programming focused on business development, entrepreneurship, asset building and financial education.

Lakota Fund's mission, commitment and track record building the private sector economy on Pine Ridge made it an ideal partner to First Peoples Fund as it launched its community-based work to grow the Indigenous arts ecosystem in the Great Plains region. For many years, First Peoples Fund had been cultivating relationships on Pine Ridge and working to build and strengthen the ecosystem of artists through its Artist in Business Leadership and Cultural Capital grant programs. Starting in 2005, First Peoples Fund, Lakota Funds, and many artists and culture bearers banded together to build Lakota Fund's capacity, human capital, and programming to better address the needs of all artists living on Pine Ridge. Twelve years later, great change has come to Pine Ridge and Lakota Funds in terms of better capacity, more resources and a framework for strategically supporting artists. A vision for the role artists can play in broader community revitalization efforts has materialized and Lakota Funds has taken a leadership role in efforts to achieve it.

Between 2013-2016, Lakota Funds was part of First Peoples Fund's pilot Indigenous Arts Ecology Grant Program, receiving two grants, plus numerous hours of training and technical assistance. With their grants, Lakota Funds improved access to capital by creating three new products for artists — equity grants that help them obtain capital for business growth; Individual Development Accounts to promote saving and asset building; and an Art Builder Microloan product to help create new art businesses. Access to affordable capital is vital to the overall ecology.

Lakota Funds leveraged its grants with public support from the Administration for Native Americans to improve access to knowledge by creating a series of specialized online business courses for artists as part of its Building Native Industry Institute. Classes range from financial planning, marketing, establishing an online presence, and business and strategic planning. Several Lakota Funds staff and local artists were certified to teach First Peoples Fund's Native Artist Professional Development course, which is offered through the Institute. Lakota Funds also improved access to markets and networks by expanding its online Artist Directory that gives artists the opportunity to market directly to potential customers<sup>1</sup>. Participation in the Indigenous Arts Ecology Grant Program resulted in a community-based model for working with artists on Pine Ridge that fills the gap in access to what they need to develop as entrepreneurs and culture bearers.





Perhaps the best example of how community organizations and artists are working together to strengthen arts ecosystems on Pine Ridge and impact the larger regional Indigenous arts ecosystem was the launch of the Rolling Rez Arts mobile unit in 2016. Rolling Rez Arts addresses access to space as well as the other resources artists need. The arts bus was developed collaboratively by Lakota Funds, First Peoples Fund and Minneapolis-based Artspace Projects with input and guidance from the local artist community as a way to deliver art, business, retail and banking services<sup>2</sup> across the reservation — services that were not available to most artists and culture bearers until now. In just over two years, nearly 80 Lakota art and culture classes like beadwork, film, and ledger drawing were taught impacting more than 800 artists living in all districts across the vast reservation.

Beyond Pine Ridge, Rolling Rez Arts travels to support art events in the region like the Cheyenne River Youth Project's RedCan Graffiti Jam held annually on the Cheyenne River Reservation and the Native POP Art Market Festival in Rapid City, South Dakota. The Rolling Rez Arts travel-

ing art space is helping unite and connect regional efforts centered on the expression of Lakota art and culture that can further impact the artist-driven work happening at home. Rolling Rez Arts is just the first step in bringing art space to Pine Ridge. The partners will break ground in 2018 on the \$2 million Oglala Lakota Artspace in Kyle that will be the reservation's first dedicated studio, gallery and learning space for artists.

With these targeted investments of time and resources, Lakota Funds has become First Peoples Fund's strongest local partner. It has demonstrated a commitment to working with artists and offers an adaptable framework for developing and strengthening arts ecosystems in Native communities and giving artists access to what they need to be successful. Working together, Lakota Funds, First Peoples Fund and an ever-growing team of partners, artists and culture bearers intend to fully transform the arts and culture sector on the Pine Ridge reservation, making it a hub of entrepreneurialism, asset building, job creation and business development, while strengthening Lakota culture for future generations.

*"Working with First Peoples Fund has been so inspiring. We have worked together to establish relationships with artists who are now growing their businesses with help from loans and matched savings accounts. Our work with artists continues to grow and the Rolling Rez Arts is helping with that. We're now piloting unsecured loan products for artists. All of this means artists are better able to do their work, sell their products and at the same time manage their funds and build credit."*

— Lakota Funds executive director Tawney Brunsch (Oglala Lakota)

1. <http://www.lakotafunds.org/artdir.htm>

2. Banking services are being offered by the Lakota Federal Credit Union, the first and only depository institution on Pine Ridge

# Results

## IV. INDICATIONS OF SUCCESS: HOW HOLISTIC, LONG-TERM INVESTMENTS CAN YIELD STRONGER RESULTS

The assessment of the pilot phase of the Indigenous Arts Ecology grant program clearly indicated that comprehensive investments in individuals, communities and long-term partnerships produce stronger results. The Indigenous Arts Ecology is an ecosystem-based model of change. It weaves together culture, art and economic development and requires holistic thinking about adaptive processes and development that are specific to each person and community. Pathways of engagement for individual artists and community-based organizations are founded on relationships built on mutual trust and cooperation.

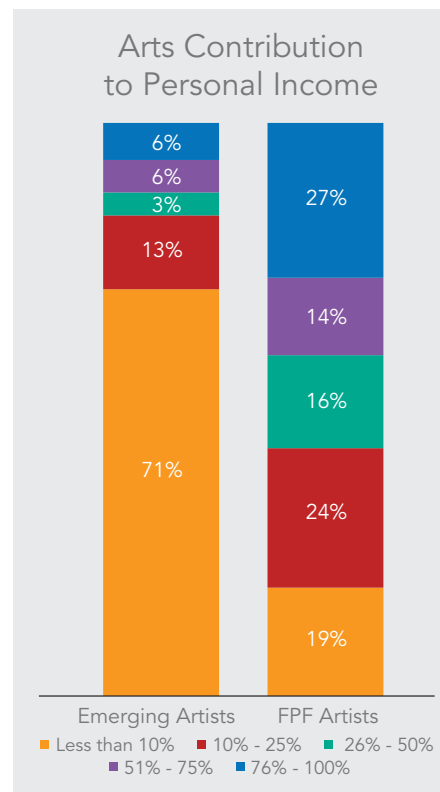
### A. Stronger Results for Artists

Among artists surveyed as part of the Indigenous Arts Ecology program assessment, just over half (54%) had participated in a First Peoples Fund program. Eighty-seven percent had gone through a Native Artist Professional Development training and a smaller percentage, 43%, had been through at least one fellowship program.

Comparing data from emerging-level artists to that of artists involved in one or more First Peoples Fund fellowships



shows the economic value of making investments in Native artists. Through investments and increased access to resources, FPF artists produced higher priced art, generated more arts-based income, and achieved higher overall income. This evidence demonstrates that longer-term investments can create systemic and sustainable economic growth for reservation-based artists.



### B. Stronger Results for Organizations

The longer an organization is engaged in the Indigenous arts ecosystem, and the deeper their relationships and partnerships within the ecosystem, the more they accomplish. In the analysis of grantees' stage of development within their ecosystems, evaluators found that two organizations were at the first stage of organizational devel-

opment, and were focused on improving their organizational capacity and learning about the structure and value of the ecosystem. Five organizations were at the second stage, actively showing evidence of working together with artists and others organizations. Four organizations were at the third stage of development and had begun to be leaders in collective work within their arts ecosystems.

Comparison of the grantees' programmatic accomplishments through their projects showed that as Native CDFIs and other organizations develop partnerships and networks within their local ecosystem and the larger Indigenous Arts Ecology, they are able to offer a greater range of programs to artists. For example, those Native CDFIs working collectively and as leaders were found to close a higher percentage of loans to artists (18%) than Native CDFIs working to build their internal capacity (5%). In addition, Native CDFIs that were working collectively doubled their artist clientele over the grant period while those working to build their capacity within did not change their artists total clientele percentage.





## STAGES OF ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: WITHIN, TOGETHER AND COLLECTIVE

To honor and respect the unique culture within a community, tribe and region, FPF uses adaptive processes rather than replicated models. In their best application, these adaptive processes are fully integrated.

### Stage 1: Within

In this initial stage of development, organizations are focused within, building leadership, support and programs. Their experience working with artists is limited, as is their knowledge of artist-entrepreneurs' needs and their value as economic drivers and community leaders.

### Stage 2: Together

Organizations continue to build capacity, internal systems and programs, increasing their potential to contribute to arts ecosystems. Leadership is actively building partnerships and understands the value of supporting the growth of staff to meet the needs of artists. Meeting or working to meet two to four of the artists' six resource needs. Value peer-to-peer learning and collaborations.

### Stage 3: Collective

Organizations working collectively demonstrate a constant commitment to cultural assets and culture bearers. Actively investing in staff development to grow, they are sophisticated leaders in the innovation of support for artists. Through their partnerships, they are working to provide all six resources for artists.

## V. NEXT STEPS

### Strengthening the Future of the Indigenous Arts Ecology

#### A. Invest in Long-term Relationships

The Indigenous Arts Ecology is based on the power of relationships. Relationships that require time and close attention in order to flourish. This assessment shows stronger impacts for artists who are already in the First Peoples Fund family and for community-based organizations that have longer-term and more intersectional relationships. Given these findings, going forward First Peoples Fund will invest in longer-term relationships both on the community level, with artist fellows, and with its youth development work.

Phase two of the Indigenous Arts Ecology Grant Program has moved to two-year cohorts for grantees with opportunities to convene, learn from each other and develop partnerships. Grantees may be invited for a third year. At the same time, First Peoples Fund is integrating its fellowships with its community partnerships, and exploring investing in two-year fellowships for individual artists. Peer learning circles are connecting fellows with Indigenous Arts Ecology grantees and regional arts ecosystems. Similarly, First Peoples Fund is deliberately growing its youth development pro-

*"I thank culture bearers for their leadership and their wisdom. They enrich us all by the knowledge and profound insights they share. They don't do their work for themselves or their children, or even their grandchildren. They do what they do for their grandchildren's grandchildren. I think that is a good way."*

— Jennifer Easton, founder of First Peoples Fund, 1947-2017

gram, Dances with Words, on Pine Ridge and in neighboring tribal communities in relationship-based, sustainable ways. As it deepens the program with a newly developed curriculum and expands it into additional Native communities, elements of the program will intersect with the Indigenous Arts Ecology grant and the fellowship programs, and will align with First Peoples Fund's Theory of Change.

Creating sustainable change requires communities to work together to envision collective solutions and strategies. It requires conducting a stronger assessment of local needs, working in

partnership with organizations and artists to implement shared solutions, and setting up agreed upon systems to monitor and evaluate. First Peoples Fund will provide specific technical assistance to support this level of community development.

### B. Collective Work Requires Data

In the pilot phase of the Indigenous Arts Ecology program there were some gaps and uncertainty in data, all of which affirms trends in the Native CDFI field to invest in data collection. In order for the Indigenous Arts Ecology story to be told, data has to be consistently gathered and local capacity needs to be built to inform this process. As it was for this report, data must be gathered and analyzed from an Indigenous perspective, encompassing and valuing relationships, traditional values and culture. Better data collection will allow First Peoples Fund and local partners to recognize expected and unexpected outcomes, adjust programs for greater impact and make the case for investments in the Indigenous Arts Ecology.

Going forward, First Peoples Fund will build into its Indigenous Arts Ecology grant program a system for helping its Native CDFI partners gather more complete and relevant data about their work with artists. First Peoples Fund is also working with the data



Keone Nunes (Native Hawaiian) at 2015 CSA Honoring, Photo Credit: Kai Markell (Native Hawaiian)

management firm Sweetgrass Consulting to ensure that measures specifically related to artists are built into the Opportunity Through Impact Systems (OTIS), developed by Sweetgrass Consulting for the Oweesta Corporation as a collaborative data collection, management and reporting system for Native CDFIs and piloted in 2017.

### C. Tighten Networks

As First Peoples Fund embarks on the next phase of Indigenous Arts Ecology

grant funding, it is providing deeper support and technical assistance for partnership and networking building, and approaching this strategy in three distinct ways:

1) Networking on the local level. First Peoples Fund assists grantee partners to more regularly bring together local stakeholders (other nonprofits, individual artists, tribal programs, etc.) to work collectively on strengthening their local arts ecosystems and encourage artist-led initiatives.

2) Networking on the regional level. First Peoples Fund hosts annual convenings bringing together key partners and First Peoples Fund artists to tighten collective strategies on the regional level

3) Networking on the national level. Grantees requested peer-to-peer learning across regions. First Peoples Fund hosts a grantee cohort convening each year.





## Conclusion

For artists and culture bearers, investing in the Indigenous Arts Ecology means more opportunities to pass on ancestral knowledge within their communities, and more opportunities to engage creatively to support themselves and their families. For Native CDFIs and other community-based organizations, growing investments in the Indigenous Arts Ecology means gaining a new understanding of the value of artists and culture bearers as leaders and economic engines that compels them to reach and effectively serve many more people in their communities. For tribes, funders, policy makers, and other decision makers, the *Investing in the Indigenous Arts Ecology* report makes visible a potent investment opportunity to disrupt systemic inequities and help rebuild Native families and communities.

In 2013, First Peoples Fund's report *Establishing a Creative Economy: Art as an Economic Engine in Native Communities* report demonstrated the value of investments in Native art and culture as among the most promising ways to make real and lasting change in Indigenous communities. Finding that 30% or more of Indigenous people identify as artists, the report established the economic and community development potential of this single sector. FPF has long recognized this potential and has been investing for

nearly 25 years in individual artists and their families. Through these investments, it has seen significant gains in income and business practices as well as cultural revitalization, intergenerational mentoring and contemporary innovation among the nearly 2,000 Native artists who have moved through its programs.

In 2014, knowing that igniting social and economic change in Indigenous communities requires a collective response, First Peoples Fund set out to catalyze its long-standing nonprofit partnerships. It invested \$340,000 in 11 community-based organizations, primarily Native CDFIs, to shine a light on the role artists can play in economic development and to build partners' capacity to provide artists access to the resources they need to build and grow arts-based businesses.

An in-depth evaluation at the conclusion of the pilot grant program demonstrated its effectiveness. Partners were able to develop services specifically for artists, and nearly double the percentage of their total clientele who are artists. Furthermore, the majority of artists surveyed within their communities pointed to these partners as critical sources of support.

The assessment also gave way to a construct beyond the creative economy

*"First Peoples Fund is committed to reviving and awakening what is deeply ingrained in First Peoples by shining our light on artists and culture bearers so that through art and ancient traditions, they are able to lead and make our communities stronger and whole again."*

— Lori Pourier (Oglala Lakota), First Peoples Fund President

— the larger and more holistic Indigenous Arts Ecology, a collective system built on relationships, traditional values, and ancestral knowledge. First Peoples Fund identified a dynamic of development prevalent throughout the Indigenous Arts Ecology. Artists, culture bearers, community leaders, and organizations journey from internal capacity and skill building *within* closely followed by valuing and building partnerships *together* to eventually turning outward to work *collectively* across networks and regions. Looking ahead, First Peoples Fund has set a course for a longer and deeper approach across all its programs, putting into action learning from the assessment and reinforcing the components and dynamics within the Indigenous Arts Ecology model that its programs touch.

Taking the holistic approach, First Peoples Fund's work with artists and culture bearers has a direct correlation to the ancestors who came before and

those who will come after. Investing in the Indigenous Arts Ecology makes the case for further investments in First Peoples Fund and the Indigenous Arts Ecology as a whole. New investments in the Indigenous Arts Ecology mean fueling the wave of cultural revitalization building in Native communities across the country. Traditional art along with modern interpretations are beginning to flourish. Native hip-hop, spoken word and electronic beats are reimagining Indigenous music and oral traditions for a new time. Writers and especially young poets are finding their voices and speaking out about the past and their dreams for the future. Social media is providing greater access to inspiration, markets and networks. *Investing in the Indigenous Arts Ecology* means harnessing the creative Indigenous energy of this time to overcome the challenges in tribal communities, renewing a way of living in harmony tied to culture and traditions.

## Afterword

by Alfred "Bud" Lane III, Vice President Siletz Tribal Council, President Northwest Basketweavers Association and First Peoples Fund board member

To see our people making and proudly wearing ceremonial caps and work caps, carrying our children and grandchildren in our baby baskets, wearing bark capes and dresses, using traditional mats, and cooking and eating from baskets is to me preserving the very core of our collective tribal existence. It is our responsibility to make sure that we teach in turn what we have been taught, and always give thanks for what the Creator has provided us. This is our Indigenous arts ecosystem, and in this way, we continue to become closer and stronger as a people and a community, sharing and practicing our traditions and beliefs.

I have always been taught that gathering and preparation are 90% of the basket making process. The next step of course is the weaving process. I always explain to family and friends and students I take to gather how important that process is. I tell them to think about how many thousands of years it took for the knowledge of how and where and when to gather our materials took to finally reach them. It is important that they understand that they are the latest link in the chain of

our people to do this and that they have to pass this knowledge on to the new links in the chain so that it will continue on.

Our collective tribal knowledge of how to gather and use our plants for baskets, mats, clothes and other things proves that these lands are ours. We often talk about sovereignty in the political sense, but this is what sovereignty means to me. That we have this relationship with the land, plants and animals, that these lands were given to us by the Creator, that we belong to these lands. Even our word for the earth proves this. Nun-nust-'an", means literally, "for you it is made." Everything comes from that sovereignty — baskets, foods, songs, dances, and the rights of a people to pursue their own practices in their own way on their own land.

Land has been at the center of nearly all the bad federal Indian policies adopted in the last 150 years, and almost every one of those policies has been applied to my people, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. In the 1850s, all of the Western Oregon tribes and bands were forced to cede their homelands, roughly 20 million acres, in exchange for reservations. They were all forcibly relocated to the reservations. It was not long after that that the reservation was



Alfred "Bud" Lane III (Siletz),  
Photo by David Bernie (Yankton Sioux, Ihanktonwan Dakota)





diminished and then allotted. Lands that were not allotted were declared “surplus” and taken into the public domain. Finally, the Eisenhower Administration decided on a new federal Indian policy, called Termination. They targeted certain tribes, including ours, and severed the federal relationship as if we were no longer Indians.

As devastating as all these practices were, we clung to our traditions. Our songs and dances were still practiced. Many families still kept our basketry traditions alive. Though diminished from the days of old, these things were still very much alive. Our people fought to regain our rightful federal status and after 22 years of Termination, we were finally recognized again in 1977, becoming only the second tribe in the U.S. to be restored federal recognition. Our elder basket makers held basketry classes. Our dance families held our dances.

These traditional activities may seem insignificant but they are the rock upon which our people rebuilt our modern tribe. They say to our young people, it is okay to do these things and this is really how it should be. Our struggle is to try to undo the damage done to our dances, our basketry, our language. The destructive things and the trauma our people and culture went through are unimaginable.

The survival of our traditions is proof of the resiliency of our people and our community, and our traditions have always played a central role in our ability to remain, always, as Siletz people.

When we walk through our lands we see it differently. In our way, there are no plants that are “weeds” or “useless”. All of the plants the Creator provides us are foods, materials or medicine for our people. In our view, we are not waiting to die and go to paradise; we are already in the paradise the Creator has provided for us, in its perfect natural state. Basketry and gathering of materials reinforce this timeless view of ours. Keeping our basketry traditions alive also keeps more awareness in our community about the need to protect and enhance resources.

Gladys Muschamp has been gone for a long time. She was one of my teachers, and Gladys didn’t care what anyone thought. She didn’t receive help from anyone. Gladys always walked around town with a great big coat buttoned up around her neck, even in summer, and I always call her my hero. This lady carried on our practices, even through the Termination era. People like Gladys are the people whose shoulders I stand on and learn from. We need future Gladyses, people who will pursue the preservation of our ways no

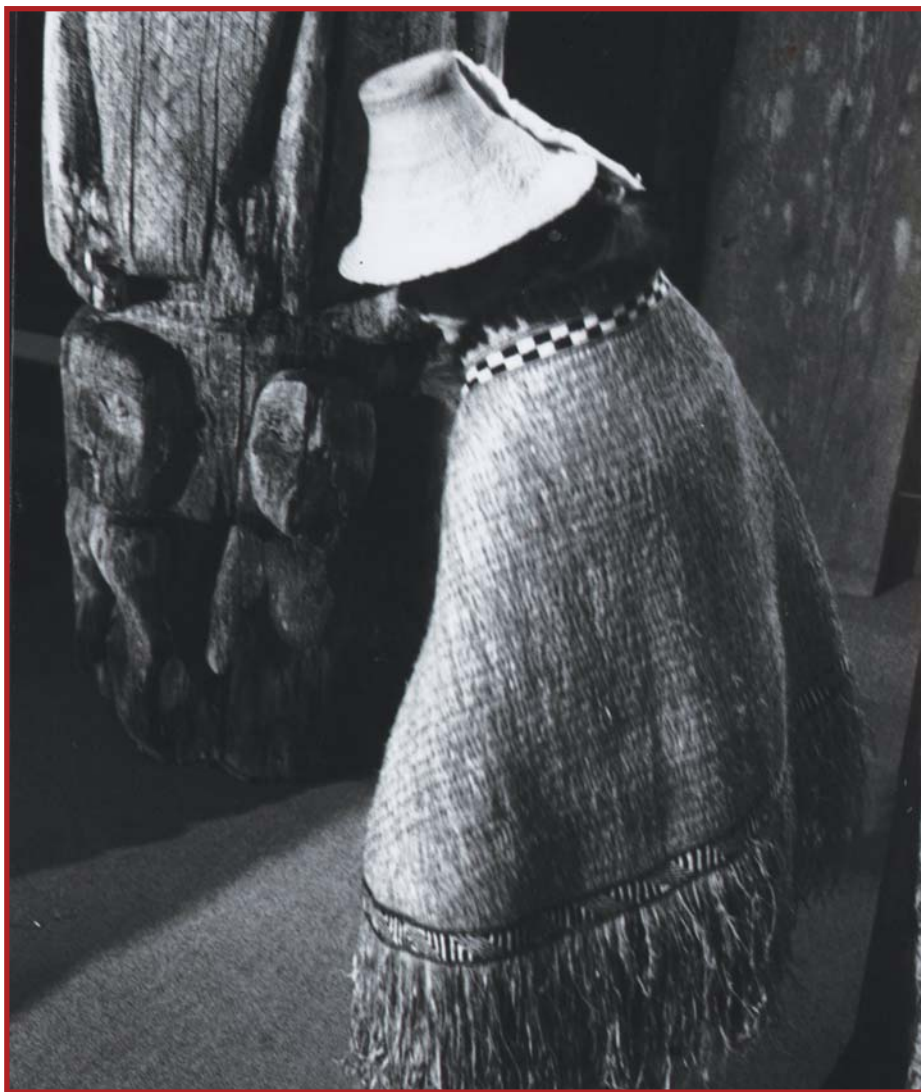
matter what. And it is not just about what is happening in our little corner of the world. What is happening here, for example the acidification of our shellfish, is connected to U.S. energy and trade policies, to the pipeline at Standing Rock and our global approach to fossil fuels. We cannot only be concerned about what is happening in our own communities. Everything is connected and it is critical that tribal governments and nonprofits like First Peoples Fund do that critical advocacy work, striving toward the goal of keeping our practices alive and ensuring our cultural sovereignty.

In order to do advocacy work effectively, and in order to make the case for investments in our communities, we need data. Our people generally mistrust requests for personal information out of a fear of appropriation or misuse. Even the Northwest Basket Makers Association, which I chair, struggles to convince our members that we need them to fill out questionnaires about access issues so that we can advocate for better gathering rights. Getting tribes and Native people to understand that we need data, that we need reports like *Investing in the Indigenous Arts Ecology*, and that you can’t go into your Congressperson’s office to advocate for the land, resources and rights you cherish without this kind of information, is crucial.



Chad, Photo by Jaida Grey Eagle  
(Oglala Lakota)

Though some tribal governments are not able to be part of implementing First Peoples Fund’s model, every tribal community has artists, culture bearers and cultural assets — stories, songs, dances, creative practices and ceremonies rooted in ancestral knowledge. And they all have other resources to leverage, such as Native CDFIs, tribal colleges, tourism, artist associations or



informal artist networks. Every tribal community is part of and participates in the Indigenous Arts Ecology, and every tribal community can invest in some way in its own arts ecosystems and the larger Ecology. *Investing in the Indigenous Arts Ecology* makes the case for just that — for individuals, tribes, policy makers, and funders to make a priority of investing in and advocating for Native artists, culture bearers, communities, and organizations that make up the Indigenous Arts Ecology. Together, we can build a movement for sustainable change in tribal communities based on honoring that stream of ancestral knowledge and values, ensuring our young artists have strong roots from which to evolve and expand their own art forms.

In the 1870s, federal agents burnt to the ground five ceremonial dance houses on the Siletz Agency. The agents didn't want our people practicing our ceremonies. Our term for dance house translates to "blessings inside are made." We probably should say church instead. For many years, we danced at non-Indian events and at community centers. In the 1990s, we started talking about that history, asking why our ceremonies couldn't have

a home on our reservation, and the Dance House movement began. Twenty-one years ago, we built our cedar plank Dance House. We gave our dances a home, and after 100-plus years the dances came out from an almost underground existence. I had no idea of the impact it would have on my life, my family, my people.

As people enter through the door of the Dance House, they turn around, leaving the burdens of daily life behind. There is always a sacred fire in the center. People don't want to leave — school kids, the governor of Oregon, everyone wants to stay. It has that same effect on me. I lingered in our Dance House not long ago. I sat and watched the fire burn down, thinking about the old times, when people were on their original lands and how life has changed for us. But one thing has remained constant, our ceremony and how we thank the Creator for making Creation for us. We are all just common people, ordinary souls, nothing special and giving thanks is what it is about. That's the most important part — approaching the ceremony with a good heart and thanking the Creator for making you and making our world. Sometimes the things you don't think will be monumental turn out to be monumental.

*Cedar Bark Robe,*  
Delores Churchill (Haida)





# First Peoples Fund

First Peoples Fund, a Native arts service organization based in Rapid City, South Dakota, knows art is an asset with the potential to strengthen cultures, people, and communities. As Elouise Cobell, one of the organization's founders, once said, "Art is the greatest asset Indian people have in our communities, yet it is the most underdeveloped". For nearly 25 years, First Peoples Fund has been committed to developing this critical asset by investing in the people who keep it alive. Through funding, training, and mentoring, First Peoples Fund has helped close to 2,000 Native artists improve their business models and practices, increase their incomes, and give back to their communities. In turn, these artists are dedicating themselves to mentoring the next generation of culture bearers, ensuring their art and traditional ways survive.

Photo by Ronnie Farley

## Our Partners

### **Cheyenne River Youth Project (CRYP)**

The Cheyenne River Youth Project® was founded in January 1988 in response to the Cheyenne River (Lakota) Sioux tribal community's need for more services that support children and their families. The organization operates two facilities that offer comprehensive and holistic programming that touches the minds, bodies and hearts of the next generation of leaders and culture bearers on the Cheyenne River Sioux reservation in South Dakota. The Main Youth Center serves youth ages 4-12 and provides a recreation room, library, family room, commercial grade kitchen, office space and residential quarters for long-term volunteers. The Cokata Wiconi Teen Center serves teens ages 13-18 with a full-sized basketball court, cafe, computer lab, dance and art studios, as well as private volunteer quarters.

CRYP's art programming continues to grow and includes internships, traditional Lakota and graffiti art classes, and the annual RedCan Graffiti Jam, which draws globally renowned graffiti artists to the reservation to teach and paint alongside the youth and community. The Waniyetu Wowapi (Winter Count) Graffiti Art Park provides a public space where Lakota youth can express themselves freely and connect to their culture, identities and stories, and the Waniyetu Wowapi Lakota Youth Arts Institute, slated to officially

launch August 2018, will further expand arts programming at CRYP by providing a dedicated space where youth, teens and the community have access to consistent and diverse arts classes.

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*"The Cheyenne River Youth Project is really pleased with our partnership with the First Peoples Fund. FPF is an amazing organization and the staff have been truly generous with their time. Their guidance and support will be key as we develop our Waniyetu Wowapi Lakota Youth Arts Institute. Lori is in an incredible mentor and we are grateful for their support,"* said Julie Garreau (Cheyenne River Mnicounjou Lakota), executive director of Cheyenne River Youth Project.

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### **Five Nations Arts (Five Nations)**

was established in 1992 by the Great Plains Indian Artist Cooperative and shortly after was taken under the umbrella of the North Dakota Indian Arts Association (NDIAA). In January 1995, NDIAA needed to divest its assets to another 501(c)3 non-profit. NDIAA approached the Fort Abraham Lincoln Foundation (FALF) so that Five Nations Arts could remain open. In 1995, FALF purchased Five Nations Arts' inventory, invested in marketing, and kept staff as managers. Today Five

Nations Arts provides a large variety of raw materials for artists to create with and a venue to sell their finished products. Through a grant from First Peoples Fund, Five Nations offered training and educational opportunities to artists.

### **Four Bands Community Fund (FBCF)**

was established in 2000 as a nonprofit organization to lead the community and economic development movement on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation. Four Bands provides programs in small business development, business lending, financial literacy, and youth entrepreneurship. Four Bands estimates that 30 percent of its clientele are artists. Beginning with offering First Peoples Fund's Native Artist Professional Development training, trainer certification and technical assistance, Four Bands has been working to increase the skills of its staff and support for community artists for over five years. They are also working to increase networking and marketing opportunities for the artists they serve. Four Bands is a close partner of the Cheyenne River Youth Project, another Indigenous Arts Ecology grantee serving Cheyenne River youth.

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*"Native artists remain an integral part of Four Bands' client base today. We invest in the art community to strengthen the economy as well as perpetuate the inter-generational transmission of cultural and artistic knowledge. We appreciate the advocacy and support First Peoples Fund does on behalf of Native culture everywhere. First Peoples Fund's role in sustaining and growing the Native art economy is unparalleled across America,"* said executive director Lakota Vogel (Cheyenne River Mnicounjou Lakota)

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### **Kawerak, Inc. (Kawerak)**

The Bering Straits Native Association (BSNA) was formed in 1967 as an association of the Native Villages in the Bering Straits Region, and reorganized in 1973 as Kawerak, Inc. Kawerak's organizational goal is to assist Alaska Native people and their governing bodies to take control of their future. With programs ranging from education to transportation, and natural resource management to economic development, Kawerak seeks to improve the region's social, economic, educational, cultural and political conditions. Kawerak provides training to local artists through the Native Artist Professional Development program and has also nurtured access to markets





via an active Facebook site representing Bering Strait artists and artwork, as well as encouraging other marketing opportunities.

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#### **Lakota Funds (TLF)**

Lakota Funds, a Native CDFI serving the Pine Ridge Reservation since 1986, has a loan portfolio of over \$10 million and has helped thousands of artists and aspiring entrepreneurs, created over 1,600 permanent jobs, and helped establish or expand nearly 600 businesses. Lakota Funds has been working with First Peoples Fund since 2011 through the Native Artist Professional Development Training program to increase the capacity of its staff to meet the needs of reservation-based artists. Lakota Funds is also partnering with First Peoples Fund by bringing creative space to artists and banking services via the Rolling Rez Arts mobile unit. Together with a third partner, Artspace Projects, they will create the reservation's first permanent space for artists, Oglala Lakota Art Space. Since working with First Peoples Fund, Lakota Funds has seen a rise in the number of artists seeking their services. Today, Lakota Funds continues to play a vital role in improving life for the Oglala Lakota people by placing capital with new and growing businesses on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

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#### **Northern Shores Community Development, Inc. (NSCD)**

is a certified Native CDFI formed in 2008 to promote community development for the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians. This includes training, technical assistance, business incubation and a loan fund. Northern Shores Community Development launched a program to assist all adult members of the tribe living throughout the state of Michigan to purchase the necessary supplies to teach, show and sell their art. This program helps traditional arts and crafts heritage in the region thrive by providing an opportunity for artists to become more familiar with running a business, managing costs, displaying and promoting their product, and teaching others their art forms.

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#### **Northwest Native Development Fund (NNDF)**

was established on the Colville Reservation in Washington in 2009 to foster economic and financial independence for Native people by assisting in the development of personal assets through financial and entrepreneurial education as well as providing access to capital through creative lending products. A certified Native CDFI, NNDF has created over 300 jobs and dispersed \$2 million in small business and enterprise loans in the Native communities in eastern

Washington. Supporting local artists in the region, NNDF has conducted Native Artist Professional Development trainings and established a regional art show to showcase Native Plateau artists.

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*"Our partnership with First Peoples Fund has been an invaluable relationship in opening up our ability to serve our Native Artists," said Ted Piccolo (Colville Confederated Tribes) "We have artists growing in leaps and bounds now because of this help."*

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#### **Native American CDC Financial Services (NACDC)**

was established in 2010 with the assistance of the Native American Community Development Corporation. NACDC Financial Services, Inc. is a Native CDFI located in Browning, Montana on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. It offers a range of services that are tailored to the needs of Native entrepreneurs including comprehensive financial literacy and entrepreneurship programs for both youth and adults as well as a line of credit specifically designed for established artists. NACDC Financial Services partnered with the Great Western Living & Design Exhibition in Great Falls, Montana to showcase local Native artists. The Exhibition includes music, dance and other cultural presentations

and provides an excellent opportunity for Blackfeet artists to reach new markets.

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#### **PA'I Foundation (PA'I)**

PA'I Foundation, founded in 2001, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and perpetuating Native Hawaiian arts and culture for future generations. The geographic reach of PA'I Foundation programming is primarily Hawai'i, but PA'I cultural programming also reaches audiences in the continental United States and internationally. PA'I has partnered with First Peoples Fund to bring Native Artist Professional Development training to Native Hawaiians as well as to certify trainers in the program. PA'I, First Peoples Fund, Alternate ROOTS, and the National Association of Latino Arts and Culture are founding partners of the Intercultural Leadership Institute, which they launched in 2017. PA'I is also investing in the creation of an art gallery and performing arts complex in partnership with Artspace Projects. This center will provide a sustainable, creative space to preserve and perpetuate Native Hawaiian arts and cultural practices.

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*"PA'I is honored to be among the many organizations and individual Native artists that are supported by First Peoples Fund. We have all benefited from their spirit of generosity that is*

one of the founding principles upon which FPF is built," said Vicky Holt Takamine (Native Hawaiian), Kumu Hula, Pua Ali'i 'Ilima, and executive director, PA'I Foundation.

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#### **Red Lake Entrepreneur Program (Red Lake)** (now 4-Directions Development, Inc.)

4-Directions Development, Inc. is a recently formed 501c3 nonprofit organization that emerged from the Red Lake Entrepreneur Program. The organization is pursuing its certification as a Native CDFI and is comprised of a full service entrepreneur development center, the Gitigaanike Local Foods Initiative, and the Ogichidaag Arts Initiative. The Red Lake Arts Initiative was established by the Red Lake Nation Entrepreneur Program with funding from First Nations Development Institute and First Peoples Fund, with a focus on promoting local artists, increasing their access to target markets, and to preserving traditional arts by passing them on to the youth.

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*"We strive to build skills that will build wealth for local community members; and, we see the local artists as one of the many knowledge carriers who will help develop that local economy we*

*are striving to create,"* said Sharon James, executive director. 4-Directions Development, Inc.

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#### **Turtle Mountain Tribal Arts Association (TMTAA)**

Started in 2006, the mission of the Turtle Mountain Tribal Arts Association is to empower Turtle Mountain artists to foster, promote and preserve their art, heritage and culture. The association operates an art gallery that features Anishinaabe/Chippewa/Metis artwork designed and handcrafted by Turtle Mountain artists. TMTAA empowers local artists to become self sufficient entrepreneurs through training and opportunities to access new markets, and developed an annual arts market through their partnership with First Peoples Fund.

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*"From young to old, we hope to continue to provide intergenerational transfer of knowledge through our ongoing programming and activities to enrich the Anishinaabe way of life in our community. A creative spark has been lit within the home fires of our community with the help of First Peoples Fund,"* said Memory Poní-Cappo, executive director. Turtle Mountain Tribal Arts Association

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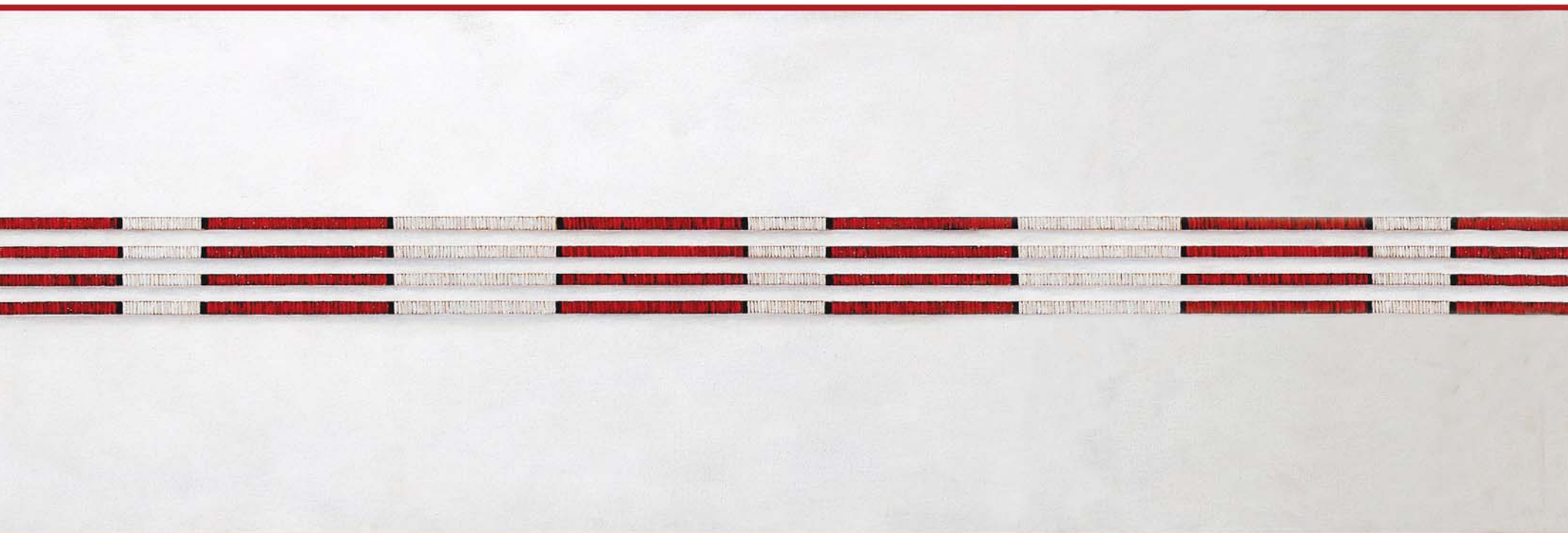
*Tipis Along the Road to Jackie Parsons' Place, Photo by Ronnie Farley*  
Photo opposite page: Jack Wallace Gladstone (Blackfeet), Photo by Steve Wewerka







*First Peoples Fund honors and supports the Collective Spirit of First Peoples artists and culture bearers.*



**First Peoples Fund**

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#CollectiveSpirit