

CLAIMING CULTURAL CAPITAL



2012

New England Foundation for the Arts Native Arts Program Evaluation by Nancy Marie Mithlo, Ph.D. Mario Caro, Ph.D., Associate Researcher

A critical overview of current program activities and strategies for long-term sustainability submitted October 15, 2012

Cover art: Jeremy Frey, From "Interview with Passamaquoddy basket maker Jeremy Frey, best in show winner at Heard Museum Guild Indian Market 2011" http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=2pgfMuQ_s8U.

PREFACE

I am grateful for this opportunity to assess the Native Arts program of the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA). My heartfelt thanks to the artists, arts administrators and scholars who assisted me in gathering the information presented here and in advising me as the project unfolded. Special thanks to Dawn Spears, Native Arts program Manager, for her optimism, good will and her firm belief in my capacities as a program advisor. I am grateful for the special prayers said on my behalf as I traveled to, read, researched and conversed with the good people of New England from my home in New Mexico.

As an American Indian art veteran, with thirty years in the field as a theorist, educator and activist, I have read about, experienced and led many Native art initiatives in regional, national and international contexts. The enduring narratives of Native arts dying, being re-born, corrupted by the market or advancing with the freedom of mainstream artists are cyclically told; endlessly repeated with each generation. My task is to tell a different story, one that honestly reflects the tensions and hopes of one Native arts program as it looks to the future. In listening to the artists and funders that make up the community of Native New England arts, I am reminded anew that Indigenous creativity, kindness and spirit endures and even thrives despite the legacies of colonialism.

Readers should note that I take full responsibility for the facts as presented and any mistakes found in the data are purely my own. Likewise, any perceived biases or overt opinions are mine alone. I have tried to strike a balance in this report between conveying my own informed perspectives as recommendations and forwarding the opinions of those I spoke with in interview, even if I personally disagree with the perspectives advanced. As an educator, I am accustomed to the presentation of opinions as neutral spaces of dialogue, not personal affronts to an individual's integrity. It is my hope that these findings will be received as such- dialogues across a table of peers engaged in sometimes-difficult conversations. The informants I reached by telephone, email or in person were given the option of remaining anonymous. Those quoted gave explicit permission to be cited. I have endeavored to represent the essence of the unattributed contributors without compromising their confidentiality.

Midway through my research, I realized that I needed the assistance of an expert in international artist exchanges and national grant making in the arts. I asked for help from my colleague Dr. Mario Caro (Assistant Professor/Faculty Fellow of Draper Program in Humanities and Social Thought at New York University), to prepare this data for final project submission as a subcontractor. Dr. Caro has participated in Evergreen State College's Longhouse Education and Cultural Center activities under the Ford Foundation Illumination portfolio for many years and is attuned and sensitive to the issues surrounding the support of Native arts. In addition, he directs "Res Artis: A Worldwide Network of Artist Residencies." His perspectives enhanced the recommendations presented here significantly and I am eternally grateful for his willingness to participate in this study as a co-researcher and advisor.

Finally, my gratitude to my daughters who endured patiently as I cut dinners short, ordered take-out meals and skimmed on the special times we typically spend together. Thank you to my warrior women who prove daily that "smart women can do anything."

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NEW ENGLAND FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS NATIVE ARTS PROGRAM
EVALUATION BY NANCY MARIE MITHLO, PH.D.
MARIO CARO, PH.D., ASSOCIATE RESEARCHER

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METHODOLOGY

My training as a cultural anthropologist with a focus in visual analysis informs my research ideology. I believe in the strength of qualitative data richly informed conversations that offer the possibility of a two-way exchange of ideas and perspectives.

In my response to NEFA's call for proposals, I indicated that I would: a) review NEFA's Native arts programming, including existing literature, such as project reports, individual applications (funded and unfunded), published literature, and web presence, b) collect original data from organizations and individuals that participate with NEFA and those unaffiliated, via phone interviews and Internet inquiry, c) cull information from other granting agencies for comparison in terms of originality, coherence with broad national trends, and awareness of larger social cultural issues, and d) interview a sample of current stakeholders (staff, board members, grant recipients, other arts and cultural agencies) for general attitudes and assumptions.

My total source data includes 68 past program reports NEFA generated, 36 national and international reports I located and drew from in my literature review, and 25 qualitative interviews, of which 20 were rated as "rich data" interviews (meaning more than 30 minutes in conversation or more than 500 words in email exchange). I chose not to utilize quantitative data survey instruments such as questionnaires (see more explicit descriptions on data cultivation below). The NEFA Directory of Native American Artists and Organizations in New England served as a primary source document for me to contact artists to interview, demonstrating its utility to the field.¹

Outcomes for this assessment include this written assessment and a one-day in-person meeting on September 28, 2012 where I presented my initial findings and recommendations to key NEFA staff (two PowerPoint presentations - "NEFA Native Arts Program Assessment" and "Establishing International Alliances" capture the talking points of this meeting). This study will provide an overview of current program activities while articulating a strategy for long-term sustainability. My findings are presented topically, drawing out micro and macro level analyses.



Rhonda Besaw detail: <http://rhondabesaw.com/>

¹ One apparent problem with the directory however is that roughly half of the names I sought to contact listed out of date information. I understand that this listing will be transferred to an on-line data directory similar to NEFA's MatchBook.org, a free online performing arts directory. An important conversation should be had concerning the characterization of the listing as established artists have indicated they would likely not wish to be listed with emerging artists in the same source-book fashion.

Research Strategies

It is important to note my assumptions in terms of research strategies for this evaluation. Often funders utilize a type of evidence-based analysis that seeks key outcomes in relationship to clearly stated goals. For example, a funding agency may seek to reduce crime in a neighborhood by 50% in response to a neighborhood watch program being implemented. Pre-research data and post-research outcomes are quantifiably measured.

Alternately, organizations might apply a type of realistic evaluation, in which the outcomes of policy are tested to see how new programs are received under certain conditions. Is poverty reduced in a given population, for example, by grants, workshops and training in small business management?

The problem with both evidence and realistic based appraisals is that other causal factors are often overlooked. Perhaps crime reduction is achieved due to increased social support services, or poverty reduction impacted by a new business being opened. In addition, the structure of the organization being evaluated is often overlooked in evidence-based approaches. In other words, a more inclusive evaluation would consider its own organizational culture as well as community trends in the culture it is attempting to impact.

In the arts, clear program outcomes are often difficult to quantify. NEFA's most recent reports list the following as stated goals for the Native Arts program:

- A. Build NEFA's organizational capacity to provide leadership in support of Native American artists and Native-led organizations.
- B. Expand NEFA's contacts with Native artists in New England and nationally.
- C. Raise the visibility of New England Native artists and Native organizations.
- D. Organize and facilitate gatherings and forums that strengthen connections among Native artists and organizations.
- E. Explore a variety of means of creating networks and communications among Native artists, Native-led organizations, and tribal entities.

As evidence in support of these goals, NEFA reports list: increased listings in the artist directory it publishes, the number of grants distributed, successful gatherings and workshops, positive feedback from artists in questionnaires and multiple partnerships. While these quantifiable outcomes are often required by the granting agencies, the "numbers game" often misses the exposure and consideration of deeper levels of analysis, including what I will term in this report "enduring tensions."

Enduring tensions (macro data) include: the arts/crafts divide, traditional or modern, regional and national considerations, marketability vs. preservation of culture, the role and expectations of the artist, questions of native identity, the perceived barriers or challenges for native artists, and perceptions of Native New England's invisibility. When these qualitative issues are not dealt with directly, confusion results in the minds of the funders and the grantees. My approach is not to pretend to resolve these

pressing social issues, but to dissect them, to clarify, to demonstrate willingness and even a dogged persistence in dismantling the assumed wisdoms that have congealed around Native life and art ways.

This research employs a “complexity evaluation” approach in order to access deeper issues of social justice, economic parity and equitable representation of Native arts in New England. Complexity evaluations take into consideration the social and political contexts in which a policy or program is employed.¹ The dynamic, complex and multilayered impacts of communities, tribes, universities and granting agencies are taken into consideration. In addition, the subject populations, in this case the artists funded, serve as change agents, enacting a counter-push back on systems of representation as engaged participants. This two-way, dynamic system both creates and is created by policy changes and programs.

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Key Assumptions

This report starts from a framework of **resilience and strength** rather than from a perception of lacking or need.² When necessary, hard facts, such as ratios of poverty or narratives of historic trauma will be shared, but not in an effort to arouse sympathy or demonstrate insufficiencies. Rather, Native peoples and Nations are approached as intact and functioning within contexts that may negate their sovereignty and knowledge base. This approach mirrors the “asset-building framework” that characterizes many proactive philanthropic efforts today. Also known as a “community capacity model” this approach “emphasizes the capacities, skills, and assets in a community rather than its deficiencies and needs...A goal of the capacity model is for a community to begin assembling its assets and capacities into new combinations, new structures of opportunity, new sources of income and control, and new possibilities for production.”ⁱⁱⁱ

An additional nuance of the report findings is the inclusion of non-monetary assets as a component of NEFA’s efforts. Specifically, I will call out the social and **cultural capital** of NEFA’s Native Arts program as a starting point of discussions. I wish to bring this social capital more centrally to the fore in the discussion presented here by substituting a valid cultural presence for what has been termed in the previous program descriptions as an absence. This switch in perspective from the viewpoint of the mainstream (non-Natives erasing Native presence) to the viewpoints of Native people themselves (self-

² The notion of “embedded barriers” is rife throughout the Ford Foundation reports 2007 to the present: “embedded barriers,” cultural barriers, obstacles (Ford, July 2007, p. 2, p. 5, Aug. 2007 p. 3 “inferiority” Aug. 2007, p. 2 “Artists lack connectedness and ability to market work” May 2009 p. 3, May 2010 p. 13, 2011 p. 3, May 2012 p. 3 “remove obstacles”). Apparently this attitude was reflected in the Pam Kingfisher report of 2006 (Larsen Allen Public Service Group on behalf of the Ford Foundation), however I was unsuccessful in obtaining a copy of this report as NEFA does not have a record of it and the Illuminations portfolio under which it was commissioned is no longer funded.

recognition and awareness of one's own cultural values) is an important step towards **self-determination**.³

The collective interests and concerns of people overcoming social, political, and economic impediments - a "we" reference – are central to the program's future sustainability. Thus leadership is not positioned solely on the shoulders of an individual, but rather **leadership is a collective endeavor** where community concerns take precedence over the interests of an individual. What the non-profit world terms "capacity building" is borne by the community at large and not the specific responsibility of a sole individual within an institutional hierarchy.ⁱⁱⁱ



Left, Charles Shay and nephew Tim Shay, Penobscot Nation, Summer 2012. Schoodic International Sculpture Symposium, The University of Maine, Photo by Nancy M Mithlo. Right, recent work by Tim Shay. See: <http://www.timshaystudios.com/>

One of my main key findings is that the work of relationship building between NEFA and the Native arts constituencies it serves has only just begun.^{iv} Specifically, there is not evidence that NEFA is working with tribes to develop and promote its activities as originally defined in its early meetings in 2005 – “Engaging tribal governments and re-energizing their support for Native arts was critical.”^v I want to be clear that I am not advocating that an independent arts organization like NEFA ask tribal governments for permission for their activities, but that tribal communities are actively engaged in conversation.

NEFA's grant programming efforts starting in 2007 articulated the “capacity” of individual artists and the organization itself, rather than the communities it serves as collective units. I term this method of working

³ The notion of cultural capital is powerfully expressed in the context of Aboriginal art in the following discussion: “I think the debate and the change that we are about to experience is one where we want to bring cultural capital into the debate. We want to say as indigenous artists, we have the right to tell our stories in the way we want to tell them, not always about educating non-indigenous people along the way.” See: <http://www.currencyhouse.org.au/node/163>. Martin Portus (Currency House Board) chairs a forum on *Have Our Indigenous Arts Outgrown Public Policy* with Liza-Mare Syron (The Eora Centre for Aboriginal Studies), Wesley Enoch (Director) and Lydia Miller (Australia Council) at the Parade Playhouse, NIDA.

with Native communities the “at arm’s length” approach. Specifically, while trying to develop and maintain “an appropriate posture that is sensitive and respectful of Native culture and at the same time acknowledges the leadership, voices and self-determination of the Native community,”^{vi} NEFA has apparently overlooked the political dimensions of Native nationhood in preference to a self-authored Native advisory board and inclusion of individual Native staff and board members.⁴ My recommendation based on national standards is a **shared learning between funders and tribal communities**.

A related finding is the program outcome to serve as large a community of Native artists as possible. This broad inclusivity in attending to Native artists’ needs may be a result of an effort to mirror perceived Indigenous sensibilities; however, the approach actually evidences the misperception that all Natives are the same.

The multiple programs that NEFA’s Native arts offers (master apprentice, artist, artist exchange) and the granting to both individuals and organizations gives the impression that NEFA’s Native Art grants are available to all artists in any geographic area, in any medium and at any stage of their career, for any purpose (travel, supplies, mentorship, exchange). While this “be all things to all people” appears inclusive and democratic, this inclusiveness actually overlooks **core cultural beliefs in cumulative knowledge building**, the recognition of life stages, and appropriate age and generational responsibilities. This inclusivity additionally overlooks key historic and geographic specificities that critically inform the manner in which the arts are practiced, circulated and interpreted.

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The multiplicity of application opportunities in practice pits cultural organizations that serve dozens against a single artist for the same grant funding. It also inappropriately places elders in competition with youth. What NEFA’s Native Arts program lacks is the **articulation of clear and distinct program goals that serve specific community needs**. While listening to artists’ needs is to be applauded, ignoring the leadership advice of key cultural workers in advisory positions is not productive. My professional recommendation is for NEFA to articulate the pressing political and social needs of tribal communities and articulate these “content” topics as a call for response from artists. An example provided in my PowerPoint (Initial Findings, September 28, 2012) to NEFA staff is the state of Maine’s establishment of a “Truth and Reconciliation” committee in response to historic foster care abuses in Native communities.⁵

⁴ The 2007 report to the Ford Foundation explicitly cites the early pre-Native Arts program meetings, citing directly from the Ranco report of 2006 that “engaging tribal governments” was critical. However, I do not see adequate evidence that this approach was adopted. Several informants/collaborators to this study stated that NEFA did not approach tribal governments.

⁵ “On May 24, Altvater, a member of the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik (Pleasant Point, Maine) and of the Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission, participated in a public ceremony at the Penobscot Indian Nation’s Sockalexis Bingo Palace on Indian Island to launch a Truth and Reconciliation process.” See:

<http://www.mpbn.net/DesktopModules/PDGNews/MediaPlayer.aspx?PDGNewsStoryID=22562&PDGNewsMediaID=5517&TabID=1159&ModuleID=3762>

Parameters

NEFA's schedule for this Native Arts program review was a 75-day period from contract signing to delivery of a final review. My own research philosophy, what I term American Indian Curatorial Practice, identifies Indigenous research methodology in the arts as having four characteristics: long-term, reciprocal, mutually meaningful and with mentorship. If even one of these characteristics is missing, then the research is not being pursued according to Indigenous values. The short window of research time, my status as an outside researcher, the lack of reciprocity and mentorship are all serious concerns, for myself as an indigenous scholar and for NEFA's Native Arts program and its standing in the Native community. So, why did I accept the contract and pursue research that appears to de-value my core beliefs in proper research practice?

I was trained at an early stage of my professional career that when you are asked to do something, it is because you are the appropriate person to do that task – that you have the proper training and that you are of the right frame of mind to complete the job. I was asked by key people in the field to respond to NEFA's call for proposals. When NEFA staff called me to be interviewed, I happened to be in Maine already on another research project and could travel to the NEFA offices in Boston fairly easily. Meeting the Native Arts program Manager Dawn Spears and the NEFA staff, I felt comfortable. In short, I thought I could make a positive contribution to the communities of New England arts and to the NEFA board, staff and constituents. The urgency of the need overrode my articulation of core research qualities. In essence, I read this task as a cultural responsibility.



<http://www.elizabethjamesperry.com/index.php>

Earning the trust of artists and administrators to conduct interviews in such a short time was difficult. As one artist observed, (and this is paraphrased) "People are cautious, most of us have day jobs and people can be very busy. Some of us know Dawn and do not want to do anything to jeopardize her position. The enthusiasm for the start up of the Native arts program is gone. The amount of funding is low – this is a tough economy. Anyone who is not invested in NEFA would not have much to say." Another collaborator commented (paraphrased): "timing - all of these artists are scrambling just to find enough work to survive, so they wouldn't see this as a priority, and August is often their busiest time with powwows, etc. When there are problems, most folks don't like to discuss them with outsiders."

While these inhibitors were a challenge to gathering stories and opinions, I was fortunate to make contact with 13 local artists and advisors, 11 who shared rich data for the study. 12 additional contacts were made nationally. Future NEFA program assessment could ideally be conducted by an elder (or elders) who could monitor the program over time, periodically speaking to the participants about core beliefs and actions.

Quantitative data gathering that is directly sponsored by the institution seeking its own evaluation information is compromised in several ways. Participants who directly benefit from program activities are not inclined to critique their sponsors, especially in the context of an institutionally hosted event. Additionally, the “instrument” that one utilizes to ask questions is already weighted with core cultural and philosophical assumptions that the respondent has no ability to critique. I sought qualitative data and used open-elicitation questions. I approached those interested in contributing to the study by asking, “What are the Native Arts program’s strengths, challenges and future?” Respondents were able to contribute as much or as little as they desired in a conversational style.

It is important that I am transparent in my position as a researcher. I am a Chiricahua Apache and an academic, with strong ties to the tribal college system – specifically the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico where I was a student, and have served as a teacher, curriculum-builder, editor, and writer. My tribe is located in western Oklahoma, where the Mithlo family largely lives and where I participate in the cultural life of our community. I taught for six years at Smith College in Western Massachusetts and was a member of the Five College Native American Indian Studies cohort. I have been fortunate to mentor many Northeast Natives and visit students in their homes. I am also a Ford Foundation grant recipient for the “American Indian Curatorial Practices” initiative from 2007 to 2012. This collective prism of experiences is the window from which I view the Native Arts program efforts at NEFA.

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FINDINGS

The Native Arts program at NEFA has achieved remarkable gains from its inception in 2005. 84 grants have been funded since the first round of applications was offered in 2007. Compelling stories of the grantees’ experiences are documented in the rich source data NEFA generates in program reports and grant applications. In particular, NEFA Native Arts program’s “Stories of Impact” section of their latest (May 31, 2012) Ford Foundation report provides rich qualitative data attesting to the fine work that the Native Arts program has accomplished. Likewise, the NEFA report to the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation (NACF) dated December 11, 2011 contains excellent source material. The “Impacts, Benefits and Outcomes to the Community” section of the NACF report provides pertinent and compelling narratives conveying the very real and sustained benefits of NEFA’s efforts on behalf of the Native New England arts community.

Because these program reports provide such thorough documentation of past projects, I will not attempt to simply duplicate these findings in this report. Rather, I hope to draw threads of influence between program aims and outcomes, providing a more nuanced approach to developing a case for support. My findings are presented in macro and micro data fields.

Macro Findings

Topic: Protect Access to Resources

Observation: Few programs deal directly with environmental protection issues.

Recommendation: A 2011 International Funders for Indigenous People's report states that 44% of an estimated \$54 million dollars given to indigenous peoples internationally in 2008 went to environmental issues. The arts represented only 6% of this amount. NEFA's program activities to date do not significantly address the environmental underpinnings for Native arts practices.

Community Feedback: RE: Materials and material security - "Secure resource rights for ash, secure coastal areas for access to sweetgrass, ensure that those gathering resources are compensated, work with others in tribal governments and communities to secure resource rights, develop a plan for health care and occupational hazards, program for short term financing so artists can purchase materials, central purchasing of materials, a working group to meet regularly about resource access and preservation, develop laws to protect resources." Darren Ranco, "Summary of Findings of the New England Native American Artist Gatherings November 11-12, 2005 and February 3-4, 2006"

"In New England there is obvious environmental damage, loss of resources and availability of resources. Due to private property, it is difficult to get what we need, to get access to water. These are stumbling blocks we have to overcome. Shellfish hatcheries have genetically-altered shellfish. These are pre-disposed to be white shell, not purple and are thinner shells. What kind of impact does that have on us as artists? There are no laws pertaining to these issues. We are pushing on our tribal government side of things so our traditional arts survive." Jonathan Perry, interview, October 12, 2012.

"Traditional Indigenous arts go directly back to the earth. If we don't take care of that we will not have the raw materials to make baskets, drums. One of our messages is to take care of the earth, even in small ways." Joseph Firecrow, Jr., October 12, 2012.

Topic: The Artist's Role "Doing it all" and Marketing

Observation: Onus on Native artists to be business people. No consideration of training a cadre of arts professionals as administrators, art writers, theorists/educators.

Recommendation: Reconsider the assumption that all artists should be trained as competent grants writers and business managers. Reframe the qualification in previous grant proposals of "cultural barriers" to becoming successful economically in the arts to an attitude of "cultural capital." Target funding efforts to support Native arts professionals. Respect Indigenous Life Plans. "Most Indigenous communities and organizations have developed life-plans. What are Life-plans? Indigenous Amazonian Peoples use the

term 'lifepans' to differentiate from 'development plans' to highlight that in their worldview, their existence, along with their territory and natural world, is more important than the Western concept of economic development."

Community Feedback: "The role of the artist is to create things that have not been seen in that perspective – that are unique. An artist makes an independent observation of the world that is done with a level of precision that cannot be duplicated." Jeremy Frey, interview, October 12, 2012.

"We assume artists are business people and social organizers." Joan Lester, interview, October 3, 2012.

"Fundors are taxing artists in certain ways, especially in this economic climate." Anonymous program funder, October, 2012.

"Artists are not writers." Anonymous artist, interview, October, 2012.

Proposals that embrace market training:

"I would like to see more funding for artists business and marketing development." Anonymous artist, October 2012.

"There should be training for native artisans- such as the curriculum provided by First Peoples Fund to help native artists advance their businesses. The NEFA should subcontract First Peoples Fund, like the Four Directions Development Corp and the other tribal CDFI's in the country are doing, not try to reinvent the wheel- also this supports the other Native arts organizations who work on a fee for service basis and who are making great positive changes in Indian country." Theresa Secord, interview, October 3, 2012.

"The biggest challenge to NEFA and Native artists is the economy. The remedy is to find ways to make our work a sustainable industry. I suggest creating artist links to gift shops and museums. Identify products that are in demand. I think that NEFA should track vending events and offer planning grants to instruct the organizers on promotion and consolidating events. For instance: if there are four separate events being planned in Boston for December find a way to join forces and make them into one event. Last winter there were two separate Native events at Harvard on the same day." Robert Peters, October 10, 2012.

"The tourism that New England towns enjoy today was built on the backs of Native people and taken away. The market was taken away when they removed Native people to elsewhere, when they removed access points to Native regions at inns and docks. What you see in New Mexico or Arizona today was here 150 to 200 years ago in Iroquoian communities. Things tend to be cyclical. Artists in New England are savvy to this. They come from generations of dealing with that. Native arts have moved on but the knowledge of how to do it has not left us. The young need to be able to come up in the art world. To know it has a place and respect for you." Jonathan Perry, interview, October 12, 2012.

Topic: Engaging Tribal Governments

Observation: The work of relationship building between NEFA and the Native arts constituencies it serves has only just begun. Specifically, there is not evidence that NEFA is working with tribes to develop and promote its activities as originally defined in its early meetings in 2005.

Recommendation: Communication with Native nations sounds simple, but realistically it entails the willingness to take some risk. A commitment to working with communities is taking responsibility to owning up to transgressions one may be guilty of in the process of communication with tribal representatives. If a funder is really responsible, ideas and perspectives are forwarded. If these ideas do not match the context of community need, sometimes there are consequences. These mistakes are a natural and an almost guaranteed aspect of transcultural dialogue.

Community Feedback: "It was recognized that engaging tribal governments and re-energizing their support for native art was critical, not only to Native individual artists, but also to the funding agencies that fund Native arts programs." Darren Ranco, "Summary of Findings of the New England Native American Artist Gatherings November 11-12, 2005 and February 3-4, 2006"

"Tribes are a tough nut to crack. Most funders want to go to tribal communities and find they are not invested, and are surprised." Anonymous program funder, interview, October 2012.

"If NEFA had also cultivated a little bit of a relationship with tribes, rather than just reach out or be available to individual artists, tribes could have gotten out the word and possibly provided feedback all along (for the life of the Native Arts Program). I don't know if that is something that NEFA would consider politically stupid. But it would have been a good idea. I think." Anonymous artist, interview, September 2012

"Tribes should support, and to an extent tribal leadership does support the arts. What has happened - our tribe is obsessed with money. Any art that goes to our tribe is given away or sold." Anonymous artist, interview, October, 2012.

"All area tribes, federal, state, and unrecognized, should contribute money, but also other capital, other non-monetary resources like space, venues to show and perform." Anonymous artist, interview, October, 2012.

"The community often does not know what the tribe has to offer. There are so many places you can effect change – the senior center, schools, museums." Toni Scott, interview, October 12, 2012.

"Communication between NEFA and tribal nations is beneficial. Education and service departments can help in identifying and encouraging younger folk coming up to look at opportunities. Post grant opportunities in tribal papers; get word out through tribal services. Tribal program staff can promote projects." Jonathan Perry, interview, October 12, 2012.

"The tribes and lack of support for or real interest in, arts. It is correct to say that here, our small number of tribal employees are serving a bigger membership than our resources, their time and hours can easily

support. I also think that its a personality issue, and that the kinds of people who go into politics aren't necessarily the ones who are too involved in arts, or with practicing artists. But I think there are departments within the tribe that are poised to become involved, perhaps out of suggestions or requirements of a First Peoples Fund -some grant they got for mentoring teens. The employees were very concerned apparently by the kinds of things that were being written on surveys the kids filled out, and knew culture/art could be a key to helping." Anonymous artist, interview, October 2012.

The funding offered by NEFA is immeasurable for me. As an artist and as a tribal member. They have sponsored a few projects I've been fortunate to take part in. Considering the contributions made to our community over the years I don't know where our tribe would be or what our future generations will see. The funding provided by NEFA while constructing our longhouse several years ago prompted our tribal council to match the full allotment from NEFA (\$3k) dollar for dollar. This was unprecedented since our tribal council has never designated any funding for any of our traditional dwellings I often volunteer to construct for the community. That longhouse still stands in our community. Along with it, the pride in each individual who participated. Youth & elders worked side by side throughout that particular project which I also find immeasurable." Annawon Weeden, interview, October 12, 2012.

Topic: Documentation: Tell Our Story – Cultural Capital

Observation: NEFA funders and constituents talk passionately about the stature of the Native Arts community in New England, yet vibrancy is not effectively conveyed in grant proposals.

Recommendation: Profile the compelling ways that Native arts in New England work to bring recognition and pride to Native communities while addressing the misperceptions of the non-native community.

Community Feedback: "Several artists agreed that they want documentation and feedback, and want to preserve processes for those who come after." Marge Bruchac report "New England Foundation for the Arts and Maine Basketmakers' Guild, Native American Artists' Gathering, August 7, 2006, Portsmouth, New Hampshire"

"There is a problem with cursory or shallow writing with no real insight. Especially previews, not reviews of shows. There is less about the artist and more about who is talking about the art. We are proposing in our organization the development of 30/60 minute spots to tell our story, to describe the power and impact of Native arts." Anonymous program funder, interview, October 2012.

"NEFA space-no space seems allocated to the display of any Native arts produced in the grant, nor is there some catalogue of past projects with quotes and interviews, etc. How are these experiences being captured? What lasting impact will any of us or our art have, without the encouragement of local and national agencies? Does NEFA's Native Arts program consider ways they could help artists achieve modest success? Where will we exhibit our art? Is it at all possible to guide artists through the process of getting exhibited and gaining recognition? Is there a way showcase Native Arts through a partnership?" Anonymous artist, interview, October, 2012.

"Boston Children's Museum has been committed to working with Native communities in New England since 1972! They just completed and are now circulating an exhibit entitled Native Voices from New England,

created with a 12 member Native advisory board. I think they might be interested in a NEFA exhibit. I am a consultant still, and know the new curator if you think that's of interest. Otherwise, I'm wondering about Mashantucket Pequot or one of the other museum sites where NEFA held their meetings. Funding is a tougher question, especially given this economy. I wonder about Mass Council for the Humanities or Mass Council for the Arts." Joan Lester, interview, October 9, 2012.

"NEFA needs to seek recognition and network with performers that pull people in. Find ways to bridge gaps. Find a way to bring in the community at large, not just the Native community. I would be as creative as I could about reaching out. The First People's Fund Community Spirit Award had an art auction, brought in sponsors, senators, the mayor, the award took all of 5 minutes, but it was a tangible way to get behind and support the organization." Anonymous artist, interview, October 2012.

"Just getting the word out is the biggest thing. Let the press know. More people, a bigger venue. You have to have a draw for people to show up." Joe Firecrow Jr., interview, October 12, 2012.

Re: the art auction at Native Arts and Cultures Foundation gala. "Not about dollars – it's about getting the word out." Anonymous artist, interview, October, 2012.

"You cannot close yourself off and become an entity unto yourself and not let people understand you as a people and as a tribe. It behooves us as a tribe to have the larger community know of us as a reality and not just word of mouth. Art is a very clear way of accomplishing that. Good dialogue is another. Art bridges gaps." Toni Scott, interview, October 12, 2012.

"Native arts are a huge untapped resource. In Boston, the Museum of Fine Arts – make sure Native exhibits are there on a regular basis. Outdoor installations, people have to see and acknowledge the Native presence in New England. NEFA has helped advance that; there is huge growth and opportunity. Native people need to continue art forms by expressing themselves in physical form. Young generation needs to see itself on a daily basis in buildings, designs and markers that remind them of their predecessors. Help to grow, develop, pursue any kind of field or opportunity in the arts field – architectural forms, city planner, graphic designer. There is no perceived opportunity from the outside world to encourage Native youth. NEFA can play a role in that opportunity to support artists." Jonathan Perry, interview, October 12, 2012.

Topic: Program Sustainability

Observation: NEFA's current Native Arts program is dramatically altered with the end of Ford Foundation funding. The current program as positioned is not fundable.

Recommendation: Celebrate the many achievements of NEFA's Native arts initiatives for the six years it enjoyed Ford program support. Curtail the existent program offerings that are multi-focused. Exercise leadership in authoring a new vision for the future (see more under general program recommendations below, adjacent to Conclusion section.) Develop an arts leadership initiative that targets key tensions in A) access to recourses, legal approaches and B) international exchanges.

Community Feedback: “The primary goal is to create a sustainable program after the grant funding (Ford) ends.”

Marge Bruchac report “New England Foundation for the Arts and Maine Basketmakers’ Guild, Native American Artists’ Gathering, August 7, 2006, Portsmouth, New Hampshire”

“Long term program sustainability is the greatest challenge for Native Arts @ NEFA” (Ford report, 2009, p. 5).

“We need to empower Native artists to develop leadership models within their own communities – a model of funding that is a shift from NEFA’s usual work of supporting individual artists.”

Marge Bruchac report “New England Foundation for the Arts and Maine Basketmakers’ Guild, Native American Artists’ Gathering, August 7, 2006, Portsmouth, New Hampshire”

“Get inside doors of tribal agencies and demonstrate economic impact.” Anonymous program funder, interview, October 2012.

“Several foundation officers described the need for more leadership development in Native communities. There is no doubt that there is a need for the development of comprehensive Native leadership programs but there is also an indication that leadership is yet another subject that some foundation officers, and more traditional-oriented Native people view quite differently.”^{vii}

Micro Findings

Topic: Emerging Artists and Mid-career Artists: Recognizing the Differences

Observation: NEFA’s current funding of both emerging and mid career artists creates tension leading to lack of participation.

Recommendation: Create separate categories of funding, so that emerging and established artists are not in competition with each other for the same grants. Ideally, these opportunities are geared to content-specific grants. For example, international exchange grants should be reserved for mid-career artists. Arts professional training or mentorship opportunities are reserved for emerging artists.

Community Feedback: “The emphasis on community needs to be leavened with a newer focus on, and commitment to, professional development for mid-career artists.”

“I also have heard that beginning artists are reluctant to be in competition with established ones, which could serve as a deterrent for the beginners. Beginning artists do not want to compete with older artists. It is intimidating for people applying for the first time... Perhaps there could be two competition categories.” Joan Lester, interview, October 3, 2012.

“Competitive grants for more advanced artists. Encourage them to advance to another level. Even third level of grant opportunities for folks. Get people to the point of artist residencies... international exchanges.” Jonathan Perry, October 12, 2012.

“A need for unrestricted, merit-based funding. Not project-based.” Anonymous artist, interview, October, 2012.

“Mid-career artists struggle with access to institutions, markets, establishing their name, moving through the gauntlet of supports...” Anonymous program funder, October, 2012.

“Grant funding should go to emerging artists. Artists that can feed themselves don’t need to be fed.” Anonymous artist, interview, October 2012.

Topic: Artists Compete with Organizations for NEFA Native Arts Funding

Observation: Tension exists in the field due to the perceived competition between organizations that serve many and individual artists under the same grant opportunity.

Recommendation: My professional recommendation is to structure the grants so that this overlap does not occur. In concert with the findings above concerning senior and emerging artists, program content can drive the eligibility criteria. For example, perhaps arts training or mentorship opportunities are only funded through arts organizations.

Community Feedback: “NEFA should fund organizations to reach more artists and provide more opportunities.” Anonymous arts administrator, October, 2012.

“A problem- is the fact that individual artists can receive the same amount and in some grants higher amounts (\$5K) grant than an organization- that serves dozens of tribal artisans. There should be a separate category for native arts organization grants and these grants should start at \$5 and go as high as \$20k. For example, right now Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance (150+ artists in the group) wishes to receive support for its large tribal community basketry workshops on the 5 reservation communities in Maine, where as many as 15 (including youth mentors) teach upwards of 80 the entire process of basketry from the ash log to the finished basket. The largest grant we can receive for this work is \$3k, the same amount an individual artist can receive for a small project to make their own art.” Theresa Secord, interview, October 3, 2012.

“There is an expectation from the community to provide for the community, not individual artists.” Anonymous program funder, October, 2012.

“I would not want to take from individual artist, the opportunity to grow. Would not want to see it take from individual grant opportunity. Develop own style, more research, history of art form, support the development of the individual. An organization would not do the same thing. It would not encourage the development of the artist, but encourage the production of artwork, making enough inventory. Especially for people not used to being at large art festivals.” Jonathan Perry, interview, October 12, 2012.

Topic: Institutional Culture of NEFA

Observation: As a non-Native organization, certain structural boundaries exist that inhibit Native Arts program success. Indigenous leadership and community protocol need to be respected.

Recommendation: Move the conversation away from focus on “capacity building” of Indigenous practitioners and move towards building a conversation with Native professionals, organizations, communities and tribes that respects the unique perspectives of diverse communities. The International Funders for Indigenous Peoples frames this perspective as follows, “When we speak about the rights of Indigenous Peoples, let us not forget that Indigenous Peoples are constantly looking for partnership with local or global collaborators who would empower them with a development approach that is based on Dignity and Identity, an approach that builds on social solidarity and the ethos of sharing and harmony, that upholds the preciousness of traditional lands and territories to Indigenous communities, that promotes a string gender focus, that respects traditional experiences and yet that has no fear of modern challenges.”

Community Feedback: “I am so impressed with the dedication and energy of the staff, especially the time, caring and support of Dawn Spears. She is so engaged with the people, reaches out to all who are interested, puts in so much of her own personal time and travels vast distances to be available.” Joan Lester, interview, October 3, 2012.

“Dawn needs greater autonomy. Program needs strong leadership and vision and leadership needs to be exercised. Problems with leadership structure. Person above Dawn insensitive to situation.” Anonymous arts administrator, September 2012.

“The challenge is that it is embedded within a non-Native organization and struggles to find its place within the context of programming. This is a concern to funders. It is not always about money.” Anonymous program funder, October, 2012.

“Struggles with NEFA’s leadership that need to be broken down. While enthusiastic about Native arts, not specific about where it wants to pursue funding.” Anonymous program funder, October, 2012.

“NEFA is not visible at Native art conferences nationally.” Anonymous art administrator, October, 2012.

Charges of cultural insensitivity by non-Natives on Native lands - “Does NEFA understand who they are funding and why? There is a real lack of understanding of, regard for, or involvement with -Indigenous people here in the New England area on the part of cultural and arts agencies, though the Ford Foundation may have provided money to jump-start some modest grant-making to Native artists, the overall structure, approach, ignorance does not seem to have changed. At the end of the day, the expectation is that the burden is on real Indians, in real Indian communities that predate the existence of cities in "New England" by thousands of years, making real, ancient and very endangered art, to politely explain who we are and what we do and where we do it, again and again. Still without much changing. Still without many or better opportunities coming our way, here near our traditional homelands.

This problem is much bigger than NEFA of course. But what happened to being extra-courteous to creative people, and being mannerly and grateful when one has a chance-as a Native or Non-Native person- to visit artists in their community?” Anonymous artist, September, 2012.

“When NEFA 's representatives come to communities I feel they should take the time to look at the communities projects.” Anonymous artist, October 2012.

Topic: Grants, Review of Grants, Types of Grants, Amount of Grants

Observation: Grant funding to date has enabled a diverse group of Native New England artists to move forward as a collective. Past trends including: self taught artist, ideas of authenticity and stereotypes, economic development via the arts, art vs. craft, victimization, isolation, individual craftsperson are eclipsed by current trends: formal education, professionalization, mobility via the web, new art forms, agency, content-rich works, non-commercial and global concerns.

Recommendation: NEFA should move towards incorporating current trends in Native art perspectives and activities.

Community Feedback:

Grants –

“Positives include: accessibility, overall reputation of the New England Foundation for the Arts, Dawn Spears and staff of the program are approachable people, Dawn is an enrolled member of a Federal New England tribe and an artist herself, relatively easy application process, with a quick turn around time for awards or rejections, feedback is provided from the review process, that an artist is encouraged to re-apply, that there is a Native program at NEFA at all.” Anonymous artist, September 2012.

“The feedback I gave on the grant application process was listened to. They made it easier to complete the application.” Anonymous artist, October, 2012.

“A big challenge is the distance and location of the office to the field.” Theresa Secord, October 3, 2012.

“This is a source for everyone in the area to go to that is solely for Native arts.” Anonymous artist, October 2012.

“The support of a diverse group of artists is a strength.” Jonathan Perry, interview, October 12, 2012.

“The community outreach is good. NEFA helps create public art in the community.” Anonymous artist, October, 2012.

“I think that NEFA does a great job letting people know what is available - lots of emails sharing programs deadlines and training sessions. And they are quick to respond to questions.” Judy Dow, artist interview, October 5, 2012.

“Have to get rid of Culture Count. Elders or people without good coping skills would give up on the application process.” Anonymous artist, October, 2012.

"NEFA makes an invaluable contribution to the field. The group of grants is rare in the field, only presence in that part of the country. Trying to imagine the field without that support, it's a huge hole. Their survival is important." Anonymous program funder, October, 2012.

"I think that NEFA's strengths are in the community outreaches that present the various programs available throughout New England. The final reporting was difficult. For the future, artists need development with technology" Anonymous artist, October, 2012.

Advisory board –

"Very impressed. Very thoughtful. The guidelines made me think and helped me know what I believe." The panel "All knew each other and knew where the grants would fall. These people already knew what most people would say." "I hope I get to serve again. Keep some panelists, bring in new folks." Joan Lester, interview, October 3, 2012.

"Grant panelists/reviewers may not always be as professionally experienced and as objective as one could wish" Anonymous artist, October, 2012.

"Feedback on grants was not helpful or professionally worded. It was totally confusing. I sit on review committees and know that the staff should re-word or edit the grant reviewer comments." Anonymous artist, October 2012.

"I assume NEFA has too small a pool of panelists to choose from. Panelists need to be knowledgeable in all areas." Anonymous artist, interview, October 12, 2012.

"Whole panel needs to be re-vamped." Anonymous artist, interview, October 12, 2012.

"Sometimes you have to sacrifice people's emotions and feelings to get to perfection. Business is competitive enough, especially the music business." Joseph Firecrow Jr., interview, October 12, 2012.

Workshops/Gatherings –

"...the sheer joy and productive nature of the meetings revealed to many of the participants the need to recognize each other as part of a larger group." Darren Ranco, "Summary of Findings of the New England Native American Artist Gatherings November 11-12, 2005 and February 3-4, 2006."

"I would love to see 'kitchen table gatherings' where small groups of Native artists could just get together over coffee and tea and talk about problems and successes with their art. Something informal like this often brings up new and different ideas. A smaller setting lets people feel safer to talk." Judy Dow, artist interview, October 5, 2012.

"Native artists would benefit from artist gatherings and networking – something identified in the early surveys, yet the distance and base again is a big challenge. It would be great if someone could access \$500 at NEFA to go spontaneously to a workshop or market for a one time deal without a ton of strings

attached – especially known artists who are in NEFA database and who have carried out grants successfully – with final reports – in the past.” Theresa Secord, interview, October 3, 2012.

“Guilds that can learn from each other’s experiences, a workshop so artists, accountants, photographers, computer specialists can work together to develop portfolio and communicate their art, cultural retreats, work collaboratively with tribes.”

Darren Ranco, “Summary of Findings of the New England Native American Artist Gatherings November 11-12, 2005 and February 3-4, 2006”

“When you go to workshops, you meet other Native Americans who are not in your tribe and see what they are doing, how they are doing it, what they think. Excellent networking. Now I have started weaving baskets. I was exposed to that through NEFA.” Toni Scott, interview, October 12, 2012.

“I would come if expenses paid. For other people they would need a stipend as many of them have other jobs. It is worth it to come together for the survival of the art - to teach and learn, meet and network, collaborate.” Anonymous artist, interview, October, 2012.

Re: gathering in Ledyard CT at the Pequot Museum last spring for Folklorists and Native Artists –

“Somehow people could not quite connect, or be comfortable around each other. I really enjoyed the two films shown. Perhaps the setting-a dark mostly empty amphitheater with a small stage and a few chairs table, spotlight-were not conducive to us being able to share across disciplines, age lines, Native Nations. Too static. We were filmed and I bet it looks too static. Why were we filmed? Then too the facilitator did not come across as being at ease. I suspect the program was put together hastily.

RE: suggestion of meeting space – “Outdoor space would be my number one pick, and one could have walking breaks, or creative movement to break up the day. I don’t like depending upon doing artwork demos during discussions or presentations, because I don’t like the appearance –‘Indian Crafts Day.’ But perhaps one or two artist demos talks-quick ones, and a storyteller -even if they only told their story in their language and didn’t translate it-would have changed and enlivened things. Or have a short musical interlude. Or a kids hand drum group-no over-explaining, no apologies. And ... no dry listing of grant types, fellowships money and deadlines, but truly engaging discussions about the state arts program attendees about what they do, their range of experiences, and why they do it; where could we go from here...” Anonymous artist, interview September, 2012.

“The events we attend need entertainment. They should be fun. There should be presentations, music, and interactive activities. Vendors could be given the opportunity to talk about their work.” Robert Peters, interview, October 8, 2012.

“The challenges that I am aware of continue to be encouraging a wider group of interested artists to respond. I would suggest this issue has three parts: knowledge of the program (which Dawn is actively working on); reluctance or the struggle required to write a proposal, and competition between incipient and established artists. In terms of proposal writing, my Tufts experience with museum school students suggests that they are not writers, but artists who think and work visually. Again, Dawn is offering proposal writing help but perhaps rather than just an offer of assistance, there could be formal workshops where people bring their ideas and work on them there, with solid guidance on site. I also

have heard that beginning artists are reluctant to be in competition with established ones, which could serve as a deterrent for the beginners... Perhaps there could be two competition categories. And the final challenge, which again relates to writing, is completing the final report (a reluctance that is universal)." Suggestions for improving the final report include asking better questions - "What did you learn? What did you need that you do not have? What didn't work? What was your progress?" Joan Lester, interview, October 3, 2012.

Size of Awards -

"Small size of awards, and, though the Master Apprentice grant is a bit larger. I would also like to create larger pieces of art entirely on my own, without the stress of thinking that it would take probably 10 years in the current economic climate, for the large piece to sell (and for me to recover expense of materials and time, appropriate storage)." Anonymous artist, September 2012.

"The funding level is not enough to do anything significant" Anonymous arts administrator, October, 2012.

"If you do crafts for your own enjoyment, you don't need a grant. If you use that as a way to educate others...how will it help people understand better? What I want is for it to benefit me and others. Person with grant has to have some financial backing. You can't expect them to give you everything. I can't expect them to pay for this (equipment) entirely." Toni Scott, interview, October 12, 2012.

The size of the award "is like food stamps." Anonymous artist, September 2012.

"Artists who receive support speak highly about how it sustains their career and stimulates new work. Smaller funding can make a major impact." Anonymous funder, October, 2012.

"The scope of projects I want to do take more than \$3,000." Anonymous artist, interview, October, 2012.

ESTABLISHING INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCES (Prepared by Mario Caro, Ph.D.)

Given that NEFA has already established an international program through its Center Stage initiative, it is valuable to look at similar programming and fundraising opportunities for its Native Arts Program.

Unlike most cultural exchange programs, those that involve inter-Indigenous cultural exchanges will most likely involve more preparation from both host and guest. They will also provide more long-lasting rewards in terms of the various relationships established. Most Native communities operate, and have traditionally functioned, within an international system of cultural and economic exchanges. In fact, many Native traditions emphasize hosting protocols that have been maintained in anticipation of frequent encounters with other Native nations. These established protocols are powerful declarations of identity, sovereignty, and a willingness to engage the other with respect.

An effective way of acknowledging and exercising Northeast Native protocol traditions would be to produce opportunities for international cultural exchanges in which Northeast Native communities hosted other Indigenous communities. These opportunities not only affirm established traditions, they also provide

opportunities to revive lost ones. They provide distinct instances in which host communities clearly enunciate their traditional and contemporary cultural identities and histories.

Potential International Partners

There are many possibilities for establishing partners for programming inter-Indigenous cultural exchanges. The Northeast Native hosting communities themselves should be the ones to provide guidance as to the most appropriate exchanges to pursue. These decisions would be made according to already established traditional inter-tribal relationships, but would also take into account possibilities for establishing new relationships deemed advantageous on various fronts—cultural, economic, political, etc.

Of course, guest Indigenous communities can also contribute to the financial and logistical requirements of such an exchange. In addition, there are a variety of entities whose focus is to promote international cultural exchanges. These are found at regional (e.g. sister city initiatives,) state, and government levels (these include arts councils and embassies.)

There are also a variety of non-profit and non-governmental organizations devoted to facilitating cultural exchange. Some of these entities already have programs devoted exclusively to promoting Indigenous cultural exchanges worldwide. The International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies (IFACCA,) the global network of arts councils and ministries of culture, has been involved in studying international policy for Indigenous arts and has recently published a report of its findings to date, titled *D'Art Research Report No. 22 Indigenous Arts Policy: Initiatives and Challenges*.⁶

The report is based on work developed during its Indigenous Arts Policy Forum held in 2011, which identified issues such as cultural maintenance, ownership, copyright protection, promotion, funding, and infrastructures as the main issues for the development of Indigenous art policy.⁷ Part of their conclusion was that “countries with specific divisions or dedicated staff positions also tend to have more ongoing funding schemes and specific programs.”⁸(22) In addition to providing extensive information on the twenty-two international organizations that took part of their survey, the report also includes a listing of additional resources they have identified as organizations operating internationally.

Case Study

The kinds of possibilities for international programming described in detail in the IFACCA report can be best understood when looking at an organization in the U.S. that offers similar programming to the Native Arts programming offered by NEFA. The following is an overview of the international programming offered by the Longhouse Education and Cultural Center, an organization with a similar funding history for Native arts. The Longhouse is a non-profit organization that has been involved in the

⁶ IFACCA *D'Art Report No. 22: Indigenous Arts Policy: Initiatives and Challenges*. The report was published in May, 2012 and is available at <http://media.ifacca.org/files/D%27Art22IndigenousArtsPolicy.pdf>. In addition to listing information on the various organizations that took part in their study along with a description of their programming, the report also lists many other useful resources.

⁷ IFACCA *D'Art Report No. 22*, p. 3.

⁸ IFACCA *D'Art Report No. 22*, p. 22.

successful planning and implementation of these types of inter-Indigenous diplomatic endeavors for more than a decade.



The Longhouse Education and Cultural Center, Olympia, Washington

The Longhouse Education and Cultural Center is a 501(c)(3) organization whose focus is to “to promote indigenous arts and cultures through education, cultural preservation, creative expression and economic development.”⁹ They share a similar funding history to NEFA’s Native Arts program since they were also part of the cohort of grant recipients from the Ford Foundation’s Illumination Grant.¹⁰

The Longhouse Education and Cultural Center is located in Olympia, Washington, housed in a building whose architecture is very much informed by the traditions of the region. It is also an organization surrounded by vibrant Native communities deeply engaged in maintain and promoting their cultural heritage.

It is in this setting that in 2000 the Longhouse held an international gathering of 71 Indigenous artists from the Pacific Rim. This eight-day gathering marked the beginning of their international programming. It also established long-term relationships with the many Native nations participating in the gathering. In fact, the nation that participated that was farthest away, the Māori from Aotearoa/New Zealand, had hosted earlier encounters of this type and provided the model for the Longhouse’s project.

The Māori have since partnered with Longhouse to establish an art residency exchange. Through a relationship established with Te Waka Toi/Creative New Zealand, the government organization that funds the development of Māori arts, the Longhouse has been hosting Māori artists for a twelve-week stay.¹¹ The residency often involves engaging the artists with the various Native communities in a variety of projects.

Similarly, the Māori have provided residencies to Native artists from the Northwest.

The first Māori artist to be in residence was Christina Hurihia Wirihana, who is an established weaver. Her residency is exemplary in demonstrating the long-term engagement that has been established with the Māori. She has returned to the regions several times and has participated in various workshops and cultural events since then, as have many of the other Māori residents.

⁹ <http://www.evergreen.edu/longhouse/> Accessed on October 10, 2012.

¹⁰ An overview of the IllumiNation Intermediary Organization Regranting program, which took place between 2006 and 2008, can be found at <http://www.fordfoundation.org/pdfs/library/Native-Arts-and-Cultures.pdf>.

¹¹ For an overview of the Longhouse residency program visit <https://www.evergreen.edu/longhouse/residence.htm>.



Christina Wirihana, Senior Māori weaver at opening of *The Eternal Thread* in San Francisco, August 4-12, 2005

Exercising Welcoming Protocols

As with most Native communities, following protocols of engagement is crucial for the Māori. They provide an opportunity to demonstrate and affirm their own cultural identity while, at the same time, establishing and nurturing new relationships with other communities. This is particularly important in their adherence to exercising *powhiri*, or welcoming protocols. The Māori follow these protocols in a variety of settings, whether in intimate community gatherings or in official governmental meetings. An important aspect of their protocol, one that at times is employed to great political gain, is an acknowledgment of the standing of the guest.



Māori waka, or war canoe, navigating under Golden gate Bridge as part of welcoming ceremonies for *Eternal Thread* exhibition, 2005

An excellent example is when *The Eternal Thread-- Te Aho Mutunga Kore*, a large selection of Māori weavings opened at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco in 2005, an exhibition that was partly organized by Wirihana.

The opening of the show was preceded by an elaborate welcoming ceremony, which included navigating a waka, or war canoe, under the Golden Gate Bridge and onto the shore of San Francisco Bay. The most significant part of this ceremony was the careful coordination with the Ohlone community, the original inhabitants of the region now known as San Francisco, so that they would be the official hosts to welcome the Māori ashore. This strategically orchestrated event was politically effective in reaffirming the historical role of the Ohlone people in the region.

Establishing and nurturing alliances between local Northeast Native communities and international

Indigenous communities provides many opportunities for hosting and cultural exchanges, the kinds of activities already at the heart of many Native traditions.



Māori and Ohlone representatives performing the *hongi*, a part of the Māori welcoming ceremony. Photo by Paul Chinn, The Chronicle, permissions pending.

Resources for Building International Alliances

For a listing of international organizations--including governmental, non-governmental, and non-profit—that are specifically engaged in supporting international cultural exchanges, see the IFACCA report. Their listing includes the twenty-two respondents to their study plus other organizations listed under “Other Actors,” pages 25-33.

In addition, the following international residency networks can be accessed in investigating further collaborations and disseminating information on NEFA’s initiatives:

Alliance of Artists Communities

255 S Main Street

Providence RI 02903

Phone: 401-351-4320

info@artistcommunities.org

<http://www.artistcommunities.org/>

Res Artis: Worldwide Network of Artist Residencies

Sarphatistraat 470

1018 GW Amsterdam

The Netherlands

Phone: +31 617135449

office@resartis.org

<http://www.resartis.org>

TransCultural Exchange

516 East 2nd Street

Suite 30

Boston, MA 02127 USA

Phone: 617.464.4086

<http://www.transculturalexchange.org/>

Trans Artists

Arie Biemondstraat 105

Netherlands

Phone: +31-20-6127400

<http://www.transartists.org/>

RECOMMENDATIONS

I am moved by the power and spirit that is apparent in the Native Arts program outcomes to date. 154 applications from individual artists and organizations have been prepared and received in three different categories of funding: Native Arts New England, New England Master Apprenticeship, and the National Native Artist Exchange. The Native Arts workshops and gatherings as well as the Native Arts Directory have truly built a pan-tribal community of Native New England artists. The articulation of this community of artists is immeasurable. Now is the time to recognize this accomplishment and step forward.

Possible scenarios for NEFA's Native Arts program include:

- 1) Continue with the current program of funding, reducing the awards given to the amount of funding available. Recommendations for organizational and programmatic challenges addressed. The existing Native Arts Manager post stays intact.
- 2) Move the Native Arts program to an independent entity with NEFA serving as an umbrella fiscal agent. A manageable time frame for adaption to independent status should be supported.
- 3) Envelop Native Arts within current NEFA program efforts, ex: The Rhode Island 2008, National Dance Project, New England Regional Dance Development Initiative. The existing Native Arts Manager post stays intact.
- 4) Develop invigorated program efforts that embrace international exchange, celebration of accomplishments and focused programming tied to community concerns. This new programmatic structure will necessitate the hiring of a Native Arts Program Director whose administrative responsibilities are on equal footing with other program administrative posts. The existing Native Arts Manager post stays intact.

CONCLUSION

During my in-person meeting with the NEFA offices in September 2012, a program officer asked me directly, "Are you recommending that the Native Arts programs need to change?" I replied, "No, I am telling you that the Native Arts programs are changed. It is not my opinion, it is fact." I say this directly as an optimistic "Great job!" and as an indication of a new era. With the end of Ford Foundation major funding, opportunity exists for Native Arts to go back into the community with ideas and directions for the future. The sponsorship of international artist exchanges, the hosting of a retrospective exhibit and the continuation of specific programming efforts that tie directly to tribal community needs are potentially the future face of NEFA's Native Arts program efforts.

The recommendation to A) embrace Native New England's international indigenous presence, B) forward the artistic achievements of its artists for a broad public and C) focus funding efforts on social issues - advances the cultural capital of tribal nations. Narratives of poverty, invisibility and need are not

incorrect, but rather, this approach evidences the perspective of the outsider looking in. Native self-determination in the arts can embrace its many strengths, forwarding the need for respect, self-determination and mutual dialogue between funders and recipients.

ⁱ “Thinking only in terms of cause and effect is becoming obsolete. It will never be possible to determine precisely to what extent certain results or changes in the way societies or people behave can be attributed to a certain policy or programme. It is even less possible to determine this if the development effort is coming from a foreign country. The notions of causality and control must be replaced by notions of complexity and adaptation to complexity.” Evaluation Evolution? Three approaches to evaluation. Otto Hospes, June 16, 2008. <http://thebrokeronline.eu/en/layout/set/print/Articles/Evaluation-evolution>

ⁱⁱ John McKnight, “The Healthy Neighborhoods Project: A Local Health Department’s Role in Catalyzing Community Development,” Reprinted in “The Power of Art: The Arts as an Effective Intervention Strategy for At-Risk Youth.” Prepared for The California Endowment by Susan Anderson, Nancy Walch, and Kate Becker, 2003.

ⁱⁱⁱ Juana Bordas. 2007. *Salsa, Soul and Spirit: Leadership for a Multicultural Age*. (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.).

^{iv} At the 2011 Philanthropy Northwest conference, eight philanthropic leaders reflected on the significance of the Montana roundtables and the excitement they shared about learning together with Native leaders. While the conversation started by reflecting on the creation of *2030 Vision* and its goals, it quickly shifted to personal stories of relationship-building, appreciation, and applications of the vision to current philanthropic work. Building relationships in Indian Country is now a defining principle for Philanthropy Northwest. (Philanthropy Northwest)

^v Darren Ranco, “Summary of Findings of the New England Native American Artist Gatherings November 11-12, 2005 and February 3-4, 2006”

^{vi} New England Foundation for the Arts Final Report, The Ford Foundation July 18, 2007.

^{vii} Context is Everything: Reflections on Strengthening Partnerships Between the Philanthropic Community and native Americans.” A project of One Fire Development, Inc. <http://www.onefiredevelopment.org/index.php/2011/12/14/context-is-everything/>.