



Native Artists:

Livelihoods, Resources, Space, Gifts

Marcie Rendon | Ann Markusen

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Cover photos feature the artists and their work profiled in this study.

Photo of Thressa Foster by Cheryl Walsh Bellville. Photo of Laura Youngbird by Dee Jensen.

See individual profiles inside for photo credits.

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Marcie Rendon
Ann Markusen

Arts Economy Initiative
Project on Regional and Industrial Economics
Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs
University of Minnesota

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Preface and Acknowledgements

Collectively, Minnesota's Native artists do not enjoy the respect and income from their diverse artistic creations that Hopi, Navajo, and Pueblo artists enjoy in the southwest. Puzzled by this contrast, we set out in 2007 to explore the artwork and livelihoods of Minnesota's Ojibwe artists. From our prior research and personal experience, we drew up plausible reasons for this difference and added many more along the way. Our findings and recommendations, while based on Ojibwe artists in Minnesota, are relevant for indigenous artists everywhere, North American and globally.

Our goal was to understand how artists' training, employment and self-employment, access to space and resources, location, and commitment to community, culture, and environment shape their abilities to pursue their artwork seriously, earn a living from it, and have an impact. We spent two years sitting down with artists and gatekeepers one by one, listening to their stories and posing questions to them. In their accounts, we found so many marvelous as well as horrific experiences. So many resourceful ways they have figured out how to make a living from their work. So much blending of artistic creativity with community service. Such honoring of tradition while innovating for the contemporary world. Remarkable environmental knowledge and sensibilities. So many stunning encounters with racism, subtle and blatant. Such poverty and health challenges. Much geographic and institutional isolation.

Artists recounted good and bad interactions with knowledge, space, and resource gatekeepers. Since a number of funders and space managers have expressed a desire to better serve Native artists, we also sought to understand how teachers, funders, collectors, patrons, museum curators, galleries owners, casino managers, performance space managers, and tribal leaders view Native artists and their work. Here, too, we found an enormous range of practice, from inventive ways of encouraging, training, showcasing, and funding Native artists to articulated indifference or ignorant exasperation that "they" don't do it right.

We apologize to the many Native artists and gatekeepers whom we were not able to reach or interview during our field research. For every artist profiled in this study, from young and emerging to professional and renowned, there are two or three more whose work and insights deserve visibility. The same is true for the many arts and community organization leaders whose

activities shape Native artists' prospects. We also apologize to the visual artists whose beautiful color paintings, beadwork, dresses, dolls, quill boxes, and photographs we had to reproduce in black and white.

We are grateful to the McKnight Foundation, Vickie Benson, its Program Director, and Neal Cuthbert, its Vice-President for Program, for their support of this work, both financially and substantively. We would like to thank the many people, listed inside our back cover, who spoke to us or otherwise helped us gather and test out ideas and conclusions. Our research assistant, Andie Martinez, helped cull through historical research on Native artists in the Southwest as a prelude to this work. Our photographer, Cheryl Walsh Bellville, produced beautiful photos that capture each artist at his or her work, sometimes with their audiences or in their communities. Anne Gadwa, Anne Focke, Michael Leary and Paul Griffiths have helped to organize, edit, polish, and improve the sense of our findings. Our administrative assistants, Katherine Murphy and Mary Lou Middleton, helped us communicate with artists, correct and beautify our text, and manage the layout, production, and dissemination process. They have also added important insights and questions to the process. Kim Jackson worked her magic in graphic design. Our thanks to the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, for resources, staff, and space support. This study is dedicated to Minnesota's Native American artists, all of them, with gratitude for their amazing bodies of work and optimism for their futures.

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Executive Summary

Works created and delivered by Native artists are unique in the way they speak to contemporary urban and rural life. They preserve and celebrate the traditions of their people, offering opportunities for participation that would otherwise not be there. They provide bridges to the future for their own youth and between Native and non-Native communities. And they produce beautiful and moving music, images, spoken and written words. Yet Native artists find it difficult to make a living from their artwork.

In this study, we explore the nature of various challenges for Native artists and how their experiences are similar to and different from artists in general. They have high levels of self-employment, low incomes, and need to rely on non-arts jobs. Explicit racism has restricted access to art training and market development. The poverty of their own communities restricts the home market for their work. There is under-appreciation of Native artwork by the larger society and its gatekeepers and merchants. Geographical isolation, even in the city, throws up barriers to remunerative markets. Practices of funders, arts organizations and tribal governments and casinos constrain access to resources, space, and commissions. The diminution of Native landholdings and blocked access to private land makes the harvesting of traditional art-making materials difficult. The challenge of honoring tradition in artistic expression while trying to address today's changing social and political circumstances complicates creative work.

To explore these multiple dimensions, we chose to study Ojibwe artists in Minnesota. The research required traveling to and spending time on six reservations, nearby towns and larger cities. Minnesota hosts the United States' largest contingent of Ojibwe artists, a significant group of North American Woodland Indian artists whose traditions are rooted in the temperate forest, lake and river environment of the northeastern portion of North America. Ojibwe residents account for 60% of Minnesota Native population, with Plains Indian tribes accounting for 10%. The rest come from a surprising array of tribes, including Alaskan tribes, Blackfeet, Cherokee, Iroquois, and from Canada and Latin America. Ojibwe culture and history are quite distinct from that of the state's other Native groups and thus influence Ojibwe artwork and livelihoods. However, many of our findings apply to Native artists in general.

To frame the research, we posed the following questions at the outset:

Questions posed

- How do Native artists first choose artistic expression and develop their unique styles and practices?
- Have they been able to find the training, seed funding, space, and encouragement to develop their work as a livelihood?
- Have they found arts-related jobs and paying markets for their work and how satisfactory are these from income, aesthetic, and community service points of view?
- What challenges do Minnesota's Ojibwe artists face because of racism, geographic isolation, and strong community and spiritual rooting of Native cultural practice?
- What gifts do Native artists make to their communities, to Minnesotans as a whole, to the larger artistic world, and to each other?
- Why have incubating institutions that prepare Native artists for careers and markets for disseminating their work not evolved to date the way that they have for Pueblo, Navajo, Hopi, and other Native artists of the American southwest or Canadian indigenous people, including Ojibwe?
- How can Minnesota's Native artists and their tribal governments and enterprises (schools, casinos, social service complexes, community centers) improve the conditions for creation, presentation, marketing, and valuing of their work?
- How can non-Native educational, philanthropic, public sector, commercial, and cultural organizations improve the conditions for the same?

Research Design

To answer these questions, we first reviewed the history of Native art-making and its relationship to trading posts and the tourist trade in the 19th and 20th centuries, comparing the experience of Woodland artists in the Upper Midwest with that of other regions, especially the American Southwest. The purpose of this exercise was to explore why Woodland Indians of the American Upper Midwest and Northeast have not had access to the institutions that prepare and provide markets for Native artists in other regions, especially the Pueblo, Navajo, Hopi, and other tribes of the Southwest. We also gleaned what we could on the numbers of Native artists by region within the state and their distribution by tribe, band, and reservation.

Executive Summary

We then interviewed more than fifty Ojibwe artists, inquiring how they had come to be artists; what forms of training, encouragement, and mentoring they had received; what barriers they had encountered; whether they were able to make a living from their work and how; the extent to which their work reflects Native community needs and cultural practices; and what changes they could imagine that would substantially help their ability to continue and flourish as an artist. We balanced the set of interviewees by age, art form (music, writing, visual arts, performance), career stage, market orientation, gender, and place of residence, spending time on each major Ojibwe reservation in Minnesota and nearby towns and cities including the Twin Cities.

We supplemented these interviews with two-dozen discussions with gatekeepers—people in a position to provide Native artists with access to resources and space both within and beyond the Native community. We talked with Native art gallery, casino, gift shop, theatre and building managers, some Native, some not, and with leaders of Regional Arts Councils, arts programs at regional family foundations, non-profit arts organizations, museum curators, educators, and commercial gallery and cultural space managers. We asked each about their experiences with Native artists and posed similar questions as those directed to artists.

Findings

Livelihoods

Ojibwe artists are more likely to do their artwork on a self-employed basis than artists in general. Fewer of them work for commercial or non-profit employers, the legacy of poorer access to arts training, discrimination, and location far from employment centers. Some live in poverty, while others find non-arts-related day jobs—in casinos, on construction, as retail or fast food workers, to pay their bills. Some have full-time teaching positions in K–12 schools, often tribal, and a few in community colleges or universities. Two or three interviewed work in arts-related roles in museums, cultural centers, or for tribal government. A few are successful entrepreneurs, managing a bookstore, gallery, band of musicians or traveling to sell their own work and that of others at Indian markets and powwows. A very high percentage of artists interviewed would like to concentrate more on their art and make more income from it.

Training, encouragement, and mentoring

Many Ojibwe artists enjoyed the encouragement and support

of parents, elders, siblings, teachers, and other role models in developing their art, though others recounted terrible stories of dismissal and disparagement. Many are self-educated or apprenticed to elders. A few benefited from years of high quality, Native-taught arts curricula at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe. Experience in colleges was mixed, with some encountering blatant racism or dismissal of their Native aesthetic, while others flourished. Though few have benefited from formal mentorships, tutoring and mentoring by more experienced Native artists has been critical for many, and in turn, the receiving artists mentor others. Most Ojibwe artists, especially those living and working in more remote areas of the state, long for more opportunities to network with other artists and learn from each other.

Access to space, materials, equipment, resources, technology, and markets

Many Ojibwe artists lack good workspace, making do in their garages, kitchens, and living rooms, or writing in coffee shops. Many dream of a room of their own or a communal space to work in with others. Artists who use traditional materials like birchbark, sweetgrass, or porcupine quills face increasing difficulties procuring or buying them. Low incomes make purchase of supplies and equipment prohibitive for some. A few more established artists receive commissions, advances and grants, but generally these are not enough to support their work. Few are adept at digital technology that would help them make and market their art.

Despite lack of know-how, many Ojibwe artists are creative in their search for venues in which to present, exhibit, market, and sell their work. Performers and musicians find audiences at college campuses, clubs, and coffee shops, bookstores, powwows, and community centers, and sometimes radio and film. Visual artists exhibit and sell at powwows, art fairs, museums, galleries, and gift shops. Many market to managers of tribal buildings, hotels, and casinos, and some to non-Native commercial enterprises.

Cultural, spiritual, and spatial dimensions

A strong community orientation colors the work of many Ojibwe artists. Many do not see themselves as just individuals pursuing a career, but anchor their artwork in community cultural practice, whether urban or rural. Native values such as gift giving, cooperating and “not standing out,” clash with Western norms of artistic aspiration and self-promotion. Artists’ work is often embedded in rituals and sacred practices. Use of certain symbols and materials and the sharing of sacred cultural

content beyond one's own community or within it by gender or age, is sometimes prohibited. Nevertheless, Ojibwe artists have been successful in bridging traditional with contemporary artistic forms and messages, often through sustained efforts to work within their communities, especially with elders, for understanding and permission to innovate.

Ojibwe artists' livelihoods bear the scars of the ravages of racism, dispossession of land, boarding schools, and other cultural annihilation policies, poverty, and spatial isolation. Many artists live close to or below the poverty line. Many spend time and resources supporting extended family members. Compared to artists in general, Ojibwe artists testify to the profound healing power of their artwork. Those who work on remote reservations where their ancestors were forced to go, find it difficult to encounter the training, mentorship, networks, and markets that they seek. Some Ojibwe artists feel a mission to interpret Native life and culture for a largely indifferent or even hostile white world, while others use their work to address problems within their own community that are rooted in internalized oppression, including addiction and political corruption.

Pioneering gatekeepers

Many tribal and non-Native arts venues (museums, theatres, music clubs, galleries) are inaccessible to Ojibwe artists. However, a number of people have found creative ways of training, funding, presenting, and paying for Native work. Among Native-entrepreneurial efforts, the Minneapolis American Indian Center hosts the Two Rivers Gallery, a first exhibition opportunity for many Native artists. The Min-No-Aya-Win clinic on the Fond du Lac reservation has for two decades bought contemporary Ojibwe artists' work to mount on its walls, believing that art is key to healing while providing income and validation for artists. In its gift shop, White Earth's Shooting Star Casino showcases work by area Native visual artists, financially supporting local artists. The Grand Portage Casino hosts a nationally known Native musician, when most other casinos only headline white country music. The Hinckley Grand Casino commissioned a tribal artist to do paintings and murals for its walls and held a Native-juried competition that paid half a dozen Native artists to create artwork for hotel rooms. Tribal community centers and tribal summer camps host Ojibwe artists to run art, music, craft, and spoken word workshops.

Among non-Native venues, Fargo's The Plains Museum and University of Minnesota Duluth's Tweed Museum are developing expertise in Woodland Indian art, mounting exhibits, occasionally purchasing work, and engaging in educational

outreach. Here and there, a coffee shop, nightclub, and Minneapolis cabaret present Native musicians, dancers, and performers. Annual visual arts exhibits at University of Wisconsin Superior and jointly between Bemidji State University and Leech Lake Tribal College offer artists a chance to show their work, win awards, and network. College circuit music and poetry series have invited a few artists and performers to exhibit and perform with compensation. These are exceptional cases, role models for others.

Some funders, public and non-profit, express concern about the low levels of Native application and awards. Two of the state's eleven regional arts councils—Arrowhead and Region 2 (Bemidji)—have created Native-tailored small grant programs, while another, the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, explicitly asks artists to identify the community they are addressing, rewarding community orientation. A few Ojibwe artists have competed for and won substantial one-shot fellowships from the Jerome, McKnight, and Bush Foundations and the Minnesota State Arts Board. Some have been supported through Foundation re-grants to organizations like the American Composers' Forum and the Loft Literary Center that provide Native-targeted resources and mentoring.

Ojibwe artists and funders alike perceive a communication gap. Many Ojibwe artists have no idea what funding resources exist. The ways that funding programs are structured often discourage submissions. Burdensome application procedures require digital technology and expertise that older artists, in particular, do not have, and that neither younger nor older artists can afford. There is the touchy matter of traditional artistic form and content versus "innovative" (and often socially detached) work. Ojibwe artists sometimes interpret a Foundation's invitation to apply for a grant as a message that "yes, you will be funded." Turned down, these artists vowed never to apply again. A lack of trust between Native artists and funders perpetuates low application award rates.

A key insight from our research is that Native-only or Native-focused programs, convenings, mentorships, curricula, and venues are often a crucial stage for an Ojibwe artist's development of skills, networks, and determination to pursue artwork as a livelihood. We encourage artists, tribes, and gatekeeping institutions to nurture such "gateway" platforms. In addition, to ensure that artists move through these experiences and into mainstream venues and opportunities, both tribal and non-Native, resource and space providers and managers should cultivate greater appreciation for the unique and varied facets of Native economic and cultural life.

Recommendations for Nurturing Native Artists

Employment

- Hire Native artists as curators, producers, designers, and cultural space managers
- Expand K–12 teaching jobs and curricular development
- Create a Native artist roster for school residencies
- Recruit and nurture Native arts faculty in higher education

Self-employment

- Offer business of art classes targeted to Native artists
- Train and pay Native artists to run business of art sessions and act as mentors
- Create a roster of working Native artists targeted to state businesses
- Highlight Native artists in search mechanisms for existing artist rosters

Encouragement, education, training, and mentoring

- Challenge art world practices that privilege formal Western-centric art training
- Nurture mentoring relationships between accomplished and emerging Native artists
- Signal to parents and communities that an arts career is viable and valued
- Expand teacher training in Native literature, music, art, performance, and media
- Create more college programs and scholarships for Native arts students

Space, materials, equipment, resources, technology

- Provide new and use under-utilized space for creation of artwork
- Develop collective work/marketing spaces for Native visual artists
- Amend/enforce public land use regulations to permit gathering of Native materials
- Provide multiple and larger funding pots for Native artists
- Create targeted funds for equipment, materials, services, skill upgrading, and travel
- Mount Native artist-led workshops for funders to review issues of aesthetic content, artistic process, and communication from a Native point of view
- Offer Native-taught digital training services for artists to improve their on-line learning and marketing

The marketing and sale of Native work

- Build a non-profit organization to market Native artists' work
- Create an on-line marketing website featuring Ojibwe art and traditional crafts
- Institute “buy local” policies for artwork in tribal buildings
- Commission and publicize more Native public art
- Develop more presentation space for Native music and performance
- Revamp participation and pricing policies for powwows and tribal events

Community orientation, Native values, and reservation/town relationships

- Organize one or more convenings of Minnesota Native artists
- Use community orientation as a positive criterion for support of Native artist
- Integrate artistic practice and creations into community healing activities
- Open and support a network of Native art galleries in towns near reservations

We believe, as do many of our interviewees, that contemporary Native art, music, performance, and literature have the potential to become an honored and distinguishing feature of our region, serving their own communities, residents, and tourists. We hope that our grounded account, including the many profiles presented alongside our narrative, will help to make that case.

I. Introduction

People from all walks of life, in and outside of Minnesota, are eager to know how Native American artists pursue their work financially and aesthetically and what contributions they make to their communities and the larger society.

In many ways, Native artists share the experiences of all American artists, a unique occupational group who are highly likely to be self-employed, receive relatively low earnings for their degrees of skill and educational attainment, and often work two or more jobs to support themselves and their families (Jackson et al, 2003).

But in other ways, their careers are distinctive. Because of racism and discrimination in education and markets, geographical isolation, and high rates of poverty in their communities, they are apt to be poorer than artists in general. Their commitments to their communities, including the responsibility to use their talents to preserve and carry forward cultural traditions and to address hardships and community challenges, often render their personal aesthetic missions complex and time-consuming. On the other hand, their embedding in their communities gives their work a meaning and impact that few artists enjoy. Furthermore, unique tribal economic, cultural, and political institutions, such as casinos, ceremony, powwows, and elders' councils, offer them training and distribution channels that are markedly different from those that non-Native artists use.

These dimensions form the broad canvas for the present study, which uses Minnesota as a laboratory for understanding the livelihoods of Ojibwe musicians, performing artists, visual artists, and writers and how they balance their desire to serve their communities with the need to make a living from their artwork. We rely heavily on artists' own words and examples in telling this story.

As a roadmap to the study, we here lay out the questions posed at the outset, why the focus is on Ojibwe artists, review the history and distribution of Ojibwe artists in the state, and address how we conducted the research. Readers should feel free to jump around the study. Read the artists' profiles first if you wish. Or, to whet your curiosity on how we arrived at them, start with our recommendations.

A. Questions posed

This study summarizes two years' exploration of contemporary Ojibwe artists' ability to pursue their artwork, make an income from it, receive recognition in art worlds, and serve their multiple communities. We posed the following questions:

- How do Native artists first choose artistic expression and develop their unique styles and practices?
- Have they been able to find the training, seed funding, space, and encouragement to develop their work as a livelihood?
- Have they found arts-related jobs and paying markets for their work and how satisfactory are these from income, aesthetic, and community service points of view?
- What challenges do Minnesota's Ojibwe artists face because of racism, geographic isolation, and strong community and spiritual rooting of Native cultural practice?
- What gifts do Native artists make to their communities, to Minnesotans as a whole, to the larger artistic world, and to each other?
- Why have incubating institutions that prepare Native artists for careers and markets for disseminating their work not evolved to date the way that they have for Pueblo, Navajo, Hopi, and other Native artists of the American southwest or Canadian indigenous people, including Ojibwe?
- How can Minnesota's Native artists and their tribal governments and enterprises (schools, casinos, social service complexes, community centers) improve the conditions for creation, presentation, marketing, and valuing of their work?
- How can non-Native educational, philanthropic, public sector, commercial, and cultural organizations improve the conditions for the same?

B. Why Ojibwe artists?

At the outset, we grappled with how inclusive of Native artists' experience we should be. As with any qualitative, time-intensive project, the number of interviews and places that we could visit for multiple day periods was severely constrained. Yet we were determined to spend time in Minnesota communities with high concentrations of Native artists around the state, where we could explore how regional locations, environments, and tribal histories have created a setting for unique Native artwork and outcomes.

For several reasons, we decided to concentrate on Ojibwe artists, whose grounding in what Euro-American scholars call the "Woodland Indian" environment and tradition distinguish them from Plains Indian artists, the second largest group in the state. Minnesota's Dakota and Lakota artists are chiefly engaged with a large and vibrant Plains art tradition that stretches through the Dakotas to Montana and Colorado, with its market centers in Sioux Falls and Rapid City, South Dakota, Denver, Nebraska,

I. Introduction

and Oklahoma. Minnesota hosts the United States' largest contingent of Ojibwe artists, a significant group of North American Woodland artists whose traditions are rooted in the temperate forest, lake, and river environment of the northeastern portion of North America. These generalizations are problematic, since many Dakota and other Indian artists living in Minnesota identify with their current home (and traditionally, many of them lived in the forested portions of Minnesota), and some Ojibwe artists have moved to the southwest, blending the artistic genres of that region with those from home. However, we believe that our findings are germane to the prospects for all Minnesota's Native artists and indigenous artists everywhere, North American and globally.

Native Americans are the original inhabitants of the territory now called Minnesota. The state's contemporary American Indians are members of tribes (and within them, bands) who since the incursion of Euro-American soldiers and settlers have been linked to sovereign territories called reservations under terms, often adverse, negotiated with the United States government in a long series of treaties between 1837 and 1889 (Figure 1). Tribal membership is a matter of lineage but does not require residency on a reservation.

Minnesota's Native population today lives and works on seven Ojibwe reservations and nearby towns, in four Dakota communities, and in the cities of Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth (Figure 2). Native presence is most prominent in the northern portion of the state, especially in those counties that host or are adjacent to the Grand Portage, Leech Lake, Red Lake, and White Earth reservations, where Native people account for more than 5% of the population (Figure 3).

More than 82,000 Native Americans lived in Minnesota in 2000, a third of whom identified themselves as multi-racial (US Census, 2000). Ojibwe tribes account for the largest group, about 60% in 2000, not counting Canadian Ojibwe who live in the state (US Census, 2000). About 10% are Dakota and Lakota, and the rest come from a surprising array of tribes, including Alaskan tribes, Blackfeet, Cherokee, Iroquois, and from Canada and Latin America. The principal tribes of Minnesota's Ojibwe residents have been recorded by the 2000 Census, with the largest numbers identifying as enrolled in the Red Lake, White Earth, Leech Lake, Mille Lacs, and Fond du Lac Bands, but these are complicated by the large numbers who reported their enrollment in the Minnesota

Figure 1 Minnesota Land Cession Treaties, 1837-1889



Chippewa tribe, an amalgam of non-adjacent bands from many reservations including White Earth and Leech Lake but not Red Lake¹ (Table 1). Many Ojibwe residents of Minnesota are enrolled in Wisconsin bands (Lac Courte Oreilles, Bad River, Red Cliff, St. Croix) and North Dakota's Turtle Mountain Band. Large numbers of Ojibwe from many bands live in the Twin Cities.

An estimated 400 to 800 Minnesota Native artists reported artwork as their major occupation in the 2005-6 American Community Survey.¹¹ Many more are doing artwork as a second job or in retirement and are not counted in these totals. As with other minority groups, Native artists are under-represented in the artistic

workforce. Yet professional Ojibwe artists comprise about 1.5% of the Native workforce in Minnesota, a bit higher than the Native share of the state's workforce overall. Ojibwe writers, musicians, visual and performing artists are twice as likely to be self-employed in their artwork than artists in general. Although the Census sample is too small to map the residential locations of Native artists, we believe that these reflect the distribution of the Native population as a whole. Many live on or near the state's Ojibwe reservations.

Between 1995-2000, due in part to the hope of prosperity brought by casinos and poor employment prospects in cities, a net 10% of Minnesota's Native people reporting moved from metro areas to other parts of the state (Wittstock, 2007: 21). Many artists interviewed for this study have moved back and forth between reservations and cities, including out of state and overseas. They move for education, to try out larger artistic communities and markets, to find jobs, to connect with family and kin, and to find affordable space and welcoming communities. Some are no longer living in the state but began careers and continue to exhibit or perform here. Since each Ojibwe reservation and band has a unique history and geographic orientation to larger population centers, the study explores artists' tribal affiliations and their current and past work and residential locations as aspects bearing on their work and impact.

C. Research method

We researched the answers to these questions in three ways. As a first step, we read the history of Native art-making and its relationship to trading posts and the tourist trade in the 19th and 20th centuries, comparing what occurred in other regions with the experience of Woodland artists in the upper Midwest. This

Figure 2 Minnesota's Indian Reservations, 2000



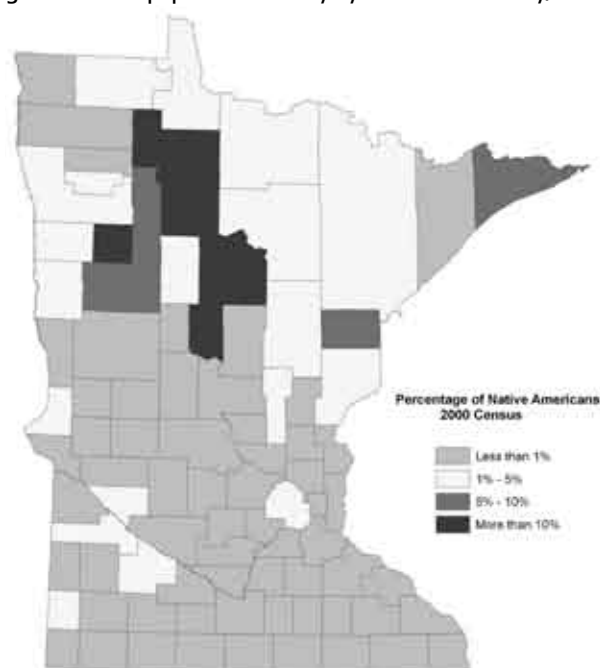
Source: Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State, data from <http://www.gis.leg.mn/metadata/amerind2000.htm>

exercise, summarized in separate papers (Markusen, Rendon and Martinez, 2008; Markusen, 2009), helped us to shape our questions about markets, especially how Anglo-American individuals and institutions have or have not come to acknowledge, value, and support Native artists financially in this region.

Second, we interviewed more than fifty Ojibwe artists around the state, asking each how she/he came to be artist; what forms of training, encouragement, and mentoring they had received; what barriers they had encountered; whether they were able to make a living from their work and how; the extent to which their work reflects Native community needs and cultural practices and serves their own people; and what changes they could imagine that would substantially help their ability to continue and flourish as an artist. We interviewed musicians, writers, and performing and visual artists, many of whom also worked non-arts jobs. Although we were not able to interview anywhere near the total population of Minnesota artists, we sought to balance the set of interviewees by age, art form, career stage, market orientation, gender, and place of residence, spending time on each major Ojibwe reservation in Minnesota and nearby towns and cities including the Twin Cities.

Third, we identified and interviewed individuals who had developed reputations as gatekeepers who provide Ojibwe artists with access to the resources and/or space that had been important to them in their work. Some of these are members of the Native community, such as Native art gallery managers,

Figure 3 Native population density by Minnesota County, 2000



Source: Minnesota Geospatial Information Office, data from Census 2000.

Table 1. Minnesota Ojibwe Tribal Membership, Census 2000

Tribe/Band	Total
Chippewa Tribe	11777
Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	7474
White Earth	6087
Leech Lake	4686
Mille Lacs	2097
Minnesota Chippewa	1905
Fond du Lac	1473
Bois Forte/Nett Lake Band of Chippea	1204
Turtle Mountain Band	1081
Grand Portage	480
Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa	425
Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Tribe	351
Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa	309
St. Croix Chippewa	173
Sault Ste. Marie Chippewa	145
Lake Superior	142
Other Ojibwe Tribes	181
All Chippewa (US Government term for Ojibwe)	39910

Source: US Census, *Census 2000 PHC-T-18. American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes in Minnesota: 2000*. Revised June 30, 2004. The numbers include those identifying themselves as multi-tribal and multi-racial, reporting enrolled or principal tribe.

I. Introduction

casino managers, and managers of social services complexes that have purchased Native work for their buildings. Others head up Regional Arts Councils, serve as arts program officers for regional family foundations, run non-profit organizations with targeted programs for Native artists, host Native American art exhibits, run educational programs and facilities, and curate museum exhibits and collections, program cultural space for music, drama, and spoken word presentation.

D. Recommendations

In our final section, we review the ideas generated by both artists and gatekeepers on steps that can be taken to substantially improve the livelihoods and impact of Ojibwe artists in Minnesota. These are organized around actions that can be taken by theme. Many key actors can initiate or collaborate in implementing these proposals: Native artists themselves, tribal organizations, funders, public sector agencies, colleges and universities, artist service organizations, and commercial sector arts exhibition, sales, and presentation spaces and publishers. A key insight from our research is that Native-only or

Native-focused programs, convenings, mentorships, curricula, and venues are often a crucial stage for an Ojibwe artist's development of skills, networks, and determination to pursue artwork as a livelihood. We encourage artists, tribes, and gatekeeping institutions to nurture such "gateway" innovations. To ensure that artists move through these experiences and into mainstream venues and opportunities, resource and space providers and managers should cultivate greater appreciation for the unique and varied facets of Native economic and cultural life.

¹The Census Table on which this is based explains: "Respondents who identified themselves as American Indian or Alaska Native were asked to report their enrolled or principal tribe. Therefore, tribal data in this data product reflect the written tribal entries reported on the questionnaire. Some of the entries (for example, Iroquois, Sioux, Colorado River, and Flathead) represent nations or reservations. The information on tribe is based on self-identification and includes federally- or state-recognized tribes, as well as bands and clans." For an explanation of the concepts used in this table see "The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2000," U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Brief, C2KBR/01-15 at www.census.gov/population/www/cen2000/briefs.html.

²The range represents likely numbers based on a 1% sample of Minnesota residents each year averaged over two years. We pulled data from the 2005 and 2006 ACS surveys and estimated that 1.82% of artists in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota are Native American. The estimate is 707 but because of the small sample size, could vary from as low as 400 to just over 1000. Most are writers and visual artists. The estimated total number of artists (all races) from these two ACS surveys is 38,876 for the three states, while estimated total population of Native Americans is 99,669 out of a total population of 6583000, or about 1.5%.

Tina Stately |

When we ask around about artists on the Red Lake Reservation, we hear the name Tina Stately from folks down in the cities, up on White Earth, and from other artists at Red Lake. We are told she is a beadwork artist teaching at the Red Lake School. We met with Stately at Perkins Restaurant in Bemidji.

Stately speaks with great pride regarding Red Lake investing in future artists by having a commitment to beadwork. The school also has a regular art teacher and two music teachers. Stately had one student, a 2nd grade boy who could do everything. Another student returned to visit her after he had left school. He came to show her a purse, of all flatwork beading, a skill he had learned from her.

Stately tells us she has been teaching since 1978 when she was hired by the Title IV program. Later the Red Lake School District took over the program. She's worked at Red Lake Elementary, St. Mary's Mission, and Ponemah Elementary. Currently she's full time at Red Lake Elementary School.

Over the years Stately has worked with grades K-8, currently with grades 1-5.



She teaches around 500 students basic Native American beadwork, covering many techniques: zig-zag necklaces and bracelets, string daisy necklaces and bracelets, spider web necklaces, different types of pouch bags, lazy stitch, flatwork, and loom work. When students complete what's required of them, they can create whatever project they want if the supplies are available.

When Stately doesn't know how to make what the students want to make, she goes into the community to find someone who does. Her main teacher is her best friend Doreen Wells, a Native American crafter "who can do anything from beadwork, sewing, birch

bark baskets, and any other native craft you can think of."

Stately started learning beadwork at a young age from her mother and has had many teachers since then. She comes from a traditional family of pow-wow dancers, so there was always some beadwork going on. Her dad, brother, and little sisters were all champion dancers at one time. Stately and her older sister are pleasure dancers—they love just being in the circle and dancing because it makes them feel good.

Stately has four daughters to whom she has passed down all the knowledge and talents that she has about the Native American culture. Their father Edward Isham is an artist who does acrylic paintings, teepee lamps with an airbrush, birch bark, and other crafts using most of his materials from nature. He harvests wild rice and does all the finishing process himself. Edward has also passed his talents on to their daughters.

When she retires, Stately will continue with her crafts and hopes to still be working with young people.

II. The Economics of Ojibwe Artists: Jobs, Self-Employment, Entrepreneurship

Most of Minnesota's Ojibwe artists pursue their artwork as a second job. Some hold arts-related jobs, primarily teaching at K-12 or college levels. A few are employed as curators, staff, and graphic artists at museums, cultural centers, and tribal offices. Some work part or full time at non-arts related jobs that cut deeply into their artwork time but which they sometimes find rewarding and enriching of their art-making. Compared with Minnesota artists in general, we encountered few examples of Ojibwe men and women working as artists for private sector employers and, outside of tribal institutions and public sector colleges, few cases of not-for-profit employment. Many are entrepreneurs who have figured out how to fund and market their work.

A. K-12 teaching

Among arts-related jobs, teaching is by far the most common. Teaching K-12 provides a decent and stable income, an opportunity to share arts and cultural expertise, and a summer hiatus in which to pursue one's own work. For artists not directly employed, many instruct on a short-term basis at schools and seasonal camps, sharing their work for little or no pay.

Visual artist Karen Savage-Blue teaches art at the Fond du Lac Ojibwe School, which she considers "the best job." An aspiring serious artist who went to the Institute for American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, Savage-Blue returned to Duluth to pursue an Arts Education degree and began teaching in 1995. It pays her bills. She appreciates her summers off. "As a teacher, you have certain restrictions on you. A person has time to get their mind back, remembering where you want to be."

Grand Portage enrollee Laura Youngbird teaches at the Circle of the Nations School in Wahpetan, South Dakota. Although she never desired to be a teacher, she began working as a traveling artist-in-residence, a grueling and under-paid job. She then became cultural coordinator at Circle of the Nations, a 100-year-old boarding school that serves indigenous children from 25 states and 32 Indian nations and then moved into the job of art teacher, earning certification in working with gifted and talented kids. Youngbird teaches art classes to 4th through 8th graders. She considers the work important,

especially with high-risk kids: "so many of our children are gifted but then give up. So many of our prisons are filled with gifted people who are not using their gifts." She acknowledges children's diverse traditions by making art objects like prayer rattles with them. But the job takes time and energy from her artwork. During the school year, she has to do lesson plans and paperwork, often after hours. She processes visual arts ideas in her head, but has to wait until the summer to execute them.

Red Lake's Tina Stately began as an assistant teacher of the beadwork she had learned from her elders. At Red Lake School, she averages 600 students a year, most of them at the elementary level, and enjoys working with all types of students. "Some pick it up really well. One boy was so good that by the 2nd grade, he could do everything. Some don't have enough patience to sit." Stately has also led a dance club—"you have to dance right with them!"—helping younger people launch music careers.

While generating a steady income, teaching involves burdensome paperwork and governance responsibilities, consuming more time than artists would prefer. Although Stately expresses contentment with her job, both Youngbird and Savage-Blue would like to be able to do their artwork full time, even though both are dedicated teachers and love their students.

Some Ojibwe artists teach one-shot residencies in schools or more informal settings. Writer and basketmaker Jim Northrup and visual artist Joyce LaPorte frequently visit the tribal and public schools on and around Fond du Lac, demonstrating how to make ricing winnowers and traditional dolls. Northrup does every fourth session for nothing or a greatly reduced price, "my way of paying back for the gifts I've been given." At his home-based Northrup Institute of Traditional Technology in Sawyer (NITTS), he teaches traditional nature-based arts. White Earth artist Juanita Blackhawk teaches quillwork at tribal seasonal (berry, ricing, maple sugar) camps in the region: "I want to teach so that it is not a lost art. Out of the 100 or so people of all ages that I teach in a year, if only one continues, I will be happy."

B. College and university teaching

Some Ojibwe artists are employed by tribal colleges and schools. A few have landed jobs in state universities and private colleges. In addition to income, these jobs provide resources for making art and opportunities to communicate

II. The Economics of Ojibwe Artists: Jobs, Self-Employment, Entrepreneurship

and innovate, often with the Native community in mind. But these jobs consume the lion's share of artists' time, cutting into their ability to create.

Musician and composer Lyz Jaakola benched her dream of becoming an opera singer to return to the Fond du Lac reservation to teach music, first in K–12 and later at the Tribal College. At first an adjunct, she accepted a full-time position because she wanted the job security. In addition to a heavy

teaching load, mounting musical performances is one of her responsibilities, but since choir concerts are expensive, she must also raise money and barter for talent. "Sometimes," she reflects, "I wish I had more time to do the other things." But after her own rocky educational trajectory, she feels that her students deserve the education.

Leech Lake writer and scholar Anton Treuer is Professor of Ojibwe at Bemidji State College where he teaches Ojibwe

Juanita Blackhawk |

Felt-topped pool tables, hot coffee in Styrofoam cups, and country music playing in the background at the North Star Coffee Bar. Quillwork artist Juanita Blackhawk is home on the rez.

White Earth member Blackhawk works with birch bark, porcupine quills, and sweet grass to create barrettes, broaches, earrings, and small birch bark baskets with quillwork designs. Eighteen years ago, master quillwork artist Melvin Losh walked into the store where she was working to buy a pack of cigarettes. She asked if he would teach her quillwork. When he turned and walked away without saying a word, she was close to tears. When he reached the door, he turned around and said, "Be at my house tomorrow at 8 a.m." In payment for teaching, he asked that when the time was right, Blackhawk would teach someone else.

As a child, Blackhawk started sewing when she was six. During grade school and junior high, she drew. For her, art is healing, a form of therapy. Even during the drinking and drugging times of her life, she was sewing, beading, making fancy shawls and drawing posters for community events and pool tournaments. Now when she is teaching art to youth or community members she uses her story of healing to impart world wisdom and healing wisdom with art technique and craft.

Blackhawk has always done her art from her home. She can work on her quillwork while riding in a car or sitting at a table to sell



CHERYL WALSH BELLVILLE

she became well known for her quillwork. She knows that people from all over the world have bought her work, either for themselves or as gifts for others. Earrings with a quilled cow are in Peru. A loon quill box is in the Smithsonian. A quill box with a baby loon on its mother's back took 1st place in the 1995/96 MN Ojibwe Art Expo. The Minnesota Sexual Assault Consortium has bought her birch bark pins as gifts for their yearly

her craft. She gathers her own birch bark and most often relies on friends to give her quills. But she has been known to grab porcupine road kill by a paw and throw it in the trunk to take home. As she has gotten older it has been harder to gather sweet grass, so she buys that and the sinew she needs.

A large building where artists could gather, like a co-op, is Blackhawk's vision of what she and other artists need. It would give artists a place to work, and buyers would know where to find them. When she sells at conferences, she often goes in with another vendor as a table can run anywhere from \$25 to \$500 to a \$1000. She sells at powwows when the tables are affordable and at select craft fairs, and she is often asked to teach quillwork at traditional camps. She deals strictly in cash. Many elders and artists on disability can only make so much per month or their benefits will be cut.

Gagonsikwe, Little Porcupine Woman, is the name Blackhawk became known by as

conference. The MN Storytellers Association bought pins and necklaces for a similar event.

Giggling, Blackhawk tells us how the prices of her baskets are determined. The cheapest, at around \$95 wholesale, are as round as a commodity vegetable can. A basket the roundness of a commodity juice can sells in the range of \$125, while a lard can-sized one sells for more than \$175. These prices are low for the amount of work that goes into creating a quilled basket. Blackhawk gets frustrated with folks who question her: "You get it from nature, why does it cost so much?"

Three changes Blackhawk would like to see happen for artists. One would be for the general public to be educated about the amount of work that goes into creating a piece. Second, that artists themselves be educated about the value of their work. And third, that they learn how to price their work in a way that reflects the beauty and time that goes into a piece.

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language courses, history, and culture. “I love that I get to serve a higher purpose with preservation and revitalization of the language,” he says of his job in the University’s Department of Modern Languages, where his courses attract Native and non-Native students alike. However, because he teaches three courses each semester, he has trouble finding time for his writing projects and immersion in traditional Ojibwe ceremony and language. Recently, he has won grants from foundations and the National Endowment for the Humanities, enabling him to buy out teaching time.

Bois Fort enrollee and Duluth-raised poet and fiction writer Linda LeGarde Grover is a professor of American Indian Studies at University of Minnesota Duluth. Earlier in her career, she worked many jobs: telephone operator, store clerk, concession stand operator, and secretary. “I didn’t feel this was a poetry kind of life,” she admitted. LeGarde values the University job because it gives her a space to create. Her University office provides a quieter work space than her home, where children and grandchildren often take precedence over work. She also appreciates the opportunity to do historical research and explore publication of her work. However, she sometimes feels she is working at the margin of her institution. Of her recent published article, *How American Indians Feel about Working*, she says, “Sometimes I wonder, does the U consider this kind of research legitimate?”

Not all Native artists decide to stay with college teaching. Turtle Mountain writer Heid Erdrich recently left her tenured teaching position at University of St. Thomas to take on the directorship of Mitakuye Oyasin/All My Relations, an urban Indian arts program at Ancient Traders Market in Minneapolis and to pursue her first love, writing and editing. Erdrich continues to teach an annual writing workshop and retreat at Turtle Mountain Community College that she started several years ago. Artist Paula White taught quilt-making for nine years at Leech Lake Tribal College in Cass Lake, three hours a night, once a week. It was a struggle, despite her youth and strength, and she was discouraged because most students could not get past the drawing stage.

Bois Forte enrollee and painter Carl Gawboy also prefers his artwork to teaching. Because the University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD) Art Department, where he studied as an undergrad, emphasized art education rather than non-teaching art degrees, Gawboy pursued the former and began teaching at Bemidji State College. He realized early on that teaching did not fit his temperament: “If I had been able to stick with teaching, maybe I’d be retiring with \$70,000 from

some rich suburban high school somewhere. But the ideal job for me would be to be locked away in a garret somewhere to do my art.” Nevertheless, Gawboy went on to teach for five or six years at the University of Minnesota Duluth and the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth where he became the coordinator of the Ojibwe language program: “I kept walking backwards into college teaching” (Szucs, 2007). There he helped Native speakers learn how to teach and created curricula for new teacher training programs, an enterprise he doubted: “I don’t know where it was that Indians decided that schools were the best place to teach culture. That was the worst idea in the world because culture is supposed to be in the community and at home” (Ibid). Eventually, Gawboy left college teaching to concentrate on his painting.

Generally, college jobs require a graduate degree. Anton Treuer holds a PhD in History from the University of Minnesota. His brother, novelist David Treuer, earned a Princeton PhD in anthropology and is an Associate Professor in literature and creative writing at the University of Minnesota. Writer Heid Erdrich did graduate work at Johns Hopkins in professional writing, and Lyz Jaakola pursued a master’s degree in music at University of Minnesota Duluth. Although some college American Indian Studies programs hire Native artists, there are very few Ojibwe arts faculty in mainstream liberal arts departments in Minnesota. This may result from discrimination in hiring as well as low rates of graduate degree completion by Ojibwe artists, the latter a function, in turn, of the absence of college faculty role models. One artist educator credits federal equal employment opportunity policies with making tribal identity a plus in hiring.

C. Arts-related jobs in museums, cultural centers, and tribal government

A few Ojibwe artists have found rewarding and remunerative arts-related work outside of teaching. Poet Bob SwanSon has worked as a video artist, native crafts artist, media producer, and interpreter of Native American history, including paid stints as station manager of MTV in Toppenish, Washington, videographer for the Yakima Indian Nation Museum, and currently special projects technician at the Grand Portage Tribal Museum. Pathways to such positions are often circuitous. SwanSon worked as an historical interpreter at the Grand Portage National Park for three seasons before moving home to his current job. In other examples, Sculptor Jeff Savage is the Director of Fond du Lac Cultural Center and Museum, where he is building a collection and developing programming that

Faron Blakely |

Faron Blakely, White Earth artist, lives in West Fargo, ND in an apartment development that encroaches on wheat fields. This world differs starkly from Phillips, the inner city Minneapolis neighborhood where Blakely literally died, in 1991, under the Franklin Avenue Bridge. Brought back to life, he feels blessed to get a chance to do his art. He considers art his way to heal, be a family man, and be strong. He tries continually to prove himself and make his people proud.

Blakely's work, pen and ink drawings, acrylic painting, and poetry, comes strictly from his heart. His work is full of color—portraits of Native men and women, regalia, eagles, with powerful titles like "We are not Conquered my Child," "Dance Proud," and "Native Vision in my Head." He feels it doesn't fit into any one category. For instance, most of his drawings include poems. Since leaving the Cities, he has dreamt of dancing and drumming, which helps him visualize what to put on paper. Although Blakely creates "Native American stuff," in part because that's what he feels he is supposed to be, music and his street side also continually influence his work. His also draws inspiration from his children.

In Fargo he parents during the day while his wife attends school, creating art in the evenings and when his children nap. He always used art as a way to relax and still turns to it when he becomes frustrated as a parent. Being away from the distractions of the inner city helps him learn his culture and teach it to his children. When he lived in the city, he had no focus and no one to look up to. He says, "I didn't think towns like this, 'Pleasantville,' existed. We are safe here. In the city you had to watch for your life going to the corner store."

Blakely considers himself self-taught. He gets his talent from his mother's musical side of the family and his artist father, Irvin Bunga. Blakely remembers his father, who passed away from alcoholism, constantly doodling. His art teacher, Gary Wolf, always provided encouragement. "He must of known I had something. But I never listened to what he said." Blakely never had the chance to go



MARCE HENDON

places like the Walker Art Center, but grew up watching painter Bob Ross on PBS. He felt like he knew Ross and imitated his work.

Blakely turned to art as a way to shut out the alcoholism and inner city violence, including murders of family members, going on around him. When invited, he shares his life story and art with younger people and hopes someday he can talk more with youth involved in the juvenile system. He tries to show he has been where they are and the beauty of native culture. He also encourages other Fargo artists struggling with alcohol, but notes, "They have to do it themselves."

In the last four years, Blakely started focusing on getting his art out to the public, a challenge for him. "I have a big fear of success, I was terrified when I first started to put my art out there. I was so used to hearing negative all my life."

He's had help along the way. Native Christian Ministries in Fargo invited him to work in their studio. And Blakely says Sandy Berlin's Sweet Medicine group, "will do anything you need to get you on your feet. They helped me find gigs at MSU and NDSU for song and dance performances." Artists, Blakely meets through powwows, offer support and advice—lists of names, encouragement to make prints. The Mille Lacs

Gift Shop and the Two Rivers Gallery welcome his work.

Over time, Blakely figured out where to sell and how to market. He hated his first couple experiences selling at powwows. He didn't sell anything, he thinks because he didn't feel good enough about himself. Then at the Fargo-Moorhead Powwow, his work started selling. Since then, he has sold at many more powwows, out of his mother-in-law's garage, at other garage sales, and on his website. Juanita Espinosa has some of his prints at Two Rivers Gallery and told the Mille Lacs gift shop about his work. He has mouse pads, coasters, and plaques for sale at the Anishinaabe Center in Callaway.

Other Native people make up Blakely's biggest market. He struggles finding non-Native customers in Fargo. Outside of a 2004 street fair, Blakely hasn't sold in Fargo. Although he took

the blue ribbon at that fair, he barely earned back the \$500 he paid to setup, even though 30,000 people attended. He says, "It made me want to start drawing other cultures, but I'm drawing from my heart. I don't want to draw just to make other people happy...I am patient and wait for people to come to me."

Blakely traveled far from his youthful self in Phillips, when he didn't want to be an artist and feared he would die young, an alcoholic. Currently, he's creating a drawing for Veterans, dedicated to his uncle, and hopes to make a mural at his daughter's school. He has a collection of signed prints and selling those on the powwow trail is his main goal. He also explores new media, since prints are expensive and people have limited wall space. This year for the first time, galleries, both the Plains Art Museum and the Mall, expressed interest in his work.

As scared as he is of success, watching his wife work towards her degree and earn a 4.0 has given him courage to imagine going to school himself and achieving his dreams. He says, "There is no limit to what I can do now. Now that I am sober, I'm not just talking about it, but doing it. When it happens, it will happen. All the eagle feathers that came to me enabled me to start dancing. Right now, my focus is on my kids."

offers historic and contemporary cultural content. Visual artist Carrie Estey worked as Director of the Mille Lacs History Center, a job funded through the Minnesota Historical Society.

Few Native artists land commercial art jobs. An exception is Mille Lacs artist Steve Premo who holds down a job with the Mille Lacs band as its resident graphic artist. Things weren't always so good. In one difficult stretch, Premo took a job fixing pinball machines at the casino's arcade and moved up to slots technician, jobs he did for six years before his talents as an artist and illustrator began to be valued at Mille Lacs.

D. Non-arts jobs for artists

Many of the artists we interviewed work, or worked at earlier stages in their careers, at jobs unrelated to their art. Some enjoy these jobs and find crossover benefits with their artwork. Some consider them just an economic necessity. All appreciate the income, and sometimes the benefits, they receive from such work. Many dream of not having to work and concentrating fully on their creative activities.

White Earth's fiber artist Marie Martin has always worked to support her family: for Job Corps where they needed a cook and later for the Minnesota Concentrated Employment Program for thirteen years. Unemployed for a protracted period, she helped start the gift shop at the Shooting Star Casino where she now works as a stocker, four hours a day, three days a week. Well past retirement age, she would like to quit working and live off her artwork, but she needs to pay the bills.

On her way to becoming an award-winning writer, Minneapolis-based Louise Erdrich worked in the beet fields, at a swimming pool, and selling concessions at a movie theater. She was a short order cook, a waitress, and a construction worker. Meanwhile, Erdrich reflects, "I was writing my way into my current work." Her books include characters in these occupations.

Photographer Travis Novitsky works as a Grand Portage ranger at the first Minnesota State Park jointly owned and operated with a Native band. He appreciates the synergy between his ranger job and his artwork. Some of his photos deck the Visitor Center walls where he spends much of his day standing behind the counter. He uses them to direct people where to go in the Park and other areas of the reservation. Novitsky jokes that you are not a true Cook County resident if you don't have at least two jobs. Of his photography, he says: "It's just a side profession. I do want it to become bigger. But it doesn't have to be fast. I will always be creating and experimenting."

Visual artist Dan Neisen of White Earth works in security at the Shooting Star Casino full time, Monday through

Thursdays. The casino gift shop, with its marvelous display cases bordering the hallway that leads from the hotel to the casino floor, sells quite a bit of his artwork, supplementing his day job income. As a younger artist, Neisen hoped to make his living from his art, but he almost starved a couple of times. The job has made it possible for him to afford his home with its capacious barn where he keeps his materials and works. And it helps him buy materials. Then, too, he says, "If I were compelled to live off my artwork, it would become more of a job." Though he spends more than forty hours a week on his artwork, often working far into the night after his full-time casino day job, it remains driven by pleasure and excitement for him.

St. Paul-based Robert Desjarlait sees little beyond money in his day job. "I currently work in Indian Child Welfare monitoring the courts. I don't like being a professional. I would rather be an artist." Desjarlait hopes that a recent Minnesota Arts Board grant to create a mural in remembrance of the 2005 Red Lake school shootings will revive his art career. His dream is to build a house on land he has up at Red Lake and focus on art and writing.

As incongruous as it seems, even artists who have received considerable acclaim are simultaneously working blue-collar jobs. Painter Jim Denomie, who with Andrea Carlson had a two-person show at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts in 2007, has been working full time as a dry wall installer, a job that requires him to commute two to three hours a day to the Twin Cities from his home near Taylors Falls. He devotes the weekday hours from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. to this job. "I'm always thinking art," he says, "when I'm driving and going to work. If I'm not thinking about the administrative side." In the evenings, he enters his spacious studio that he built above his garage and works from 8:30 or 9:00 p.m. to midnight or 2:00 a.m. Half that time goes to writing grants and looking for arts work and presentation opportunities. In 2008, Denomie won a prestigious Bush Career Fellowship. He decided to cut back his drywall work hours to half time for at least a year to concentrate on his painting.

Sometimes, an artist will take a service or fast food job to gain the flexibility to do his or her artwork. To support herself and her daughter, White Earth costumer Connie Engebretson is currently working in foster care following years as assistant manager at Miguel's Tacos and KFC. For a while, she was successful at sign painting, but the competition has stiffened. While she puts in her hours, Engebretson wonders when she can get her dresses and regalia made for customers.

II. The Economics of Ojibwe Artists: Jobs, Self-Employment, Entrepreneurship

E. Self-employment and entrepreneurship

Many Ojibwe pursue their artwork on a self-employed basis entirely or while working a separate job. Sometimes they make very little at it. Linda LeGarde Grover recounted how she received \$75 for a piece of writing. She usually gets just little bits for publishing, though she recently signed a book contract with University of Georgia Press.

Some younger artists are trying to make a living from their artwork on a full-time, self-employed basis. Music is all that Red Lake member Clem May has been doing for twenty years, writing his own lyrics and songs and performing paid gigs around the Red Lake reservation, at casinos and local night clubs, and at festivals farther afield. His band performs in the greater region, too, a business he developed while travelling for three years from Wisconsin through North Dakota with fellow musician Floyd Westerman. In addition to some compensation in kind—rooms at casinos, meals sometimes, he figures he makes about \$600 a week, “not a living wage in the cities,” but enough to maintain his music-only ambitions. For the last seven years, May has also been teaching drums and guitar at the Red Lake School to supplement his income.

Andrea Carlson graduated with an MFA from Minnesota College of Art and Design in 2005 and has since produced artwork

for exhibitions in galleries and museums. She initially found exhibiting challenging because her costs exceeded her sales. Studio space, materials, frames, taxes, and travel to openings cut into her take-home receipts. By 2009, however, she was turning down opportunities for lack of time. Todd Bockley markets and sells her paintings through his gallery in Minneapolis, exposing her work to local and international audiences.

Many self-educated artists have developed artistic livelihoods by experimenting and learning how to market their work in unusual ways. As an emerging painter, Punk Wakanabo knew little about the business end. He and his brothers sold his early watercolors as raw prints without frames, carting them around in plastic. Then they met Jim Mondry, who sold birchbark baskets, potatoes, guns out of his car trunk. Mondry showed them how to dress up the prints with mats and frames in different colors, enabling them to raise their prices by multiples at modest extra expense. They also worked to develop a clientele among doctors’ offices, regional companies, and fast food restaurants like Bemidji’s KFC. Over his artistic career, Wakanabo and his brothers have sold more than 6000 prints of his work.

Josef Reiter, a St. Paul-based Ojibwe jewelry artist, worked at and later owned Blue Water Indian Arts in a downtown Saint

Karen Savage-Blue |

At Fond du Lac’s Mash-ka-wisen Treatment Center, Karen Savage-Blue leads us to the room wrapped with her commissioned artwork. In the back wall painting, a young Ojibwe pair stand close together holding their baby, framed by a bold sky, deep green trees, and a river. On an adjacent wall, a sunset blazes with purple-red and deep blue, backlighting a shallow lake fringed with black spruce. Along the next wall, a three-foot traditional floral border picks up the cool colors of the back wall, fades into softer, powdery shades and approaches a corner pillar spiraling with partridges. Cedar waxwings peer from a lean tree.

For Fond du Lac member Savage-Blue, “My art is about nature and us as human beings being a part of this planet and co-existing, getting everything we need from the earth. Physical needs, but also our spiritual needs and knowledge.” She sees a bridge or boat on Lake Superior, imagines



what the same place would look like without them and paints that vision. She captures the magic, the essence of nature. Subtle and subliminal messages fill her work. Spending

time alone in the woods as a child, “You become attached to those other life forms. They become something more than just water is water, tree is a tree. I like to give

II. The Economics of Ojibwe Artists: Jobs, Self-Employment, Entrepreneurship

Paul skyway. Lacking time to do his own work, he decided to investigate an array of market outlets. He began travelling to the Texas and Denver art markets and regional powwows. About twenty years ago, Reiter discovered that museum gifts shops are the best and most reliable way to sell hand-crafted jewelry at good prices. He joined the Museum Shop Association for \$250 a year, attending their two annual conferences where he pitches his work to three to four hundred buyers empowered to write orders as large as \$10,000. These outlets, plus his bartering of training and room and board for apprentices' labor, have generated a good and relatively stable income.

For artists whose work is large and expensive, like Gordon Van Wert's stone sculptures, self-employment can be a sequential feast and famine. With excellent connections and museum/gallery knowhow from his Institute of American Indian Art days, Van Wert has managed to place sculptures all over the world—Hong Kong, Manila, Berlin, New York, Buffalo, Indianapolis, and Colorado. His home reservation of Red Lake owns 25 of his pieces. Since moving back near Bemidji, Minnesota, a few years ago, Van Wert won a commission for the Midtown Market in Minneapolis, sold a large sculpture to a hospital in Bemidji and another to the Tech Center in town, and has been working to raise his visibility in the region.

Ojibwe women artists, especially those without formal education or who live on remote reservations, often have a harder time earning enough income from self-employment, no matter how exceptional their work. In addition to Connie Engebretson's need to work at "women's" jobs like foster care, described above, other rural Ojibwe women have struggled to place and make money from their art. Quiltmaker Paula White has sold one-of-a-kind brilliantly colored and patterned quilts to New York City's National Museum of the American Indian, Phoenix's Heard Museum, and a Cass Lake Hospital. When she won "Best of Show" at the Bemidji State University's Native Art Expo, she sold the prize quilt to a buyer for \$3000. But occasional sales like these are not enough, and the hours incorporated into a single quilt make it difficult to price affordably. Like other Native women artists on reservations, White sells her work through intermediaries and beyond that, waits for people to come to her. Giving quilting workshops at Native community centers around the region White tells them, "You'll probably starve if you try to do this as a living. You have to do this all your life, not overnight, and you have to have it in your heart."

Several artists interviewed are supporting themselves on pensions, social security, or modest savings since retiring from

them characteristics beyond what you can see superficially."

Savage-Blue studied at the Institute of American Indian Arts in New Mexico on a scholarship financed through the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. She thrived in support from other artists and soaked up the offerings in that "Mecca of art." She remembers Native teachers from all over the U.S. giving each student encouragement and opportunities. Savage-Blue now teaches art herself. She lovingly describes her elementary school position at Fond du Lac Ojibwe School as, "the best job." She has taught all levels of K-12, after earning an Art Education degree and raising children in Duluth.

Savage-Blue exhibited often in her early college years, has received commissions for murals and illustrations, and in 2009 she was the featured artist in the University of Wisconsin Superior's annual Native art show. However, finding markets for her

work is challenging. Sharing her artwork without community and extended family support was particularly hard when living in southwestern Minnesota, post-college. She knows people don't just come to you, but that you need to have projects under your belt and on your resume.

Savage-Blue works hard to develop an appreciation for her work. As marketing efforts, she exhibits at regional fairs, like the fall art Festival of the Trees at Lake Superior College and the national Finn Festival in Duluth. Often the booth is a family affair—her brother sells wild rice and maple syrup next to her small prints and watercolors. Commissioned projects and displays of her work raise Savage-Blue's visibility among Native people. The Min-No-Aya-Win Human Services Center on Fond du Lac purchased and displays some of her early works. Her original illustrations from the book, *Our Journey*, now hang in the band's Head Start building, which

helps ensure most community members know who she is and are familiar with her style.

Savage-Blue wants people on the reservation to have a piece of her work. Understanding that few community members can afford artwork, she has begun painting smaller canvases. Savage-Blue also actively shares her artistry with her community in other ways. She teaches a beadwork class at the Fond du Lac Museum, an art form she began learning as a child. The hardcore beaders come to her classes with projects that take months or even years to complete, and beginners come to experience beading and appreciate it. Having the class at the museum sparks their interest in their own history, artfully displayed around them in artifacts and photos.

Savage-Blue aspires to exhibit at the Walker and the Smithsonian, possibly the Heard Museum in Arizona. "I know that someday people will come to their senses and realize that I have a lot to say in these paintings."

II. The Economics of Ojibwe Artists: Jobs, Self-Employment, Entrepreneurship

non-arts jobs. Melvin Losh is an example, as is Sandstone area Susan Zimmerman, now retired from her job as a local librarian and devoting herself to her painted gourds that she sells at powwows and through gallery shows like the annual University of Wisconsin Superior event. Reliance on social security or disability payments, often meager, prevents some artists from applying for State Arts Board or foundation grants, because awards would be taxed away or endanger their benefits.

Several Ojibwe artists have become entrepreneurs and are now providing work and/or presentation space for other

artists. Louise Erdrich's Birchbark Books in Minneapolis and Keith Secola's Wild Band are cases in point. These artist entrepreneurs have achieved visibility and good markets for their work and are able to hire and support other artists. Other Ojibwe artist entrepreneurs have a good enough day job that they can underwrite new businesses, as in Richard Schulman's North Star Coffee Bar performance space on the Leech Lake reservation. These artists' entrepreneurial efforts are explored in their profiles.

Andrea Carlson |

We visited with Andrea Carlson in a stylish, industrial coffee shop close to her studio in the Minneapolis Warehouse District. Although this area of Minneapolis is seeing many changes with loft and stadium construction, her studio is in one of the last buildings available to artists in this area with low studio rent. Carlson enjoys the opportunity to step out for a break and meet with people over coffee.

Carlson utilizes many mediums, such as acrylic and oil paint, pencil and marker on paper, to make unusual imagery. She painstakingly draws realistic objects and incorporates them into highly stylized environments. Playing off of the different styles, Carlson's objects appear foreign or out of place in these landscapes. This is a visual metaphor for museum collections and cultural consumption. Carlson is also interested in narrative and how objects relate to storytelling and conveying culture.

From a young age Carlson knew she was an artist, working with sculpture before moving on to two-dimensional art. She is grateful for receiving tribal assistance in the form of college scholarships which helped her get a BA from the University of Minnesota in Art and an MFA from MCAD (Minneapolis College of Art and Design). The University of Minnesota improved her artistic skills and introduced her to theories and



Andrea Carlson, "Culture Cop 2007"

language about art and art making. MCAD is where she met many other artists who advocated and promoted her work, while helping her visualize an independent career in art.

Another asset for Carlson's career is her business relationship with gallery owner Todd Bockley. It is currently a flexible arrangement where he has clients to show her work to, but she is free to sell out of her studio. Although Carlson likes the option, she usually directs interested parties to the Bockley gallery. In 2007, Big Bear, Wallowing Bull and Carlson were featured artists at the October Gallery in London. The international exhibition, arranged by Todd Bockley, is the kind of exposure that moves an artist from emerging to established status.

Carlson looks for contemporary spaces to exhibit her work. "I want to be shown in places open to all people." She is adamant that she wants to be taken seriously, not just seen as a curiosity based on her identity.

In 2006 Carlson and artist Jim Denomie submitted a proposal to the Minnesota Artist Exhibition Program (MAEP) at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) which was accepted. Spring of 2007 they exhibited their proposed show entitled "New Skins" a title taken from an essay on their work by novelist Susan Power. The MAEP selection

process is described as democratic, involving an elected panel of four metro artists and two from greater Minnesota who meet monthly and look over the proposals. The selection committee accepted the New Skins proposal quickly, and the artists were informed of their approval four days after mailing it in.

In 2007 Carlson received a McKnight Artists Fellowship and was able to produce works major in scale and undertaking. Prior Carlson's works had been relatively small (22" x 30") but was able to produce two large-scale works (88" x 120") with financial assistance for time, space, and materials. Carlson has also sought out residencies such as Blacklock and the Anderson Center in Minnesota to provide uninterrupted time and space to realize her ideas.

III. Encouragement, Education, Training, Mentors

The careers that Ojibwe artists have fashioned are heavily shaped by early encouragement from family, teachers, role models, experimentation, and self-taught techniques, opportunities to go to college, and mentoring from other artists. The stories of artists' evolving careers provide positive examples of each of these, but also reveal cases where artists encountered discouragement, closed doors to space and training, and difficulties in developing markets and patrons.

A. Encouragement: parents and role models

Despite Minnesota's relatively large Native population, few young people in Minnesota grow up experiencing visual art, performance, and music by Native artists. There are good books, but not enough, written by Ojibwe authors, in Anishinaabe as well as English, and these are heavily used in schools run by or catering to Native students. Indian youths deserve a mirror in which to see themselves in the larger society, a role artists uniquely provide. Almost all the artists interviewed have been pioneers and innovators in their art forms. They have followed the even thinner ranks of a prior generation—George Morrison (Grand Portage visual artist), Patrick DesJarlait (Red Lake painter), and Gerald Vizenor (White Earth writer; 1984, 1987) whose reflections on their own paths reveal the key roles that parents and other elders, teachers and role models play (DesJarlait, 1995; Williams, 1975; Morrison, 1998).

Elders, parents, siblings, spouses

Several Ojibwe artists learned from and were encouraged by accomplished artist parents and grandparents. Robert DesJarlait received his first art training from his famous father, Patrick, who worked in one of the family's bedrooms and later, after they lost the house, on the kitchen table. "I helped paint the Hamm's cartoons," he says of the famous "From the Land of Sky Blue Waters" commercials. "It helps to be born into this work," reflects Marcie McIntire, daughter of renowned Grand Portage bead artist Ellen Olson. McIntire recalls watching her mother beading at home. "There was always a plate of beads laying around." Her mother responded to a birthday wish by buying Marcie her own beads.

Other artists learned their art from elders creating their work as part of family or community culture life. "When I was five, my grandma made a doll with me," remembers Joyce LaPorte. "She had a rawhide leather bag with all these pieces of leather—

just scraps, no big pieces. She gave me a needle." Together they fashioned the doll using traditional materials like cattails and her grandmother's own hair.

Some artists' parents were experimenters in non-traditional art forms. Writer Jim Northrup's grandfather was a writer, well-known for *Wawina*, an Ojibwe Romeo and Juliet story. By publishing this book, says Northrup, "My grandfather broke the trail for me." Bob SwanSon dates his interest in poetry to his mother's writings in rhyme. Both mother and father encouraged his efforts: "I made up songs and stories before I knew how to write, and unknown to me, they would write it down and show it to me years later." Travis Novitsky's youthful interest in photography was inspired by his father's amateur picture-taking and frequent slide shows. When Novitsky was in the 9th grade, his parents enabled his ambitions by giving him a basic point-and-shoot camera.

Some artists observed their parents marketing as well as making their work. Linda LeGarde Grover's father's family ran an Indian stand at Mineral Center. She recalls that her aunt made willow baskets and sold them for 50 cents with flowers in them.

Several artists interviewed were encouraged by their teacher parents. Both of Heid and Louise Erdrich's parents were teachers. As Heid puts it: "Modeling of artistic endeavor was plentiful, and encouragement was handy." Louise recalls her father, who was a devoted memorizer of poetry, taking a great interest not only in what she wrote, but also in what she read. Their mother, Rita Gurneau Erdrich, was, as Louise says: "One of those creative lives that are often lost so easily. She would make these elaborate things, like clothes for us. We were surrounded by her creativity, including canned fruits and vegetables." Rita was very ambitious for her children: "You would have thought my father, the literary German, would have been the ambitious one, but it was my Chippewa mom who filled out the form" (for her to go to college). Louise values her mother's perseverance, her message that "you are worth it, go for the best." When older sister Louise succeeded as a writer, Heid felt liberated and assured that it would be okay to succeed.

Even when they knew little about art worlds, some parents encouraged their children. Carl Gawboy, who was drawing before he could walk, is an example. His mother encouraged him, giving him paper and 50-color Crayola boxes every Christmas. Yet because his parents didn't know what being an artist was, he grew up with strange ideas, such as thinking he was the only artist in the whole world. He envies other artists who had parents or grandparents who were artists, who he believes

III. Encouragement, Education, Training, Mentors

taught them things like “always schmooze with customers at the opening,” a skill he feels he still lacks.

Some parents gave their aspiring artists mixed messages. Although Jeff Savage recalls that ten boxes of modeling clay were all he ever requested for Christmas, his family “just tolerated my art.” Leech Lake artist Thressa Foster recalls, “my dad said ‘if you think you’re going to paint birds all day in the woods, you are going to starve.’ My mother stressed just making crafts for income. All my life, I would work beside her while she was sewing or picking berries, teaching me how to find princess pine and make Christmas wreaths out of them, and saying, ‘now you’ll never starve my girl.’”

Others’ parents were strongly opposed. Dan Neisen’s parents did not support his artistic aspirations, thinking he couldn’t make a living with art. “I was dyslexic. I had a hard time with numbers, spelling, and reading. But in an art class or woodshop, I excelled. Art, making things, always gave me what I couldn’t get from other people or other things.” Neisen wanted to go to art school in Minneapolis, but was discouraged because of his grades. “My counselor—with my folks—talked as if I wasn’t in the room: ‘Find this guy some kind of labor job. He’ll never get into college. He’s

not going anyplace. Give him a shovel and put him in the field.’ That hit me like a hammer between my eyes.” Neisen went on to become an electrician and eventually returned to his artwork as a second but most beloved occupation.

A number of artists credit their partners as important supporters of their work. Faron Blakely’s wife, who is working to support their large family while she also pursues a degree in social work, “helps me by just being there, believing in me.” Heid Erdrich considers her husband her patron.

Role models

Beyond the encouragement (or lack of it) from extended families, aspiring artists also looked to external role models they could read or observe. Louise Erdrich tried imitating James Wright in her early writing years. Fargo-based artist Faron Blakely was inspired by Bob Ross painting on PBS television: “Just watching him, I felt like I knew him. I imitated him!” Blakely recounted. When Fond du Lac spoken word artist Sarah Agaton Howes saw another young native man, Bobby Wilson, perform spoken word on stage at the League of Pissed Off Voters, she realized that she, too, could get up there and rant her heart out.

Sharon Day |

How big is one’s artistic vision when one can see the whole community as a canvas? Sharon Day, Boise Fort enrollee, is one such artist. Day uses her position as Executive Director of the Indigenous People’s Task Force to create beauty, based on traditional knowing, for the community. A building. A garden. Drums. Composing songs to sing, performing at Illusion Theater, painting, beading.

Day has been known to say she was never told there are things she couldn’t do. As Task Force Director, she initiated the building of Maynidoowahdak Odena Housing, “A Place Where the Ceremonies Happen,” a culturally specific housing complex for Native people living with HIV. She hired Native architect Douglas Cardinal to design the series of octagonal-shaped buildings with tepee-like roofs resembling a traditional native village. Day, collaborating with others, designed the cedar log seating in the middle of the housing complex and its turtle shaped garden.

Also under the umbrella of the Task Force, Day created Ogiitchiidag Giikiinooamaagad Productions, probably the oldest continually



CHERYL WALSH BELLVILLE

running Native youth theater company in North America. The group travels extensively to perform plays, most of which have been written by Day in collaboration with others, to promote messages of wellness to native communities.

Sharon’s medium is what she can find to create art out of. Expanding beauty outward, she works anywhere from the table in her dining room to her yard. Currently, to honor their ancestors, she and her daughter are creating an Ofrenda in front of her house made of found objects and saplings from the nearby riverbank. Day’s found furniture that she has painted or done mosaic on graces her house and yard.

When asked if she was supported to be an artist as a young child, Day pushes air out of her mouth with a short laugh. Born to a family with twelve siblings, she recalls how her father collected and used salvaged materials from the dump to build her younger sisters a playhouse with a screened-in front porch. Watching him create from found objects freed her to experiment too. Day’s mother, after she retired, made each of her children intricately embroidered pillowcases, something she never had time for while raising a family.

In the early 90s, Day suffered a back injury that kept her home for two weeks. Bored, she called her sister and asked for beading

For many artists interviewed, encouragement in youthful years was rare. Parents, even though they participated themselves in dancing, chanting, and craftwork, could be ignorant of, indifferent to, or fearful of the artist's way. Teachers were often dismissive, addressed below. Role models and youthful mentors were hard to find. "All children are artists," as Pablo Picasso famously said, adding that the problem is how to remain an artist once you grow up. It's not difficult to imagine young aspiring Native artists turned away from an interest in music, performance, writing, and visual art at an early age for lack of acknowledgment.

In addition, in Native culture, "art" is integral to Native life, not a separate vocation/occupation. There is no word for art in the Ojibwe language or in many tribal languages. This differs from non-native culture where people label and consider themselves artists. As one Native writer put it, "I think in lots of ways we are expected to create, but we are not hallowed because we do so. You are the best seamstress, but you do that for the community. That is your gift and you are expected to share it, not be exalted for it." Also, rather than specializing, Indian people are expected to be multi-talented, creative in

many different styles and forms, such as sewing, beading, leatherwork, painting, singing.

B. Self-education, training, and formal education

Many Ojibwe artists are completely self-taught, including as renowned Canadian artist Norval Morrisseau and contemporary White Earth/Minneapolis artist Frank Big Bear. Some credit high school teachers for making strenuous efforts to encourage their talent. Others went to colleges or art schools where they had access to excellent resources and intensive training. However, formal schooling has not always been a positive experience for Ojibwe artists, whose aesthetic and cultural sensibilities have been sometimes belittled.

Self-education

Quite a few artists we interviewed are self-taught. Marie Martin, growing up on White Earth, learned and taught sewing and made individually tailored designs for people. Working without patterns other than old shirts and dresses, she would ask customers to point the clothes they wanted in the Sears and Roebuck catalogue and then sew them. With her son John,

supplies, leather, and wooden hoops. She went to work creating shields. Friends and family laughed at the idea of Day being an artist. But when Day took them to the Shakopee Gallery and Trading Post, she received a check within a month. In 1995, she submitted her shields to the Southwest Museum Juried Art show and took 2nd and 3rd place in the soft sculpture category.

Day is a well-known hand drum maker who teaches others how to make them in a day or weekend-long workshops. This skill she learned from a man who doctored her grandson. Most recently, the *Oshkii Giizhik Singers* won a Nammy (Native American Music Award) for Best Traditional Recording. The night of the awards, Day received a text thanking her because she taught them how to make their hand drums.

Day herself is a singer and composer of traditional songs. As a member of Neeconis Women Singers, she has traveled around the continent to share her songs and women's water teachings. She recalls that her father played seven musical instruments, all by

ear. "He would take a stick and draw on the ground the creation story. He would sing and say, 'This is a rabbit story. This is your grandfather's song.' The songs were all on reel-to-reel tapes that got lost. We were told that he played sax in a swing band in the military, but I never saw him with a saxophone." Once again, her training was by witnessing the possible and years later experimenting, thinking: "I can do that."

Day has participated in three residencies, one with Spiderwoman Theater and one an eight-week performance art session facilitated by Juliana Pegues that culminated in a show of Native and East Indian women's writings at Patrick's Cabaret. In a First Nations Composer Initiative residency with Mohican composer Brent Michael Davids, Day decided to 'write' a song, as opposed to having a song 'come through her'. "All the things I create come from myself, what I see, what I like. It all comes from who I am as an Indian. I rarely think about white people when creating."

Sometimes Day thinks about art opportunities she would like to join, but her

full-time job does not lend itself to classes or residencies. She does not apply for artist grants. One granting agency called her and invited her to apply. When she didn't get the grant, it hurt.

While Day creates some of her art in a place of solitude, most of her creative work is community focused and collaboratively done. She feels that this spirit of camaraderie is often lacking in other programs where competition has seeped in as a value. Cooperation is what has allowed tribal communities to flourish, and it is what Day models in the projects she initiates.

Almost all of Day's art is pursued as a community activity that honors tradition. Her creations are used for learning and solving community problems. She would like to see art more valued both in Native circles and beyond. She imagines a small mall in the Twin Cities, like the Mercado or the East African mini-malls, where Native artists could have small shops and sell their creations. "People need to see how they can translate making art into making a living," she says.

III. Encouragement, Education, Training, Mentors

they started making crazy quilts and block quilts, moving on to star quilts and others with fancier designs. Connie Engebretson wanted to go to Minneapolis to become a fashion designer, something her Detroit Lakes high school teacher encouraged, but her young husband said no. She began making jingle dresses for her daughter, like Martin with no patterns, “learning by doing, by making mistakes” as she says. Soon her work began to attract notice at powwows, building a clientele for her increasingly beautiful, one-of-a-kind medicine dresses.

K–12 training

High school art teachers were sometimes key to a young Ojibwe artist’s decision to pursue an artistic path. Heid Erdrich attended St. John’s grade school in Wahpeton, ND, where the Sisters of St. Francis “were nature girls” who encouraged all creative efforts. Leech Lake visual artists Mike Lemon was tutored far beyond what the art curriculum required by his Bemidji eighth grade teacher, Mildred Wardell. She recognized his talent, especially his three-dimensional acumen. “She taught

Jim Denomie

Dust puffs up as the car travels the gravel road to Jim Denomie’s oasis along the St. Croix valley. A log cabin, smaller buildings next to a log house. One is Denomie’s art studio.

Denomie’s work is storytelling with paint. “I have a mainstream art education and combine it with the political, social, and personal commentary of a Native American who grew up in the cities. My art is representative of the tradition of storytelling. The colors are natural. I started with the Renegade Series, paintings about the reservation system and how it developed. I saw it visually—tall mesas, confined, with flight being a privilege. I am doing visual storytelling.”

Denomie, Lac Courte Oreilles enrollee and recipient of a 2008–09 Bush Artist fellowship, had his first inklings of being an artist as a little peewee of 3 or 4 when he liked to draw or color. At 7 or 8, a cousin taught him linear drawing with shading by doing a still life at the kitchen table. At school, he was always in art classes or events.

After his first semester of 10th grade at Minneapolis’ South High, Denomie asked if he could transfer to an art school. He was told there was no future or money to be made with art. So he dropped out of school: “Pot, beer, and cars were what I became interested in.” He worked minimum wage jobs and found his way into construction and gave up artwork for twenty years. In 1989 he got sober and in 1990 started a health science major at the University of Minnesota.



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An art class reawakened him, and he shifted his major. “I wasn’t always supported there. Others didn’t understand the storytelling concept, couldn’t critique it. Someone said, ‘You think too much.’ I said, ‘All these symbols and metaphors mean something!’ We were in a post-modern era but didn’t know what that was. Other students had the same experience, too. We couldn’t wait to get out of art school.” But Denomie appreciated two teachers, David Feinberg and Jon Neuse, mixing what he learned from them with his own ideas. Neuse “pushed and pulled” him through holes he wouldn’t have gotten through on his own.

Graduating with a Fine Arts degree, Denomie returned to drywall to support himself and his family. He thus developed his own visual language without having to sell his art for a living. He chose not to pursue further art training: “Theories don’t inspire me. I’m an old fashioned painter, not trying to throw a trick in there. My work is more conceptual.” He finds inspiration in other artists’ work, often visiting

the online site mnartists.org three or four times a day and subscribing to art magazines and visiting galleries.

Opportunities initially came to Denomie through other artists. Shortly after his graduation, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith conducted a residency at the U of M and flashed a picture of Denomie’s birch bark Santa Claus painting. People stood and applauded when she showed this photo at a conference in Denver. She included his work in several traveling shows,

introducing it to a national network. Shows at the Heard Museum’s Fine Arts invitational and the American Indian Community House in New York City followed.

Denomie is always looking for more studio time. It costs him \$2500 to free himself for a month from his day job. Before the Bush fellowship, Denomie worked as a drywall finisher full time, commuting two to three hours on top of seven or eight-hour workdays. His creative time got sandwiched between the responsibilities of being a father, grandfather, husband, and his drywall job. He typically spends from 8:30 p.m. to 2 a.m. in his studio; half of it is doing the administrative side of his art and the other creating art. The two-year, \$50,000 Bush grant was a great gift.

When Denomie moved to his new place outside the city, he spent seven months building his studio space after work. In his words, his ‘mind got congested with things’. He decided to follow the model of another artist who was doing a drawing a day. Denomie

me everything: pottery, jewelry, sculpture, silk-screening, airbrush, oils, acrylics, pencils, chalk." Faron Blakely, whose mother was not supportive of his talent, was recognized and encouraged by Gary Wolf, his high school art teacher in Nevis, Minnesota. "He was the only one who stood up for me," Blakely remembered. "He gave me confidence. He must have known I had something."

Sometimes, a teacher's discouragement made a young Ojibwe student angry enough to take strenuous steps. Lyz

Jaakola's Cloquet high school music teacher disparaged her chances of making it as a singer. With her folks' blessing, Jaakola sought and won a scholarship to Wayland Prep in Wisconsin where she was the only Native student. She devoted half her time to voice and violin work, encouraged by a music teacher who served as a surrogate grandma and helped her move toward a college music trajectory.

Several artists went to the Institute for American Indian Arts (IAIA) in Santa Fe for high school and sometimes college

likened the decision of doing a painting a day to giving up smoking. Preparing for this task, he bought supplies and told himself this endeavor was going to be about playing, experimenting, and exploring. He chose portraits after doing family ones for Christmas. Starting on New Years Day 2005, he painted at least one painting every day for the year. Subject matter varied but many were portraits. They are less vocal, less a political statement than most of his other work, like the Renegade Series.

Denomie's work appeals to people who can understand his stories and jokes, sarcasm, humor, and wit. He believes some of his narrative paintings say, "Mean people suck," and the only people offended are mean people. His art reaches both mainstream and Native audiences. Denomie has noticed that being identifiably Native sometimes closes doors. He used to be asked to speak at Indian month in May. But when folks saw his images, their reaction was, "Oh, that's not what we expected." Often, people want what they consider traditional Indian images, and Denomie's Renegade series gets rejected.

Since his first show at Two Rivers Gallery, Denomie has been included in a number of national juried exhibitions, including three at the Weisman Museum and in several other museum exhibits, including his 2007 Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) two-person show. His paintings have been purchased by the Weisman, the Tweed, the Minnesota Historical Society, and collectors around the country, though he does not have a patron. The MIA show resulted in numerous sales and led to two additional exhibits. On average, his work is now featured in eight to ten group shows a year and a solo show every other year.

Denomie believes exhibiting is as important, if not more so, as selling, and he works hard to generate opportunities. During his one-a-day painting project, he sent out ten to twelve proposals trying to develop it as a traveling show. He keeps costs down by asking for a stipend (some colleges do) or a budget for shipping (others do). He wonders how much his artwork would change if he had to sell it for his living. He anticipates that his work would be less challenging and less confrontational but still artistically strong.

Denomie's ambitions are to paint full time, develop new work, keep evolving as a painter and try to make a living at it. To do so, he needs to sell work. Todd Bockley, who sells his work on commission, represents him well in the state, but Denomie would like to hire a rep for venues outside of Minnesota. Additionally he is setting up an Internet business, run by his daughter, to sell his work online. He plans to operate the site for three years while plowing the profits back into the business for supplies, hoping to make an income off it after five years.

Denomie feels that some contemporary Native American artists do not, for the most part, enjoy support and encouragement from the larger Indian community. Often their work is not understood because they work in contemporary formats. He notes that when Red Lake went to the state championships in basketball—an Indian team playing in a mainstream event—the team had a large Native following. Contemporary Native artists, working in mainstream venues, do not get the same recognition but rather are supported by other contemporary artists.

Still, Denomie is proud to represent the Indian community, expanding the definition of Indian art while competing in the mainstream community. He would like to see his work invested in by the Indian community, businesses, organizations, and tribal entities. While the majority of Native people cannot afford his art, even rich Natives who can afford to collect often find it too edgy and modern. Noting that even some Indians possess a narrow conception of what Indian art is supposed to be, he believes that better education of art history in the native community would enhance the understanding of contemporary Native artists. When he discovers talent in younger Native artists, he supports them by encouragement and points out opportunities.

Denomie and Jerry Rau, a street musician, both share the philosophy that if you don't document your idea or inspiration you will lose it. Rau told him that you have to catch your song. If not, another musician will, and if not him, then they all go to Bob Dylan. Denomie always carries a sketchbook with him wherever he goes. He loves to go to a coffee shop and sketch. Whether driving or working, he is always thinking art. If he's not creating paintings in his mind, he's thinking about the administrative side.

As an artist, Denomie strives to continuously develop and evolve. For him, one artistic achievement leads to the next step. Learning and discovering something new is a life-long process that he describes as twisting and turning, reaching for a new branch. "It's like the clouds in my paintings. Nuclear bombs and smoke signals are just abstract ideas that emerged."

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coursework. At IAIA from age 14 for grades 10 through 12, Gordon Van Wert was taught and mentored by the famous sculptor Allan Houser, from whom he learned technique (including working on Houser's pieces), patience, and how to price work. "He was my father figure," said Van Wert, who then decided that he wanted to sculpt for a living. Returning to IAIA for college level training, Van Wert sums up the experience as awesome and trend-setting. He valued learning in all art forms from a cross-section of Indian cultures, from Eskimo to Samoan and Cree, and benefited from exhibition opportunities and ongoing networking that have helped his career.

Post-secondary training

Going away to college is often a daunting experience for Ojibwe youth. It requires being away from home and from your people and subjection to racism and otherness. Being interested in art, rather than in other majors like public safety or social work, makes it even more challenging. Colleges that offered Native Studies programs or special Native tracks in art or music departments have been friendlier places for Native artists than

straight arts programs. Carl Gawboy, who was committed to an artistic career and a personal artistic aesthetic as he entered college, found it difficult at the University of Minnesota Duluth. A watercolor professor, who acknowledged that Gawboy was the best watercolorist in the class, nevertheless gave him a B because Gawboy refused to work in abstract expressionism. After majoring in art education there and teaching for a few years, Gawboy found a University of Montana program tailored specifically for Native artists. He flourished in this environment, where he appreciated working with fellow Native students from around the country.

Andrea Carlson found the University of Minnesota's American Indian Studies Department much more community-centered than the University's Art Department, which fostered a sense of individualism and provided less instruction on building a career as an artist. However, she acquired foundation skills and an artistic language there. "The U of M is a much better school for encouraging artistic growth over career pursuits, which is a good thing for undergrads," she reflects. In contrast, when she moved on to the Minneapolis College of Art and Design,

Robert DesJarlait |

A black cowboy hat with bone and beaded band sets atop long black hair, with minor streaks of gray. Sunglasses complete the urban Indian image. Sitting in a Perkin's booth, waiting to be interviewed, Robert DesJarlait, Red Lake enrollee, is a father of four, a man who graduated from college in his 50s, and when we interviewed him, he was working at Ain Dah Yung as project manager for its Indian Children Welfare program in St. Paul. A visual artist and writer, he considers himself a community artist, not a gallery artist.

DesJarlait's visual art depicts Ojibwe life. His early work challenged the stereotype of women as the beast of burden. For the Franklin Library mural, DesJarlait featured the seven original clans, four orders of life, the star world, plant world, animals. A storyteller recounts the creation of the universe. A hand depicts the Creator. In all his murals DesJarlait incorporates pictographs, a principle form of communication in Anishinaabe culture with spiritual significance. To ensure his use and his respect of cultural beliefs, he spoke with an elder who told him what pictographs he can and can't use.



DesJarlait grew up poring over art books and cites Matisse and Picasso as major influences. He had no formal art training, but grew up watching his father paint the Hamm's Beer cartoons and the Land O' Lakes and Minnegasco Indian maidens. DesJarlait also witnessed how racism impacted his

father. Hamm's denies DesJarlait's father created the Hamm's Beer Bear. DesJarlait's family lost out on royalties. "He was pretty bitter about that. He did all those ads but the credit goes to white people. There are all those stereotypes of Indian men. He did become an alcoholic. I didn't realize how hard it was for him," DesJarlait says.

DesJarlait didn't commit to art until his wife, Nanette, asked him to create a calendar for a group of midwives as part of a fundraiser. Earlier in his 20s and 30s, he lacked motivation, turning to alcohol and drugs. He considered himself a writer and wrote here and there, but thought he could not be both an artist and a writer. "I kept telling Nan that I couldn't do it because I hadn't drawn for twenty years. But she kept insisting that I could. Finally I said, Okay, I'll try it!" After the calendar was released, two local Indian galleries made him offers for solo shows and collectors bought his work.

DesJarlait then illustrated and wrote educational materials, providing youth with an idea of how Ojibwe people lived 150 years ago. He created work for the Anoka-Hennepin School district, Indian agencies throughout

she encountered a school that is professionally focused, career driven, and good for learning how to network.

Few artists made it to elite schools out east and enjoyed the experience. An exception is writer Louise Erdrich, who flourished at Dartmouth College. Sacrifices by her parents and her father's service in the National Guard helped to pay for hers and her six siblings' college educations. She found Dartmouth to be open and welcoming, and from this base, she met and gained a number of important mentors who continued to encourage and critique her writing. In contrast, her sister Heid Erdrich found graduate work at Johns Hopkins to be an enriching, but also difficult environment. As the only Native woman, she felt little affinity with the other writers, occasionally experienced blatant racism about the content of her writing, and was lonely for the landscapes, Native community, and artist support networks of the Upper Midwest.

Composer and musician Lyz Jaakola faced personal and cultural discrimination and marginalization when she returned to University of Minnesota Duluth for her graduate work in music. When the UMD department, where she had

comfortably finished her undergrad degree, publicized her graduate fellowship with the word "minority" attached to it, "It was almost like I was outed. There was a shift in attitude that wasn't friendly." A couple of younger faculty members were hostile to minorities and vocal about it, suggesting that she was coddled and didn't deserve a degree. Finished with her coursework but angry and ambivalent, she decided to walk away before finishing her thesis, especially after the Dean of Fine Arts responded negatively to her appeal for help.

Several artists pursued their college educations later in life, finding it more challenging because of family and work commitments, but meaningful. Painter Laura Youngbird spent a good number of years pursuing her art degrees part-time at Moorhead State University while working and raising a family. At a young age, though wanting to be an artist, she believed it impractical and studied drafting instead, developing a profession in mechanical drawing. In 1986, because of a construction slowdown and the closing of her employer, she began taking visual art classes, completing a BFA in six years. In 2002, she completed her MA in painting and printmaking. It's an unusual

the state and the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center, but admits that he grew tired of this kind of work.

With a hmpfh that is part laughter he says, "I would have been rich if I was single, but with a family, I am barely getting by." With a family to support, DesJarlait decided to return to school for an alternate line of work. He graduated from Metro State with a degree in Ethnic Studies.

DesJarlait does not like being a professional; he would rather be an artist. Despite challenges, he has continued his mural work. Although DesJarlait and frequent collaborator Marilyn Lindstrom receive grant funding for their murals, it is limited and stretched thin. They created the Franklin Library mural for \$15,000. After materials, renting studio space, and devoting almost a year's worth of time, they made about \$2.25 an hour.

DesJarlait hopes his current mural, dedicated to Red Lake and funded by the Minnesota State Arts Board, revives his art career. In two years, he wants to move to his land in Red Lake, build a house and focus on art and writing. DesJarlait feels he needs to put together an exhibit

based on his current work, in order to make a living from his art. He has plans to link a show featuring his journals and mural color studies to a Twin Cities event for the opening of the Red Lake mural.

DesJarlait finds few Native-centered spaces exist through which he and other artists can sell and exhibit work. DesJarlait used to sell his art at powwows, but he notes that Indian people don't have money. He could set up a table, but no one buys. His community art is fueled by grants, but there aren't enough monies to go around. Sometimes the community art is torn down. Again, with Marilyn, he created a mural across the street from the Franklin Theater with neighborhood youth. That mural was destroyed to build the Franklin Street Bakery. He thinks casinos don't buy and display native art because the casinos are aimed at non-Indians. He says, "Minnesota, unlike the Southwest, this state is not aware of the art that it has. We are supposed to be a liberal state, known for our artists, but no..."

He feels Minnesota could learn a lot from Southwest communities. When DesJarlait

visits Phoenix, he sees huge painted pots and pictographs on cement walls, right on the freeway. He points to Albuquerque's Pueblo Cultural Arts Center as a specific model worth emulating. The center attracts tourists and features classes, traditional stoves outside for pottery and bread, and a building dedicated to beadwork, traditional art, and new work. He says, "The entire (Minneapolis) American Indian Center, was supposed to be an arts and cultural center, but "the people running it didn't know what to do, so instead social services took over."

DesJarlait uses his art for purposes well worth celebrating. As a community artist, DesJarlait tries "to be what the community responds to." Through his mural work, he teaches kids of all colors about native art forms, like pictographs. He sees art as a way to bridge cultural differences in communities like the Phillips area in Minneapolis with refugees from all over the world. For him, community art is a way to keep Native art forms present in the midst of such cultural diversity. "The artists can help us figure out who we are, find the human connection, a common denominator."

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path—twenty plus years of artistic work generated in and outside of college instruction.

Although as a high school student Jim Denomie wanted to transfer to an arts college, he was discouraged from doing so by his teachers and dropped out altogether, doing minimum wage work and partying. Twenty years later, he started working construction and earned a BFA degree in art at the University of Minnesota. There Denomie insisted on his artistic mission as a storyteller, dismissed by most of the faculty. But Jon Neuse, a dedicated teacher and a good artist, encouraged exercises and collaborations: “He pushed and pulled me through holes I wouldn’t have gotten through on my own,” says Denomie. He also got great support from David Feineberg, one of his painting professors. While he considers himself an old fashioned painter, Denomie’s formal art training has helped open doors and enables him to navigate the institutional art world.

C. Mentoring

Beyond or in place of relationships with teachers, many Native artists express a wish for mentoring, gratitude for those who mentor, and a desire to help others in this way. Several told of the significance of specific artists in their lives. In 1988, when Marcie McIntire started selling fulltime, she was encouraged by artists and patrons, many of them women. Grand Marais artist Hazel Belvo, George Morrison’s widow, advised her, “You have to get your work into galleries and museums, into solo and group shows. Go to the juried art shows.” Belvo invited McIntire’s mother Ellen Olson and sister Shelley to a WARM (Women’s Art Registry of Minnesota) and McIntire accompanied them. The Native Art Circle sponsored a conference in Duluth thanks to fundraising efforts by Juanita Espinosa, who compiled the resulting resumes and slides into the Minnesota Native Artists Directory and updated them for

Connie Engebretson |

Connie Engebretson wears many hats. A White Earth member, she makes regalia for Ojibwe ceremonies, selling directly and marketing through the Anishinaabe Cultural Center. She creates signs for storefronts. She has been assistant manager at KFC and Miguel’s Tacos and is currently working in foster care. She even does carpentry, including constructing outdoor graphic designs. Even though Engebretson works other jobs, she does art full-time.

Engebretson considers fashion design her main art form. For 15 years she has created jingle dresses. She stays traditional, while keeping up with styles—first floral, then bright, now solid color dresses. Engebretson even created a denim dress. She stays sensitive to both the spiritual aspects of the dress and the needs of young dancers. “You don’t step over a medicine dress and don’t hang anything from the jingles...the dress is considered a spirit.” She says, “I don’t put 365 jingles on them. It’s too heavy for a lot of people; but for an experienced dancer, I will.” She tries to make dresses affordable for young girls who can’t pay the \$500 some places charge.

Engebretson started by creating a dress for her daughter, because her own mother who used to make them passed away. Then she made one for herself and next, for friends. She remembers sitting on the front steps with her



mother rolling jingles. Her mom would stay up all night before a powwow. Engebretson’s family is full of creative women—her mother drew, one sister made quilts, another is a florist, and all are gardeners and sewers.

Engebretson’s artistic impulses started early, and she has nurtured them mostly without formal training. She draws, a practice started as a girl. Her parents encouraged her, even taking her up Highway 59, “to a guy

who painted, to show me his paintings.” As a young woman, she went to technical school for sign lettering. Her teachers encouraged her to go to fashion design school in the Cities, but her husband said no. Lucy Kjar from the Beadin’ Path taught Engebretson how to price her dresses by telling her to keep track of her material and her time. She told her not go under \$100 when making breech clothes for men because they require a lot of sewing

several years. McIntire was inspired to go to the library for books on starting a business.

Such a mix of artistic and practical advice is cherished in a mentor. Melvin Losh described how meeting accomplished quillworker Catherine Baldwin in Michigan brought him out of a five-year slump. She showed him how to insert quills into birchbark using an awl and tweezers, and advised him to take off on his own.

Louise Erdrich describes the energetic, caring feedback devoted to her work by a number of writers. Essie Horne (Shoshone), then in her 80s, would read everything Louise wrote. Non-Native writers that she met through her training and after continued to help her: Richard Howard, Cynthia McDonald, Edmond Wright, and Mark Vinz. "It was a time of having mentors, being encouraged, and just being around other writers," she reflects. Her mentors told her to write and

write and write. They told her to find her own voice, to throw out what wasn't good.

Young artists we interviewed want to be mentored and feel there isn't enough of it. Sarah Agaton Howes notes, "We (native people) don't have a lot of mentorship. I'd like to have more of that." Gordon Van Wert encourages aspiring artists to seek out accomplished artists, asking for encouragement and ideas. "The more you do it, the better it gets," he promises. "Young kids need to hear something positive from their elders. It's a good thing for an accomplished artist to do."

As artists become more established, they often extend help and counsel to younger artists. Marcie McIntire supports other artists and community members through her gallery on the Grand Portage reservation. More for encouragement than income, she teaches beginning and advanced beadwork in her space and elsewhere. She helps other artists buy materials and

time. Engebretson takes pride in the fact that her work is quality work—the jingles stay on and the seams hold.

Engebretson never uses patterns. At powwows she dances and absorbs, sometimes sketching regalia, noting how the styles and colors change. Traditional people at powwows tell Engebretson how things should be made or the ceremony behind a particular creation.

Engebretson's artistic process fills her life. She creates art in her basement, garage, all over the house, and on the back deck. She makes different projects in different spaces. Inside, she makes feather dance fans. She paints on the back deck. Her garage, where she has a table saw, jigsaw, and router, is full of wood for making silhouettes. If she works on a dress and gets tired of that, she paints, and then on to a shirt, and then maybe a cutout. "When I shift off to something else, it makes the first better, fresher." When her sister died, she created a feather wreath for her grave. She started making breech clothes because she wanted her brothers to look good dancing. In spite of setting up her life to do her art, Engebretson has never applied for a grant because she doesn't consider herself an artist.

Engebretson has found some supportive outlets to display and sell her work, but many doors remain closed. She started creating things to sell for the Anishinaabe Cultural

Center when her daughter attended youth drumming and dancing. She appreciates that the Center welcomes everyone and helps artists earn money. Mick and Lucy Kjar run The Beadin' Path out of their home in Fargo. They trade Engebretson Lakota beadwork for her dresses and then sell the dresses every weekend at powwows. Floral Impressions, where she paints signs, has also been open to her.

Some outlets are closed to her. She does not sell online. She never enters casino banner contests; nor does she sell work there. She can't afford the \$100-300 set up fee, so she doesn't sell at powwow booths, although she sometimes takes dresses to the announcer stand to offer them for sale. Fellow White Earth artist Dan Neisen lets Engebretson display her dresses at his powwow stand.

Engebretson faces challenges pricing both her textiles and signs. Most of Engebretson's sewing goes to the Native community. People ask Engebretson to make them a dress. She tells them to buy materials and then she will put it together. Many balk at the cost. In the non-Native community, she has sold signs to KFC, Taco Place, and the Arena. She charges \$200 for a 4 x 8 foot sign, but her nephew once bought one for \$800 and told her, "You better start charging more."

Recently, Engebretson has been gaining

more exposure. The Detroit Lakes museum exhibits her mother's and daughter's jingle dresses, and the White Earth poster features her Mom with her dress on. Engebretson photographs her dresses and signs for her portfolio. If she sees one of her jingle dresses at a powwow, she asks the wearer if she can photograph her in it.

Engebretson takes pride in her work and wants to go even further. Her art focuses on tradition and celebrates community. She is learning to work with eagle feathers. When people ask her to teach them, she does. Since she has been working in foster care, she has made regalia for foster children who then take them home when they return: "So many families can't or won't spend money on outfits. This helps the child see there's something else out there, in terms of life style."

Engebretson's daughter tired of her mother working fast food, and Engebretson agrees that she should focus full-time on her art. How to make that break remains a huge question. She might ask the White Earth small business office for a grant, but it is hard to reach them. Lower powwow setup fees, like Tom Mason's community powwow that didn't charge local artists, would also help Engebretson achieve her goals. She knows she could grow her arts business, if people had enough money to purchase her work.

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offers to market their work in her gallery. When they come in with their work, she buys it from them if she has the money. "I have a large collection of paintings and prints that I bought from other artists—mosaics, drawings, acrylics, and basketry. Some people avidly collect this work."

Musician Keith Secola likes to jam with and empower local musicians. "Sometimes it's a risk, like releasing chaos," he says. So he encourages them through making music, encouraging expression and experimentation. Secola believes his creative spirit will disappear if he doesn't share it, that it doesn't belong to him but is a gift.

Though relatively youthful, Travis Novitsky wants to serve as a role model for younger people, using his photography. He's

thought about starting a local camera club. He helps pass on skills on a one-to-one basis, just bumping into people. "I ran into a local teen one freezing March night watching the northern lights. He had a point and shoot camera. I showed him what I was doing. He said, 'Dude—I love this kind of stuff. I wish I could do shots like yours.' He's someone I never thought would be interested. It's a good way to help local kids out. It gets them outside, away from movies and video games."

Self-taught artists often share their marketing and pricing skills with others. Marie Martin sees that many artists don't know what their work is worth. She acts as solicitor and encourager. "I tell them, no, not 50¢, sell it for \$5.00. Like the man who is selling his birchbark work. He was selling it for nothing. I

Louise Erdrich

Louise Erdrich meets us at the coffee shop attached to Birchbark Books, her non-profit bookstore, in the Kenwood neighborhood of Minneapolis. Without hesitation she describes herself as a writer. Her books weave stories of traditional and contemporary Ojibwe life around characters sprung from her childhood on the cusp between small town farming and reservation environments. She concedes that she would be a visual artist if she had another life, but for this life, she just illustrates some of her books with drawings of her children. "I wish I had more time to do this," she says.

A Turtle Mountain Ojibwe, Erdrich grew up in Wahpeton, North Dakota, attended Wahpeton High School and rarely left North Dakota. She had always kept diaries and notebooks and exchanged long letters with people like her grandparents and friends from junior high, often illustrating them. Her teacher parents encouraged her reading and writing, sacrificing to send her and her siblings to college. She earned a B.A. at Dartmouth College and an M.A. from Johns Hopkins. The spaces most open and welcoming to her included Dartmouth and her mother's perseverance, her feeling that "you are worth it, go for the best."

At Dartmouth, Erdrich tried everything—science, art, math—and in her words, failed. But in writing, she found her niche and flourished under good mentoring that continued beyond college. Her first poem was published by *Ms. Magazine* in 1976, a

blind submission. After college, she worked for the Boston Indian Council, writing stories and taking photos for their newspaper. It was during this time, "that I started writing about my own background and became more politicized." She and her sister Heid also wrote romance stories for *Redbook*, *Women's World*, *Ladies' Home Journal*. "...totally white bread. There was nothing Native about them. One story was built around an ice cream cone they both liked, The Mint Chip Man."

Erdrich returned to North Dakota as a traveling poet with Poets in the Schools, teaching at Bureau of Indian Affairs schools on the Turtle Mountain reservation, reservation (where she is enrolled), and prisons as well. The pay was not good. At a flophouse in Valley City, where she paid \$8 for a night's lodging, she contracted hepatitis. She had to quit her job, and the money she had saved went to pay the hospital bill.

Erdrich then started writing seriously, while working a variety of jobs. The best included a stint with the Fargo Arts Council, an artists' collective that worked with children in the school system in return for space to work, a job that helped connect her with regional poets, distributors, and publishers. She worked in the beet fields, as a waitress, at a swimming pool, and selling concessions at a movie theater. She was a short order cook and a construction worker. For a while, she shared a windowless apartment in Fargo with her brother where they split the \$105 a month rent. About the

jobs, she says, "Maybe I found them mentally exhausting, no creative outlet, but I also gained a lot from them. Experience. Other people's ideas. The knowledge that I had to write, that I wouldn't be happy in another job."

But always she was "writing my way into my current work" with stories and poems, following her mentors' directions to write and write and write. "I had notebooks filled with unreadable work. I was trying out a lot of different voices. For a period I was trying to be a French ex-patriot. They told me to find my own voice."

Erdrich's heritage was a conundrum for her. "As a mixed blood I have been incredibly lucky. I was very aware that I never had to be away from my parents. I thought, I can't write about this—my life is not anguished enough. I am not going to pretend to be something I'm not." She believes this happens a lot with Native people, where the subject of one's writing is a political choice. "But then I realized that I was affected. I was part of what I didn't know I was a part of. I went back and connected with family on the rez and the broader family of humankind. Then I felt I had to write, it was the only thing I could do."

Erdrich then began to write out of a different place than before. "With a varied family, she writes from numerous ethnicities—her Polish step-grandmother, her Chippewa grandfather, her very Catholic mother. "My parents wished I wouldn't be explicit about anybody's sexuality. That was hard for them.

told him to raise his price.” Joyce LaPorte’s husband, John Losh, an accomplished artist himself, questioned her habit of giving away her dolls. So many people wanted them. John told her, “You have to put a price on them, even though you’ll never get your time back.” When she decided to price them at \$1, he responded, “No, sell them for \$30.” She followed this advice, raising her prices thereafter as she became better at her dolls and learned that people would pay what she asked.

Native Arts Circle, a region-wide network of Native artists run by Juanita Espinosa, facilitates the formation of spontaneous mentoring relationships. Lyz Jaakola tells how at a Duluth convening organized by Espinosa she learned that she might actually be able to go on the road and perform. “I didn’t know

that Native singers did touring and got gigs! In Europe! Like Cochise Anderson!” Through Native Arts Circle, Juanita became a coach for many artists, helping them learn the skills to market their work elsewhere and giving mini-courses on how to approach coffee houses and enter art fairs and exhibitions.

Juanita Blackhawk joined a convening of the Michigan-based Great Lakes Indian Basket and Quill Box Makers Association in East Lansing, where artists came from all over the US. There she watched a 9-year-old make black ash baskets. “The convening created space for artists to network and see each others work. Why do we need to be affiliated with some big organization like the Basket and Box Makers to have this happen? Why can’t we have our own network?” Blackhawk asks.

But they rose above it, to support me. Their love trumped their discomfort.” She credits her mother in particular for giving her permission to chose her politicized and sexually graphic writing style.

Breaking into publishing was difficult. Erdrich’s first effort, *Tracks*, a novel set in the searing political economy of Ojibwe dispossession by whites, was turned down repeatedly by every major publisher. They said things like, “Oh, we already did a Native American book this year.” But she believed that if the quality of her writing were good enough, she would get published. In 1984, her first novel, *Love Medicine*, sold 400,000 copies and won the National Book Critics Circle Award. She used the original version of *Tracks* as “spare parts” in many other books, eventually publishing it in a much revised form. Since then, she has published a dozen novels, five children’s books, and three non-fiction volumes.

The book market is unpredictable. Erdrich was disappointed when she won a regional book award for her *Master Butcher’s Singing Club*, a book that focused on white rather than Native subjects. She notes Native work is sometimes critiqued differently than non-Native work, because “Native work is seen as ‘less than.’ For example, Tony Hillerman got attention for his work as authentically Indian.”

But being a woman writer can be a greater liability than being Native, Erdrich thinks. Women writers do not earn the same status,

the same respect, as male writers in this world. “We’re stuck in this domestic basement. Unless you are a Jane Austen, if you write about a domestic world it’s not as important as when men incorporate violence in their books. Violence is really valued.”

Erdrich hopes that as more Natives move into positions of reviewing in the art world, awareness and readership will increase. “Native people are in the process of defining ourselves. We need all kinds of voices to do that, to help us know how we fit in as American writers.” She believes it starts from the ground up, through the educational system and by getting encouragement and valuing our own background. “The value of my work is that it has made it clear that you can write about your own background, whatever it is. I am mixed, German and Ojibwe. No one has ever really told my story. So many tribes have not had their own stories told.”

Erdrich speaks to cultural relevance: “I would never join or give away something that is sacred. I make sure that I have a verified written source for anything that might be considered a revelation. There is lots of ethnographic work. On the other hand, you can’t shut off your own mind or blinder yourself. As a writer you have to be free to write the story coming out.”

Erdrich feels fortunate to have been able to support her family through her writing. “In my own work, I’m doing what I set out to

do, which is to never compromise anything I write. And miraculously, I get paid for it, so that’s why I keep doing it. Sometimes it seems like an act of madness. I am so surprised. I’ve tried to stick to my truth.” Her current working space is the top floor of her house: “I work in doll house sized rooms.” Today she can pay a babysitter and knows how lucky she is. She also considers it luck that she didn’t have children until her first book was published.

Birchbark Books, a Minneapolis reading and distribution space, was born as an outlet for Woodland Indian art and a place for Native literature. “It’s a project I knew should be in this city, a great intellectual city for Native people.” Recently, she and her sister Heid have expanded their enterprise to add the non-profit Birchbark House, a media clearinghouse, multi-lingual press, and distribution service for Native American literature, specializing in Ojibwe and Dakota languages.

Erdrich supports other Native writers. She helped Mark Anthony Rolo by mentoring, reading, and editing his book, *The Wonder Bull*. She reviews and writes blurbs for other Ojibwe writer’s books, and hosts readings and employs writers at Birchbark Books. To encourage Native writers, Heid and she have created an annual Turtle Mountain Ojibwe Writer’s Workshop, a grassroots movement to write and tell stories, including writers reading their work.

Marie Martin and John Ahles

White Earth mother and son artists Marie Martin and John Ahles live in a small house in Mahanomen, Minnesota. Their art and craftwork fills their home, even visible out the windows occupying spaces in the yard. Ahles's skills range from carpentry and wallpapering to sewing, beading, and leather and feather work. He makes braided and loom rugs, black ash baskets, star quilts, pine needle baskets, men's dance roaches and war bonnets. Martin, 80-some years old, still sews, makes baskets, and sews leather on glass vases.

Born and raised in the woods of Wauban, Minnesota, Martin created all her life, out of necessity and interest. As a young mother, she made children's clothes out of Grampa's hand-me-down white shirts. When her daughter needed a graduation dress, she went through her stash of material and made one. Martin taught herself sewing and how to create patterns, figuring out how to recreate items in the Sears and Roebuck catalogue.

Martin had no one encouraging her, but she has served that role for her son. Ahles acknowledges he's got most of his training from his mother. He first started creating just to kill time during the slow hours at his resort job. He started making braided rugs from old wool coats from the mission. He crochets, does beadwork, and upholsters. He built his own house, teaching himself most of his skills.

Neither Martin nor Ahles have formal art training. Ahles took classes in Detroit Lakes in cake decorating and pine basketry and recalls how Mrs. Frances Keahna of Naytawash taught his mother and him how to make black ash baskets. Ahles moved from painting houses to making Indian Halloween costumes that "everyone had to have." Mother and son started making quilts together, first making crazy and block quilts, and working up to star quilts. Ahles specializes in ribbon shirts. His mother can't understand why people prefer the black shirts to the beautifully colored ones.

Both have always held other jobs. Ahles started cooking in the Navy and still cooks at a casino's high-end restaurant. Martin's worked on the reservation's business committee for over 20 years, using her people skills to help community members find jobs. She also worked at Job Corps as a cook at the Minnesota Concentrated Employment Program and as an interior design and decorator.

Martin worked at the Mahanomen Shooting Star Casino's gift shop as a way to keep busy in her later years. She still works part-time in the shop as a stocker, encouraging other Native artists to bring their work in. Although she knows that the shop's policy of taking a month to pay artists isn't ideal, she still solicits their work, often buying items directly herself at wholesale and telling artists when they charge too little. "I tell them, no, not 50¢, sell it for \$5.00."

Martin and Ahles sell some of their work—ribbon shirts, headdresses, sweet grass, and pine needle baskets—through the casino gift shop. The shop's drawback is it only has space to display one headdress at a time and keeps their items in a glass case, forcing buyers to take an extra step to make a purchase. They market dishtowels, kitschy sewn items, and Indian dolls with hand-made leather clothes at their own "Granny's Attic," a garage they converted. Most of their customers hear about them by word of mouth or seeing their rummage sale signs. Many come back for repeat business, often buying wedding or birthday gifts. Martin and Ahles also sell at the White Earth Clinic, where they usually sell out. They can't expand into powwows, given Martin's age, but on Senior Citizens Day, they set up at the casino. Ahles and Martin never use the Internet to sell or market their work. Just recently Ahles started taking pictures of their work, so they can provide a portfolio when requested.

Though Martin and Ahles are resourceful—recycling leather from old coats, shopping around for deep discounts on deerskin, they cannot rely on their artwork for income. Although most customers want quilts, Ahles and Martin lost their access to a quilting machine when the one in the sewing room at the White Earth Recovery Center broke. They also struggle continually with pricing their work. Initially, Ahles didn't charge much, because he thought of it as a way to fill time. But as the cost of materials rose, he had to



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charge more. They both try to factor in the time they spend creating an item, but they feel they can't really get back what they put in. Some places charge \$600 for a quilt that Martin might sell for \$200, yet at times customers balk at their prices, unaware of the cost of materials and amount of labor involved. Martin knows a higher price on her work would cause museums, galleries, and customers to value it more, but sometimes they just really need to make the sale.

Ahles and Martin both wish they could spend more time creating, rather than running around securing materials and selling. Although not ready to quit their jobs, they both agree, "It's something to do to keep our minds busy." They enjoy encouraging other Native artists and teaching interested family members their skills.

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Like most self-employed artists, Ojibwe artists must work hard to assemble the materials and equipment to create their artwork. Finding space for creative work is often challenging, compounded by low incomes and family responsibilities. Since artwork often requires expenditures of time and money before the work is sold or performed, finding the resources to cover these costs takes effort and time away from creative activity. Figuring out who will buy or fund or pay to attend one's creations or performances is uncharted territory for many Ojibwe artists. In a rapidly digitizing world, procuring digital knowhow, technologies, and Internet presence is extra challenging, especially for those in rural locations.

Many Ojibwe artists lack workspace, making do in their garages, kitchens, and living rooms, or writing in coffee shops. Many dream of a room of their own. Artists who use traditional materials like birchbark, sweetgrass, or porcupine quills face increasing difficulties procuring or buying them. Low incomes make it difficult to buy commercial inputs such as fabric, paints, dyes, canvas, frames, and sheet music, a problem compounded for those who need expensive equipment like musical instruments, printing presses, kilns, computer technology, and cameras. A few of the more established artists receive commissions, advances and grants, but generally these are not enough to support their work.

Most Ojibwe artists interviewed report an ongoing search for venues in which to present, exhibit, market, and sell their creative work. Because of the poverty within their own communities, they often must rely on non-Native markets for income. Some visual artists have found individuals, collectors, and museums that become patrons of their work. Most Native artists, even those who write grant proposals, accept the need to promote and find outlets for their work, although a few established artists with unique and valued work can rely on people coming to them.

A. Space to create and equipment

Artistic work, especially for those self-employed, requires special space to create—to practice music, block out dance and performance pieces, use paints and chemicals for visual artwork,

and store materials, equipment, and completed work. And space to work in peace, concentrate, and leave the in-progress work laid out on the bench or easel. Finding space to work is a challenge because of Ojibwe artists' relatively low incomes and for many, the difficulties of sharing of work space with home space and its spouses, children, and sometimes elders. Many of the photos in this study show artists working in their kitchens, living rooms, garages, and basements, surrounded by utilitarian objects.

Native musicians, often working in teams, seek space to practice and work up their compositions, and spaces where they can perform for paying publics. Young musicians have a particularly hard time. Clem May and his brothers and fellow band members rehearse in his garage, a less than desirable prospect during the long Red Lake winter. Recently they have begun working with kids after school and use the available schoolrooms as practice space as well. Sometimes, when they have a gig, they can rehearse in the club's space beforehand. Richard Schulman, a country music Ojibwe band leader who has toured as a second job for decades, believes that the effort that goes into combo music-making is not well understood. The average bar musician has spent more time learning his craft than the average doctor, he believes.

Many artists work at home by choice. Although dollmaker Joyce LaPorte could work at the Fond du Lac Museum where upstairs space is available to any artist, "my favorite space is right here," her apartment in elder housing on the reservation with her buckskin and other materials spread around her. Writer Jim Northrup and sculptor Jeff Savage live and work at their homes on the Fond du Lac Reservation, Savage alternating between his kitchen and a year-round greenhouse on his land. At home, Melvin Losh creates his quill boxes on small TV-sized tables, often working late into the night.

Visual artists also require space to store, treat, and sort materials. Dan Niesen, who supports himself as a security employee at the Mahnomen Shooting Star Casino, was thrilled to be able to buy an old farmstead on the White Earth Reservation. He works in his living room, shuttling to his large barn where he stores the deer horns, bones, turtle shells, and the woods he uses in his constructions. Mother and son team John Ahles and Marie Martin have transformed the garage of their modest home into an ingenious store room and work space, with floor to ceiling shelving and cubbies that neatly display their sweetgrass, deer hides, and fabrics for easy retrieval from sewing machine and work bench. Martin

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does her sewing in her kitchen, multi-colored thread spools hanging neatly from the cupboards.

Sometimes, one's home doesn't work well as a creative venue. Painter/printer Laura Youngbird has been working at home on a three-season porch that she and her husband insulated. Increasingly gobbled up by storage—"artwork is large," she says, her work is spreading all over the house, and she is thinking about renting a space again, mostly for storage. Jim Denomie built an ample studio above his garage where his work can be fully sequestered from his home life. Karen Savage-Blue is building a studio that will provide her a 24 by 36 space with twelve-foot walls and a vaulted ceiling, room enough to create a large mural. Others find public spaces in which to work. When we interviewed her, Sarah Agaton Howes was in the habit of spending quiet hours at a Cloquet coffee shop writing where she likes "the feeling of being alone without being alone," though racist vibes eventually drove her out. Now, the mother

of a young child, she tries to write at home, often with her son clambering for attention and climbing onto her lap.

A number of Ojibwe imagine a space to create work collectively or in the presence of others, as a place to learn from others. Sarah Agaton Howes dreams of a shared space with other Native writers and poets, "where we could all be physically together, talk about writing, share writing, work on writing... to be inspired by other people." White Earth beadworker Janet Oshkinowe would like a place to work in an Arts Circle with others doing bead, quill, and tanning work. Oshkinowe believes that joint workspace would enable artists to share knowledge of techniques like tanning that young people aren't taught anymore. In Bemidji, Indian rights activist Audrey Thayer is trying to raise grant money to secure space in a streamside warehouse for Native sculptors and other artists to work.

Some artists wish for a space to work collectively that might also serve as a place to sell work. Juanita Blackhawk, describing

Heid Erdrich |

Heid Erdrich sees herself above all as a writer, crafting essays and poetry that react to things in contemporary society. Her published volumes include *National Monuments*, *The Mother Tongue*, *Fishing for Myth*, and an edited volume of North American Native women writers on community, *Sister Nations*. A Turtle Mountain Ojibwe, Erdrich was a college professor for 20 years, including 10 at the University of St. Thomas where she was tenured and continues to teach writing workshops. Most recently, she stepped into the role of curator of the Mitakuye Oyasmin/All My Relations, an urban Indian arts program, at the Ancient Traders Gallery in Minneapolis, and created a non-profit for Ojibwe language publication called Birchbark House.

Erdrich's family and teachers modeled artistic endeavors and readily gave encouragement. Her grandfather told stories, and her mother creates visual art. The nuns at her Catholic grade school "were nature girls" and encouraged creativity. Erdrich aspired to be a visual artist. At thirteen years old, she applied for and won a scholarship to a college-preparatory boarding school. There, she painted "serious fantasy with occasional realism." Her teachers also encouraged her writing. In college, Erdrich stopped



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doing visual artist because, she says, "I was intimidated by the resources. I thought, 'this is for real artists.'" So her attention turned to writing as her artistic expression.

During and after college, Erdrich pursued writing and editing and with encouragement overcame some self-doubt. A college poetry

teacher, Cleopatra Mathis, mentored her. Erdrich worked in journalism after college, writing obits, and covering weddings and the police beat. When Cleopatra pushed her to quit the job and go to graduate school, she enrolled in Johns Hopkins' professional writing program, where, as the only Native woman, she felt little affinity with the other writers. She recalls experiencing some blatant racism regarding the content of her work and was lonely for the landscape of the Upper Midwest and the community of Native people.

One day, as Erdrich looked at her favorite books, she realized Minnesota publishers produced them all, so she decided to move back. Once in St. Paul, she joined the literary scene. In 1993, Roberta Hill became her mentor at the Loft Literary Center. Erdrich had read Hill's work in high school and loved it. Carolyn Holbrook Montgomery, founder of SASE (for Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope), and Ojibwe writer Pauline Danforth also mentored Erdrich.

In addition to reading her work around the country, Erdrich curated Native Writers' series for SASE at Birchbark Books and for Friend of the St. Paul Public Library, from 1998 to 2003 or so. In 2000, she earned a Career Opportunity Grant through the Loft

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how she does her quillwork anywhere, including in cars, dreams of having an artist coop, where artists could sell work in the front and pursue beadwork, birchbark, quillwork, and painting in the back. Sharon Mitchell of Leech Lake built some band wigwams along the highway where artists offer their art for sale and work while they wait for customers. But the wigwams are set back from the road, and not insulated, are only useable in the summer. The Native-run Anishinaabe Cultural Center and Gallery in Callaway serves as a sales center for White Earth artists, but does not offer its premises for workspace.

Acquiring expensive equipment can also be an obstacle to career development, especially for younger cash-strapped Native artists and those without second jobs. Several young artists described struggles in buying instruments and machinery. Musician Clem May, desiring better guitars and amplification equipment, applied for and received a grant for \$700–\$800 to do so from the Region 2 Arts Council. Thressa Foster is trying

to buy a planer to help with her seven direction medicine mills. High school photographer Kevin Jackson of Cass Lake, who began with a small camera and then added a telephoto lens, hopes to add a wide-angled and other lenses to his toolkit. Some artistic disciplines are almost completely absent in the Native community because tools, like video-cameras, are so pricey.

Established artists often need to upgrade their equipment or expand into new technologies. Jim Denomie, for instance, is hoping to buy an etching press. When Jaune Quick-to-See Smith visited his studio some time ago, she advised him to find a fine art press and start doing monoprints. His former University of Minnesota professor, Jon Neuse, offered him space and a press in the interim to experiment, and Denomie saw the improvement in his work. With his own press, he will be able to do etching, linoleum cuts, and monoprints. The prints are works of art in themselves, but the results are also unexpected. The press lets Denomie work more spontaneously.

that gave her the opportunity to do readings and sit down with editors and allowed her to fully believe in herself. In 2009, she received the Minnesota Book Award for her poetry manuscript *National Monuments*.

After leaving her St. Thomas job, Erdrich had a hard time immediately turning to writing. She had come to think of herself as a teacher first and then a writer. Since then, she has published one book and begun drafts on two others. She continues teaching in spaces open to writers. At the Turtle Mountain Writing workshop, which she co-founded with sister Louise Erdrich, she mentors 12–20 participants each year.

Erdrich considers the Turtle Mountain workshop her retreat and struggles to carve out equivalent space and time elsewhere. In the Cities, she writes most often in a bedroom alcove. But as a parent, no space is sacrosanct. Her husband is her best patron, as his work and support afford her the time and space to write. Although she enjoyed one glorious residency at the Anderson Center, Erdrich has not applied to other residencies because she felt intimidated by the process and uncomfortable with competition.

Erdrich works as both an editor and curator, helping other artists. An Alaskan

elder once sent her a handwritten story, all too common in Indian country where resources and knowledge of publishing submission requirements are limited. Erdrich typed it and mailed back the original. She says, "I like editing almost as much as my own work...there is an art to making a 'whole' of a body of written work." Her anthology of Native poetry *Sister Nations*, edited with Laura Tohe, was nominated for a Minnesota Book Award.

Erdrich started running the All My Relations exhibition program in 2007. Created by the American Indian Development Corporation (now Great Neighborhoods! Development Corporation), the gallery showcases contemporary artists who tell the story of native people today and strives to be intergenerational, intertribal, and international. It has excellent grant funding, most notably from the McKnight, Target, and Archie and Bertha Walker Foundations. It does not charge commissions on artists' sales or admission fees to the public. As curator, Erdrich creates opportunities for emerging artists and sometimes helps them apply for grants to get their work gallery-ready. When she has to turn artists' work away, she tries to make it clear that it isn't about the worth

of their work, but that she currently needs different work. Currently, Erdrich works on contract with no benefits, but she considers the work a labor of love and is searching for someone else to take over in the future.

Along with All My Relations, Erdrich considers SASE, Birchbark Books, Two Rivers Gallery, Wolves Den, Pangea Theater, and the Playwrights' Center local spaces open to Native writers and artists. Erdrich hasn't felt too hopeful about reading or seeing other writers like herself in publications like the *American Poetry Review*, which has featured Native writer Sherman Alexie. She says, "Maybe the poetry establishment is not my audience."

Erdrich sees art as a community activity. Her sister, Louise, started Birchbark Books as a community place that features Native writers like Sherman Alexie, John Trudell, and Winona LaDuke reading their work. When the crowds get too big for the bookstore, they hold events at a café or a nearby church. Erdrich also belongs to an indigenous writers' network, the Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers. With Louise, she has recently embarked on a new community endeavor, Birchbark House, a non-profit indigenous language and literature clearinghouse.

B. Disappearing land, federal and state regulation, and access to materials

The shrinkage of Native land over the decades, often forced through government policy or the result of private sector scams, has deeply restricted access to important artistic materials. Jim Northrup explains how it happened: "On the Fond du Lac Reservation, we had the 1887 Dawes General Allotment Act and various other nefarious land deals. Federal agents would decide if you were competent to sell your land.

"Competent" meant that you wore white man's clothes, lived in a square house, and spoke English—then you could sell your land allotment. The buyer was the same guy who decided your eligibility. Many people were really poor and had to sell. Others, suddenly liable for taxation, lost their land through forfeiture. Today, we control approximately 30,000 acres of the 100,000 that was reserved for us." All over Minnesota, large portions of Reservation land changed hands in this fashion.

Although the federal treaties of 1837 and 1854 guarantee

Carl Gawboy |

Pulling into Carl Gawboy's driveway is like entering an art installation piece. The gravel road enters a horseshoe-shaped collection of six, or is that eight, miniature houses? Carl emerges from one and calls us into his home. Wool rugs adorn wood floors. Gawboy art hangs on wood walls. On a wood mantel are one-and-a-half inch thick, six-inch tall, sanded and painted earth-tone figures of native women. Gawboy art.

An artist before he walked, Gawboy found his way with his family's encouragement, but not their expertise. "My parents didn't know what being an artist was...Someone to teach them how to be artists, someone to say, 'always schmooze with customers at the opening.'" He laughs, indicating this is a skill he feels he lacks. He thought he was the only artist in the world.

Gawboy, an enrolled member of the Boise Fort Ojibwe and a Finn on his mother's side, grew up in Ely, Minnesota, land of lumberjacks, ice hockey, and 60-below wind-chill. A teacher at Ely High School recognized his talent. He put Carl's work on the bulletin board, but could provide no advice on commissions, exhibits, or going on the road with a portfolio.

Gawboy made his way to the University of Minnesota, Duluth, where for the first time he saw that he was not the only artist in the world. Students exhibited their art at a big gallery on campus, and through classes about the field of art and art history, Gawboy finally had a sense of an arts community.



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months. Gawboy realized Ely lacked purchasing power to sustain him and other artists. He remembers, "The whole place filled up with my work. I think maybe other artists were intimidated by me. I forgot to schmooze." Gawboy ended up selling the gallery. "The idea was good but too early for the town."

Gawboy is proud that Ely welcomed his work in other ways. You can walk around Ely and still see his work at the hospital, other institutions, in homes of a few

individuals and in tribal buildings.

Gawboy considered following the mass migration of artists to the Southwest in the '70s, but he decided to stay. He says, "I would have felt like a phony down there, painting Navajos and Pueblos. People wouldn't have recognized northern images." So, rather than capitalize on a current style, Gawboy committed himself to his home region and the culture of the northern region.

The Ojibwe Art Expo, initiated at Bemidji State University and run by Native people, proved instrumental in supporting Gawboy's career and promoting interest in Ojibwe art at large. Gawboy helped found the Expo, which ran for nearly 25 years. In the 1970's, he convinced the head of Indian studies to direct money earmarked for speakers during the college's Indian Week to the art show instead. The Expo fostered community and friendly competition. Artists pushed themselves to work harder each year to earn higher marks with the judges. Gawboy reports that by the end, everyone framed their work and used

In retrospect, Gawboy considers the UMN Duluth program not a great fit. He remembers a professor saying he was the best watercolorist, but giving him a B because he didn't do abstract expressionism. Gawboy pursued an art education degree, which the UMD art program emphasized, though he didn't believe his introverted nature suited a teaching job. He then taught in Flint, Michigan, for a year and in Ely for two years, before deciding he couldn't continue doing a job so against his character and calling.

In the early 1970s when Indian art exploded into mainstream consciousness, Gawboy heard about the University of Montana's program for Indian artists and headed west. Times had changed, and the University was interested in meeting Indian students' needs. There he met Indian artists from around the country.

During his Montana stint, Gawboy visited RC Gorman's Gallery, which inspired him to return to Ely and start his own gallery. He learned the challenges of selling artists' work on consignment. Artwork could sit there for

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Native rights to hunt, fish, and gather, the State Department of Natural Resources personnel often ignored these rights and arrested Indians for trespassing, injustices that resulted in a recent and largely successful surge of protests for enforcement of treaty rights. Fond du Lac's Jim Northrup makes birchbark winnowing baskets for ricing, some of which he gives away. The best birchbark nearby is on private land that was once tribal and where harvesting is now prohibited, or is on land that is unmarked so that gatherers can't determine whether

it's permitted. White Earth's Dan Neisen makes and markets beautiful traditional bows and arrows, for which he needs large feathers. But federal laws ban hunting birds of prey, songbirds, and other migratory birds, limiting choices to geese, pheasant, wild turkey, and peacock. Geese feathers, which resemble those of eagles, can't be sold off the reservation.

State laws also vary. Niesen explains that you can use and sell bear claws in Minnesota, but not Wisconsin, which also prohibits the sale of badger parts and allows sales of objects

new kinds of materials.

Gawboy has other ideas about how tribes can help promote Indian art and artists. He offers the dedication ceremony for the mural he created for the Bois Fort Museum as an example of a missed opportunity. The ceremony organizer asked for no cameras and ensured everyone had an opportunity to speak his or her mind, but Gawboy's signing of the mural came as an afterthought. The event had no media coverage, which professional artists greatly need.

He also wonders why casinos don't invest more in art. He says, "Casinos are not interested in promoting Indians and Indian culture. One lady at a gift shop said she would look at what I had and then asked if I do any wildlife." He wishes managers realized they have an opportunity to show work and that "fake lore" items promote stereotypes.

For ten years, Gawboy worked on a colorful set of 35 huge murals, each 5 feet by 7 feet, for the Superior Public Library. They cover 150 years of the region's history, from legendary times through the sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald. A considerable number of the paintings depict traditional and contemporary Native life.

Currently, Gawboy sells his work in group and solo shows around the country. The Madeline Island Historical Museum always carries his prints, and recently, thanks to an anonymous patron, it acquired six paintings based on the journey of Chief Buffalo to secure Ojibwe rights to residency rather than removal. He did a show with a dozen watercolors in Chicago "at a tiny museum at a tiny college" and sold six pieces.

According to Gawboy, the northern gallery crowd does not solicit his work. "If I was in Santa Fe, they would be competing for me. One time a person was looking for my prints at a gallery downtown in Duluth. The gallery said, 'We can't keep them in stock! They lied.'"

Gawboy dreams of being in a downtown Duluth gallery with the Savages' work, Jim Northrup's baskets, with big spaces in-between; lit tastefully, with brick and white walls, and a genial host or storekeeper and nice, tasteful music playing in the background.

Museums like the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and the Weisman overlook Gawboy, which he attributes to a Twin Cities-centered mentality. He says apparently Minnesota ends at Fridley. "If that's going to be the image of what's happening in Minnesota, if their loyalty is to the state, something North should happen." It saddens Gawboy that the North is not a culturally cherished place. He longs to see more written about the region's history and culture.

Overall, Gawboy thinks regionalism benefits Native artists. He thinks the question needs to be posed why Ojibwe art is viewed differently from Indian art elsewhere given that the Ojibwe are the largest group of Native people in the United States. He notes Ojibwe artists spend a lot of time explaining imagery, even to other Indians. However, he thinks Navajo and Sioux art cliques in Santa Fe have helped raise visibility for other Native artists. He notes Northwest Indians now have galleries showing their work, and he feels area galleries and museums now express more interest in acquiring work of the region than in years past. Duluth's Tweed Museum recently

purchased some of Gawboy's work, saying they'd like to "right a long-standing wrong." Prior to this, Gawboy reports that national museums called the Tweed seeking loans of his work, but the Tweed had none to offer.

In just the past two years, Gawboy's work has received greater visibility and honor. A solo exhibit at All My Relations in Minneapolis, his first there in twenty years, brought acclaim and many sales. The Grand Portage Visitor Center commissioned a huge 18 by 16 foot mural that hangs prominently in its initial gallery space. In 2009, Finlandia University in Michigan produced the largest Gawboy show to date. In the fall of 2009, Duluth's Peace United Church of Christ hosted a show of Gawboy's work, "Transformations in the Cutover," accompanied by three evenings of his lectures on images of Indians in art, the misuse of oral tradition, and the history of Native struggles with identity, 1670 to 1989, the latter a reader's theater performance. And in 2008, Gawboy won the Duluth Depot Foundation Lifetime Artist Award.

Gawboy sticks doggedly and passionately to his artistic vision, rooted in the North. He recalls everyone doing abstract expressionism in the 1970s, saying, "If you wanted success, you couldn't do landscapes...those around me tried to pound it out of me...I haven't changed my vision." His example inspires Native youth, whom he teaches during summer workshops on reservations and who have seen his images in curricula since Head Start. He says, "Even those who haven't seen it know my name. If they are thinking about an art career—people say, keep at it. You might be like Carl Gawboy."

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incorporating turtle shells only some months of the year. Since he markets through a Wisconsin Dells shop, he has to be careful what he sends there. In contrast, non-Native artists are not in danger of being fined or facing jail time when caught with an item like a crucifix central to their cultural practices.

Even when not illegal, access to appropriate materials may be challenging or expensive. Drums, flutes, costumes, jewelry, pipestone pipes, tobacco, quill boxes, bandolier bags—Native creations that serve spiritual as well as utilitarian ends—are made from traditional woodland resources. Fond du Lac's Jeff Savage describes how you have to find cedar without knots in it to make good rice knockers and how he has to travel to quarry pipestone. Although there are sometimes specialized sources for materials such as quills, birchbark, and sweetgrass, prices are often outrageously high. Leech Lake's Melvin Losh gets most of his quills from roadkill. People bring dead porcupines to his doorstep or call him when they spot one. He may drive one hundred miles to get one. Procuring materials is only part of the challenge. They must be cared for and prepared for use, a time-consuming process.

Collectors, market intermediaries like galleries, and funders often don't understand or value the quality of materials from

nature and the knowledge and skill that goes into procuring and incorporating them into visual art. As Jeff Savage notes, many of them "don't understand the work of an artist, the gathering of material, the learning required to do the work."

C. Commissions, advances, and grants

Native artists, like their non-Native counterparts, value commissions, grants, and advances, but do not expect them to be a major source of economic support. Financial commitments in advance are wonderful because they permit artists to buy materials, take time off from non-arts work, and give them a chance to do something completely new or exploratory. Grants and commissions validate one's work as an artist and bring welcome exposure in a larger arena. Native artists face particular problems competing for grants when their work is in part or whole dedicated to preserving, using and even innovating with traditional art forms and materials. Such work is often aimed at their own tribes and communities with few internal patrons or non-profit funders. However, the success of casinos in recent years has resulted in some bands commissioning and purchasing their own artists' work.

Linda LeGarde Grover |

Linda LeGarde Grover, a small woman whose shy mannerisms make her seem even smaller, writes and works as a college professor at the University of Minnesota, Duluth. At 17, she enrolled at the University and lasted less than a quarter. By becoming a professor she achieved a hard fought dream. "It was very important to me, for my family, to not let this defeat me forever and ever. I just kept coming back and coming back."

Through writing, Grover honors tradition and becomes a voice for community activity. "I am the witness to whatever is going on. I am the conduit. I get to put it down and shape it forever." Grover writes for her grandparents and family. She cares particularly about her aunts' stories and feels the need for the telling and for others to remember. Through poetry, she testifies how boarding school affected her family.

Through her academic work she does historical research and writes on the Native experience. For her dissertation, she interviewed and documented Ojibwe people's



stories about their boarding school education. In recently published articles "An Ojibwe View of Adult Learning in the Workplace" and "Are You Teaching Them Anything Yet, My Girl?" she explained cultural values for teachers and human service professionals working with and supervising Native Americans.

Grover remembers her family opening up the world of reading and writing to her. Her parents, each with an 8th grade education, began their family at a young age and had 14 children. They placed a tremendous value on education and learning. Grover remembers jointly researching a school assignment on Christmas customs in other countries with her father. Grover's teacher, assuming a French heritage because of her name, had envisioned her interviewing a French grandfather; she was too shy to tell the teacher that he was not French. Grover's father resourcefully turned to the library catalog as an alternative. Her parents read to the children before bed from books of poetry and short stories, and her uncle, a school janitor, salvaged books destined for the trash and shared them with the family. As a little girl, Grover started writing poems one summer when her mother told her to amuse herself by writing on an old school desk they had put in the yard.

Though Grover started writing early on, she faces life-long challenges of doubting her

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The major sources for commissions are federal, state, local, and tribal governments, casinos, and community institutions such as hospitals and health care centers. Several Ojibwe artists have had work commissioned or purchased by the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, which featured George Morrison's work in its inaugural exhibit. The New York City branch owns a Paula White quilt. The Washington branch bought two of Jim Northrup's ricing baskets, following a ten-day live demonstration of how he and his wife Pat Northrup make them. The Smithsonian has also purchased Gordon Van Wert's sculpture. Interviewed in the Smithsonian's magazine, Joyce LaPorte received a number of commissions from people who sent her inquiries.

Public art programs run by cities and states have provided sporadic paying projects for Minnesota's Ojibwe artists that have raised their visibility. In 2005, Robert Desjarlait created a large mosaic entitled *Red Lake* that hangs over the fireplace of the renovated Franklin Community Library, a branch of the Minneapolis Public Library. The State of Minnesota Percentage for the Arts program commissioned Jeff Savage's 2005 bronze sculpture, "Headwaters Caretaker Woman," for the Mary Gibbs Mississippi Headwaters Center at Itasca State

Park. Savage continues to get referrals through the Percentage for the Arts program. The City of Hinckley invited Mille Lacs artist Steve Premo to paint an outdoor mural commemorating the great Fire of 1894. In it, he depicts the rescue of a settler family by a young Ojibwe woman.

The Mille Lacs Band has made substantial purchases of its own and other contemporary Ojibwe artists' work for its casinos and public buildings. The band began commissioning work from member Steve Premo about a decade ago. His paintings and murals grace the walls of the Hinckley Grand Casino and can also be found in the tribe-owned Makwa Cinema, the band's Government Center, and a reservation health clinic. When the Hinckley complex added a new hotel in the late 1990s, Premo convinced the Design Committee to commission regional Native artwork for hotel rooms and entryways. From many who applied, the Committee selected five, including Slat Fairbanks, Rick Brown, and Carly Bordeaux.

Tribes have also commissioned artists' work for their community and social centers. An example is the spectacular Marcie McIntire beadwork wall hanging in the atrium of one of the Grand Portage Band's newer buildings. Sometimes artists pitch their own work to reservations for support. Sculptor Gordon

ability and overcoming shyness. As a young adult, she did not keep her writing because she thought it wasn't good enough. She gradually started keeping poems in a drawer, just to come back to later for improvements. She eventually noticed she had generated lots of poems and decided to keep writing. As a young mother, she tried writing short stories but threw them out, because she didn't think she had anything to say. While she worked as a secretary at the University of Minnesota Duluth a poetry teacher told her, "There are times when your life doesn't lend itself to writing." Encouraged, she continued to write, but with no thought of publication. Then, 12 years ago, she read some of her work and thought, "This is pretty good," so she sent it out and it was accepted.

Publishers continue to accept her poems and fiction, but Grover feels, "Recognition is nice but I am not writing just for that." When Grover started to think of her writing as a way to bear witness to events affecting her community, she had an easier time submitting

her work. She thought, "I am supposed to be doing this. You're not creating. You are looking at what is there." She keeps rejection letters if they contain feedback. She has in the past two years published fiction, poetry, and research. In 2008 her boarding school poetry collection *The Indian at Indian School* was the Sequoyah Research Center's Native Chapbook selection. A short fiction collection *The Dance Boots* received the First Book Award from the Native Writers Circle of the Americas and the University of Georgia Press's Flannery O'Connor Award.

Grover's shy disposition prevents her from taking advantage of opportunities open to other writers, including writers' groups, where she fears she would clam up with the slightest hint of competitiveness. She feels asking others to read her work is an imposition, given the length of her pieces. Of poetry slams she says, "It wouldn't be my approach, standing up there and yelling." She has not accessed space at residencies or retreats. "I figure if it is meant to be I'll know it. I don't assert myself

very much. I send things out, and respond if I am asked."

Grover encourages others to write, out of appreciation for those who have helped her and a desire to keep helping moving in a circle. Her cousin, poet Bob SwanSon who lives in Grand Portage, spent time with her reviewing her writing and encouraging her, and she encourages him to keep writing, too. She reached out to Ojibwe poet Al Hunter and has read with Jim Northrup, who she describes as "being in tune with my unease." With a group of other Native writers, Grover did a conference for youth at the Fond du Lac Indian School.

Grover works in her office, a college professor. She's worked many jobs for pay—telephone operator, store clerk, concession stand worker, secretary. She did not feel hers "was a poetry kind of life," yet she achieved a major dream of becoming a professor. For the rest of her writing, she hopes for having structured days to write, and a book published—short stories, a novella, or a whole novel.

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Van Wert, moving back to Minnesota from the southwest after many years, approached his Red Lake tribe for opportunities. They invited him to present before the Tribal Council. They now own and exhibit many of his sculptures. Other tribal facilities have commissioned work, such as Karen Savage-Blue's murals at Fond du Lac and her sister Wendy Savage's stenciling for new or renovated buildings. But for the most part, tribal managers tend to buy finished work rather than commission it. Often non-Native casino managers make these decisions, as for instance regarding lobby and hotel room decor.

Minnesota's Ojibwe artists have applied for grants, a few winning exceptional stipends from the major regional foundations. Artists and writers Frank Big Bear (twice), Jim Denomie, and David Treuer have each won a one-to-two year prestigious \$50,000 artist fellowship from the Bush Foundation. Recently, two Dakota-based Native artists won awards from the Bush Foundation's Enduring Visions Awards, a new initiative set up to support older artists. A number of artists have been supported by McKnight and Jerome Foundation grants and fellowships, such as the Travel and Study Grant Program of the latter. Some Ojibwe artists apply

for and win small amounts from Regional Arts Councils. Joyce LaPorte received a grant of \$1000 to improve the booth she uses at art fairs. Others have benefited from indirectly funded programs such as the Loft's Inroads and other writers' mentorships that explicitly pair Native artists with each other, like Marcie Rendon with Jim Northrup. Lyz Jaakola received a welcome grant from the St. Paul-based American Composers Forum's First Nations Composer Initiative (FNCI).

Still, these remain exceptions and for winners, mostly one-shot events. The five Bush fellowships awarded to Native American artists, for instance, comprise 1% of all Bush artist fellowships. Artists interviewed feel that they encounter extra burdens when applying for grants. For one, funders conceptualize artists as working primarily as individuals, devaluing artistic work created with and for communities, an orientation more common among Native artists. Also, funders often explicitly discourage artwork perceived as "just traditional." Competing for the \$1000 grant from the Arrowhead Regional Arts Council, Fond du Lac dollmaker Joyce LaPorte had to state how her art was innovative, ironic since her mission is to preserve and teach a lost art. Since

Sarah Agaton Howes |

Anishinaabe spoken word artist, Sarah Agaton Howes, Fond du Lac enrollee, bursts beyond the quiet, shy, Indian woman stereotype, embodying French writer, Émile Zola's quote, "I am here to live out loud." Style, charisma, out loud—it is all there, from the stylish, short, frayed denim jacket, to her smile and energetic eyes filling the space. "I love being onstage. I spent much of my life feeling invisible. Onstage, everyone is listening to you."

Agaton Howes sews, paints, beads, and makes mosaics, but she always returns to writing. She lives on the Fond du Lac Reservation in northern Minnesota and comes from a family who puts pen to paper—her great grandfather, her mother, father, and a brother. Growing up, Agaton Howes wrote in journals that her mother gave her. Then, when she saw another young Native man, Bobby Wilson, burst into song while performing spoken word at the League of Pissed Off Voters, she realized she, too, could get up on stage and rant her heart out. "I saw Bobby, and thought, oh, we can do this?!"

At Juliana Peguese's spoken word performance workshop at Patrick's Cabaret in



Minneapolis, Agaton Howes read her poetry for other people for the first time: "It was like jumping off a bridge." When the fellow participants, all people of color and some tough critics, responded enthusiastically, she started trusting her talent.

Agaton Howes first hit the spoken word scene while living in Minneapolis. The

Peoples Institute North, where she organized youth, fed her creative drive. They used hip-hop to pull in youth, and that's how she first came to see Bobby Wilson perform. Serendipitously, she also started meeting other spoken word artists through her soccer league, including Bao Phi. Phi curates the Equilibrium spoken word series at the Loft Literary Center. Agaton Howes eventually earned a \$3000 Verve grant from the Jerome Foundation through SASE, one of the first literary organizations to support spoken word as a genre in its own right.

Since moving home to Fond du Lac, Agaton Howes has had fewer opportunities to perform. Her chosen audience is Native American, but in Indian country spoken word is a new way to do storytelling. People on the reservation wonder what this young woman does, speaking loudly, adapting a black art form to the oral tradition storytelling. So, she mostly performs at shows she coordinates, community events, and the open mic at Beaners, a Duluth coffee shop. She favors coffee shops as a place to write.

Even in the Twin Cities, Agaton Howes

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cattails are scarce and very hard to work with, she pitched the substitution of other stuffing material as her innovation and won the grant. From funders' points of view, a major problem is the quality of submissions, often a function of poor access to technology and know-how, explored below.

From an individual career artist's point of view, grants are difficult to get and short-lived. In 2004, bead artist Marcie McIntire of Grand Portage wrote six grant proposals, none of which were funded. A decade earlier, McIntire had studied at the Smithsonian under a grant from its Community Scholars Program. There she viewed and studied 19th and 20th century weavings. But the staff really didn't talk to her, and she rarely met other artists. Once McIntire got a grant from State Arts Board. "It is hard to know what they are looking for—traditional, contemporary? Judges are weird. Most do not understand Native Art. And they never state the criteria or give you any feedback." Nevertheless, McIntire agreed to serve on the Arrowhead Regional Arts Council Board starting in July of 2008.

Several regions have created special Native American arts funds. In 1983, the Region 2 Arts Council, based in Bemidji, with

funding from the McKnight Foundation, set up an Anishinaabe Arts Initiative program to support and promote contemporary Native artists in the region with grants under \$2000. Fond du Lac's Wendy Savage worked hard with the Arrowhead Regional Arts Council to set up a special \$5000 fund that Native and other artists of color could apply to for up to \$1000 each. This fund began to be available in 2005. Results to date are summarized below. A number of Native artists interviewed, many who have never received grants themselves, have served on regional arts boards, time-consuming but sometimes educational.

As for writers, few routinely receive advances for their work. Louise Erdrich, whose work has been acclaimed and is widely read, is an exception, though her struggles to find outlets in her earlier years are explored in the accompanying profile. Erdrich believes that publishers and reviewers run hot and cold on Native American writing, "Sometimes we're in, sometimes we're out." Most other writers must finish their projects and then look for a publisher. Some, especially poets, receive little or nothing even when they are published. Most emerging authors do not know how to bargain with publishers and producers

and other Native artists carved out their own events, because they lacked venues for Native performers at the community level. For instance, Agaton Howes and other organizers of the Indigenous Action Group held their Native spoken word event at the Indian Center, because they couldn't find other space. "It isn't enough to complain about not having space. If there are no spaces for us, we have to create them. We, Anishinaabe, are nothing if not highly creative and adaptable."

When asked what training prepared her to write poetry and perform it on stage, Agaton Howes answers, "Just life...just frustration, life, and being an Indian." Beyond writing in English class and some comp classes in college, she has no formal literary or stage training. Agaton Howes considers writing in a journal akin to praying, although she notes, "It's hard to pray when you are mad."

Agaton Howes finds many non-Native people are taken aback by the anger expressed in Native spoken word. Through written feedback they've said, "I don't understand the anger, why do they have to say that?" and

they seem more baffled by Native rage than that of other people of color.

Agaton Howes, like other Native artists, grapples with questions of self-censorship and compromise. At a fundraiser in Duluth in 2006, organizers invited her to perform, but asked her "not offend the white people." Agaton Howes ponders, "...how small do I need to make my intellectual space, my emotional space, in order to be accepted, make money, not be censored? It's a question of personal integrity. What 'box' do critics, patrons want me, the artist, to fit?" She concludes, "You either like me, or not, but not 'something nicer'...It's my freedom to tell people what I really think."

Agaton Howes sees art as way to work with others to build community. She collaborates with other young native poets, creating a reservation market for spoken word with local poets Bill Howes and Edye Howes, as well as regionally with Bobby Wilson and Coya Artichoke. She plans to tour Minnesota reservations with all of them. Agaton Howes hopes that by performing for youth not that much younger than her, they may realize they, too, can do this.

Agaton Howes works continually to put herself out there and take more risks as a writer and performer. She writes poetry and in journals, while holding down a full-time job as a mother. She is not yet used to getting paid for her art, saying, "I got paid \$50 for reading six poems. I thought I was doing it as a favor. I haven't ever gotten paid, never asked for it." She aspires to write plays, create documentaries, and most of all see her work published in an anthology.

Many of Agaton Howes' dreams involve collective opportunities for Native artists. She would love to perform in a big Native American spoken word, poetry, and music festival that would broaden the Native experience and bring people together. She envisions a space where Native poets and writers could come to talk about writing, share their work, inspire each other, and just write. She craves more mentorship opportunities—a gathering of Native spoken word artists with someone to lead and coach them, who was not simultaneously trying to hold down a full-time job. Her visions involve space, time, energy and collective thought.

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over advances, royalties, and other contractual issues. Some playwrights, Marcie Rendon included, are commissioned for specific scripts, but yet their best, most creative writing is done “on spec,” without assurance of payment or a buyer.

D. Space to present and exhibit creative work

Native musicians, spoken word artists, and dramatic performers often face high barriers in finding venues for presenting their work. Young musicians have a hard time landing gigs, especially at live clubs. Veteran country western band leader Richard Schulman explains that rising insurance costs related to DUI laws have cut sharply into the numbers of live music venues in Indian country, and the remaining clubs hiring bands prefer the tried and true. Schulman has developed a no-alcohol club setting near Cass Lake, described below, to provide a free venue for young people to practice and perform, hoping to draw dancing, billiard-playing and soda and coffee-swilling audiences at a modest price. Native-owned facilities are another option. Clem May longs for a music festival in the Red Lake area, perhaps in Bemidji, that would create a stir and draw large audiences.

Even nationally celebrated Indian musicians like Bois Forte enrollee Keith Secola have found Native-owned performance

spaces like casinos reluctant to book their shows. Secola recalls an Iowa casino that presented a well-known singer to a small crowd for an amount ten times what it paid Secola’s Wild Band when they packed the place. The Grand Portage Casino, closer to Secola’s roots, has been more welcoming of Secola, who in turn invites local musicians to come up and join him on stage.

Like other evolving art forms, spoken word performance is a relatively new concept for Indians. There are few venues for native performers at the community level. Jim Northrup initiated poetry readings at the Fond du Lac Community Center. Sara Agaton Howes, working with the Indigenous Action group organizing native youth in Minneapolis, organized a Native spoken word event with her co-workers. Because there was no obvious space, they held it at the Indian Center. When she first moved back to Fond du Lac, most of her performances were in Duluth venues, especially at a coffee shop called Beaners that offers a venue for shows that she organizes. Then she began to use Fond du Lac’s community centers for writing workshops and performances by groups of intergenerational Ojibwe community members. Northrup, a popular author and performer of his own writing, has performed over the years on the college circuit and at venues such as Lincoln Center,

Susan Zimmerman |

At the Grand Portage Pow Wow, Susan Zimmerman stands in front of her booth full of seasoned and painted gourds and wild rice that she has harvested. Zimmerman’s dream catchers and narrow, bulbous gourds hang off the canvas roof, clipped up with clothespins on a thin cord. Gregarious, she engages passersby with talk about everything from family and friends—she is Grand Portage enrolled, but lives in Sandstone, Minnesota—to her art work and how she finds the gourds, cares for them, and applies her designs.

Her major art form, Zimmerman’s gourds range in size from small ones you could cover with your hands to large pumpkin-sized vessels with tapered tops. Smooth and faintly mottled in earthen color, she paints the circumferences with distinctive images ranging from flowers to Indian motifs—intricate moccasins, Indian women in brightly colored traditional dress standing in a circle with their backs



to the viewer. She finishes the open tops with beaded or feathered leather strips. She uses soft colors—turquoise, orange, lavender, and rose—and black, yellow, and

red. Few artists work with gourds, and none the way Zimmerman does, working with watercolors on the natural gourd rather than first covering up the skin with

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Disney World, National Museum of the American Indian, and Minnesota theatres (Albert Lea, Illusion, the Minnesota History Theatre). So has musician Annie Humphrey of White Earth, though both she and Northrup report that they are poorly feted in their own communities. "You can't get jobs where you are from," concludes Humphrey.

The Ojibwe Art Expo, a traveling exhibit of contemporary work that ran for almost twenty-five years and survives in truncated form as an annual event in the Bemidji area was perhaps the most unique and fruitful vehicle for Ojibwe visual artists, creating great interest in their work among a wide and diverse population. Carl Gawboy proposed it for Bemidji State's annual Indian week, and Kent Smith, an Indian Studies professor at Bemidji oversaw its mounting each year. Gawboy recalls, "We'd all meet at the opening and go out for Chinese food. There was good rivalry, and competition. We took the judges' decisions in stride. I think it inspired the artists to do better. If someone's piece took a second or third prize, then the artist would work harder for the next show. By the end, everyone was framing their work, using new kinds of materials, including other forms like sculpture." Eventually, the Minnesota Chippewa tribe sponsored the Expo, which began to circulate around the state and beyond, with large doses

of volunteer time committed by people like Wendy Savage and Juanita Espinosa. A few years ago, lacking resources for curatorial leadership, the Expo ceased to circulate, but has recently been revived as an annual event under the joint leadership of Bemidji State's Ben Burgess and Leech Lake Tribal College's Dewey Goodwin, alternating between the two campuses.

In recent years, the growing ranks of Ojibwe visual artists continue to have a difficult time exhibiting and selling their work through high-end non-Native venues. Those creating large works, like Gordon Van Wert's sculptures, Robert Desjarlait's murals, or Jim Denomie, Laura Youngbird, and Andrea Carlson's canvasses, must hope for commissions, gallery shows, and museum exhibits. Carlson recently landed a solo show at the New York National Museum of the American Indian that opened in June of 2009. Minnesota's collecting museums have occasionally bought work and hosted exhibitions, reviewed below. Non-profit, non-collecting organizations such as the Duluth Art Institute, the Bemidji Center, and All My Relations Gallery at the Ancient Traders in Minneapolis offer exhibition and sale opportunities to a broader range of regional artists. Beginning with John Steffl's artistic directorship in the 1990s, the Duluth Art Institute hosted a number of solo shows of

leather dyes. Her process yields an unusual translucent quality.

Zimmerman began making birch-bark baskets 20 years ago. A gardener, she grew gourds and wondered if she could make dream catchers out of them. She decorated the gourds with traditional woodland flowers, and people liked them. Three years ago, she began concentrating on the gourds. Natives, she says, have used gourds for thousands of years, emptying fishing nets into them, floating the fish back to shore, and storing food in them. Zimmerman cares about this tradition of use and continuity of spirit, as with her ricing and basket making. Her great-grandmother made her living fashioning quillwork baskets and beaded moccasins. "My grandmother gave me her metouche, which was her awl, and so I started using it, making baskets and dying quills."

Zimmerman doesn't heavily market her gourds. She shows at the Grand Portage

Powwow, where her booth space is free because she is an elder and a member (for others, it's \$350, plus travel expenses). She once tried the Mille Lacs Pow Wow, but no one bought, and she made less than \$100. Occasionally she sells through intermediaries, such as a Native gift store in New Jersey. Although others approach her, she resists lowering her price more than what she directly charges customers. "This IS my wholesale price," she says, gesturing towards her gourds. Zimmerman also exhibits at the University of Wisconsin Superior's annual Indian Art show and finds customers through word of mouth.

Zimmerman would like to sell and present more. Her pension, from a career recently finished as a small town librarian, is very low. Currently, Zimmerman seeks art fairs she could join—candidates include one in Hovland in July and the Crossing Borders fall show along the North Shore. Zimmerman would also love to show her artwork in

galleries. She did display her work in a case at the library where she worked, part of their commitment to presenting work from the community. She has also served on the East Central Arts Council, reviewing grants and allocating funds.

Zimmerman works at home on a card table in the living room. She calls it "Chuck's room," where she chucks everything: boxes, gourds, beads, leather, feathers. "I still have trouble thinking of myself as an artist," she says. "I hold artists in such reverence. I've seen such beautiful artwork, and mine is just okay. I've never had any formal training." She considers taking drawing classes: "It's a good thing I have an eraser!" But is unsure where to go for instruction. Perhaps Duluth.

Despite her disclaimers, Zimmerman creates beautiful and expressive work. Every gourd is unique, finely done, polished, and light as a feather. She constantly looks for new ideas, finding them in books, in designs elsewhere, and in nature.

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Native artists from the Arrowhead region. But the price of such visibility can be high. At least one artist refused to exhibit at a non-profit gallery where the presenting organization wanted 40% of the sales price. All My Relations raises grant money so that it will not have to rely on a share of sales revenues.

Native-owned venues offer exhibition and sales opportunities, but could be better supported by the community. Two Rivers Gallery, part of the Minneapolis American Indian Center (MAIC) on Franklin, has provided years of exhibition space and tutoring by director Juanita Espinosa for Native Arts Circle artists in the region. It has been an excellent proving ground for many artists in the state, though sales from its shows are meager. Robert Desjarlait believes the MAIC management could do more to support the Gallery: "The whole building was supposed to be an arts and cultural center. It was dedicated to my dad, with George Morrison's woodwork out in front. There are two artists' studios above and additional space for two galleries. But the people running the Center didn't know what to do, so instead, it was taken over by social services functions."

Other than the rare commissions mentioned above, native-

owned casinos have to date been poor patrons of contemporary Native American artists' work. Walking us through the Fond du Lac casino a couple of years ago, visual artist Wendy Savage asked rhetorically, "Do you see any Native American art on these walls?" This may be changing, slowly. The relatively new Grand Portage Casino and hotel complex has recently purchased many of Travis Novitsky's photographs to hang in its hotel rooms. At Mahnommen Shooting Star Casino complex, a few large paintings by Ojibwe artists hang in the hotel lobby, and a number of modest-sized display cases exhibit traditional and contemporary work on the hallway to the conference center.

Ojibwe visual artists would like to see tribal and non-Native spaces such as colleges, hospitals, clinics, offices, and community centers commission, buy, and exhibit contemporary Native work. Andrea Carlson suggests a buying program where bands and tribes set aside money to purchase work. Punk Wakanabo targets non-Native spaces. He notes that the Bemidji Hospital is decorated from floor to ceiling—shouldn't this be a place to display and sell Native artwork? Again, the exceptions underscore the possibilities. Recently, Bemidji's North Country Health

Annie Humphrey |

Annie Humphrey, an award-winning Ojibwe singer/songwriter, addresses contemporary Native life through folk/rock songs with rich lyrics and themes of love, spirituality, and overcoming hardships like poverty and prison. With a soft, ethereal voice, Humphrey's songs often feature women as the actors. Her songs are candid, yet uplifting. In "Edge of America," she ends a chronicle of oppression with the refrain, "Somewhere in the heart of America, we can take back our lives. We don't all have to fall."

Also an accomplished visual artist, Humphrey's teachers encouraged her. They saw something special, letting her know discreetly that she made the best owls in second grade and honoring her with her own wall at the end of sixth grade. Though overlooked by the band teacher because she did not read music, Humphrey's natural ear stunned her teacher during a pitch test. "She said that I hear notes like people see color."

Self-taught, Humphrey composes and plays completely by ear. Growing up on the Leech Lake reservation, her dad brought home an old piano that she began plunking on. "I



ART MAPLES

would do soap opera music I heard on TV, like the *Young and the Restless*." One day, a man hawked her father a guitar, when drunk, and never came back for it. Though officially off limits, Humphrey watched her father show her older siblings some chords. When he left

for work, Humphrey remembers, "I just went over to the guitar and picked out those chords right away. My mom had a hymnbook, and she pulled it out, and we played and sang 'At Calvary'. Then suddenly my dad came in the door, and we were scared." But after that, he helped her learn, even upgrading the piano with a tax refund.

Humphrey joined a rock band in her late teens and made her performance debut, at an American Indian Movement benefit in Cedar Cultural Center, but launching her musical career took most of a decade. As a Marine, she spent time in Japan and played in a couple of bands. Later, at the University of North Dakota, she studied painting and sculpture, but decided to move to Bemidji with her children after the 1994 flood, buying a sound system with UND scholarship money. "I decided I wanted to make a go of it. I remember thinking, we can get off welfare if I can make as much as welfare—\$321 a month." Early on she secured two paid performance gigs at the Ordway. Later, when new gigs failed to materialize, she started performing in coffee

Services purchased an inspirational Van Wert stone centerpiece, "Medicine Bag," though its cost was partly underwritten by donations of some of the artist's time and by the Anishinaabe Arts Initiative in the region. Karen Savage-Blue painted the entire back wall of Fond du Lac's new Mash-ka-wisen Treatment Center with murals depicting Ojibwe people in nature. Phil Norrgard, director of the reservation's Min-No-Aya-Win Human Services center, commissioned Blue's work. He has for decades purchased contemporary Ojibwe artists' work from a dedicated fund of 1–2% of total capital costs for each of the reservation's social service building additions. If non-Native institutions such as universities, hospitals, city governments, state office buildings, park interpretive centers, the Minnesota Historical Society, and others would follow suit, as they have done in the southwest, the market for Native American art could be greatly expanded, and so would the ranks of Minnesota's Native artists.

E. Places to market and sell creative work

For their livelihoods, many Ojibwe artists rely on small-scale commercial opportunities, including powwows, art fairs, galleries,

and gift shops aimed at tourists. DesJarlait thinks that most casinos don't buy and display Native art because they are aiming at a non-Indian constituency. Josef Reiter concurs, noting that casinos are corporate and money-driven rather than culture-driven. But belying a belief that non-Native patrons won't buy fine Native work, the gift shop at the Mahnomen Shooting Star Casino successfully markets regional artists' work and gives it exclusive priority in floor-to-ceiling display cases that front the shop. It is also the only profitable casino gift shop in the state, according to its manager, Jeanette Bray. The casino also invites area artists to set up a table or booth once a month on senior citizen day.

Few artists rely on Indian-dedicated or Native-run venues and events such as Indian markets, powwows, and art fairs. An exception, watercolorist Punk Wakanabo has traveled for years to Native American shows in Texas and Colorado ("the real ones," not the Native/Western ones filled with non-Native work). He sees that "white guys have agents, promoters, publishers, and many prints, but not the Native Americans." Although it costs him \$650 to get a 10 x 10 booth, on top of gas, food, and lodging, he has done well at these markets.

houses rather than return to welfare, even though she dislikes them, because "people aren't listening." In a quiet, A-frame house she built herself, she parented and wrote most of the songs for *Edge of America*. Unfortunately, a stalker eventually forced Humphrey to leave her rural sanctuary for a number of years, and she found her new home, the Duluth/Superior region, not a friendly place for Ojibwe artists.

For the next decade, Humphrey played at lots of colleges and women's events, managing her own bookings. She toured with the Indigo Girls in 2000. "They treated me really well. The Indigo Girls gave me a birthday cake on stage one night!" She received gigs through word of mouth, often receiving invitations when groups want to showcase Native Americans. She reflects, "I get the work because of who I happen to be, because I am Native American. I know some girls who are awesome but they don't get work." At the same time, being Native American closes other doors for Humphrey. She says, for instance, "casinos go for the country acts, and they don't hire Indian

people." Humphrey's music, lacking dance beats, also doesn't fit in clubs. She finds little music work during winter months and focuses instead on beadwork, quilting, painting, and making moccasins.

Humphrey's first recording, *The Heron Smiled*, won Female Artist of the Year and Best Folk Recording at the 2000 Native American Music Awards. She released *Edge of America* in 2004, and Chris Eyre later featured the title track in his film by the same name. In 2008, she released *The Sound of Ribbons*. Humphrey knows her music touches people deeply. One woman loved, "The Heron Smiled" so much that they played the song at her funeral and another woman chose Humphrey's music for her birth labor. But Humphrey sees her talent as a gift from the Creator and says, "Things would go wrong for me if I became too ambitious, so I just go with the flow."

Humphrey devotes much of her talent to work that supports the community. In 1998, she produced *The Whispering Tree*, a group recording of Anishinaabe poetry, stories, and song, with her mother, writer Anne Dunn. Humphrey also buys art created by local

women, which she sells along with her own work when she's touring her music. Humphrey initiated an annual tour, *How Far from Home*, to raise funds and awareness about homelessness. All ticket revenue goes back to shelters in each community. Humphrey also uses the tour to showcase and encourage young musicians and hip-hop poets.

Humphrey considers being a mother her greatest accomplishment and has focused on motherhood and music since 1994. "My kids inspire me, drive me to keep trying." In 2004, she only made \$10,000 after taxes and expenses, having cut back on touring because of the arrival of her third child. She sometimes had to choose between groceries and gas, but says, "I didn't mind. The struggle makes us who we are!"

Humphrey continues to compose, play, and record. In 2008, a show at the Mille Lacs Indian Museum in Onamia, a performance at the Natchez Trace Pow Wow in Franklin, Tennessee, and in Bemidji, *SisterSong: A Celebration of Women and Their Music*. Admission for the latter: "\$5–25. Nobody will be turned away."

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Regional powwows and art fairs as marketing opportunities receive mixed reviews from the artists interviewed. Some artists relish traveling the circuit and do well on it. Reiter sets up at selective powwows: Grand Portage, Shakopee, Mankato, Prairie Island, Indian Summer in Milwaukee. "It's the mood, the energy. It's the people. I love meeting people and getting feedback." He also loves some of the settings, Grand Portage in particular. However, Reiter notes that some powwows charge a stiff fee for exhibiting—\$300 to \$600, and additional for electricity hookups—discouraging independent artists and attracting large out-of-state retailers. Reiter can see the point of fees if vendors are selling other people's work, but believes artists should not be charged if they are just selling their own work. Joyce LaPorte travels to the art fairs at Wisconsin's Lac du Flambeau and to Lac Courte Oreilles reservations each year and sometimes to the art fair convened by Juanita Espinosa in Minneapolis. Because of set-up charges, she avoids many powwows, even the one on her own Fond du Lac reservation, where she would need a tent that she doesn't have.

One problem for Native artists, reflects Bill May, Red Lake's cultural director, is that many are so poor that they make work fast to sell fast. "They don't have enough money for a table," he says. Red Lake, the most remote of Minnesota's reservations,

does not charge tribal members to set up and only asks \$50 of those who come from elsewhere. "I'm a vendor myself," he says, "I know how it is to travel to Fort Kitt, Montana, and make just enough for food and gas to come home." Quillworker Melvin Losh recalls ten years of being on the road, demonstrating and selling his work at powwows, grade schools, high schools, and private homes. He spent more time on the road than on the artwork, so that it would take much longer—two weeks instead of three to four days—to make a quill box. The pay for demonstrations often did not cover his food, lodging, and gas expenses.

Some artists reach far-flung markets through intermediaries. Leech Lake's Josephine Ryan, a beadworker herself, was renowned for taking other people's work, like Melvin Losh's, with her to powwows far afield, a tradition carried on by Juanita Blackhawk who brings work by Leech Lake artists Mike Lemon and Stuart Gale to powwows. Paula White markets her quilts through HoChunk artist Lucy Kjar, who brings them to powwows and sells them at her beadwork shop in Fargo. "She gives me a better price than I expect and sells it, too!" says White, "It's better than pounding the pavement. Now I can just stay home and work." Dan Neisen, who is shy and finds it hard to sell, leases his White Earth space to the proprietor of Kelly

Charlie Stately and Woodland Indian Crafts |

Woodland Indian Crafts, run by Charlie Stately for the past 30 years, is a fixture at the Minneapolis American Indian Center. Stately, Red Lake enrollee, smiles and says, "I went from working for Bob Larson and playing basketball in the gym to buying this store." He is unique in that he is a Native American businessman operating a business in the heart of the Indian community, buying from Native artists, and selling to primarily Native buyers. And, he makes a living doing so.

Stately credits his getting into this successful business to being in the right place at the right time. If he had known he was going to be a business owner, he would have taken some business classes in high school. Instead, he worked for Bob Larson for six months to learn the business before taking out a high interest loan to buy it.

Stately took a record-keeping class early on, and he hires a CPA to do his taxes. Otherwise, everything is done in his head. He



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has memorized what he has in stock, how much items cost, who made it, and when he got it. Every aspect of the business is his responsibility. He does everything without the use of a computer. He can work this way because the business operates in a small

zone, and he doesn't worry about nickels and dimes, only the dollars. The business is small and simple according to him.

Stately credits three people with his success. His mother for raising him with an expectation of success and education. Bob Larson for recognizing that he was capable of running the business. And Dave Anderson, Ojibwe founder of Famous Dave's, who told him to go to powwows to sell because that is where the buyers of Stately's products go. Anderson traveled with him for the first couple of years. Stately says, "He always had a money-making idea."

Stately pauses when asked about being an artist himself. "I will, I can create things that other people appreciate, that we as a culture consider beautiful." At thirteen, he learned beadwork at St. Joe's Indian School in Chamberlain, South Dakota. Other boys and he shared beadwork ideas, and when he got home he realized what he made, people

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Collectibles in Mahanomen, a white woman married to a White Earth member. She also sells his work at other powwows.

Charlie Stately operates Woodland Indian Crafts in the Minneapolis American Indian Center and travels the powwow circuit selling many artists' work. His outreach has been an important source of earnings for artists. Stately is the only Native entrepreneur we encountered who makes his living by selling Native visual art in commercial markets.

Local commercial gift and tourist shops are a selling locale for some Ojibwe artists, but they vary greatly in quality and experience. When a young artist, Dan Neisen, working outside of Mankato, met a woman who owned a shop in town through a friend. "I stopped in there and said I made things. I brought them over to her house, and she bought \$240 worth from me. I was thirty, thirty-five years old. Afterward, I bawled, screamed, and yelled—that someone thought I was so good." He still gets that rush with a sale: "just the feeling that you are wanted." But Neisen is often turned down with dismissals, such as "it doesn't fit our décor." He does best at Native American gift shops, such as the one at the Shooting Star Casino in Mahanomen, the Five Nations Gallery in Mandan, North Dakota, and Morell's Chippewa Trading Post in Bemidji. Photographer Travis Novitsky tried marketing his work to the top commercial gallery

in Grand Marais, but was told they already had commitments to veteran landscape artists. He had high hopes for the Native-themed gift shop in a huge new tribal Spur store on the Grand Portage reservation, but it is a big disappointment, under-staffed, and selling mostly trinkets made elsewhere.

Some shops buy work outright, like the Shooting Star Casino's gift shop, while others work on consignment. Many artists have had bad experiences with consignment, including not getting paid or losing their work altogether. Dan Neisen had several experiences in southern Minnesota, California, and in Washington State. For instance, he sent a Washington store \$2400 worth of stuff fifteen years ago and never heard from the owner again. "He about buried me," said Neisen. "I couldn't buy materials, I was living in a shack with no insulation. I was dumb enough to keep sending stuff out there."

Pricing is also an issue. Jeff Savage notes that shops and commercial galleries do not know the value of natural materials. Many galleries ask to see his work but then want to buy way under his prices. "They are asking me to make trinkets. There is an insensitivity and ignorance that I find insulting. They just don't know the cost and work of the pieces. They ask me, 'can you make things for \$20–30?' But I don't like to make things for under \$100."

would buy. He attended the Minneapolis College of Art and Design for about one and a half years and then realized that that would not be his career.

When investing in items to sell, Stately chooses those that have not only visual but also traditional value appeal. The items in the store, ranging from beaded key chains, to earrings to checkbook covers, greeting cards, and small leather pouches, all are easily identifiable as Native American art. Most of his customers are Native American, although foreign visitors appreciate the art much more than Americans. Stately says, "If Americans in general appreciated Native American art, it would all be gone. Most of the things here in the store sell for \$20–\$30. But Americans have different art values so there is enough to go around for us."

Because of the number of visitors who pass through the Indian Center, and because of his travels selling on the pow-wow trail,

Charlie Stately is well known throughout Indian Country. So he does feel somewhat disappointed that he gets no recognition in the white world. He says that if he went to an area art market, no one would know who he is, but folks in Kentucky or Louisiana have heard of him or know him. There is a cultural, artistic divide between the Native community and the white arts community.

The core of Stately's business is selling art that offers the form and the tradition that is based in the wisdom of his ancestors. He says, "Our ancestors decorated with what was around them, and that is mostly what you see here. There is tradition we usually don't go too far from."

Currently, Stately has six or seven people beading for him full-time, only two or three of whom are under 30. When people no longer supply him with art or people don't buy tribal arts, it will be difficult to have a store. He thinks that what hinders artists

is how the everyday survival need to make a living, makes it hard for them to create, when it doesn't pay for them to make art.

While he credits his success to being in the right place at the right time, and his business being small, as the interviewer I witness him selling products to a young woman for a give-away. He personally knows one of the people who will be receiving a gift and makes a recommendation based on what he knows about her taste in beadwork. He cuts and makes leather strips for tiny pouches as we talk with this same customer. His daughter comes in and he draws a moccasin pattern on a piece of paper and tells her how to sew it. He talks about how he buys beadwork from one artist because this artist's medication costs \$100 a week. Stately says, "So far we have been able to buy from him." It is evident that Stately knows the community, supports the community and understands the needs of the community.

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Some artists have succeeded in developing relationships with commercial galleries. A standout, Todd Bockley's gallery next door to Birchbark Books in Minneapolis specializes in contemporary Native artwork and has become an active intermediary for Frank Big Bear, Andrea Carlson, and Jim Denomie, among others. Bockley and each artist build a long-term relationship, with Bockley providing space, curatorial support, and "a scene" where buzz is generated around the artists' work. Few of the larger galleries in the state, Severtson's in Grand Marais and Duluth included, carry more than token examples of Native work, some of them imported from Alaska or the Southwest. Fargo/Moorhead is the only metro outside of the Twin Cities that hosts a network of galleries, some of which have exhibited Native American work: Rourke Art Gallery, Underbrush Gallery, Boerth's Gallery, the City of Moorhead's Hjemkomst Gallery, and The Spirit Room, the latter a holistic, contemplative, and healing arts space where Laura Youngbird has had an exhibit. Other galleries we visited informally,

especially outside the Twin Cities and near reservations, show no Native work, and managers were pointedly hostile when asked about it.

The Anishinaabe Cultural Center and Gallery in Callaway, run by White Earth member Ray Belcourt (see profile), buys work from area Native artists or takes it on consignment to sell in its attractive, roomy space. It carried many regional artists' work, including Connie Engebretson's jingle dresses, Janet Oshkinow's beadwork, Clyde Estey's black ash baskets, Ed Burnett's birchbark birdhouses, and Dan Neisen's bows, arrows, and quivers. The Center aims to bring artists' work to buyers, to help them continue to make work by providing a market. Belcourt seeks out the artists, negotiates with them, and makes sure that the quality of the work is good. Once in Detroit Lakes, the Center is trying to re-establish itself on the main street of this small reservation town, though the tourist traffic through there is slim.

Artists would like to see more cooperative storefronts of this sort. When he goes to the Red Lake reservation, Robert Desjarlait

Joyce LaPorte |

In her Fond du Lac home, Joyce LaPorte speaks softly with a quiet and gentle manner, often concluding anecdotes with a simple statement, "Those are my words." By making buckskin pouches and buckskin and horsehair dolls stuffed with cattails or buffalo hair, she carries on traditional art forms practiced by her grandmother. Through her creations she shares how her ancestors created these dolls, and by teaching she hopes to pass on the practice to future generations. Along the way, LaPorte found prestigious outlets to display her work—The Smithsonian, the Minnesota History Center, and Wisconsin's Madeline Island Museum. Despite her shyness, LaPorte is proud the Smithsonian displays her dolls.

LaPorte didn't initially think of herself as an artist. As a child, she considered creativity part of everyday life. Before she started making dolls she did a lot of birch bark work, following her grandmother's teachings to gather both the birch bark and the basswood fiber to sew the baskets.

LaPorte explains how she came to make the dolls, "When I was five, my grandma made a doll with me. She had a rawhide leather bag with all these pieces of leather—just scraps, no big pieces. She gave me a needle. At the



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time I was just sewing. Then she made this doll and used her own hair for the doll. She did pack it with the cattails. When I had my own grandchildren, I knew it was my role to make these. My mother never had time, she had 11 children. John Losh, my husband, he

was a great artist. He painted with oils and made replicas of bows and arrows. I told him I wanted to make a doll for my granddaughter. He said, 'Let's look what is in here. Oh, it's cattails!' I tried to do it perfect. It took five times. John told me, 'Let the needle work

can't find the beautiful beadwork that he knows is being created there. "Why not an artists' co-op?" he asks, recalling how a small supermarket there used to sell baskets. He thinks that if there were a co-op, artists could run it together and make it available for tourists and dancers who want beadwork. In a similar vein, Leslie Fain, who works at the Anishinaabe Cultural Center and Gallery, would like to see a Native artists guild form, possibly in conjunction with the Center, that would develop a web presence and coordinate selling work together at powwows.

F. Marketing

Compared to the market for southwestern Native art, the market for woodland Indian art remains underdeveloped. Only in literature have the region's Ojibwe artists made their mark, both regionally and nationally. Juanita Espinosa, a close watcher of the market for visual art, believes that even in the Twin Cities, the market is lean. "People here read books and listen to and make music. We are good at music! But Midwesterners don't

think about feeding the soul with artwork. People still think of visual arts as decoration." She estimates that 50% of local people who buy Native art purchase it from other regions, especially from the southwest. There have been eras when the tourist market in places like Grand Portage and the lake country provided sales possibilities for Ojibwe artists, especially during the New Deal era when government efforts helped to set Native/tourist markets. But as we have explored elsewhere (Markusen, Rendon and Martinez, 2008), the Southwestern Native art phenomenon has never taken hold in Woodland Indian regions.

Complicating factors are cheap reproductions of Native art by Asian traders, inroads made by white artists into the Indian/Western markets, and stiff competition from Canadian Ojibwe and other First Nations artists whose federal government actively provides grants and develops markets for their work. Dan Neisen has watched the spread of copycat "Native" trinkets and crafts from Japan, China, and India into US trading posts and tourist

for you.' Finally after the sixth time, I finally understood and then my body relaxed. I love sewing with buckskin. Those are my words."

LaPorte started making the dolls in 1982 and slowly came to accept that she should charge for them. At first she gave them away, but couldn't keep up with requests. Her husband convinced her to charge and talked her out of only charging \$1, the price she initially suggested. She now charges over \$125 for large dolls and around \$100 for little ones, but still feels guilty about it. Some Native people say LaPorte shouldn't sell the dolls because of ceremonial significance. But LaPorte's misgivings are unrelated. She makes the dolls to share the traditional practice and feels she does not sell the ceremonial part of doll making.

Over the years, LaPorte has worked to find appropriate outlets to sell her work that fit her budget and wouldn't generate more orders than she has time to fill. She mostly gets commissions through word of mouth, but also sells through art shows and the casino gift shop. When the Smithsonian interviewed and wrote about LaPorte, the article generated numerous inquiries. She can accept or decline requests and averages 25 big and 100 small

dolls each year. When she goes to art shows, people often request custom orders. She sells at the Lac du Flambeau reservation and Lac Courte Oreilles art fairs every year. Powwows' high setup fees keep her away.

LaPorte doesn't sell online, feeling she could not keep up with orders. She also talked with her daughter about patenting the design of her dolls, and they found out it would cost about \$800. Which is money she, an elder, doesn't have. Nor does she document where her dolls go, but she knows of one collector who buys one of her dolls annually.

With the help of Juanita Espinosa and Al Beaulieu, LaPorte's dolls ended up in museums. In the early 1980s, they authored *Native Artists in the State of Minnesota*, which prompted a woman from the Minnesota History Center interested in buying Losh's art to visit. Word spread of LaPorte's work as well, eventually leading to her interview with the Smithsonian. LaPorte recalls, "She asked me to have my picture taken. I couldn't say anything back. It sounded foolish to me."

Through school artist residencies and by teaching at the Fond du Lac youth intervention program, LaPorte tries to pass down traditional art forms. She teaches

youth how to create leather pouches and wrap feathers from wild turkey wings brought in by area hunters. She teaches them to work with buckskin, how to sew it, how to use it for different things. "I am passing on the traditions. Honoring the traditions. Teaching it so the knowledge doesn't die. That's the reason I'll do it because I want the young people to be able to do it, even if only one of them remembers. Even if they say, an old woman taught me this when I was a little one. This is how she taught me to do this. Maybe not now, but maybe in the future, they will pick up the needle and do this. Those are my words."

LaPorte hopes someone will carry on traditional doll making, and at this point in her life is content making dolls for people who seek her out, rather than scouting out new channels to sell. She values the knowledge others have passed down to her, whether through an indigenous educators conference that drew Native people from all over the world or her grandmother's crick-side lesson of why she made faceless dolls—that one's face is never supposed to leave the water spirits. Through her art and teaching she passes her knowledge on to others.

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outlets. He recalls that after the debut of the movie *Dances with Wolves*, his work and others' sold faster at powwows than they could supply it. Now, he says, "I've even seen imported copies in Native American houses—things like black velvet paintings with wolves."

Distressed at the numbers of white artists selling "Indian" work at the large Native and Western art markets despite the federal Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990, Punk Wakanabo believes that such shows should post giant "Indian Only" signs.

For instance, he favors the Five Nations Art museum and annual show in Bismarck, North Dakota, because you have to provide your tribal enrollment number to enter. In Grand Marais, Inuit artwork from Canada's far north is more prevalent in galleries than Grand Portage work from up the road, partly, according to gallery managers, because the Canadian government underwrites production, distribution, and artists' travel.

Several artists interviewed stressed that they need help understanding the art market. Andrea Carlson is one—her father

Lyz Jaakola |

Lyz Jaakola is an accomplished singer, composer, producer, and educator of Anishinaabe youth. As she nurtured her gifts, she faced challenges working for college and post-grad music degrees in often hostile environments. Today, as a performing artist and educator at Fond du Lac Tribal College, she designs and teaches culturally-attuned curricula, creates new work and forms, and leads ensembles to present it.

Jaakola's musical family on the Fond du Lac reservation encouraged her to develop her talents from an early age. Jaakola decided to become a singer even though her high school music teacher discouraged her: "The Finnish Sisu in me said, 'I can.'" Jaakola sought out specialized musical training, winning a Native scholarship to begin her studies at Wayland Academy in Wisconsin. There, the only Native student, she studied voice and violin, encouraged by a music teacher whom she describes lovingly as a surrogate grandma.

Although Jaakola finished high school at age 15 with astronomical SAT scores, she had little family know-how on choosing a college. It took Jaakola eight years to complete her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance. Her first college, Valparaiso University, a Lutheran school, with daily chapel, was a poor fit. However, she learned one valuable lesson. An instructor told her to choose between the violin and singing, because she couldn't serve two masters. She shelved the violin, with ten years into it, and chose voice, her first passion. She moved on to stints at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis and Duluth.

Jaakola found these training environments difficult culturally. In the 1980s, music at the university level was strictly classical. There was



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no room for powwow. "I would bring it up in class. No, no room for it. Yet it was always there for me, part of my artistic heritage, my history, and aural memory." She learned that she had to check it at the door in college. "I had to play the game, even though stomping my feet 'that it's not fair!'"

Finding that at age 23 she could not yet enter the professional circuit—women's voices do not mature until their late 20s—Jaakola fell into a teaching job on the reservation. Interviewing to be a music teacher despite no teaching credentials, she gave a sample lesson that integrated Anishinaabe language and movement. "Yes!" they said, "This is what we need." Her predecessors had not integrated truly culturally relevant material with the state music standards. "It was like jumping on a moving train, teaching to standards and being culturally relevant at the same time!" Jaakola enjoyed

the grade school teaching, finding it more intellectually stimulating than singing opera.

However, offered a UMD \$11000 grad fellowship, she decided to try academia once again, pursuing a masters degree in music. It was rough from the start, because UMD publicized her fellowship with the word "minority" attached to it. "Half the music faculty didn't know I was Native American before that. There was a shift in attitude that wasn't friendly. Some faculty said things like 'I don't know why you people don't do everything like the rest of us...' and that I was coddled and shouldn't get the degree." Although others stood up for her, administrators didn't take on the offenders. Frustrated and angry, she decided to abandon the degree despite having finished the coursework.

Rededicating herself to teaching, she started to receive songs that were more traditional in nature. "I had a dream about playing a hand drum, and I started writing and crafting songs. These are my songs, I thought. I can use them in the classroom." For her students, she composed musicals and taught vowels on drums with English and Anishinaabe words. She saw her students become empowered. Because her new music was unorthodox, blending Native themes, sounds, and instruments with new styles and performance techniques, she took time to consult elders and explore the sensibilities of her community.

And Jaakola kept singing. "It's like breathing for me. If I don't do it, things get jammed up." She sang for whomever would hire her. Even though she is not Christian, one year she sang at three different churches on Sundays. She sang with the Arrowhead Chorale and in

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helps her, but she feels she needs more. Laura Youngbird asks, "How would people buy your work? I try to get into some different shows, but it's not enough exposure to make a living at doing my art." She would like to be able to devote more time to getting her work out there. Youngbird also speculates about the nature of her work, often boldly critical of the treatment of Native Americans historically. "I think people really like it, but it's a little serious for most people. Maybe they don't want it in their house. But that's okay, you have to make it." Artists need help in figuring out how

to target their work to audiences and buyers who will be most interested in and moved by it. And on how to find agents and other intermediaries who will help them reach new outlets.

Many Ojibwe artists don't have an adequate portfolio that would help them place work in juried art shows, galleries, museums, and other venues. Mike Lemon, for instance, has neither a portfolio or a website. Hundreds of people have emailed him asking how to buy prints of his work, but he doesn't have time or the know-how to translate his originals into prints.

independent opera productions in Duluth. She recalls pondering, "How could these musics come together? I was always concerned about culturally inappropriateness, asking, 'Can we just skip this scene? We don't really need it'...I wondered, 'Why can't we sing anything that means something to me?' As I sang things from other people's faith systems, I thought 'I shouldn't have to sing just one way.'"

So Jaakola pursued her "own stuff." She worked with a musician who developed her ideas on guitar. They performed jazz standards and folk music at coffee houses. She started to write new music, part of redefining who she was.

Asking herself, "What is my purpose?" Jaakola articulates, "My job is helping my people understand their path better, putting voice, sound, to the modern reservation experience." Her workaholic grandmothers and her mom (still working at 70) instilled her with this commitment to making oneself useful and giving back to the community. "I asked myself, 'How am I doing that as a musician?'" She came to see how she could serve. "At a funeral, I help people's emotions come to the surface; the same at a wedding, or coffee house, or cathedral. Once I saw this, it removed the ego for me. It helped enormously."

Jaakola began singing for conferences, small community gatherings, and Indian health centers. Learning at a Native Arts Circle convening that Native singers could actually get gigs and tour, she started planting little seeds seeking performance



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opportunities in many musical genres. "There are no hard and fast lines. Style is a spectrum of gray, even in Native music."

To date, the highpoint of Jaakola's composing wedded to community outreach was a recital, *Of Drums and Voices*, at UMD's Weber Hall in May of 2008. It brought together many musicians: a traditional Drum group; the Anishinaabe Youth Chorus that Jaakola directs; a professional choir that sang some of her compositions; and the Oshkii Giizhik Singers, a Fond du Lac Area women's hand drum group that Jaakola started. For the finale, Jaakola composed a song that all the musicians sang together, "About blueberry pie, one of the longest words in the Anishinaabe language, so that everyone who sings will learn the word!" Several CDs have come out of this and related work.

Jaakola began teaching at Fond du Lac Tribal College as an adjunct during the late 1990s and joined the faculty full-time in 2002 upon completion of her masters degree. An "Award for Excellence" from the MNSCU

system allowed her to make some time to compose an Ojibwe opera based on the traditional teachings from *The Mishomas Book* by Lac Courtes Oreilles' elder, Eddie Benton-Banai. She hopes to secure another award for excellence to mount a performance of the opera on campus. Concerts are expensive, so she calls in favors and applies for grants. *Of Drums and Voices*, was supported in part by Jaakola's composer-in-residency grant through First Nations Composer Initiative.

Teaching, composing, organizing, grant-writing, and performing make for a grueling work life, sometimes at her own expense. "I often wish I had more time to do the other things. But it's all a balance. I do perform enough to feel I'm in the game, whether it's solo, with the Blues band, classical, or traditional." Jaakola directs the Youth Chorus and the hand drum group as a volunteer. "I made myself broke a few times doing this or that, not being a practical thinker. Like the hand drum group—we're great, and we've done lots of performances, but sometimes expenses come off my credit card!"

Jaakola values her artistic home, the Fond du Lac community. "Though I love singing opera and traditional songs, my persona belongs here, on the Rez and at the college. My students deserve it. I didn't have this, and I had to change my focus to get a degree. Now I can create art from here just as well as if I were on the road. This is where my roots are. I'll travel if I get the chance. But home is the source of my inspiration, being here and writing about this experience."

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Gordon Van Wert, despite the wide distribution of his work, needs to continually work at marketing. "You do need to have some form of brag book. Enter your work in a show. Get some ribbons, even if it's a county fair." He believes that the growing number of Native shows like the Ojibwe Art Expo is a good thing and will help younger artists build portfolios.

Keeping good records of one's work, including photographs, is a major challenge in portfolio-building. Many artists we interviewed have not kept good track of who owns their work. Robert Desjarlait has sold to collectors from all over the US, but does not know where it all is at present. His brother has spent years tracking down the contemporary locations of the paintings of their famous father, Patrick. Melvin Losh wishes he had documented and kept track of his work. One museum has asked him if he could find twenty of his quill boxes for a show, and he doesn't think this is possible at present. He knows that a few are at trading posts or galleries (one in Minneapolis), but many have been sold or resold (including by museums) without any trace. Paula White, whose quilts are owned by the Smithsonian among others, has only a photo album full of often faded snapshots of her beautiful work. Joyce LaPorte has not documented where her dolls go, though she has a woman

customer who buys one every year. "I never knew there were so many doll collectors," she says. "My grandmother didn't make dolls for collectors, she did it for you."

Artists who rely on performance venues and commercial markets for their livelihoods report strenuous marketing efforts, identifying niches and starting close to home. Writer/speaker Jim Northrup is always hustling himself, a role he finds comfortable. The humorist always, Northrup describes his trajectory. "I used to be known as a bullshitter. I know it's hard to believe, but it's true. But being a bullshitter didn't pay anything, so I called myself a storyteller. A little better, more prestige, but it still didn't pay anything. Then I became a freelance writer. At first it was more free than lance, but I eventually started getting money for my words. When I became an author, a poet, a playwright, and a newspaper columnist, I could charge consultant fees."

Photographer Travis Novitsky's strategy was to start local, targeting area and regional patrons, including his band's casino and the local post office that displays his prints for free. He has learned a lot about what people like by watching their choices and reactions. Now, using the Internet, he markets more broadly and has developed an email list for his "photo of the

Michael Lemon |

"Mixed media," Mike Lemon says of his art form, showing us several drawings thumb-tacked to the walls of the new Cass Lake job center that he recently helped to start to place teens and elders in landscaping and other short-term jobs, "is watercolor, acrylic, pencil, some realist, some stylized, others abstract." "A lot of my drawings come from visions, dreams. I wake up and start sketching. A lady riding side-saddle, and clouds. I will let it sit there for awhile and then I'll translate them into artwork."

Lemon worked as a licensed optician for 37 years and only recently began transforming his art hobby into a business. But Lemon's love for art blossomed at age 13. His father did a lot of artwork, but Lemon credits an eighth grade teacher with recognizing and encouraging his talent. "She taught me everything: pottery, jewelry, sculpture, silk-screening, airbrush, oils, acrylics, pencils, chalk." After graduating from high school, he kept drawing, occasionally making a few dollars and turning to art to



relieve stress. He later collaborated with his wife, a beadworker, on full-sized and doll-sized cradleboards, selling them at places like Mystic Lake Casino. They hit the powwow train for a number of years and sold at art

fairs in Uptown and Ashland, Wisconsin. Louise Erdrich at Birchbark Books bought and resold some of Lemon's work, including his willow-weaving and work in birchbark, basswood, and black ash.

day,” sometimes accompanied by a journal of the place and time. Just a few years into this work, Novitsky has been able to sell his photos broadly, both to people who display it locally and to a dispersed clientele.

Josef Reiter’s marketing efforts illustrate the potential for developing niche markets and branding one’s work. Twenty years ago, he began researching how to get his jewelry into high-end shops, developing different lines that he sells to diverse audiences via Native American museums, historical interpretive centers, and fine arts museums. His Sacajawea jewelry line, for instance, has sold well to interpretive centers from St. Louis to Astoria, outlets he reaches through his own mailings.

Others have a hard time succeeding at self-marketing. Carl Gawboy started his own gallery in Ely, Minnesota, years ago, exhibiting his and others’ work. “I had to learn about consignment,” something he wouldn’t do again. “The whole place filled up with my work. I think maybe other artists were intimidated by me. And I forgot to schmooze.” It was perhaps before its time, Gawboy thinks, and he eventually sold it to a non-Native owner.

Finding an agent might be an alternative to self-marketing, but is usually only possible when one has a track record. Mike Lemon is devoting himself more fully to his artwork and would like to sell

and make a living from it. Encouraged by a cousin who spends time in Germany, he thinks there could be a European market for his work, where many people are quite knowledgeable about and interested in Native American history and art. Since it is hard to find the time and know-how to promote his work that remotely, he would like to find an agency that would help.

Pricing one’s work is a daunting challenge for many Native artists. Jim and Pat Northrup developed a sliding scale for their traditional hand-made rice-winnowing baskets. For ricers, \$175. Indian price, \$200. White guy price, \$300. Museums, \$400. Casinos, \$500. Tribal governments, \$1000. Jim tells a story about negotiating to sell a basket after he learned that museums would pay more for ricing baskets that have been used and stained brown in the warming process. He quoted \$800, but when the museum in question balked, he said, “But look here, see the rice in the corners?” They paid the price.

Most artists start from an estimate of the time and material costs they put into a work, but market experiences teach them that they may not be able to recover these. Pricing is especially tricky on the high end, where outlets are few and remote. Marie Martin might sell a quilt for \$100–200, but knows there are places where the same quilt would sell for \$500–600, places

Four years ago, Lemon became a born-again Christian. “I came to a better understanding of what God has given me as a talent. I see things in a different way, more in tune with my culture and with nature.” In the summer of 2008, he began an ambitious project to recreate the Last Supper in dried, colored corn.

In the summer of 2008, a Bemidji Art Center show featured Lemon’s work along with that of two of his high school classmates. Lemon hopes to get his work into other galleries and is creating larger projects, including 25 abstract panels in oils. Lately, he has been exploring bright, brilliant colors. “Many people have never seen Native culture in an abstract version, and that’s exciting,” he says.

Lemon’s ideas for future projects include photo visions, based on traditional Native dancing and singing with drums, and developing and marketing his idea for photographs in frames that incorporate music. Music would help tell the story of a particular photo and many photographs could

be displayed in a single frame by advancing from photo to photo with a push of a button.

Currently, Lemon is devoting himself more fully to his artwork and aspires to make a living from it. His visibility is growing through word of mouth—people know his work from Minneapolis and the casinos on Red Lake and Leech Lake reservations. Juanita Espinosa at Minneapolis’ Two Rivers Gallery offers him encouragement and advice. But Lemon finds it hard to find the time to promote his work and would like to find an agency that would help.

Like many other artists, Lemon doesn’t have an adequate portfolio or a website. He receives emails from hundreds of people asking how to buy prints of his work, but he doesn’t have time or the know-how to translate his originals into prints. Lemon also thinks there is a European market for his work. He is fascinated by how much the Europeans he meets know about Native American people. “And there is the Holocaust...we lost many more Native people than they could imagine.” A cousin who

spends time in Germany believes that there is a strong market there for Lemon’s work and is encouraging him to come over.

Lemon dreams of opening a gallery in downtown Cass Lake for his work and that of others. The town used to have a good gift shop that sold Native work to people who flew in from all over, but it folded. In recent years, the Cass Lake/Bemidji area is getting more prosperous. New bank branches have opened up, and wealthy retirees, an untapped market have moved in, building luxury homes in the woods.

Lemon would like to see a radio station in Leech Lake, too, to showcase local talent, speak the language, “and keep our people updated.” Lemon’s personal goals for his own artwork include getting a trailer and living in the woods where it would be easier to work. Currently he lives in an apartment with his grown son and daughter. He says, “Serenity is when they are sleeping, and I’m listening to music and doing my artwork!”

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where people have a lot of money. She also believes that there are museums and galleries where people will view your work as more valuable if you put a higher price on it.

Where markets are better developed and competitors offer work side by side, such as at powwows, art fairs, or tourist shops, seasoned artists have a better feel for what sells and at what price. Juanita Blackhawk, who has sold for years at powwows and art fairs, knows that she can get \$95 wholesale and \$190 retail for a quillbox. Jewelry sells more easily—earrings for instance for \$20 or \$40 a pair, because people don't have that much to spend.

Dan Neisen explains why artists often price their work so low: "Some artists need the cash for their stuff the same day they make it. So they sell it where they don't get very much money. In turn, it gets sold for six to eight times as much. That's the rut people get into." There are, of course, quality differences, so the discerning buyer will pay more for something that is unique or beautifully done. Blackhawk took some of Mike Lemon's drawing on the circuit with her. He asked her to price them, and when she returned with the proceeds, he was astounded at how much they sold for: "That much for that??"

Robert SwanSon

At the Grand Portage Museum, Bobby SwanSon unpacks and photographs an outstanding collection of Ojibwe woodcarvings, basketry, beadwork, and hooked rugs recently returned to the community. With three large portfolios full of poems, chapbooks, and newspaper clippings, he demonstrates he is also Bob SwanSon, the writer.



ROXY SCHIERER

gave SwanSon his first publication break. Gray ran SwanSon's poems in numerous issues, part of her commitment to promoting Native artists. "She really spread my stuff around," he recalls. He later joined regional

writers' retreats and symposia, but became disillusioned with many of the high profile attendees. Although "pretty good writers, they berated lesser-known writers and belittled service workers. The attendees (the students) were pretty nice."

SwanSon values process over product. He never set his sights on making a living

through his poems, despite occasional small grants, royalties, and workshop fees. He never actively marketed his work—opportunities to publish came his way. In the 1970s and 80s, when the Indian movement bloomed, he regularly wrote, taught poetry, collaborated in anthologies, organized workshops, and helped found the enduring Pacific Northwest Native Writers' Association. With a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, SwanSon started Sweet Pine Press, publishing a series of Native American poetry volumes on a platen letterpress. In addition to eight published volumes, his poetry appears in anthologies, magazines and newspapers, and on television and radio.

Through his writing, SwanSon powerfully addresses contemporary Indian life, celebrating modern Native identity, but not flinching from portrayals of anomie, depredations of alcohol, and ravages of racism. The *Seattle Times* quoted SwanSon saying, "My poetry says that if you stick to the red road, and follow traditional values, your life will be much improved" (Ament, 1989). "It's true for Indians, but it's equally true whatever culture you belong to."

SwanSon dates his interest in poetry to his mother's writings in rhyme. Through his mother, SwanSon is an enrolled member of the Bois Forte band at Nett Lake, but he spent his early years on his grandfather's Grand Portage reservation. At 10, he traveled with his family as his father sought work, ending up on the Yakama reservation in Washington State. A high school dropout, SwanSon read and wrote on his own from a young age, making himself knowledgeable on the large and historic body of Indian poetry.

Maxine Cushing Gray, editor and publisher of the Seattle-based *Northwest Arts* monthly,

Temporary Warrior

he's a temporary warrior
walking across the plains

sometimes in the evening he
remembers he's a thief

he's a temporary hobo
riding on freight trains

the last time I saw him
was somewhere in Spokane

he's a part time indian
but he don't know how to dance

he was wandering down an alley
looking in trash cans

he's a part time cowboy
but he's never seen a ranch

just a temporary warrior
making other plans

sometimes in the morning he
remembers he's a chief

R. A. SwanSon

At low and moderate prices, most Ojibwe artists acknowledge receiving low compensation for the work that they create. Juanita Blackhawk, for instance, describes the work that goes into something she can sell for \$150 retail. Finding and preparing birchbark or sweetgrass requires 8 hours a day for three or four days. For quill boxes, you must find, pluck, sort, and dye the quills. It requires four to eight hours for the design and more to make it. Blackhawk tries to pay herself \$10/hour, the going rate on the reservation.

Sometimes, a marketing opportunity fizzles when a host poorly organizes an event. Carl Gawboy tells the following

story: "When the Bois Forte museum was built, I did a mural for it. The person who had commissioned it planned an opening, a media event, at which I would sign the mural. But she was fired, and someone else who didn't know much about the professional artist's world took over. There were no cameras at the opening ceremony! Everyone was invited to speak his or her mind. It went on a long time. By the time it finished, there was no one around for the signing. What an artist needs is publicity, his picture in the paper signing the mural!"

Some younger artists are trying to develop their own markets.

Over the years, SwanSon made his living as a video artist, photographer, media producer, and interpreter of Native American history. Currently a museum specialist for the Grand Portage Band, SwanSon plays multiple leadership and artistic roles in the community. He reads poetry to young schoolchildren. He writes text for the National Park Services' interpretive program, grant proposals for Cook County vets, and community newsletters. And, S continues to write and read his work for others. "It seems to take a lot more out of me emotionally than it did 30 years ago. I have always used creative writing as a way to help myself and others interpret the hard realities of Native American and Ojibwe life. Today I use my tours and museum and campfire

presentations more than printed publication to offer those interpretations."

SwanSon's commitment to supporting other Natives as an artist and educator began early on. While teaching Native literature at Heritage College near Yakima, he recalls, "I used all of what they paid me to bring in and pay other Native writers, some with a substantial publishing history, some with only moderate experience or none. The students read the work and formed their own ideas about it, and then the author came in and gave his or her interpretation."

At some point, he began self-publishing and giving his work away. He encourages young Indian students to use poetry to express everyday happenings and develop a

positive self-image. SwanSon spoke to one of his central themes in the *Homer (Alaska) News*, "on a cultural, racial basis, you have no one to blame but yourself for your situation. You have to make your own opportunity" (O'Meara, 1982).

SwanSon writes for his own community. His poetry is now being translated into Ojibwe. But his work also resonates with other cultures. In the 1980s, a Pole translated and published one of SwanSon's poetry volumes. The man found the Indian experience to be quite parallel to the treatment of Poles by the communists. "We're not free to say so," the man said, "but if we can quote you, it's a way of showing how Native peoples are treated."

SwanSon feels that more publication space would best help Indian writers and poets create and find audiences. "It's not that hard—just make the space." He thinks every band should give local poets and writers space in community newspapers and admires the chapbook Fond du Lac's Linda LeGarde Grover recently published. He notes, during the suffrage movement, "Women wanted to express themselves in writing. Poetry wasn't financially viable. So women just took control and began publishing themselves. They started buying their own galley presses, fitting them on kitchen tables, setting their own type. That's where the term 'kitchen table press' comes from. This tradition of self-publishing continued into the beat movement and after." He draws parallels between historical empowerment movements fueled by self-publishing and the opportunities for poets and writers to use blogs and e-books to disseminate ideas today.

Akawe ajina ogichidaayiwī

Azhawosed mishawashkodekaang.
Akawe ajina gidimaagizi,
Boozid ishkodewidaabaning.

Ingoding Anishinaabeyiwī,
Gaawiin dash nitaa niimisii.
Ingoding bizhikiigoowizensiwi,
Gaawiin dash wiikaa owaabandanziin
endazhi-nitaawigi'indwaa bishkiwag.

Ingoding gii-gagizhebaawagak,
omikwendaan gii-ogimaawid.
Ingoding gii-onaakoshing,
Omikwendaan gii-kimoodid.

Ishkwaaj gii-waabamag,
Ingoji iwidi Spokane.
Baabaa-gwenawi-izhi-ayaa
Babaa-biin zabandang webinige makakoon,

Akawe ajina ogichidaayiwī,
Bakaan gii-inaakonidizod.

R. A. SwanSon

Translation assistance, Gordon Jourdain

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Sarah Agaton Howes is collaborating with other native poets—Bobby Wilson, Bill Howes, Edye Howes and Coya Artichoke—to create a Native market for spoken word. They are hoping to tour Minnesota reservations. The challenge is that though Native youth are creating rap, they don't see it as poetry. Agaton Howes is not much older than the youth she hopes to reach. It's her hope that if Native American youth are exposed to

her work, they will have the same experience she had on first seeing Wilson perform. That they will say to themselves, "I can do this."

G. Access to and use of technology

As for the art world as a whole, the emergence of digital technology has radically expanded the ways that Native artists

Keith Secola |

It's powwow weekend at Grand Portage. Keith Secola and members of his Wild Band of Indians whoop up the crowd at the casino performance hall. The hall features a generous dance floor, and Secola, a large, jovial man with an expressive face, cajoles the audience to dance. He asks old friends, good musicians from the Iron Range, to join him in the first set. Throughout the night, he invites other local musicians to play with him on stage.

Secola is an accomplished Bois Forte-enrolled artist: award-winning musician, master guitarist, Native flute player, singer, songwriter, composer, and producer. His music roams the genres—blues, jazz, rock, American roots, and ancient sounds. He calls his music "AlterNative" which has a "progressive innovative edge utilizing Native percussions, world beat, and tribal dance" and uses English, Anishinaabe, and politically powerful lyrics. "I am storyteller with my music, even just describing the environment around me." He puts tremolo in his guitar, hammering and pulling off playing left-handed, earning the title of his album, "Fingermonkey."

Secola's musical inspirations are far-flung. He listened to pop radio and Native singing at ricing camp. He loves wildly distinct music: the organ in the gothic Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, the songs of the Sundance coming from the lodge in a northern Utah night, the white-dressed dancers looking like ghosts with eagle whistles blowing them along. He respects how western music, especially guitar, influences indigenous music in this country, even powwow singing.

Secola grew up in the Iron Range town of Parkville immersed in a musical family. He and his siblings formed a "band" and performed for large imaginary crowds, and they all played in the high school band. Secola chose



trombone, but also began playing old guitars his mother brought home from yard sales (Musicianguide, 2008).

"It's not an instant light switch, but at some point, you decide you want to be a musician," Secola says. At 19, he hitchhiked to Hibbing to buy his first guitar, a Gibson Marauder. "I didn't know a chord, and I could have bought a car instead. People urged me to." He threw away his guitar book a month into lessons and began learning from ear and hanging out with musicians. He hooked up with the Schwartz Brothers Band, a folk/rock group of, "Iron Range misfits." He reflects wryly that on the Range, "You didn't know that you are limited." In the '70s, inspired by Hibbing's Bob Dylan, Secola set out hitchhiking. In Boulder, Colorado, he met his future wife, a Ute, and found a musical scene with which he resonated.

Secola returned to Minnesota in his early 20s to study law and Anishinaabe at the

University of Minnesota. For a language requirement, he put an Anishinaabe expression in the context of a song, his first composition. "You remember those words, how important music and thought and language are, like the way we say 'Today it snows outside.'"

After graduating, Secola left Minnesota with ten pounds of wild rice, his guitar, backpack, and \$100. On Route 66 near Albuquerque, he got a folk gig that paid \$20 and a meal on Thanksgiving Day. He and his Ute friend had kept in touch. They married, settled near Tempe, and had two children. He pursued music, but also worked other jobs, including nine years at the Indian Education Resource Center. He landed part-time work backing up Floyd Westerman, his first gig on University of Minnesota's Northrup steps.

A tutor, Neil Young's manager, taught Secola that important songwriters write songs

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can work, communicate, and market, and it has enabled new forms of artistic expression. Digital cameras have revolutionized photography and film-making, for instance. Photographers, even young ones like Cass Lake Kevin Jackson, can shoot without worrying about the costs of buying and developing film, and they can sort, store and alter photographs on their computers. Jackson is fascinated by the potential of the internet, too—the

way you can make a 360 mural out of a set of photos and share your photos with a large community.

For emerging photographers like Travis Novitsky, the web offers him a wide market. Like other tech-savvy young artists, he began exhibiting his work there after studying how other nature photographers like Blacklock and Brandenburg present themselves on-line. "It's easier than a gallery," he says. "There

important to the people. So Secola wrote *NDN Kars* (Indian Cars), an account of rundown cars cruising the reservation, now the most requested song on Native radio and hailed as the contemporary Native anthem. Traveling through Indian country with his mentor, Floyd Westerman, they played Secola's Fry Bread, a caustic yet funny review of the cruelties of American Indian policy. "I learned that you lead people gently to the brutal truth. We didn't change anything by lambasting the crowd. We have to entertain, too, be a piper. Also, we become what we are singing." He strives to bring consciousness into music because, "The laws of sovereignty are held up by people who don't tear them down."

Secola and his band worked their way up, playing at universities, reservations, clubs, small towns, bars, feasts, and gatherings. He finds it easier to work from Arizona because of the Indian market, though Grand Portage, Seminole's Hard Rock Café, and the Niagara casino are cornerstone gigs. Not all venues have been good to Secola. Native artists, he believes, have to overcome many unnecessary obstacles about the meaning/interpretation of their music, misconceptions about who American Indians are, as well as the resulting oppression. Sometimes even casinos, for instance, mimic the actions of the oppressor by treating American Indians like "stepchildren of Indian Country." It is understandable that a casino in Iowa might pay a well-known singer a small fortune for a small crowd, but it is egregious that instead of embracing one of their own, "They cried to pay me a tenth of that, and we packed the place."

Secola is an icon of Native song. For over twenty years, he has made a living doing what he loves best through his music, including years of European concert tours and the 2002



SECOLA.COM

Salt Lake City Winter Olympics. With his own agent and publicist, he no longer personally drums up gigs. Secola is a seven-time Native American Music Awards (NAMMY) winner: Best Linguistic Recording for *Anishinabemoin* (2007 with Karen Drift), Artist of the Year (2006), Best Folk/Country Recording (2006), Best Producer (2003), Best Blues/Jazz Recording (2002), Best Instrumental Recording (2001), Best Independent Recording (2000). In 2006 he also won Best Folk/Acoustic CD at Canada's Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards.

Secola's generosity to other musicians, his community, and his people's causes is legendary. He produces other artists' work on his independent label, AKINA™, which means, "We embrace all." He recently collaborated on and produced *Anishinabemoin*, a recording that helps preserve and promote the Ojibwe language. He gives benefit concerts for worthy causes, such as helping low-income families on the Range stay warm and well-fed through the winter.

Secola pitches his music to sounds around him. "I've pitched some mountains streams.

Hey, that's in C! And a C minor goes with streamlets." In casinos, he tunes to the ding ding pitches. In Cleveland, he once pitched crickets in D minor. "One day, some smartass bird was pitching to me!" Music is always around, he says, "in the pitches of the wind and water. When you can pitch yourself with these natural things, you feel part of this natural world."

A few years ago, Secola suddenly suffered major hearing loss. He thought it might be the ravages of rock, but a doctor found a brain tumor intruding in his ear canal. He left the hospital and went to an Apache woman healer. "I was prepared to die. She told me, what you do is develop hearing with your heart. It is a more dynamic instrument. It's your body language. You hear quantum energy. You develop another sense of who you are."

Recovered, though still hearing impaired, Secola is touring and working on a rock opera that draws on talents and traditions of Natives from many different tribes. "It's all about virtues," he says. The opera features music, singing, storytelling, powwow, traditional dance, and a range of characters—Auntie Bannock (love), Brother Fry Bread, Sister Salmon, Uncle Gator, and the seven Fry Bread disciples. He will bring it to the stage and screen. He has written 17 of the songs, and currently is writing an album, some narrative, and a screenplay.

Secola loves performing. He believes songs should be four things: entertaining, philosophical, spiritual, metaphysical. "And people should dance to your music! It's like conducting a modern ritual; getting people to dance, participate. Dance is spontaneity. It allows us to communicate with the past and the future."

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are templates out there, and if you know some html or csm stuff, you can customize your own site.” Novitsky is selling about a half dozen prints a month off the website, and people contact him via the web to do photos for projects. He is among the top ten photographers who frequently win “Photo of the Day” contest on the online forum, Digital Image Café.

Gallery owner Todd Bockley thinks that it is important for both the artist and the gallery to have a website. He sees the internet as a significant vehicle for reaching out to new art buyers. Many career artists we interviewed have websites: Jeff Savage (www.savageart.com), Laura Youngbird (www.laurayoungbird.com), Heid Erdrich (www.heiderdrich.com) and Marcie Rendon (www.marcierendon.com). Some, like Andrea Carlson, rely on mn.artists.org and linkedin.com as their portals. Still others, even the well-known, can only be found via gallery websites or articles that have been written about them. Some artists do very well on the web and do indeed reach new markets. Josef Reiter maintains a website and through it sells his work all over the world, including Australia and Ireland.

Some artists are leery of selling on the Internet. Joyce LaPorte worries that she could not keep up with orders, but more importantly, she fears copying by others. She would like to patent her design, but that would cost \$800 that she doesn't

have. Punk Wakanabo also avoids the web for fear of copyright infringement. “You risk every one of your pieces being copied and sold in Canada. Or, the Japanese take birchbark from here and reproduce it in Japan.” Janet Oshkinowe asked us not to photograph her beadwork because she hopes to copyright her designs and create a how-to beadwork book.

Access to and savvy about the web are increasingly important for submitting grants and landing exhibits. The Jerome Foundation, for instance, known for its patronage of beginning artists, does not accept slides anymore—only on-line submissions. Still receiving handwritten proposals on spiral notebook pages, one regional arts council director believes that access to technology is the biggest problem facing Native artists. A gallery curator who would like to be able to sell prints of originals that are exhibited sees too many poor quality work samples, like Xeroxes from Office Max rather than good prints that are archive-ready and acid-free. Some believe that because of the digital divide, the gap between Native artists and non-Native artists winning funding and exhibition opportunities is growing.

Clem May |

A young man, baseball hat pulled low over his eyes, goatee dyed red, sits with us in the Red Lake Cultural office. In a barely audible voice he tells us his name is Clem May, he has lived at Red Lake for all his 36 years, and he is a musician. Heavy metal being his favorite music to play. But in order to make a living as a musician, from the Red Lake reservation in northern Minnesota, he will play what the crowds want—everything from country western to rock and roll to backup to now deceased Native recording artist Floyd Westerman.

As a kid he dabbled in painting, sculpting and drawing, and his musical career began when he and a group of other small kids started drumming and playing guitars. He had a teacher, Al Kendall, who encouraged him. Other encouragement came from the other youth around him and his own determination to play music. It is the local youth who have made the America's Landlords the number one music requested on the local radio station.

He has been making his living for the past 20 years as a musician, writings his own lyrics and songs, performing at casinos and local nightclubs, and selling the band's CDs for \$10 each. He plays with different bands so he can always be working. He has played at the Jammin Country Fest in Thief River Falls. When people heard his band was playing with Floyd Westerman, other opportunities opened up for them in the Midwest. The pay at casinos isn't much, partly because a night's pay of \$400–600 has to be divided among all the band members, but they provide room and meals.

He and his band have faced racism when they have been hired by a club based on their music and when the band arrives they are asked, “Why didn't you tell us you were a Native band?” Sometimes they have been fired before they even get a chance to play.

When asked, “What is the number one

thing that has stopped you and your band from succeeding as big as your biggest vision?” His answer is simple. “People die.”

He elaborates by saying as soon as he trains someone, gets someone ready, a death occurs and he needs to start over. This is the reality of oppression in Native communities.

Red Lake is home for May, and he gives to the community unceasingly. He figures he has taught or gotten 50 people to play music over the years, consistently for the past seven. Currently he is teaching his brother and son, and the school on the reservation has started a music program.

May has applied for a Region 2 grant but no other grants for musicians. He would like to network with other Native bands and have a place to check out each other's styles. He would like to find ways and places for Native people to learn music and art. He would also like to see a showcase of native musicians at some venue on one of the local reservations.

V. Cultural, Spiritual, and Spatial Dimensions

Native artists are given special roles in their communities and face unique challenges, both within their own culture and in the surrounding white world where many of them live and create. In their creations, they often express Native spirituality, preserve cultural practices, gather materials from nature, and heal families and individuals from the pain and scars of long time, enduring oppression. Poverty and geographic isolation make it more difficult for them to support themselves through their music, performance, writing, and visual art. An extra burden, their work often addresses the non-Native community, telling their peoples' stories to combat racism and ask for understanding. These circumstances explain the ways Native artists are different from artists in general and why policy and support systems require careful crafting with these in mind.

A. Community orientation

As a priority, most Ojibwe artists serve their communities in both choice of artistic content and how they deliver it. Fond du Lac sculptor Jeff Savage sees himself this way: "I am an artist for Indians. My primary goal is to serve Native people. I create funerary items for traditional funerals—things like birchbark food dishes, spoons, and tobacco baskets." For Fond du Lac musician and composer Lyz Jaakola, "My job is helping my people understand their path better—putting voice, sound, to our tradition." Being of service is often spiritually and psychologically rewarding. Uncomfortable with her formal classical training to be a competitive self-promoting musician, Jaakola sought community gigs at weddings and funerals and in health care settings where her music could unlock the emotions in people. "Once I saw this (that I could serve in this fashion), it removed the ego for me. It helped enormously."

Community members often honor artistic talent and ask those with it to serve. Saint Paul-based Robert Desjarlait, an aspiring author who had left visual art behind for twenty years, was provoked into picking up his paintbrush by his wife "...bugging me to do the Women's Dance Calendar. To get her off my back, I said, 'Okay, I'll try it, even if I haven't drawn for twenty years!'" Thus began his fruitful second career as a visual artist.

Often, the mission of Native works of art is to give witness to the tribe's history, leaders, beliefs, social life, and survival from oppression. Duluth-based poet Linda LeGarde Grover

had writers' block until she came to think of herself as a witness to the community. She listened as older people began telling their stories and wrote them down. An aunt wanted her to write about the boarding schools, the damage they did, and how her Ojibwe family survived them. She transformed these memories into poetry. Visual artist Laura Youngblood has brought terrible chapters in Ojibwe history alive with her collages of photos and paint. In some, she superimposes paintings of young Ojibwe girls and boys in awkward western clothing onto collages of old Grand Portage family photographs, addressing the psychic cost of ruthless attempts to rub out Indian culture.

Artists' renditions of Indian experience and community spirit encompass both contemporary and traditional Native life and challenges. Grand Portage poet Bob SwanSon uses creative writing as a way to interpret the hard realities of Native American life, celebrating modern Native identity despite the anomie, depredations of alcohol, and ravages of racism. Hoping to motivate young Indian students to read and express everyday happenings in poetry and develop a positive self-image, SwanSon often gives away his poetry. "My poetry says that if you stick to the red road and follow traditional values, your life will be much improved." His poems reflect the values that drumming, dancing, and singing bring to a living culture.

Affirming community and culture is challenging in the larger cities. In cities, Robert Desjarlait says, "Artists can help us figure out who we are, find the human connection, a common denominator. Community art is a creative vision of the community." He notes that none of the public art Natives have created in the cities has ever been defaced with graffiti. "Even young people understand that they can see themselves in the work." Sarah Agaton Howes, a young Fond du Lac poet has spent her last few years using her art to build community and to fight the lure of self-destruction. "You've got to give them something else," she says of her choice of spoken word. "This is us being Indian, not being black or white or anything else...being proud of who we are and adding to our community." Minneapolis-based Ojibwe playwright Marcie Rendon, interviewed for an earlier study of Minnesota artists, explained her goal of being a mirror for urban Indians: "When I was growing up, there were no pictures of yourself as a Native person. So now I give written or visual pictures, or even an idea, to the people I am encouraging. I try to make us visible, to be a mirror for Indian people right here today...My job is to say, 'and here's the urban rez.' I'm not writing so much to correct wrongs or to educate non-Native people. My whole thing is 'where's the mirror?' If I can give that back, a sense of

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self, of who we are, that's important" (Markusen and Johnson, 2006: 42).

Being responsive to the community often alters what artists produce. "You have to give up some of your ideas about art, because you need it to be what the community responds to," says Robert Desjarlait. Reaching beyond poetry, Bob SwanSon gives tours and museum and campfire presentations that include interpretations of contemporary Native life. Through experimentation with the interaction between art and community participation, Ojibwe artists have much to offer other artists and arts organizations interested in deeper engagement of artistic practice with community.

B. Native values: giving, cooperating, not standing out

Generosity, cooperation and not standing out are traits highly valued in Ojibwe culture. All make it more difficult for artists to follow prescriptions promulgated by artist service organizations that emphasize marketing, self-promotion, and asking for

adequate compensation for work. It can be discouraging to young Ojibwe artists and painful for those who press on.

Many artists speak with joy about the gift-giving aspect of their work (Wittstock, 2007). They sing at the drum for free, give work to people who admire it, and charge little or nothing for people who cannot afford to pay. North Shore artist Carl Gawboy gave each of us a print of his work as we left the interview, after giving us his free time. White Earth Connie Engebretson, designer of beautiful, complex one-of-a-kind jingle dresses, prices her work modestly for those with little discretionary income. Even in formal markets, at an art fair, for instance, Melvin Losh does not price his work, but takes whatever people are willing to offer for a quillbox that may have taken him several 20-hour days to create. He also makes moccasins and other sacred personal objects for burials, even under intense time pressure. A counterpart to the habit of giving is a reticence to ask for help, time, support. Linda LeGarde Grover, for instance, has a hard time asking others to

Marcie McIntire

Marcie McIntire sits at a card table in her Ningii-Ozhitoomin Ojibwe Art Gallery, choosing and stringing tiny bits of flamboyant color onto thin fiber cord. McIntire joins hundreds of single beads on soft hide moccasins to make graceful floral designs. Her creations line the shelves and walls in her Gallery and in, larger than life, the open atrium at the Grand Portage Community Center.

"I'm a fiber artist," McIntire says. "I create works from beads and other materials—moosehide, fabric, feathers, furs, sequins, stones. Some traditional, such as foliate designs from nature, and some experimental." Self-taught, McIntire is the daughter of renowned Grand Portage bead artist Ellen Olson. "It helps to be born into this work," she says. McIntire recalls her mother doing beadwork, "Always at home. There was always a plate of beads lying there. I used to watch her a lot. She encouraged me. I used her beads, as I had none of my own. One year she asked me what I wanted for my



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birthday, and I said, 'beads.' So I got them. They were difficult to find. They weren't in stores." McIntire sees her work as a link between past and future. "I am working on an art form that goes back to my grandmothers' grandmother. Then, the beads were a new material, but they used them with techniques of quill and moose hair embroidery, based on ancient traditions."

At age 10, McIntire began making loom woven bracelets and belts with a Grand Portage style loom. "I wanted to make

traditional things from our culture. At 15, I thought about making traditional dance outfits. I believed there might be a market for work like this, especially tourists." Her great aunts and grandmother sold their beadwork during the Depression to tourists. Though the tourism trade has not yet become the market McIntire dreams of, she has devoted herself to making and marketing fiber art since her youth.

McIntire always worked to make an income from her

art. She sold her first work at age 17, a long loom-woven beaded sash with a fringe of beads sold through a store in Minneapolis—a landmark moment. She experimented with chain stitches for necklaces and earrings. At 20, she started bead embroidery, "the most difficult and advanced beadwork to master." She also works with moosehide and deerhide and bead embroiders cotton, satin, and velvet.

In 1988, McIntire started selling full time. "I attended the opening of the exhibition

read her work, which she fears would be an imposition given the length of her pieces.

Ojibwe life is cooperative and does not celebrate competition and winning as does American popular and economic life. Writer Linda LeGarde Grover feels this makes it more difficult for her to participate in activities like a writers' group where she might get feedback on her work. She is afraid that at the slightest hint of competitiveness, she would clam up and be unable to participate. Heid Erdrich finds it intimidating to apply for residencies. "You have to have a good idea, but you have to make it seem like it's urgent and competitive, that you need it more than anyone else. And, I never felt that way."

"Not standing out" is deeply valued in Ojibwe society. During a summer as an opera acolyte in Italy, Lyz Jaakola discovered that her peers were not group-oriented the way she was used to, growing up on the Fond du Lac reservation. "In our community, our school, you are only as successful as your community." In Italy, she observed that self-preoccupation and willful upstaging

of others was applauded. She came home to devote herself to her community as a musician and educator.

Many Native artists find it challenging to acquire the marketing savvy that would enable them to reach paying audiences. In her twenty years of work with Minnesota artists, Juanita Espinosa, founder of Native Arts Circle, has concluded that many don't want to self-promote. In an external art world where worth is measured by the aesthetic quality and originality of the work, often based on belonging to one of many "art worlds" fashioned from formal training, networking experiences, and an investment in marketing, Native artists often feel marginalized. Grand Portage enrollee artist Susan Zimmerman, creator of unique and lovely painted gourds, still has trouble thinking of herself as an artist, partly because she lacks formal training. Espinosa emphasizes that for the Native community as a whole, it's "about culture, not an artsy thing."

Another way to look at it, says Ray Belcourt, Manager of the Anishinaabe Cultural Center in Callaway, is that all Indians are

'Sweetgrass, Cedar and Sage' organized by Jaune Quick-to-See Smith and networked with a number of women artists at the accompanying conference organized by the Women's Art Registry of Minnesota. Hazel Belvo in particular advised me to enter my work in juried exhibitions."

Over the subsequent twenty years, McIntire won awards, expositions, and sales via numerous galleries and museums. Yet, she found relying on far-flung galleries and shows tiring. "You have to be a traveling sales lady. And lots of galleries are struggling businesses. They look nice, but then they go under." Twice she left work on consignments at galleries that never paid her or returned her work.

Wanting to be anchored in her own community, McIntire opened her own gallery in Grand Portage in 2005. Her space provides a storage closet, classroom, and bathroom behind the front show room. The gallery enables her to show her own work and that of other Ojibwe artists from the region. "I can't go around with a suitcase anymore. I have no time to do that. My strategy here is to sell everything and keep the marketing and work economical, so that things do sell."

Going the gallery route provides McIntire

with an alternative to relying on grants. In 2004, she wrote six grant proposals and didn't get any of them, despite making it through the first two rounds for one. In 1994, she studied Ojibwe weaving at the Smithsonian after receiving a Community Scholars Program grant. There she viewed and studied 19th and 20th century weavings. But the staff really didn't talk to her, and she rarely met other artists. She once got a grant from the State Arts Board, but "it is hard to know what they are looking for—traditional, contemporary? Judges are weird. Most do not understand Native Art. And they never state the criteria or give you any feedback." Nevertheless, McIntire agreed to serve on the Arrowhead Regional Arts Board.

McIntire finds ongoing opportunities to exhibit within the region. In 2007, she joined the fall Crossing Borders tour that links artists' studios from Thunder Bay to Duluth. Also that year, the University of Wisconsin, Superior's annual Native Arts Show, hosted McIntire as its featured artist. Her work is exhibited at University of Minnesota's Goldstein Gallery, the Tweed Museum, and St. Scholastica's School of Nursing. By invitation, she lectures and demonstrates at the Tweed Museum, public schools, and libraries. Closer to home,

she often exhibits in the Grand Marais' Johnson Heritage Post's annual show for North Shore artists and in the Northwoods Fiber Guild's triennial show. The Grand Portage reservation's tribal buildings and National Monument proudly display McIntire's work. In addition to the large Community Center hanging, her beaded bandolier bag hangs in the Tribal Council's meeting room, and another bead and feather work graces the Chairman's office. Both the Monument's Heritage Center and Grand Portage State Park give pride of place to her creations.

McIntire hopes to expand her gallery. She knows a lot about art and how to interpret it. Through the gallery, she supports other artists through teaching beginning and advanced beadwork, marketing their work, and even offering to help buy materials. When they come in with their work, she buys it from them if she has the money, and her reputation as a collector is growing. "I have a large collection of paintings and prints that I bought from other artists—mosaics, drawings, acrylics, and basketry. Some people avidly collect this work. What's weird is that they know that I'm here. Someone comes from the Virginia area and has heard about me."

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artists. "Art is part of us, who we are. It is a way of being in the world. We can all create something. But there are also special artists. People who go beyond, who have an ability. But a lot of them are wasting their talent," which he attributes to too few Ojibwe art teachers. "And then, some people are doing their art as an expression and gift from the creator. They are reluctant to sell it and instead give it away. That's how we are."

C. Spirituality, ritual, nature, and the sacred

Since a major function of art in the Native community is to express a distinctive spiritual tradition and preserve its modes and materials, Native artists enjoy opportunities and face special challenges in using and adapting traditional themes and symbols in their work. When applying for funding, an artist is often asked to state what is innovative about the proposed project,

when the point of his or her work may be to recover, celebrate, and disseminate cultural items such as traditional dolls, or cultural practices such as dance, drum song, or the language of Anishinaabe. Internal disputes erupt over whether certain items or songs or fruits of nature can be used in new work, or whether rituals can be altered to fit time and circumstances.

Following more than a century of Anglo-American attempts to obliterate Native culture, some Ojibwe artists are devoted to preserving and celebrating traditional rituals. Fascinated by tribal elders' stories, Leech Lake's Anton Treuer began to conduct oral histories, including monolingual Ojibwe speakers. "We have six-hour long stories. Hundreds of songs. There are different drum beats: a syncopated beat, a beat for singing. There are complicated song repertoires, sung in a sequence. This is rare and precious knowledge." Learning Ojibwe and

Dan Neisen |

As White Earth artist Dan Neisen talks about making bow and arrows, we see the widths and lengths with measurements he creates in air with his hands. He choreographs planning the bow with the grain of the wood and the tying on of two feathers to the arrow. He explains that traditional hunting arrows had three feathers to enable better rotation, but his are easier for people to hang on their walls. He tells how the best bow makers of the past were crippled or hurt in such a way that they couldn't hunt, so they sat in camp and made bows and arrows.

We sit in a small Mahnommen Shooting Star Casino conference room, with Neisen on break. He considers himself fortunate that his full-time security job generates a good income that he supplements with earnings from his artwork. Both jobs cover the costs of materials and help pay the bills. Both incomes enabled him to buy an old farmhouse with a barn and an orchard with 43 apple trees. When he leaves work at the casino, Neisen goes home and begins creating. "My workspace is my living room!" The buildings are filled with deer horns,



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horn pipe that he decorates with feather and leather. The pipes and shell rattles usually hang on peoples walls as art objects, not as items for personal use, although a good share of medicine men use his rattles in their work.

One of Neisen's best outlets is the casino's gift shop. He tells us that five years ago, the gift shop offered nothing but dream catchers for sale. Neisen recounts how Native artists worked hard together to get this changed. They approached the Casino and said, "Everything here is

based on us being Indians. This is Indian land. We pride ourselves on giving work to Native Americans. If you are bringing outside stuff in, then that's rotten. Individually we talked to the CEO and asked, 'Why don't you honor us?'" As a result, management changed their practices. "Here, we really get honored. Other casino gift shops don't honor the Native artists from their own reservation." Neisen would like to see more artwork on the casino walls, just as people have decorated their homes with his work.

Neisen makes three different kinds of turtle shell rattles. One with deer antlers. Another from the deer front leg bone, showing us with his hands how nice and round it is. A third rattle is made with a shell and a wooden stick. He used to make small turtle shell rattles, but the turtles went on the endangered species list. He buys shells in quantity in order for the final product to be affordable. He makes a deer-

As an artist working with traditional materials, Neisen is careful not to reproduce sacred items like pipestone pipes, water drums,

pursuing a graduate degree in Native history, language, and culture, he published *Living Our Language: Ojibwe Tales & Oral Histories*, a collection of fifty-seven tales collected from Ojibwe elders written in Anishinaabe with English translation on facing pages.

Visual artists, too, devote themselves to traditional art forms. Joyce LaPorte, a Fond du Lac grandmother, makes dolls out of buckskin and horsehair with cattails or buffalo hair stuffing. She recalls her grandmother making them, but the art was almost lost—her mother had eleven kids and no time to do it. When her first granddaughter was born, Joyce wanted to make her a doll—it was her role! She spent a great deal of time experimenting to replicate traditional materials and even though she has substituted some materials, is proud of the veracity of her dolls. In similar fashion, Susan Zimmerman began concentrating

on gourds, which Natives have used for thousands of years, emptying fish nets into them, floating the fish back to shore, storing food and fashioning musical instruments. The tradition of use and continuity of spirit matter to her, as they do when she makes baskets or goes ricing.

Nature forms an environmental storehouse for rituals and the sacred items associated with them. It is closely knit into contemporary as well as traditional Ojibwe artistic expression, since so many artists are still tied to the land and to the reservations where they are enrolled, even when they live in cities. Karen Savage-Blue, Fond du Lac painter, characterizes her art as “about nature and us as humans being a part of this planet. And co-existing, getting everything we need from the earth. Physical needs, but also our spiritual needs and knowledge.” Many Ojibwe writers use landscapes and metaphors from nature as

or rattles with birch bark. He also abides by federal and various state laws. Bear claws, badger parts, and turtle shells, are treated differently in Wisconsin than Minnesota. Federal laws prohibit use of songbird feathers, and though you can hunt Canada geese, you can't sell their feathers off the reservation. As a Native, Neisen can make an eagle fan but cannot sell it to non-Natives. So he makes fans from chicken, pheasant, wild turkey, grouse, and peacock feathers. Safety laws restrict items like knives that might be sold to children.

Neisen has had the desire to create since he was old enough to sneak a paring knife from his mother's kitchen drawer. He lost all of his dad's wood tools in the woods. He was baffled on how the ancients could make the things he was trying to make. When people ask, “Do you use glue?” he answers yes. He has learned that Native people used many kinds of natural glues including glue sticks from beaver tails. “All my life I have tried to find out how the things we had were made. Nettle fiber is waterproof, for instance.”

A dyslexic child, Neisen says he was never any good with numbers, spelling, or reading, but in art classes and woodshop, he excelled. He stayed in school because he loved sports and wanted to graduate. He recalls how art, making things, always gave him what he couldn't get from other people. He wanted to attend the Minneapolis Arts Institute but his

high school counselor said that with his grades he wouldn't make it. At 41 he got an electrical license, one of three Minnesotans who passed the test when it was read to him.

Neisen realized early that he couldn't make enough money from art. “It's the places that sell the artwork that make the money,” he says. “I sell everything wholesale but without them, I would have nothing. It would just sit in my house.” He thinks that young artists don't understand that “You have to give it time. I thought I could come right out of school and make it. No. I almost starved a couple of times. I had to have a job, too.” While he would like to quit his job and focus on art-making, Neisen doesn't think it will happen soon, as times can still be lean in the winter. Besides, if he were compelled to live off his artwork, it would feel like a job, although currently, he estimates that he spends more than 40 hours a week on his art.

Because of his own long journey to become a practicing and selling artist, Neisen mentors and encourages others. When he first started showing friends his work, he was so shy that he couldn't go into any sales place. While working as an electrician outside of Mankato, he showed a local woman his art, and she bought it all for \$250. He cried. Neisen currently mentors a young Naytawash man and is hopeful that this young father will carry on his work. Giving talks at sobriety

programs like White Bison, he stays connected to the community and speaks to the joy and satisfaction he gets from creating. “I wish I could give this to other people. It would slow down the drug and alcohol abuse.”

Today Neisen is comfortable with himself. His art has given him a peace of mind that he couldn't get anywhere else. He spent years angry because he was different, but now he recognizes that the Creator has given him a wonderful gift. He admits to still getting a rush when people buy his work because they think his art is good, and he is starting to realize that he is in his artwork. He dreams of doing one of a kind pieces and landing something in the Smithsonian.

Neisen enjoys the idea that his art is on wall all over the world. For instance, a wealthy guy, Chuck Hopwood, in Ada, Minnesota, collects Neisen's work and has decorated his big hot tub room with it. Neisen says, “I am so fortunate, so honored. This art work has turned into a healthy addiction.” He owns that he has made some unbelievable artwork, and as he has gotten older, he has been able to accumulate material things that please him, like a beautiful bear rug with a full head. His art keeps him going. Or, as he says, “The hundreds of arrows keep you going...I can go without a lot of things but not my art. It's so strong. It's given me life. Everything I wanted out of life.”

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their text. Others recreate traditional ceremonial and cultural items. However, finding the traditional materials from nature that artists need to create is often time-consuming, hampered by the encroachments of development and constrained by federal and state land use laws, as addressed above.

Musicians closely follow sounds from nature. Nationally known Ojibwe musician Keith Secola, Bois Forte enrollee, pitches his music to sounds in nature. "I've pitched some mountain streams. Hey, that's in C! And a C minor goes with streamlets." In Cleveland one night, he pitched crickets in D minor. "And one day, some smartass bird was pitching to me!"

Music is always around, he says, in the sounds of the wind and water. "When you can pitch yourself with these natural things, you feel part of this natural world." Humorfully, Secola also pitches to man-made sounds. In casinos, for instance, he tunes into the "ding ding ding."

The incorporation of rituals, songs, ceremonies, and sacred items in contemporary artists' work, especially when shared externally, is controversial. Anton Treuer, for instance, believes that ceremonies and practices like Midewiwin (Ojibwe medicine and healing) are for the participants and not for display to outsiders. "These things are part of initiation," he says.

Jim Northrup |

"Take a right on Northrup Road. If the season's right the Corvette will be parked out front." Rez Road follies are for real up on the Fond du Lac Reservation at the home of Jim Northrup; writer, storyteller extraordinaire, birch bark basket maker, sugar bush boiler, moose hunter, rice poler, and bingo-hall fixture. As we pull up, the requisite family members are sitting on the upper deck, talking, smoking—it's still allowed on the rez—and telling stories. The stacked

layers of birchbark and stripped basswood bark soaking in a bucket of water on the outdoor deck signal that it is birch bark basket season.

Northrup has so many visitors he has a canned speech ready to give—jokes from his monthly news column, *The Rez Follies*, hunting stories, some war poems. It takes some effort to steer the conversation from rehearsed PR lines to how he became a writer. "My grandfather was a writer. I grew up hearing about Joe Northrup. Noodin he is called up here. His longest piece was Wawina, a Chippewa Romeo and Juliet story. My grandfather broke the trail for me. He did it so it wasn't a foreign concept to me."

Northrup attended boarding school in Pipestone, Minnesota, an experience addressed in the Sesquicentennial volume on Minnesota (Roberts, 2007). He was so young that another student, Pauline Moose, wrote



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his letters for him. Then he learned to write. "It was the only form of communication with my family. I wrote a poem about it." After graduating high school in 1961, a rare feat for a Native man at that time, Northrup joined the Marines. He took part in the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 and then to Viet Nam in 1965. "Writing, again, was the only way to communicate about Nam. I saw things that people here in Sawyer couldn't conceive of."

When Northrup returned to Fond du Lac, he moved into a tipi in the woods. His friends and family would go there, sit around the fire and entertain each other by telling stories. He says, "One day I was making notes about stories I'd tell the next time we had company. I thought, 'This isn't too far from the stories you read in a book.' I wanted to write, but I didn't want people to know that these things happened to me, so all the crazy shit happens to a guy

named Luke Warmwater."

Around then, Northrup got a call from Ojibwe writer Gerald Vizenor, who asked him to submit some stories for an anthology called *Touchwood* (1987). Northrup sent fourteen stories. Vizenor used them all. "I got \$100 dollars. Then I wanted my own book." *Walking the Rez Road* (1993) was published by Voyageur Press, a collection of forty stories and some poems. Northrup went on a book tour to Madison,

Milwaukee, Chicago, Detroit, Flint, and Ann Arbor. The book and readings gave him great visibility. The book sold over 30,000 copies, won a Minnesota Book Award, a Northeast Minnesota Book award, and is used in many Indian Studies programs. College touring is more lucrative than book sales. Northrup's going rate for speaking at colleges and universities is in the thousands.

Embarking on a prose book, Northrup recalls standing on a Manhattan corner one day and meeting an editor from Kodansha Press. He offered Northrup the advice on getting an agent and solicited a book proposal. Thus emerged *The Rez Road Follies: Canoes, Casinos, Computers, and Birch Bark Baskets* (1997), reprinted by University of Minnesota Press (1999).

Northrup also began to do one-man shows based on his stories. Two friends, Ron Peluso

"They are open to all people of all ages and genders who are Ojibwe. We believe the Great Spirit created diversity. We do not proselytize like fundamentalist religions. It's our way."

Non-Native artists who make and market dreamcatchers, pipestone pipes, and jewelry with Native themes are often criticized by other Native artists and community members. Native artists have fought for and in 1990 won the federal right to restrict "Indian made" labels to work that is indeed created by Indians, though it is not adequately enforced (Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990, 1996). Native artists have challenged fellow Native artists when it appears that they misuse sacred

materials or images. Modern art magazines, noted one artist, are full of "Indian" jewelry marketed to non-Native people, some of whose Native makers claim that "the spirit guides me." Others refuse to follow this path. White Earth's Dan Niesen is careful to observe proscriptions. He does pipestone, but because it has sacred properties, does not sell the work. Similarly, he refuses to craft water drums or rattles with birchbark.

At times, the community arbitrates these issues. In the 1980s, Juanita Espinosa, with others, helped to mediate a conflict over the use of pipestone and other sacred materials. Some artists wanted to use it in their work, but a woman elder said, "The

and Bob Beverage—a theatre director and an actor—heard his bookstore reading and asked him to put together a one-man show. He laughs, "They didn't tell me that it was the hardest thing to do. Some old lady from Broadway in NY said, 'It's supposed to be fun, it's a play!' So, I did it." After his initial gig in Albert Lea, they booked him at the Hennepin Center for the Arts in Minneapolis and then the Great American History Theater in St. Paul. At the latter, Northrup was so nervous that he wrote into the script places where the character, played by him, lights a cigarette. A second play, *Shinob Jep*, is a Native parody of the game show Jeopardy. Juanita Espinosa premiered it at the Weisman Art Gallery as part of the Indian Humor Exhibition. It toured Indian Country, including the Mille Lacs and Lac du Flambeau casinos, and has been performed on radio.

Looking back, Northrup recounts how he learned to present himself to the market. "I used to be known as a bullshitter. I know it's hard to believe, but it's true. But being a bullshitter didn't pay anything, so I called myself a storyteller. A little better, more prestige, but it still didn't pay anything. Then I became a free-lance writer. At first it was more free than lance, but I eventually started getting money for my words. When I became an author, a poet, a playwright, and a newspaper columnist, I could charge consultant fees."

Film versions of Northrup's performances have expanded his arena greatly. A video of his life and work, *Northrup Northrup: With*

Reservations, produced in 1995 by Mike Hazard and Mike Rivard of the Center for International Education, was an award-winning PBS show that ran for three years and was screened at the Smithsonian's Museum of the American Indian in New York. Most recently Northrup has appeared in the films *Older Than American*, *White Man's World*, and *Way of the Warrior*.

Northrup's audience is national and international. But he is dedicated to living a traditional life on the Fond du Lac reservation with his family. He serves his community, and other Native people, by writing "Fond du Lac Follies," a monthly column with a 20-year run in the Twin Cities' *The Circle and News From Indian Country*, and is read by 50,000 people around the world. The column uses humor and stories to deliver hard-hitting political and social commentary on Native life. It was named Best Column at the 1999 Native American Journalists Association convention.

It's been harder for Northrup to land ongoing opportunities for performance on the reservation. For a few years, he organized poetry readings on the rez, petitioning the Tribal Council for the community center and pay for artists. They also paid Northrup and his actors to do *Shinob Jep* once, and it will be produced at the Black Bear Casino in 2010. Noting that "Those at home know us best and are often envious of one's success," Northrup says he was finally invited to speak at the Fond du Lac Tribal Community College, "After I bitched enough."

Northrup plays another artistic role in his community. Calling his Sawyer home the

Northrup Institute of Traditional Technology, Sawyer (NITTS), he practices seasonal Ojibwe traditions: spear fishing, birchbark basket making, wild ricing, and maple sugaring. He keeps tradition alive and teaches the making of tools and know-how involved in each. During our interview, a buffalo hide was being tanned at the tree line and Northrup and his wife Pat worked on ricing baskets that they use and sell for hundreds of dollars. "At powwows, we find a patch of shade and make rice fanning baskets—they're a tool—not a tourist thing. Mike Shibiash, my grandfather used to make them, so in the last twenty years I've figured out how to make them again." Their baskets are on display in the Smithsonian and many Minnesota museums.

Attracted by the Fond du Lac Follies, visitors come to Northrup's home from places like Macedonia, Japan, China, France, Russia, Panama, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Laos, Australia, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark. They are offered a spot to sit, told stories, and given a chance to work on whichever project is being worked on. People are also invited to the casino to play Bingo and Keno.

Despite being a greater celebrity abroad than at home—he has been to Scotland, Amsterdam, Norway twice, England, Mexico City, Winnipeg, Canada, California, Oregon, Florida, North Carolina, New Mexico, Arizona, Wisconsin, and Oklahoma—Northrup says that living on the rez has been great. "One of the high points of my writing life was when my son came home and said he was reading stories from my book at his school," he says with pride.

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spirits came and wrote on the rocks. These are our rocks, for our ceremonies." At two gatherings, in 1984 and 1989, Native people met to hear teachings about sacred things and to discuss ways to address such concerns respectfully. The consensus emerging from these gatherings was that artists should seek an understanding of the pipestone from the elders of their tribes and how they might trade for it.

Individual artists deal with these sensitivities by listening, accommodating, experimenting. Questioned about his use of pictographs in his artwork, Robert DesJarlait consulted an elder who told him which pictographs he can and can't use. DesJarlait doesn't consider this a censoring of his art but rather respecting what his elders teach. Relating a story of another artist who he thinks has used pictographic images in a macabre fashion, he questions whether the artist's problems in life might be rooted in this disrespect.

To research the historical veracity of his historical portraits, Leech Lake artist Punk Wakanabo reads books on the animals and Indian tribes. He studies color and design, the meaning of everything on an Indian horse in a particular region, what Natives of that tribe wore. He finds an elder and gives him a cigarette: "they tell me the way things should be, what they believe is wrong with modern portrayals, how things have changed, why certain dances shouldn't be done in public, and how certain colors came to be used, like the berry red of the shirts in Kiowa dance." Wakanabo then builds these into his work.

D. Innovation: bridging tradition and contemporary native life

Wishing to honor traditional cultural practices and community norms, Minnesota's Ojibwe artists often must chart a difficult path in creating new work, especially if it involves unusual uses

Travis Novitsky |

Travis Novitsky stands in his green ranger uniform behind the welcoming counter at Grand Portage State Park. He works where the rugged pre-Cambrian Canadian Shield angles down into Lake Superior, a conjunction of landscapes that he loves to photograph. "Am I an artist?" ponders the 33-year old. "I think of myself as a photographer."

Novitsky's body of work includes photos of the southwest desert, sandhill cranes in Nebraska, and Alaska. Foamy water and icefalls, lightning, and night-time auras fill his large prints. He strives to create artsy prints that stand out. "These landscapes have been photographed by hundreds of top photographers," he says, "so I try to work new angles." He experiments constantly, spending long hours at night shooting the moon, the aurora borealis, and light on water. "I have to think hard about how to make the shot. I run long exposures for many of my images, anywhere from a few seconds to a few hours."

"My Dad had a lot to do with it," says Novitsky, of his youthful interest in photography. "He was always taking pictures when I was growing up. He was good, too, and we always watched slide shows. Seeing those made me want to get into the same stuff." Starting in ninth grade, Novitsky put his point-and-shoot camera in his pocket,

pedaled his mountain bike and spent countless hours hiking and photographing the Northwoods. Over time he learned, "At different times of the year just how the light is going to hit the tree." Novitsky is completely self-taught. "When digital went mainstream," he says, "I really got into it. It's now so much easier to learn on your own. I never took a class. I read a lot of books" (gesturing with his hands to a stack a yard high). Experts tell him he has a good eye for composition, ingrained, he supposes, from viewing his dad's photos.

Set up in a corner of his bedroom, Novitsky's computer is his digital darkroom, and the web offers Novitsky a wide market. He began exhibiting his work on-line after studying how other nature photographers market their work through the web. "It's easier than a gallery," he says. "There are templates out there, and if you know some html or css stuff, you can customize your own site." He spends countless hours sorting and editing his work after his full-time job at the Park ends each day. "I am selling about a half dozen prints a month off the website," says Novitsky. "A few people have found out about me from



TRAVIS NOVITSKY



TRAVIS NOVITSKY

the website and contacted me to do photos for projects."

Local and regional patrons also purchase

of traditional art forms, such as women playing the drum, or incorporates non-Native artistic modes, such as hip-hop, rock and roll, film, and theatrical performance. Quite a number of the artists interviewed have figured out ways of doing that are sensitive to their communities' views, deference that often costs them time and energy but is fruitful. Sometimes, as we noted above, it also means compromise. Among the great achievements of many artists we interviewed are the inventive ways that they use modern media and technologies and adapt ideas and art forms from the larger cultural world while explicitly addressing their own communities and traditions.

As a young Native activist, Bois Forte's Keith Secola wanted to use his music to raise consciousness about the long history of genocide and exploitation in Native American history. At first, he used a frontal assault, belting out angry "tell it like it is" songs. Over time, he learned that "it's better to gently lead people

to the brutal truth." He struggled to write songs that would entertain as well as educate. His work became humorous, as in his famous songs *NDN Kars* (Indian Cars), about a run-down car cruising the reservation, a song that addresses inventiveness of those in poverty, and *Fry Bread*, a funny metaphoric review of the cruelties of sequential American policies towards Indians, including allotment and removal.

Musician Lyz Jaakola wanted to write new music in Anishinaabe for her students and form a women's drum group. But fearing resistance from within her community, she first conducted cultural research on what is or is not appropriate in Ojibwe tradition. So that she would not mess up relationships, Jaakola devoted time to talking to elders and putting tobacco out. She discovered, for instance, that only certain people are supposed to play flutes. Increasingly, Jaakola was encouraged by the elders and cultural musicians with whom she engaged. But

and display Novitsky's photos. Tim Cochrane, the superintendent of the Grand Portage National Monument, arranged to have Novitsky paid for prints for the new Heritage Center. A special fund created by the Reservation covered the cost of framing. The Lodge adjoining the new Grand Portage Casino welcomes guests with a huge Novitsky reproduction, and Novitsky's photos are hung throughout the lobby, hallways, dining hall, and many guest rooms. Disappointingly, although the Native-themed gift shop in the huge new tribal Spur store sells his photo cards, it is under-staffed and mostly sells trinkets made elsewhere.

In nearby Grand Marais, the Johnson Heritage Post has exhibited Novitsky's work in a couple of photography shows. He also has framed prints for sale in the gift shop at North House Folk School. Novitsky has had less luck with the top-of-the-line Sivertson Gallery, despite their heavy specialization in nature photography. The first time he sent the Gallery a portfolio, they took a year to respond. He'd like to see a wall of his work there, in addition to his photo cards that they now sell. The Duluth-Superior Symphony orchestra also bought the rights to use Novitsky's winter images on three of its program guides. His images

have been used in *Lake Superior Magazine*, *Oceanography* magazine, the *Outdoor Photographer* annual landscape calendar, in several books, and on billboards.

Novitsky's work wins the praise of peers, the press, mentors, and the national Indian community. He is among the top ten photographers who frequently win the "Photo of the Day" contest in the online forum, Digital Image Café. In March 2008, the *Duluth-News Tribune* featured his Nebraska sandhill crane project. In response to Novitsky's blogging during that adventure, nature journalist Sam Cook wrote, "You are getting good with the pen." In its November 28, 2007 cover story, *Indian Country Today* celebrated Novitsky's work—how his artistic sensibility is rooted in his life-long Grand Portage residence and how he serves as a role model for younger people.

Novitsky's ideas for new directions for his work include teaching as a community activity and/or a new revenue stream. "A lot of local people have asked me questions, like what kind of camera are you using, how do you work with it? We could go on small group outings." He does that informally on a one-to-one basis with community members and out-of-towners. "I already take outsiders to locations on the reservation. They become

virtual friends through emails. I say, sure, I'll show you around. I could charge for that." And he counts non-monetary rewards,

I ran into a local teen one freezing March night watching the northern lights. He had a point and shoot camera. I showed him what I was doing. He said, 'Dude—I love this kind of stuff. I wish I could do shots like yours.' He's someone I never thought would be interested. It's a good way to help local kids out. It gets them outside, away from movies and video games.

Novitsky appreciates the synergy between his ranger job and his artwork. Some of his photos deck the visitor center walls. "I use them to show people where to go in the Park...that gets them interested in seeing other areas of the reservation." Someday he hopes to have a public workspace for his computer and printer where he can also display prints, cards, and calendars, so that people could see his work in progress. Novitsky would like to grow his photography, while keeping balanced. "It's just a side profession. I do want it to become bigger. But it doesn't have to be fast. I hope it stays that way and does not become overpowering. I will always be creating and experimenting."

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she was questioned a lot along the way. “What I was doing was unorthodox. Some people thought I shouldn’t use a drum, even a hand-drum. Others said I shouldn’t be mixing the languages. Or, because I was a mixed blood person, I shouldn’t be doing this work. These were not questions that I hadn’t had myself.” She persisted in this work in a positive way, watching her P’s and Q’s. Eventually, her efforts blossomed and have been accepted by her community.

Some Ojibwe artists are innovating in entirely new art forms. For young spoken word artists, “Most of the spaces that we perform at, we create,” reflects Sarah Agaton Howes, who recently returned to the Fond du Lac reservation from the cities. Back on the rez, Agaton Howes reports people saying, “What are you doing? Spoken word? Poetry? Why?” To create a forum and engage the larger community, Agaton Howes organized a Saturday day-long writing workshop on Fond-du-Lac. More than a dozen tribal members of all ages joined in and gave public performed readings that evening.

In creating new work, Ojibwe artists sometimes rely on dreams and visions as inspiration, a revered spiritual sensibility that they harness to new images. Leech Lake visual artist Mike Lemon says, “A lot of my drawings come from visions, dreams. I wake up and start sketching. A lady riding side-saddle, clouds. I will let it sit there for awhile, and then I’ll translate them into artwork.” Contemplating his newly commissioned mural for the Red Lake reservation, Robert DesJarlait asked himself “how can I show the creator as both man and woman? Who is to say the Creator has a human form? So, there will be no face. There will be a spirit hand running through the mural. I went to a ceremony three months ago and saw the spirits. I saw the color, blue, like the northern lights. I am thinking of using that color to depict the human form moving into a spiritual form.” Musician Lyz Jaakala began receiving songs in dreams: “I had a dream about playing a hand drum, and I started writing and crafting songs. These are my songs, I thought. I can use them in the classroom.”

Melvin Losh |

Melvin Losh, Ojibwe master quillworker, sits in a large easy chair between his two work tables, one for sorting quills and the other for making quill boxes. He uses other home spaces for cleaning porcupines, dyeing the quills, and storing quills and birchbark. Intricate and polished, his quill boxes and bandolier bags feature eagle, beaver, wolf, floral, and abstract designs. Museums and individuals around the world seek his work. He makes burial moccasins, quill boxes, and other ceremonial items for members of his community when asked.

Losh began doing artwork in his teens, over 35 years ago. He studied with Josephine Ryan, an Ojibwe artist teaching beadwork at the Bena Hall on the Leech Lake reservation. Ryan told Losh’s parents that she saw something unusual in how he handled the beads. He messed around for ten years, making medallions, belt buckles, and outfits, but burned out and stopped completely for five years. Then at a powwow in Michigan, he met accomplished quillworker Catherine Baldwin, who showed him how to insert quills into birchbark using an awl and tweezers. “You have to take off on your own,” she advised him.



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Though he had a day job, Losh began quill-working whenever he could, happy for the extra income. Early on, his main buyer was Josephine Ryan who traveled the powwow circuit, winter and summer, from Minnesota to Michigan, Canada, North and South Dakota. Losh remembers that Josie took every quill box he made. She ordered two or three pieces every weekend, and he worked every

spare minute to make them. She knew how to price them and never returned with any, so they raised the price every year. Many non-Indians as well as Native Americans bought his boxes.

For a period of ten years, Losh went on the road himself, demonstrating and selling his work at powwows, grade schools, high schools, and private homes. Spending more time on the road than on the artwork, he found he could not finish any pieces. A quill box that took him 3–4 days at home took him two weeks. The pay for demonstrations often did not cover his food, lodging, and gas expenses.

Losh’s market now operates almost completely by word of mouth. People from near and far come directly to him to request work. He is so busy that he can’t keep up with demand. He does not price his work, but takes what people offer him. His pieces often sell like hotcakes. At the first annual Art Show at the Leech Lake Tribal College, held during the Memorial Day Pow Wow, three quill boxes sold in ten minutes. Customers generally make good offers, sometimes giving him “a huge amount of money.”

Private collectors also commission Losh’s

Some Native-run and Native-dedicated arts venues have also explicitly tackled this divide. In 2008, an exhibit in Minneapolis' All My Relations gallery (see profile below), "RE: Generations, Legacy & Tradition," featured contemporary beadwork, paintings, ledger drawings, quilts, and sculptures by ten artists whose work honor the past but leaven their work with distinctly modern sensibilities. Minneapolis critic Mary Abbe (2008a) quotes curator Heid Erdrich's philosophy in curating the show: "People are often constrained to produce traditional art forms or forms that seem historically authentic or, quote, museum quality, unquote. Those notions are all based on the idea that native art is a historic production rather than something that real native people are doing today. I wanted to show that, yes, there is tradition, but there is a bridge too." An example, and Erdrich's favorite from that exhibit, is *George Morrison Looking at the Lake*, an alabaster sculpture by Jeff Savage that depicts the prominent Ojibwe artist in traditional tunic standing on a turtle. Though the figure does not resemble Morrison, the

striated pink stone and design "suggests his spirit," Erdrich explained to Abbe.

E. Art as healing

For many Ojibwe artists, creative work is a form of healing as well as a livelihood and community gift. The long history of racism, genocidal oppression, and family disruption creates poverty, anger, pain, loneliness, disappointment, and early death, fed by ongoing racism and urban as well as rural marginalization. Alcohol and drugs, introduced by white culture, have had devastating effects on individuals and families. Lyz Jaakola summarizes this experience, "We are constantly dealing with shorter life expectancy, diabetes, and mental health issues, depression. Suicide—two members of my family. Because we are a small population, these issues are magnified in Indian communities. We are constantly at funerals. It's a fact of life." Few Native artists escape the scars and ongoing challenges. In this section, we recount how

work. For years, Chicagoan Ray Miller, a buyer of museum quality Native work since age 10, bought from Losh. "He made me understand who I really am!" says Losh. Recently, collector Ed Robinson saw one of his quill boxes in Pipestone, Minnesota, and commissioned a large piece, quillwork on birch-bark, depicting an eagle catcher, an Indian who builds a hole and hides beneath its cover of branches and raw meat to spring out and grab the eagle, taking a few feathers and then releasing it.

Losh receives and appreciates recognition. By invitation, he participated in a conference on quill boxes and black ash baskets in East Lansing, Michigan. The Minnesota Historical Society's Mille Lacs Museum and private collectors have bought his bandolier bags, and the Plains Art Museum and the Smithsonian own his quill boxes. He recently won "Best of Show" at the Bemidji State University annual Art Expo. Strangers stop him on the street to say they always wanted to meet him and to congratulate him on his creations.

Losh loves his work. He immerses himself in each quill box, each one unique. He learns something new every time. He thinks through the design and decides on color. Color-blind, he relies on a niece or nephew to help him

with dying. And the quillwork changes as he does it. "I thought I had control of this quillwork, but I don't—it's controlling me all the time. Sometimes it won't go, and I can't force it." He holds as many as 200 quills in his mouth at a time, and loves the feel of them and the thrill of pulling them through the bark. When working on a project, he goes to bed between 1:00 and 3:00 a.m. and is up again at 5:00. "Sometimes I don't even dress—I just sort quills. I can't wait to wake up in the morning and get going." A nine-year-old boy asked Losh if he was addicted to quills, and he answered, "I am!" He enjoys the outcome: "Even today, after 30 years, I can't believe I've done that!"

Losh faces challenges attaining materials. Most of his quills come from roadkill. People bring them to his doorstep or call when they spot one, and he'll drive as far as 100 miles to get one. Currently, people collect and sell quills for a penny apiece. Losh cannot afford that, because he needs such massive numbers of them. One year he may run out of quills, and the next, birchbark. Sweetgrass, too, is hard for Losh to find and afford.

Losh wishes he had documented and kept track of his work. A museum asked if he could

find twenty quill boxes for a show, but he doesn't think he could. He knows that a few are at trading posts or galleries, but many have been sold or resold without any trace.

Losh feels that no venues are currently closed to him, but in the past he had bad experiences. He once approached Northern Lights Casino in Walker about selling his work in their gift shop. The non-Indian gift shop manager turned him down, claiming his boxes cost too much, even though the shop carried other lovely, pricey pieces. The Casino manager learned of this and called him to apologize, but Losh never returned. Recently, however, the Tribal Council built a glass case exhibiting Losh's bandolier bag in Northern Lights' hotel lobby and paid him well for it.

Losh plans to continue his work as long as he can, but he fears quillwork will become a lost art. He has taught seven people, only one of whom continued on. Although many are interested in learning, they give up when they find out the amount of work required. Losh receives offers of space and funding to take on apprentices. So far he has turned down requests, knowing that the time required to choose students, prepare materials, and teach would cut deeply into his artwork.

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several artists experience these challenges and have used their artwork to respond.

Fine art craftsman Dan Neisen turned to art at two important junctures in his life, first as a child whose learning disabilities provoked dismissive career advice from teachers, and later, as a way to overcoming alcoholism. "I spent the first years angry because I knew I was different, but the Creator has given me this wonderful gift," he told us. "I can go without a lot of things, but not my art. It's so strong it's given me life." When he gives talks at AA and White Bison (a national Native American sobriety and wellness organization), Neisen tells them "that I am an artist, and about the joy and feeling of satisfaction." He believes that if he can give this same encouragement to others to do expressive work, it would slow down drug and alcohol abuse in the community.

Hard living laid sculptor Gordon Van Wert low a few years ago, when it resulted in a bad stroke in which he lost his peripheral vision and much of the use of his hands. "Sculpture

has always been my emotional therapy," said Van Wert, "and now it's my physical therapy too." He now gives talks at hospitals and elsewhere in the Bemidji area and at Red Lake, on topics such as suicide prevention, and stresses artistic expression as a route to healing. "I tell my story of my choice as a teen to go to the Institute of American Indian Art. It was the best thing that ever happened to me." Young painter Faron Blakely watched his artist father destroy himself with alcohol. Growing up in Minneapolis' inner city Phillips neighborhood, Blakely literally died in 1991 under the Franklin Avenue Bridge. Brought back to life, he feels blessed to get a chance to do his art, turning to it to get away from the drinking going on around him. This commitment to painting, along with moving out of the big city to the suburbs of Fargo, is "my way to heal and be strong, to heal, to be a family man." Juanita Blackhawk realized at a young age that drawing and quillwork were emotionally powerful for her, helping her overcome an abusive childhood. "In doing workshops and classes with the kids, when they ask me about

Steve Premo

In the Grand Casino Hinckley Convention Center, Steve Premo, adept on crutches from recent ankle surgery, stands in front of his large oil portrait, deliberately reminiscent of a famous Rembrandt oil "Man in Oriental Costume" but with an Ojibwe elder's face, feathers, garb. Perhaps a self-portrait, the colors are dark, rich, and three-dimensional. '

Premo first saw Rembrandt's work on a 6th grade school trip to the Minnesota Institute of Arts. Through years of self-study with drawing, pen, ink, and charcoal, he learned to introduce light into his work, like Rembrandt, and then returned to painting. Premo, who grew up on Minneapolis' south side, injured his leg permanently at age six. During the long recovery, he learned to draw with coloring books. Growing up, he used visuals to communicate and make friends. His teachers encouraged him. At 16 they sent him to a life drawing class at the University of Minnesota, where the professor indicated his level surpassed college students.

Hungry for technique and critique, Premo went to the Institute for American Indian Arts in Sante Fe. There, print-making instructor, Seymour Tubis, taught him tonal creativity in etchings and woodcuts, and



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he enjoyed the other students. But because Premo was drinking too much, the Institute asked him to leave after his first term.

Returning to the Twin Cities, Premo started working as an art teacher at the Heart of the Earth Survival School, an American Indian Movement charter school. He painted when he could, struggled with his drinking, and gave himself this challenge: "That if by the age of 30, people in Minnesota didn't know me, I was not going to make it as an artist."

He succeeded early, illustrating three of seven Minnesota Chippewa tribe histories. He married, bought a house, and adopted his first child. Premo adds he's been clean and sober since 1981.

In 1978, the Minneapolis Public Schools' Indian Education Department recruited Premo to be its graphic artist. He designed books and curriculum for 13 years, such as an illustrated book on the Treaty of 1854, work that he loved. He sought to study graphic design at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. But in those days, MCAD only offered courses in drawing and color. "Only the coasts had classes in graphic design, so I tried to do the best with what I had." His job involved fast work and developing interactive relationships with master printers.

His supervisor raised funds for Premo to participate in an international conference of illustrators. He met greats like Robert Blake, Bernard Fuchs, and Guy Billout. "You brought your portfolio and they would critique it, tell you what's good, or slice you up. It was good to see and witness." He learned how illustrators use light tables to draw from projected images. "To a painter, that seems like cheating. For them it's all about the

the quillwork, I retell them my story, so that they will know they have this option.” Blackhawk notes that creative arts like dance and regalia are part of Native healing practices. “We are called upon when someone is sick to do a healing dance around them. When I make a jingle dress for this purpose, I say a prayer for healing with each jingle.”

Among the many burdens of racism, Native vets who serve in US wars often return home with very little credit or honor from the larger society. Viet Nam in particular was a traumatic experience for Ojibwe men. Jim Northrup began to write as a way to deal with and share his experiences as an Anishinaabe vet, “an old Ojibwe warrior,” published as *Walking the Rez Road* (Northrup, 1993). Having given poetry workshops for Vets in places like Bemidji, his poems have helped many veterans open up and write as well.

In some settings, the link between art and healing in Ojibwe life is explicit. The Min No Aya Win Clinic purchases and displays contemporary Ojibwe artwork throughout its Fond

du Lac buildings. The Clinic’s Director, Phil Norrgard, has educated his Board on the crucial role of art in healing as part of his perennial case for funds to buy artists’ work (see profile below). On the White Earth reservation, the Anishinaabe Cultural Center in Callaway markets healthy food alongside artists’ work (see profile below). The organic groceries are an offshoot of the Center’s Diabetes Project, aimed at changing poor eating habits that began with government commodity food programs. Art and health education go hand in hand at White Earth seasonal camps too. In the summer, the youth are at Berry Camp, in the fall, Wild Rice Camp. The Center contributes to Diabetes Days at the camps, teaching how foods like venison, bison, and wild rice are healthy to eat. Drummaking, quillwork, and jingle dress-making are also taught along with the significance of these hand-crafted items.

Generalizing about the intent of his own work, Robert Desjarlait summarizes what many Ojibwe artists are doing. “I have always looked at my art as part of the healing process. Our

image, you have to say what you want and do it quickly.”

When the Indian Education program ended, Premo moved to Duluth to work with his former boss to produce Native curricula and books. But he could not support his family on a truncated salary. He hustled for illustration work and landed one project at the Mille Lacs Grand Casino. Desperate for pay, he worked an arcade tech job for six years, during which time his wife died.

Finally, the Mille Lacs community rediscovered his talents as an artist. In 1996, he partnered with Cindy Goff to write and illustrate *A Hero’s Voice*. Fifth-grade teachers in all of Minnesota’s schools received this comic book, which shares the story of six Ojibwe leaders who shaped the history of the Mille Lacs band. Premo also helped convince the Mille Lacs Design Committee to commission Native Minnesotan artwork for hotel rooms and entryways. Many artists applied, and from these the Committee selected some of Premo’s work, as well as art by five other artists from the region.

In addition, Premo received commissions to create large-scale murals for the Casino, Grand Mukwa Theatre, the band’s Government

Center, and District 3 health clinic. Premo sometimes faces extreme time constraints—he once slept in a stairwell to finish a mural for the unveiling. For the Hinckley Fire Museum, he painted an old man’s survival story of the 1894 fire, where a young woman with children paddled across the lake to help out his family, taking them into her home and giving them food and moccasins. Although his funding from the State Arts Board only covered the cost of supplies, he raised the visibility of Natives’ experiences during the fire. At the time of the fire, the local community leaders failed to even include Indian casualty counts.

In the late 1990s, Premo ran a gallery, Premo Artworks, receiving support through entrepreneurship development, Small Business Development Program efforts at Mille Lacs. For two years, he showcased and marketed Minnesota Ojibwe and local artists’ work. To support the gallery, he designed logos and posters to help cover costs. But after two years, “political land mines” sunk the gallery.

When the gallery closed, Premo got a full-time salaried job as a graphic designer with the Band’s Small Business Development program. He creates logos and visual marketing materials for small business owners

around the reservation. Premo knows of no other reservation that employs one of its own artists as a designer.

In 2009, Premo won the national contest for the National Indian Education Association’s 40th Annual NIEA Pendleton Commemorative Blanket Design, deep blue with a geometric border in lighter blue, green, and yellow, with forty points circling the NIEA logo in the center. Premo’s artwork expressed strong meaning that was well thought out. Robert Cook, the NIEA President said of Premo’s entry: “He told our story with symbols and colors with such respect and conviction. We found that the most compelling” (www.niea.org/media/broadcasts_detail_html.php?id=357).

Premo wants to pursue his oil painting, have a one-man show someday, and paint more murals. He wonders if his lack of formal arts education and the resulting connections holds him back. He recently began making prints of his work and posting photos on martists.org. What would most help his work? “Time,” he says wistfully. “I need more time. Everyone does. And openness of people to the artists around them and their work.”

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healing is depicted in our values and beliefs about our mortality.” Designing his recent mural for Red Lake, commemorating a terrible school shooting, he notes, “Children are butterflies. So I am using this image on my mural.”

F. Geographic isolation and town/tribe relationships

The ability of Native artists to develop their work depends significantly on the physical, economic, and social character of the places where they live. The vast reach of Ojibwe reservations in Minnesota, their relative distance or proximity to large urban populations and tourists, and their unique landscapes demonstrate how places can shape the creative and financial possibilities for artists at different stages in their careers. Many of the artists we

interviewed have moved to large cities or nearby towns to pursue artistic training or work, resulting in experiences ranging from the dismissive to the sublime. Many move back toward their reservations as more established artists. Some have been born and raised in cities and have benefited from more abundant resources, both within their own communities and from non-Native institutions, though racism continues to thwart full access.

Many of the most prominent of Minnesota’s 20th century Ojibwe artists left their remote reservations for training, apprenticeship, and work opportunities but continued to weave tribal and environmental themes into their life-long work. Patrick DesJarlait left his Red Lake reservation to study in Phoenix on a New Deal Bureau of Indian Affairs scholarship. During World

Grand Portage: Three Centuries of Ojibwe Artists and Art Markets |

No Native community in Minnesota enjoys the physical beauty and historic significance of Grand Portage. Situated midway along the stunning North Shore escarpment, rising as much as 1700 feet above Lake Superior, Grand Portage was settled by a band of Ojibwe migrating from the east who decided to stay while their relatives moved on, following prophecies and dreams, to places where the food mahnomi (wild rice) grows on water (Fond du Lac, Nett Lake). From the 17th to the early 19th centuries, the small harbor was a bustling fur trade transshipment point, with Ojibwe people playing an essential role in its development. Grand Portage Band historians worked for decades to get the US Park Service to understand that the fur trade would not have succeeded without Native work and knowledge. Grand Portage Ojibwe acted as arbitrators and middlemen among the Dakota and Europeans, including the company owners and managers (French, later English), rough Montreal “pork eaters” (seasonal employees who paddled furs and supplies between Grand Portage and Montreal), and teams of voyageurs bringing the valuable hides from the interior northwest of the trading site. Ojibwe crafts and artisanship were also crucial: Grand Portage Indians fashioned canoes, moccasins, baskets, and other tools needed by the companies. Their relatives trapped, guided, labored, and cooked for the unskilled or

unwilling Europeans (Gilman, 1992; Grand Portage Heritage Center, 2008).

Grand Portage with its rugged physical beauty and service as an east/west and north/south crossroads might have developed a tourist draw akin to Santa Fe’s in the American southwest. But it has been the victim of geopolitics. After the American colonies were separated from British North America in 1793, an invisible border line was laid down through rugged forest just five miles north of Grand Portage, dividing Canada from the US. In 1802, the Northwest Fur Company, controlled by British merchants out of Montreal, relocated to Thunder Bay, 43 miles to the northeast, displacing the fur trade economy of Grand Portage. The border has been an enduring suppressant of tourism along a photogenic coastline that could easily have become an international trade and friendship corridor.

In the 20th century, the Grand Portage Band planned for economic development through tourism and craftwork, activities consonant with their desire for continued independence. Women played a lead role in creating and maintaining the Band’s culture, craft, and artwork. In the early 1990s, with their handiwork, they would meet tourists at the dock disembarking from steamers en route to Thunder Bay or Duluth. In 1929, when US Highway 61 was built from Duluth up into Canada, Ojibwe artists set up stands

for selling arts and crafts (called “tourist souvenirs” in the guide books of the time) through the reservation. Grand Portage artists revived the stands in the 1960s when the highway was realigned closer to Grand Portage village.

Contemporary Grand Portage artists remember their parents and grandparents selling work in this fashion. One recalls how trinkets were laid out along the roadside tables and that knowledgeable collectors would know to ask to see the good stuff in the back. Because of the Band’s interest in craft and art sales, they welcomed programs like the 1930’s WPA that brought additional resources to the community. When the Grand Portage Monument was created in 1958, the Band negotiated a clause in its agreement with the federal government that preserves the Band’s right to make and sell arts and craftwork at the Monument. Markets for Grand Portage Ojibwe work would be much stronger today if it were not for the border. It divided Ojibwe bands and families from each other, subjecting them to different laws, policies, and forms of dispossession on the two sides of the international boundary. Canadian collectors and governments have been more attentive patrons for Ojibwe visual artists, both in the past and present, than in the US. Ojibwe artists Norval Morrisseau and Roy Thomas, both from Ontario towns more remote than

War II, he worked as an art director in a Japanese internment camp in the Arizona desert and then for three years in the Navy's Visual Aids Department in San Diego before returning to a career in commercial art and only late in life, full time artwork in the Twin Cities (Anthes, 2006; Desjarlait, 1995; Williams, 1975). George Morrison left his Grand Portage/Grand Marais childhood to study art in Minneapolis, moved to New York in 1943, spent a year in Europe, and taught full time at the Rhode Island School of Design in the 1960s before returning to the University of Minnesota in 1970 and spending the final decades of his art-making at his Lake Superior shoreline home on the Grand Portage reservation (Morrison, 1998). Carl Gawboy left his Nett Lake reservation for training at the University of Minnesota

Duluth and the University of Montana before settling back near Ely and ultimately the lower North Shore of Lake Superior.

Each Ojibwe reservation/band in Minnesota is distinctive, and each has its own unique history with nearby Euro-American towns. Many have a long though checkered history of selling art and craftwork to tourists, as Minnesota's lake country and North Shore have been vacation sites for more than a century. During this time, artists have been creating artwork on the Grand Portage reservation for their own functional, decorative, and ceremonial purposes and for sale to tourists (see historic profile). Limited marketing opportunities for Grand Portage artists in nearby Grand Marais, an important North Shore tourist town and art colony, illustrate the arts training, networking, and

Grand Portage, exhibited and sold their work in Toronto galleries and Canadian museums from the early 1960s on (Stevens, 2007; Hill, 2006). Their Minnesota counterparts, except for the abstract modernist George Morrison, enjoyed no such visibility.

Unlike most other Ojibwe tribes and bands in Minnesota, Grand Portage Indians were never displaced from their land or forced onto reservations elsewhere. Over the centuries, their lands and rights were curtailed and violated, and they were subject to the same genocidal and assimilationist practices as their counterparts elsewhere in Minnesota: the allotment system with its land and timber-grabbing, boarding schools that sought to erase their culture and language, and missionaries attempting to displace Native spiritual practices with Christianity. However, their anchoring on traditional lands has helped them maintain continuity in cultural and artistic practices, including access to the craft materials from nature and to sacred places like the Little Spirit Cedar or Witch Tree, as named by visiting non-native artist Dewy Albinson.

These practices were handed down from fathers and mothers to their children, as Marcie McIntire recounts of her beadwork and Bob SwanSon recalls of his mother's craft, beadwork, and poetry. Often this work had ceremonial, utilitarian, and decorative purposes and served mainly people within

the Band. One extraordinary practice at Grand Portage involved women's making of hooked rugs out of recycled materials. "Literally all of the women at the time made these rugs, bearing both traditional and more modern motifs. They were not sold much, but used as rugs and later mainly as wall hangings," recounts folklorist and Grand Portage National Monument Superintendent Tm Cochrane. Tribal records, however, show that this work enjoyed some popularity with local and regional non-native collectors, and several artworks were commissioned.

Sometimes Grand Portage artists' work and sales were facilitated by outsider interest or inter-marriage that broadened their markets. For instance, Ojibwe visual artist Helen Chi-KeaWiss, married to white game warden John Linklater, made canoes, large cedar mats, and other Ojibwe crafts of extraordinary beauty and sold many of these to tourists in the 1920s and 30s. During the New Deal, the Grand Portage Trail was "rediscovered" by Dewey Albinson and Alvin Eastman, led there by Ojibwe Paul LeGarde. The Indian Division of the Civilian Conservation Corps, a young George Morrison among them, cleared the Trail and helped excavate fur trade buildings (The Grand Portage Guide, 2008: 9–11). Heightened Indian craft activity—canoes, beadwork, and weaving—accompanied this flurry of activity, supported in part by the WPA Artists program. Albinson, however, who

was the regional supervisor of the WPA crafts program, was disdainful and dismissive of the native tourist trade and craftwork.

Once the New Deal was displaced by World War II, federal government interest in contemporary Native artwork receded and was not picked up by State of Minnesota agencies like the Minnesota Historical Society, or, in the 1970s, the State Arts Board and its Arrowhead Regional Arts Council. But from the 1940s to the 1960s, St. Paul collector Karen Daniels Peterson mounted a sustained project to help Grand Portage artists become self-supporting, providing resources and markets for the baskets, birdhouses, bows and arrows, and rugs made by Alex LeSage, Mrs. Mary LeSage, and Raymond Duhaime (Grand Portage Heritage Center, 2008).

This brief retrospective of Grand Portage art-making and marketing reflects a broader regional experience. Native artists in the Leech Lake area experienced similar waxing and waning of interest in and support for the marketing of their work. No good history of the creation and distribution of Minnesota's Ojibwe artwork has been written, in contrast to accounts for Ontario's Native artists (Jasen, 1993), Northeastern US artists (Phillips, 1998) and many for the Southwest (e.g., Brody, 1976; Deitch, 1989; Moore, 2001; Parezo, 1990; Weigle, 1992; Wheat, 1998, summarized in Markusen, Rendon and Martinez, 2008).

V. Cultural, Spiritual, and Spatial Dimensions

marketing challenges on a relatively remote reservation given persistent racism in reservation-adjacent towns, a phenomenon encountered elsewhere in Minnesota as well.

Today, the Grand Portage Band is not large enough or wealthy enough to support its own artists financially. The border, especially with heightened immigration vigilance, still acts as an invisible wall curtailing markets to the north and east. With the Euro-American residential population thinly spread along the Upper North Shore, auto tourism is modest in volume. Over the years, the absence of local training, employment and marketing opportunities has meant that many younger Band members, artists included, have migrated to cities like Duluth and Minneapolis/St. Paul. See for example the profiles of resident Grand Portage artists Marcie McIntire, Travis Novitsky, and Bob SwanSon, and Grand Portage-enrolled artists now living elsewhere in Minnesota: Laura Youngbird and Susan Zimmerman.

Although it has the potential to do so, the increasing commitment of federal and state resources to the Grand Portage historic site has not altered prospects for local artists much to date. Grand Portage National Monument, co-managed by the National Park Service and the Grand Portage Band, can give preference in hiring to members of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe and Grand Portage Band members. But in practice, the interpretive staff is

largely non-Native, supervised by non-Native Park Service staff, while maintenance staff workers are tribal employees supervised by a native Park Service worker. The Monument offers a few seasonal opportunities for re-enactors, people who dress and act the part of historic figures in the recreated stockade and Indian Village where canoes are constructed and beadwork made, but by contemporary non-Natives. Because it is a true partnership, the new Grand Portage State Park, a unique collaboration between the State of Minnesota and the landowning Grand Portage Band, is doing better than this. It employs Band member and photographer Travis Novitsky as a ranger.

The Grand Portage Monument's new Heritage Center could serve as a marvelous venue for showcasing and selling Native work. It displays the works of North Shore artists Carl Gawboy, Marcie McIntire, and Travis Novitsky, though it is hard to find them in their upstairs location. But it also exhibits bark work and ceremonial pieces that are non-Native reproductions. Because they are not for sale, these do not violate the Federal Indian Arts and Crafts Board laws pertaining to labeling of native work. Park Service staff are not obliged to tell visitors that the work they are seeing is not Native-made unless they are asked. And despite the Band-initiated clause in the Monument agreement (see profile), Monument managers in 2004 issued a memo prohibiting "peddling on government

Josef Reiter |

Josef Reiter stands behind his table at the Grand Portage Pow Wow, talking to several people at once about his silver work, from tiny featherweight earrings with owls in silhouette, to heavier belt buckles and pendants, some in mixed media. Reiter aspired to be an artist as a child and successfully achieved his calling—creating and marketing his own distinctive jewelry.

Reiter, Anishinaabe from Isabel, Michigan, grew up in St. Paul foster homes. He developed his artistic gifts by trial and error, spending time at the library and experimenting with charcoals given to him by an aunt. By living in different foster homes, Reiter gained broad perspectives at an early age. "It makes you stronger," he says.

At 21, when Reiter exhibited watercolors and acrylics in Oregon, a woman asked to barter her jewelry for his painting. Reiter decided to try his hand at making jewelry, pursuing a traditional apprenticeship at

Bluebird Silverworks. He hitchhiked to the southwest, and for three years, he traded labor for room, board, and experience and "learned everything."

Returning to St. Paul in 1976, Reiter worked at and later owned Blue Water Indian Arts, an arts and frame shop in a downtown skyway. He started out doing custom work displayed in one section of the store's window. "The market was good there, but I had no distinctive style. I was doing what people wanted done. I was floundering." At an LCO powwow, he realized the store sapped his energy from what he loved most—creating jewelry. "I was sitting at the powwow, and an eagle shadow flew across the table. I thought I can cut this out, this shadow, like a pictograph, a petroglyph. That became my first trademark."

Subsequently, Reiter learned to market his work. He focuses on galleries and museums and avoids art fairs. He makes cold calls, sends



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out brochures, maintains a website, and tries to get his work into catalogues. He sells his work all over the world, including Australia

property without proper permits/permission,” aimed at Indian efforts to sell crafts to park employees.

For the most part, resident artists rely on themselves, tribal support, intermittent teaching gigs, jobs in arts-related occupations such as tribal museum work, and resources such as use of community space for galleries and performances. Artists travel to lecture, present, market, and make income from their work. Portage Band, a four-man country western group, performs mainly as a community service and has one or two monthly paid gigs on the reservation or in the Grand Marais area. Opportunities to perform, display and sell work in the Grand Portage Lodge and Casino are quite limited, though the private owner of the Lodge gift shop is supportive of local artists when they approach him with work for sale, often buying it for resale, and the Lodge has purchased framed photos by Travis Novitsky for their rooms and lobby.

The nearby arts haven of Grand Marais has not welcomed and celebrated Ojibwe artists the way that Santa Fe has for its Pueblo, Navajo and Hopi artist neighbors. Grand Marais, the only sizeable North Shore city between Duluth and Thunder Bay, hosts the vintage and expanding Grand Marais Arts Colony (Markusen and Johnson, 2006), the Sivertson Gallery, and the North House Folk School, major magnets for artists, arts lovers,

and students from afar. The town of 1500 year-round residents also supports the Grand Marais Playhouse, North Shore Music Association, and other galleries. But as one interviewee put it, “There is a long-standing mindset in Grand Marais that supports and encourages non-inclusion of local native artists and crafts people, either on purpose or by virtue of narrow focus.”

Sivertson’s Gallery, the town’s most renowned, consists of a series of spacious rooms dominated by large landscape photographs and paintings. Asked whether the Gallery exhibits and sells the work of Grand Portage artists, the buyer said no, for several reasons: “1) we don’t know about them; 2) we don’t have enough room; 3) we already have long-standing commitments to other artists; and 4) ‘they’ aren’t good business people—they don’t approach us.” This last charge conflicts with the accounts of Grand Portage artists who have tried. The Gallery carries Canadian Ojibwe artist Roy Thomas’ paintings, because Thomas was good at bringing in his work and showing it to the buyers, and his widow has continued to work with them. Sivertson’s also displays and sells the work of Inuit soapstone sculptors, in part because the Canadian government has helped to develop this market. In 2000, the Gallery mounted a show on Woodland Indian Art at the Johnson Heritage Post, including Native artists from all over, mainly Canadian.

and Ireland. After 27 years, he often sees people wearing his jewelry.

Reiter reaches customers most effectively through museum gift shops. He began figuring out how to get his work into high-end museum shops 20 years ago, after the Smithsonian commissioned jewelry from him. He joined the Museum Shop Association, at \$250 a year, and attends their two annual conferences. There he pitches his work to hundreds of buyers who write orders as large as \$10,000. Reiter developed a popular Sacajawea line that he sold to interpretive centers from St. Louis to Astoria, reaching these outlets with his own mailing. He markets distinctive sets of designs to different types of shops, including Native American and fine arts museums.

Reiter is selective about Indian markets and powwows. He prefers traditional powwows to casino or competition powwows. What he loves about all powwows is the people, “It’s the mood, the energy, it’s the people, love meeting

people, and getting feedback.” He views some casino and competition powwows as more corporate and money-driven, rather than arts or culturally driven. However, the Texas and Denver Indian markets, powwows at Grand Portage, Shakopee, Mankato, and Prairie Island, and Indian Summer in Milwaukee make his cut. His favorite is Grand Portage, “The most beautiful place on earth, with fog blowing into the tipi at night, people singing the 49 songs, meteor showers, and northern lights. It touches my soul.” In general, Reiter wishes powwows would reduce their high exhibiting fees. Reiter can see the point of the fee if vendors are selling other people’s work. “But they shouldn’t charge that to people who are only selling their own work.”

Reiter creates his jewelry at home. His workspace is what would otherwise be a dining room, a lovely space with stained glass windows in the Como Park area of St. Paul. Over the years, he has taken on

apprentices, providing their expenses, room and board, and lessons, while they help him create pieces. His son, Dominic, currently apprentices. He encourages them to make their own designs, to “close your eyes and create what you see.” Former apprentices form his best artistic network.

In his work, Reiter uses imagery respectfully and tries to use earth-friendly chemicals. Many Native people use his jewelry for regalia and ask him to make special things, like memory pieces or tribal logos.

Reiter selects imagery that evokes emotions. He feels, “I am not selling my Indianness. At first, I thought being a Native artist would be rewarding in and of itself. But as the years go by and you want to expand to other markets, you will probably run into difficulties as a Native artist. I shy away from presenting myself as Native artist. I want to be the ‘new Indian jewelry,’ but I make art for art not because I’m Indian.”

V. Cultural, Spiritual, and Spatial Dimensions

Grand Marais' North House Folk School, founded in 1997 by local Grand Marais citizens and volunteers, has among its five stated goals to "promote and preserve the knowledge, skills, crafts, and stories of the past and present" and "foster the concept of inter-generational learning" (North House Folk School, 2007b). The School mounts courses, festivals, and programs that by 2005 involved over 8600 people from 31 states and three foreign countries. Scandinavian traditions are featured on their website. Yet the courses cover arts and crafts originating with and practiced by Native Americans, such as canoe making, moose-hide and canvas mukluk making, birchbark basketry, and beadwork. All are taught by non-Natives. In the summer of 2008, no contemporary Ojibwe people were involved in teaching or staffing the School's programming, though the School hosts Inuit sculptors every winter to demonstrate their soapstone carvings, and an Iroquois artist, Mike Benedict, occasionally is brought in to teach basketry. Non-Native school staffer Eric Simula works at the Grand

Portage Monument each summer making canoes. The School has recently published a book, *Celebrating Birch: The Lore, Art, and Craft of an Ancient Tree*, which features the collective efforts and talents of over twenty artisans, none of them Native (North House Folk School, 2007a). Just two pages out of 192 recount the traditional spiritual meaning of birch "courtesy of the Grand Portage Band of Minnesota Ojibwe."

A few arts businesses and organizations in Grand Marais include Ojibwe artists' work in their exhibits and marketing. Drury Lane Book, operating out of the former Sivertson's Gallery space, includes a prominent floor-to-ceiling collection of Native American writing with excellent Minnesotan and Ojibwe coverage, present and past. The bookstore is owned by writer Joan Drury who formerly ran Norcroft, a retreat for women that welcomed Native writers. The Johnson Heritage Post mounts eight exhibitions a year and often includes Native art, including Marcie McIntire's and Travis Novitsky's work.

Jeff Savage |

When asked to describe his art form, Jeff Savage says he really likes rocks and that he is an artist for Indians. He makes pipes, eastern-style ones with wooden twirled stems and fancy, ornate pipes made out of pipestone that he quarries himself. For his community he creates ceremonial items like birch bark food dishes, spoons, and tobacco baskets. He sculpts. His sculpture at the headwaters of the Mississippi features turtles and a woman's head. He explains woman is the protector of water and the sculpture is his interpretation of the site.

Savage also directs the Fond du Lac Cultural Center and Museum, a position he enjoys. The museum has limited space and is completely funded by the Tribal Council. At the museum people often approach Savage to sell family heirlooms, like arrowheads or dance regalia. Savage sometimes buys to help people out, even though the items often have no real monetary value.

Savage considered himself an artist, even as a child, and learned by doing. Every year growing up, he asked for ten boxes of modeling clay for Christmas, but feels his family mostly tolerated his artistic drive. He watched his elders do birch bark work and whittle. He learned to dig his own clay. He taught himself



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to carve by looking at the sculptors' tool catalogue. He figured out how to carve pipes by looking at them. He did take Intro to Art for two quarters at UMD, and he wanted to attend workshops and summer sculpture institutes as a young husband and father, but his family did not want him gone for lengths of time.

Savage committed to being a professional artist at age 21, thinking to himself, "You are

good at art, you might as well pursue that" and came to specialize in pipes. In 1976 he became a demonstrator at Pipestone National Monument and started quarrying seriously. He then relocated to Phoenix with his family for two years and did well as an artist, but he decided he didn't want his kids to be urban Indians, so they moved back north. He now jokes that he would love to move to where it

McIntire, a nationally-known Ojibwe beadworker, has made overtures to arts venue in Grand Marais. She is a charter member of the Northwoods Fiber Guild, founded in 1988 and whose Holiday Show she joins each December. In the summertime, she participates in the Saturday farm and craft market in Grand Marais. In the fall of 2007, her Ningii-Ozhitoomin Ojibwe Art Gallery was included in the *Crossing Borders* North Shore Autumn Studios Tour and Sale. Overall, however, it is perplexing that McIntire and other Grand Portage artists' works are better known and valued beyond Grand Marais than locally. In the summer/fall of 2009, the Duluth Art Institute mounted a two-person show with McIntire's beadwork, something that no venue in Grand Marais has offered her to date.

G. Addressing non-Native culture

The task of interpreting Native culture, history and contemporary life to a larger world is an extra burden for Ojibwe artists. Because

racism is so robust and unchallenged, some Native artists feel that their work must in part address the larger community. They use their paintings, mosaics, lyrics, performance, and writing to challenge stereotypes, educate the larger society about the rich spiritual and environmental life of contemporary Indians, and press the case for political causes like Indian sovereignty and treaty rights, land restitution, the rewriting of textbooks, and compensation for the rooting of Indian poverty in racism and dispossession. This responsibility is added to their mission of preserving, revitalizing, and modernizing their culture for their own community.

Some Ojibwe artists address racism by tackling stereotypes head on and bringing forward the history of genocide, displacement, and manipulation by government agents. Jim Denomie and David Bradley use satire in their paintings of modern Indians to underscore white caricatures. Some use contemporary techniques to explore exploitation, like Laura Youngbird's

is warm and carve rocks 365 days a year.

Savage thinks some of the top Indian artists are just good marketers, and he's worked on learning the business side of art without the benefit of formal training. When Savage first started selling art, he made trinkets to sell alongside the finer pieces, but then concentrated on finer work when he realized it sold better. Savage markets through his website and receives referrals from the Minnesota State Arts Board's Percent for Art in Public Spaces registry. Savage doesn't track where his work sells, so he is unaware if people collect it. He views casinos, hotels, and Indians at powwows as unlikely customer prospects, the latter because Indians at powwows lack the money to buy. He also finds that although local residents in Cloquet can afford his work, they prefer stereotypical "end of the trail" Indian art or mallards, loons, and moose. He receives some commissions locally, but finds them challenging because in his experience the entire financial burden falls on the artist. He sometimes applies for artist grants, but will not reapply once rejected.

Savage has shown work at Ancient Traders in Minneapolis, but some Native galleries refuse to show pipestone work, which he

views as censorship. Savage also experiences frustrations with gallery owners who don't know how rare and expensive his materials are. Galleries ask to see his work, but want to buy way under his prices, or they ask him to make trinkets. Savage says, "There is an insensitivity and ignorance that I find insulting. They just don't know the cost and work of the pieces."

Savage dislikes being asked, "How long did it take you to make that?" because his work requires gathering materials, learning skills. He says, "90% of the work is done in my head, because I am taking orders from higher authorities." He gathers most of his materials outdoors—sweetgrass, sumac, cedar, birch bark, and pipestone. For rice knockers, he searches for cedar without knots. Rising costs of the materials he purchases limit how much he produces; for instance alabaster more than doubled in price. He creates following seasonal constraints. In the summer he focuses on birch bark and sculpture. In the winter, he creates sweetgrass baskets or two-dimensional birch bark work. He carves using black, red, or white pipestone, depending on different requests. He can't make big pieces from red pipestone, so his large pieces use alabaster

and soapstone. He works at home, either at the kitchen table, or in a large greenhouse.

Savage doesn't consider himself an activist, but serves his community by creating beautiful things, teaching, and mentoring. He likes creating art people can touch, like the sculpture at the Headwaters. Savage passes his artistic knowledge to his family and mentors artists like Dave Marley, a wood burner. He offers weeklong soapstone workshops at schools, where he notices the troublemakers excel. "Young people like to work with their hands so I give them a rock and a file." Savage also sits on the board at the Minnesota Historical Society.

Savage has specific ideas for changes that could benefit Native artists locally and nationally. He would like to see the Mille Lacs tribe collect tribal members' art. He longs for a successful Native art gallery in the area through which he could work. He wishes Native people controlled the large Indian art markets, so wealthy, non-Native dealers, collectors and curators would have less power to influence art trends. In the meantime, Savage works more floral images into his sculptures, trying to develop a southern Lake Superior style. He hopes it will become an identifiable Ojibwe art form.

V. Cultural, Spiritual, and Spatial Dimensions

collages of old photographs that address the humiliation of children forced to wear western clothing and abandon their language and customs. Writers like Louise Erdrich and David Treuer write novels skilled in contemporary literary voice that explore the ravages of historical aggression by whites, novels animated by Native experience with European-introduced diseases and alcohol, white timber company agents, priests, soldiers, settlers, and relocation to urban inner cities. Keith Secola's songs, especially his Fry Bread, enumerate the failed and devastating Bureau of Indian Affairs efforts to dispossess, marginalize, and assimilate Native people. Carl Gawboy, like Patrick DesJarlait earlier, depicts Ojibwe people clothed and in modern dress, to counter the "naked Native" paintings of 19th century Anglo-American and the carrying forward of these stereotypes in American film and TV.

Native artists also speak to the problem of being lumped together with other peoples of color. They are not immigrants and were not, in the upper Midwest, slaves, but are the First Americans, the original custodians of the land, initially generous to those who came from Europe. Native contemporary issues

and experiences are very different from other peoples of color. No other group in Minnesota was hunted down, killed, impounded on reservations, and the subject of such oppressive manipulation of their cultures and economic livelihoods.

Yet in cities today, where Indians are concentrated in inner districts with many other minorities, many Ojibwe artists feel an affinity with their neighbors and seek ways of sharing with them an understanding of Native heritage, culture, and struggles. Robert DesJarlait talks about working in the Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis, creating a Pathway at Chicago and Franklin. He worked with Rafala Green, an African-American artist, who started the corner public art project with other artists of color. "I learned a lot from Rafala about community art," says DesJarlait. "Other Indian artists would ask me, 'Why are you doing it?' I said, 'Because kids are involved.'" For DesJarlait, the project was an opportunity to teach kids of all colors about Native art forms like pictographs. "It is a way to keep our art forms present." DesJarlait explains that it is important to do this work, because the Phillips community is more and more diverse. "We have people from countries where the US is

Anton Treuer

Anton Treuer passionately promotes the Ojibwe language as a scholar, writer, and teacher. His 2001 book, *Living Our Language: Ojibwe Tales & Oral Histories*, compiles 57 tales collected from Anishinaabe elders, each told in Ojibwe with English translation on facing pages. From individual and communal histories

to humorous reminiscences, the stories preserve the language, as well as content. Treuer teaches at Bemidji State University and actively supports Ojibwe immersion schools across the region.

On the Leech Lake reservation not far from his current home, Treuer's family raised him to hear the language, his mother often hauling the whole family to ceremonies. He enrolled at Princeton after high school, eager to get out of town, but he returned after his studies, keen to learn more about Ojibwe history, language, and culture. He



finished his education at the University of Minnesota, where he studied with noted historians, linguists, and Ojibwe language instructors: Jean O'Brien (White Earth), Brenda Child (Red Lake), John Nichols who transcribed and edited Maude Kegg's *Portage Lake Memoirs*, and Dennis Jones (Niccikousemenecaning First Nation, Ontario). Treuer took

down oral histories of elders, some speaking only Ojibwe. Becoming fluent through Ojibwe immersion courses, Treuer committed his academic career to this work.

"My interest in language is not simply academic," says Treuer. I have deep respect for and am rooted in our ceremonial life, as well." Treuer serves as head singer on one of the ceremonial drums at White Earth. "Ojibwe ceremonial life is so rich and detailed. It's hard for people to just take lessons on the weekend. We have six-hour long stories, hundreds of songs. This is rare and precious knowledge." Ceremonial drums

are old and used only for this purpose. There are different beats: a syncopated beat, a beat for singing. There are complicated song repertoires, sung in a sequence. "And a lot of making up of our own music."

Treuer differentiates this activity from powwows, "Powwows are newer, more of a pageant, a social experience," he says. Unlike powwows, ceremonies are not for display to outsiders. Ojibwe ceremonial life is more secret, explains Treuer. "It is easy to demonstrate powwow in schools, but the other stuff is more touchy. Midiwiwin. These things are part of initiation. They are open to all people of all ages and genders who are Ojibwe. We believe the Great Spirit created diversity. We do not proselytize like fundamentalist religions. It's our way."

Audiences warmly received Treuer's book, *Living our Language*. The first run sold out and paid for itself. Treuer credits the Minnesota Historical Society Press for "getting it out there in front of a lot of local eyes" and keeping the book in print. Treuer's new research and writing projects include a study of Bagone-giizhig, a 19th century treaty negotiator whose

over there involved in a war. They don't know anything about American Indians. You can find artists in these groups," he says, suggesting that artists of color work together to bridge divisions among their communities.

Artists who take up the burden of trying to communicate to larger constituencies are often disappointed by target audience indifference and their own community's disapprobation. Marcie Rendon wrote a play with Native characters that had its first reading by a white suburban children's theatre group. She was distressed to find that the child actors could not interpret the Native roles in a manner that genuinely conveyed her text. Sarah Agaton Howes recounts how after being invited to perform her poetry and spoken work at a Duluth-area fundraiser, she was asked to "not offend the white people." Lyz Jaakola also experiences resistance, especially from older people in her community, to the idea that Native music and performance should be addressed to or shared with external communities.

Native artists must also face a tendency for white culture to dismiss their artistic forms and content as marginal. Georgia Wettlin-Larsen, director of the First Nations Composer

Initiative, notes that the music of Anglo-European culture is quite specialized, expressing nationalism, individualism, and other culturally-specific traits. "Native American music," she points out, "comes from indigenous emotional and philosophical points of view. Native people are expressing their tribal nation," just as European-Americans celebrate, in patriotic music and otherwise, their own version of America. "We've discussed what is our music, versus what outsiders think is our music," Georgia says. "Unless it's a Native music store, our music is generally placed in 'world music' bins, not a distinction that we recognize. Our cultural definition should be acceptable." Majoritarian views of Native culture, which we continually encountered among gatekeepers and others whom we interviewed in all artistic disciplines, make the burden for Native artists that much heavier.

life Treuer uses to explore historical changes in Indian leadership. He is also working on a grammar book for the Ojibwe language and a murder mystery structured around the removal of Ojibwe to White Earth reservation. Treuer also edits the bi-lingual *Oshkaabewis Native Journal*.

Treuer struggled convincing publishers that there is a viable market for this work. "Not that many organizations are really interested in it." The University of Minnesota Press, the Minnesota Historical Society Press, and Canadian publishers now compete in this field, but only after the demonstrated successes of Kegg's *Portage Lake Memoirs* and Nichols and Nyholm's *Concise Dictionary of the Ojibwe Language*.

Finding time to write also challenges Treuer. He teaches three courses each semester and has seven children, for whom he has been a single father for some time. He spends two months each summer in ceremony, time that most academics devote to research. Fortunately, he has won fellowship support from state and national funders, enabling an early sabbatical and a year off.

At Bemidji, Treuer teaches courses in Ojibwe language, history, and culture that attract Native and non-Native students alike. "I love that I get to serve a higher purpose with preservation and revitalization of the language." He also lectures on his published work and language revitalization at universities, tribal gatherings, conferences, and high schools.

Despite burgeoning interest in Ojibwe, immersion schools face challenges finding teachers and curricular material. Although an estimated ten percent of Minnesota Ojibwe are fluent, few are interested in undergoing a five-year certification process. "The Native speakers don't have degrees, and the people with degrees don't speak the language." Teachers, in turn, struggle to provide Ojibwe curricula. "Some teachers," he rues, "take their English textbooks, print out the Ojibwe words, and paste them over the English." Native support for immersion schools continues to grow. "Some fluent elders opposed these schools in the beginning. But when all the kids passed their tests easily in both English and Ojibwe, views changed."

Treuer believes that raising awareness in the general population and expanded funding are keys to supporting Native writers and speakers. "Native people are an invisible minority, and our issues invisible, to most. Because of the casinos, Non-Natives think, 'They are rich, why don't they fix their problems themselves?' 75% support English-only laws. Do they really fear de-Anglicization of America?" He believes that funding could have a profound effect on political support for language revitalization initiatives.

In addition to support for individual Ojibwe writers, organizations, and publications, Treuer would like to see funding increased for immersion schools and for language teacher training. Treuer supports the Minnesota Humanities Commission's teacher training for many groups, including Hmong and Somali, and would like racial sensitivity training extended to more teachers. In making the case for Ojibwe language, he cites the success of Maori, who pair young children in daycare with Maori-speaking elders and now are 100% Native speakers.

Paula White |

Leech Lake member Paula White creates brilliant star quilts, each a masterpiece, each unique. Because of their originality, extraordinary stitching, and unusual colors, many exhibitors chose her quilts over competitors! The National Museum of the American Indian in New York City displays White's work, and it graces a Cass Lake Hospital CEO's office walls.

Star quilts are devilishly difficult to construct, requiring many hours. White uses wild and free-flowing shapes in the quilting stage, adding dimensionality. And she uses black in her quilts, unconventional for its association with death. White feels black acknowledges pain and suffering as a part of life. It complements the bright yellows, reds, and blues that often comprise her stars.

White, also a birch-bark and bead worker, learned her skills from her mother and grandma. They sold to summer people at their cabins in the lake-rich region and to tourists at gas stations and resorts. Her mother took her to powwows as far away as Nebraska, where the beautiful beadwork stunned White. She recalls, "You had to use your own money to get there, and though sometimes they would feed you, we always took our own lunch."

As a contest dancer at Turtle Mountain, White won a star quilt and became fascinated with it. "It started to get closer and closer and into my head and my heart, mind, body, and soul. I used that quilt. I wrapped myself in it." Her grandmother knew the secret of making star quilts, but waited to share it until someone was ready. White found the shapes strange and had to use geometry and math to create angles and diamonds out of cloth. At first, she just drew patterns, telling herself she would make one someday. Then came a period of sewing, ripping apart, and sewing again and pretty soon, she had this awesome quilt.

White loves quilting and learns something new every time, as with her birch-bark and bead work. She works at home, moving everything out of her living room, leaving only the TV and couch. Then she sews intensively, putting the quilt on a frame with chairs for the four corners. "Here I feel safe, and I can let it set when I'm not working on it."

White's makes her living through her artwork. She successfully exhibits and sells her work to major institutions like the



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Heard Museum in Arizona and the National Museum. She recently won "Best of Show" in Bemidji State's Art Expo and sold the award quilt for \$3000. When Michigan State University organized a touring New York National Museum of the American Indian exhibit, they chose White as one of 25 Native quilters from the many who responded to their call. The exhibit's companion book, *To Honor and Comfort*, profiles White and her quilts (Michigan State Museum et al, 1997). For a public television documentary, White collaborated on a quilt with other Native artists, each creating one block. Such visibility continues to generate calls.

However, institutional sales are not enough. White's soft voice alters when recalling other doors closed to her. Managers of casinos and gift shops, Native and non-Native, have turned her away, saying, "How are we going to clean it," "We already have one," or "Where would we put it?" She believes casinos often hire people who don't recognize quality work and that other fabric artists claim work is hand-quilted when it's not, which ruins the market.

White currently sells with Lucy Kjar, a HoChunk artist, through Kjar's Fargo beadwork shop and at powwows. Lucy, who calls White her teacher, buys anything White can make. "She gives me a better price than I expect and sells it, too! It's better than pounding the pavement. Now I can just stay home and work."

White does not advertise beyond this marketing relationship, but relies on people coming to her. People ask her to make quilts for raffles, wakes, and funerals, but often balk

at her prices. Her quilts require weeks to make, and she often doesn't know if or when she will be paid. She can't afford to go without income for a month or more while making a quilt.

Sometimes she wishes for more demand. She burned out only twice in her artistic life. "Once, after working on cloth for four months straight, I just went off in my car for four months straight and lived on the streets in Minneapolis," she laughs. She regrets her high profile came only after thirty years of work. "Why not when I was young and strong?"

White has taught quilting at Leech Lake Tribal College and has given workshops in community centers in Fargo, White Earth, Duluth, and Superior. People tell her they wish they could do this. "I tell them, you'll probably starve if you try to do this as a living. You have to do this all your life, not overnight, and you have to have it in your heart." These days, she worries, only older quilters create fine work—younger people don't have time because they are so caught up in the modern world.

White's bad tendonitis in her forearms now slows her down. Quilting requires strenuously pushing the needle up or down against something. She also faces continual scarcity of time and money. But, when her artist friend Melvin Losh and her sister praise her work, she keeps going. "He sees what I'm doing and says, 'Oh my god!' And my sister says, 'Oh wow!'" She most wishes for more time and space and less stress. "I'm tired. I just want to do my work," she says, but adds, "You have no idea the designs I have in my head!"

VI. Gatekeepers: Suppliers of Space, Resources, Markets

Native American artists turn to diverse organizations and venues for opportunities to create, learn, fund their work in development, and reach paying markets. Sometimes their experiences are discouraging, but in other cases, unusual connections are made or their own cooperative and networking efforts pay off. In this section, we review the insights from artists and twenty or more managers of space and resources about what seems to have worked and not worked to date. We showcase some best practices—pioneering individuals and managers, Native and non-Native, who purchase, present, exhibit, and fund Native work. The insights from these inform the recommendations in the following section.

A. Casinos as marketing, commissioning, and presentation venues

Native American casinos, which have mushroomed over the past two decades, have changed the economic development landscape for their communities. Some bands have developed diversified businesses and educational and social service enterprises from their casino earnings, though the experience varies by location of casinos (and thus access to tourists) and size of the reservation population. In our travels to all of the larger reservations in the state, we found that resident artists were relatively dissatisfied with the extent to which their tribal governments and casino managers incorporate Ojibwe artwork into their building design and décor, offer opportunities to sell quality work in casino gift shops, and give Native musicians and actors a chance to perform in their events centers.

Best practice honors at incorporating Native work in their casino and hotel complexes goes to Mille Lacs Band, which commissioned Steve Premo's paintings and murals for its casino common spaces and held a competition for Native work to decorate hotel rooms, described above and in the Premo profile. The newer and smaller Grand Portage Casino/Hotel has recently purchased large landscape photos by Travis Novitsky for its hotel rooms. But by and large, Minnesota's Ojibwe casinos offer their patrons, including many of their own members, either bland landscapes and commercial art (often made on assembly lines in China) or a conspicuous absence of any artwork at all on their ample walls and hallways. One casino manager explained how this happens: "The buildings' developers go to a purchasing agent

who hires decorators to come in and "do" the space. Very few put a priority on our art."

Casino gift shops remain a poor place to shop for regional Native work. Many carry cheap, unattributed reproductions of Native work, some brought all the way from China: dreamcatchers, for instance. Or plastic "Indian" dolls. The bulk of merchandise for sale is not "Indian" at all in character. Best practice we found at White Earth's Shooting Star Gift Shop in Mahanomen, and their experience suggests that shunning local artists work is a mistake.

Managed by Jeannette Bray, the Shooting Star's gift shop sits on a spacious corridor between the hotel and the casino floor. On either side of its entrance are two large, all glass, floor to ceiling cases that display only fine, Native-made work, almost all of it one-of-kind pieces by artists on the reservation or surrounding region. Inside the shop are the typical mass produced knick-knacks at low prices that tourists often like to buy, but it is the Native work that draws people into the shop.

Artists approach the shop rather than vice-versa. Bray purchases work outright, limiting the total to \$250 per purchase and mainly from artists within 70–75 miles. When artwork sells well, she calls up and asks for more. Artist price their own work, understanding that the shop adds a mark-up of 50%, some for funding promos that highlight the artwork. Among the items displayed beautifully in the cases are Clyde Estey's black ash baskets, John Ahles' ribbon shirts, Dan Neisen's turtle rattles, arrows with quivers, and knives, and beadwork by Janet Oshkinowe, Violet Cloud, and Linda Smuta. Bray wants to show customers that the work of the tribe's own artists is better than that made in China, "That it is one of a kind, something you can't find elsewhere." She aims to make this local artwork the gift shop's major draw, its specialty.

Bray emphasizes that the gift shop's willingness to buy and showcase Native work is an explicit tribal policy. "One of our purposes in the casino is to promote the crafts and artists in our area, raising their visibility. It's part of our community service and is one of our stated goals, written into our policies." She believes the casino should provide the band's own artists opportunities to show their work, especially when there are few other outlets on the reservation. Her CFO's have backed her up on this, sometimes buying the work themselves and occasionally approving a larger purchase.

Who buys Native artists' work at the gift shop? A mix of customers, reports Bray. Non-natives account for a large share of purchases, including headliner performing artists and their crews. Bray recalls how Crystal Gale bought a large number

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of the hand-made artwork when she came to sing at Shooting Star. Non-Native wives are good customers, too. "Some women come in with husbands who gamble, but they don't. They come in for one to two hours and love it. And usually they do buy something." Native customers also buy local artists' work. Ribbon shirts, for instance, are purchased mainly by Natives for ceremonies and powwows and sell well between May and October. Since employees are responsible for 1/3 to 1/2 of sales, the shop stays open late so that casino workers can come in and look around. They also try to keep Native items at prices that people in the area can afford. The gift shop turns a profit for the casino, which Bray says is unusual for Minnesota casino gift shops. In July of 2008, 20% of their revenues came from Native arts and crafts. Bray believes that Shooting Star's experience proves that Native and non-Native patrons alike will buy high quality, one-of-a-kind artist-made work if it is well displayed and affordable.

To date, few Ojibwe casinos in Minnesota have booked Native performers at their casinos. Even well-known recording and touring artist Keith Secola rarely has the opportunity to

play at Minnesota casinos. In the period from June of 2008 to 2009, among dozens of gigs, Secola performed in Spokane, Albuquerque, New York, Florida, and Croatia, and the DC-area American Indian Inaugural Ball, but only one June weekend at Mahnomen's Shooting Star and one August weekend at Grand Portage Casino. At the latter, tribal leaders have insisted that he be featured—though the casino is managed by an outside company, it is overseen by a council of members of the tribe. Shooting Star's new manager, Eugene "Bugger McArthur," former White Earth Tribal Chair, has a bold vision for more community-oriented performance at the casino, including a children's theatre and other cultural events, and hopes to book more Native talent.

B. Tribal spaces that purchase and showcase artists' work

Native bands and tribes have continually created and organized events at powwow grounds, museums, and community centers for participatory cultural activities, such as ceremonies, drumming and dancing, and seasonal nature, language and art

Phil Norrgard, Min No Aya Win Clinic, Fond du Lac |

On the Fond du Lac reservation west of Cloquet, Phil Norrgard, the director of the Min No Aya Win Center for American Indian Resources, has purchased Ojibwe art for clinic and complex for more than two decades. Hundreds of historical photos of the Fond du Lac reservation and its people hang along the entry atrium. Families bring in the photos. "We change the photographs from time to time. People like the wall and look for themselves and their kin," says Norrgard. Beadwork by Marcie McIntyre, stenciled borders by Wendy Savage, sculpture by Jeff Savage, and paintings by Norval Morrisseau, Carl Gawboy, Karen Savage Blue, and many others adorn examination rooms, lounges, and connecting corridors of the large social services complex.

Norrgard believes art provides a context for healing that can't be created any other way. He finds that Fond du Lac members reach a comfort level with health care and social services much faster when the environmental visuals complement their culture. "In a place of healing, art is a natural part of the entire atmosphere. It helps create the right climate for the other work to take place. People feel better



Phil Norrgard with works by Carl Gawboy, John Losh, Min-No-Aya-Win Clinic, Fond du Lac

when they see and interact with beautiful things, especially when they see that their grandparents, parents, and other community members have brought and attended to things that are beautiful. It's not just utilitarian, but honoring that part of life that honors the

divine. That's what you hope to do with healing, too. Art has to share that space."

Every time they added a new building, Norrgard convinced his board to commit 1–2% for decoration and interior design from budgets of \$2.6, \$4, and \$6.5 million,

camps for children. In recent decades, with the emergence of casinos and Native-owned health and social services complexes, new spaces for artistic expression, instruction and participation have gradually been opened up. Some are also able to purchase and exhibit contemporary Native work. As with the case of casinos just examined, several places have been outstanding leaders in this regard for Minnesota's Ojibwe artists.

One pioneering example of the use of social service buildings as a place to both support contemporary Ojibwe artists' work financially while surrounding tribal members with beautiful art is the Min-No-Aya-Win Clinic complex at Fond du Lac. The associated profile of Director Phil Norrgard documents the development and philosophy of the complex's museum-quality collection and its role in member care.

Another outstanding nurturing space for Minnesota's Native artists is Two Rivers Gallery at the American Indian Center in Minneapolis, a project of Native Arts Circle. Since the early 1990s, the Gallery, run by Juanita Espinosa (see profile) has offered Native artists a place to exhibit in solo or group shows. Mounting something like six to eight exhibits a year, with

openings and closings that involve structured conversations with artists, Two Rivers has been a "first showing" opportunity for many Native artists and often their first sale. Espinosa not only curates, but also coaches artists on framing, pricing, and salesmanship. Under her leadership, Two Rivers has also showcased writers and spoken word artists, including a recent 10-hour-long Native play-reading extravaganza. Espinosa's personal trajectory from a young performer to a community activist to a curator and organizational entrepreneur makes her an outstanding role model in her community.

Sometimes requests to use space for novel forms of cultural expression run into resistance from tribal councils. Performance that is not powwow or ceremony, for instance, is novel for the Native community, so Native artists' work in cabaret, spoken word, and theatre present a challenge. Jim Northrup occasionally performs his plays and readings at his home reservation's Black Bear Casino, but does not get booked as often as he would like. The poor record of most casinos in sustained marketing of regional artists' work creates an unmet need for space for visual artists to sell. As a result, several Ojibwe entrepreneurs have

respectively. He conveyed to the Board the importance of art to health and social services work. He pointed out that utilitarian walls and doors cost ten times as much as the artwork. The annual operating budget also includes a small amount for acquisition. These two sources allow Norrgard to add a few new pieces to the collection each year.

Norrgard welcomes artists to drop by and often buys directly from them out of their cars or at exhibits. In 1980, when the clinic was operating out of a two-bedroom house, Bois Forte Ojibwe artist Joe Geeshick came by with his work on his way to Niagara, needing bus money. Norrgard bought a painting for \$100. Now, he figures it is worth \$3000-\$4000.

Artists often give Norrgard a break on the price, because they honor the uses to which he puts the work. Years ago, Norrgard visited Frank Big Bear in his Minneapolis home. At the time, Frank was driving taxis and creating a 26-panel piece on commission in his basement. "I felt like I was talking to Picasso.



Robert Johnson, *Shooting from a Canoe*, detail

He had a huge stack of things, each \$800 dollars. I could afford only one." Several weeks later, Frank came up to visit the clinic. He couldn't believe that someone had taken the time and effort to show off Ojibwe art. "He gave me a whole other \$800 piece for free."

Norrgard passionately believes in supporting living Ojibwe artists. Every artist deserves to be seen. "I can't explain the urge to create, but it's a powerful one," he says. "We have failed the art community by not appreciating and investing more in the

work. We have done so much to this world to make it not beautiful, like homogenizing the visual landscape."

Norrgard pays special attention to young artists: "I want to demonstrate to young people that art has value." He bought one of Karen Savage Blue's paintings at her undergraduate show. But he does wonder about the modest prices he often pays. "Am I taking advantage of people?"

Norrgard believes that space managers, educators, casinos, and politicians "Should fill up public spaces with art. My idea here was to create an example. Some people would say it's a museum in ways that other public spaces aren't." Although no other Native facilities in Minnesota devote this level of resources to contemporary Ojibwe artists' work, Norrgard thinks the clinic's example may be prompting change. The nearby Black Bear Casino, for instance, began collecting a few pieces with its most recent addition. Norrgard asks, "Why should you have to go to a museum to experience such beauty and meaning?"

Juanita Espinosa, Native Arts Circle, Two Rivers Gallery |

Wherever we traveled in Minnesota, artists would exclaim, "Oh, and there's Juanita of course!" referring to Juanita Espinosa's championing and encouraging their work. We catch up with her in the Two Rivers Gallery surrounded by the work of Native American artists. Espinosa, the Director of Native Arts Circle, has a contract with the Minneapolis American Indian Center to manage the gallery in the Indian Center in Minneapolis' Phillips neighborhood. Currently, Two Rivers Gallery serves as information central and new office for Native Arts Circle, a communication system Espinosa created to connect and showcase Native artists of the region.

Espinosa's own artistry is centered on making children, solving their problems, and creating the things they need, including dance outfits. Her love of cultural expression is broad and long-standing. As a child on the Spirit Lake Dakota Nation, a reservation located in Fort Totten, North Dakota, "You go where you aren't supposed to go." Which in Espinosa's case was an old museum run by the Historical Society. Invited by friends, she auditioned for and won the role of Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*. She found drama inspiring and thought provoking, continuing in summer stock for four years. Voice, dancing, beadwork, storytelling—all were youthful passions.

Espinosa traveled with her adopted family to powwows, where she would make and sell beadwork and help set up the fry bread stand. She also participated in the social dances, not dressed as a dancer, but in street clothes: "Not for the big money, I did know how to dance." Whatever money they made, Jackie, who was the head of the family, decided how the money would be spent. Sometimes it was used to go to another powwow, sometimes at the end of the summer she "gave us money to buy school clothes."

Moving to Minneapolis to go to school, Espinosa found part-time work going door to door interviewing families about diabetes. This put her in touch with every Indian family, especially at Little Earth, the Native housing complex in Phillips. Quickly she was drafted into community services—invited by a friend



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to do a fashion show, "then being put to work as I took notes." Also planning for Indian Month, providing snacks—doing everything she could to make events successful. "This came from someone asking me, not 'I have a dream and this is it!' By 1986 or so, I had a huge personal phonebook of creative people."

Espinosa's curatorial work began more intentionally, rooted in her desire to honor Native talent. An eldest daughter, she received her Indian name in 1983—Holy Wind Woman. In 1982, she was asked to publish and distribute John Trudell's book, *Songs called Poems*. Hired by Women's Work in 1981, she developed their artists' cooperative to show women's artwork, learning by doing and earning \$100 a week. Although the job ended after nine months, Espinosa had developed her skill at creating shows and doing marketing.

Being Indian, Espinosa knew how Indians who make art feel about themselves: culturally they don't want to self-promote. And that many community members can't afford to or don't want to pay money to come to cultural events. Her work was also a response to the blunt fact that there was a

color issue in funding that could not be explained by the merit of projects proposed. To deal with these realities, Espinosa decided to start a movement to involve more Native artists and communities, an effort she was paid to develop and which would have ongoing staff funding. From the beginning, she says, "We started with ceremony and asked the creator for guidance." Through the questions raised, they worked to find collective answers. What should we be doing here? What does it mean to be an Indian artist? Who is Indian? What about working with sacred material? Is there a need for an organization? With a task force of 28 native people, the answers became policy and the impetus to create a network for Native artists became a reality. Thus was born Native Arts Circle—a statewide native arts agency with a calendar of events and a roster of Indian artists built from her Indian Month roster, contacts made while working at the Circle newspaper, and her personal phonebook.

Over the years, through neighborhood and committee work, Espinosa forged strong connections with many people of all ethnicities. She saw how they developed spaces and used them, from schools to churches, non-profits, and art space like Patrick's Cabaret. From these experiences, she learned how to find people and look for funding. But funding often came with unwelcome strings. "We got big bucks from the Northwest Area Foundation for three years, but their money came with their desired tainted agenda—could you do it like this, or add in this? Meaning they wanted productions that we couldn't effectively do at the time. But we did it. We knew what the community wanted from our own surveys, and it was more important to build on the spirit of educating to what we needed to know, creating access. To do the right thing, first, to do the right thing."

Espinosa started Native Arts Circle because she had discovered that the funding world was not only poor at encouraging Native artists but also at times applied quotas to limit the number of artists supported.

As a panel member for the COMPAS Community Art Fund, she sat in on a round of grantmaking and actively encouraged Native people to apply. Working with Louis Alemayehu, they proposed to the COMPAS Board that the organization develop a funding program from an Indian perspective. To prepare for this, she and Alemayehu talked to dozens and dozens of artists, "successful, not successful; teaching and not teaching; what they were running into. I needed to know the issues and the language. This process created the list of questions we asked ourselves; i.e., who is Indian, what is Indian art and what does it mean to work with sacred materials, along with the direction of, is there a need for a native arts organization?" In general, she found that most organizations wanted a slate of the five greatest Indian artists—those who were producing the most art. "But I thought, there are over 400 of them!" which she had learned from the survey work and her phonebook. And even the five most prominent, she knew, were painting on their beds, taking day jobs, and unable to support themselves as artists. Espinosa reported back to COMPAS that Native artists need space: producing space, presenting space, and workspace.

Espinosa's experience revealed to her the way funders often use race and ethnicity to set artists apart. During this period of time, federal and state legislation created a situation where Indian artists had to prove blood quantum in order to be eligible for grants and other monies. Also, issues of repatriation of sacred scrolls and other cultural materials, as well as issues of preserving them, complicated Indian and white cultural relationships. She also came to understand how corporate exhibitions are opportunities to educate a given audience and are a good basis for showing work, but are only one-shot displays of an artist's work.

In 1998, Espinosa co-curated an exhibit for the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe. Her partner, Janeen Antoine of American Indian Contemporary Arts in San Francisco, California, taught her how to do a national "traveling" exhibit. Espinosa remembers that she was literally building the showcases in her home. "My home WAS an art studio," she laughs.

In late 1999, Native Arts Circle was offered a contract to manage Two Rivers Gallery for the Minneapolis American Indian Center. "There were grants to fulfill and exhibits to create, so we accepted the challenge. When we first took over the space, it was 'here's a kid's desk, there's a broken chair, and no lights.'" Adding light was a major improvement.

Since space is so crucial for Native artists, Espinosa, as director of Native Arts Circle and the Gallery, continues to work to build partnerships and assist other organizations in offering space to native artists. Continuing work that predated Native Arts Circle, she helped create that space in city parks and with other arts organizations like the Southern Theater, Patrick's Cabaret, the Loft, The Playwrights' Center, the Butler Building, the Walker, the Historical Society, the University of Minnesota's International Film Program and the Heart of the Beast Theater. The goal was to build projects and programs that made Native Arts Circle's efforts real and potentially ongoing. Sometimes collaborations developed, but often the commitment was only focused on a particular goal an organization might have for that time.

Often, Native Arts Circle didn't have the same goals or dollars to continue particular initiatives. "Over time, we learned to rely on prayer for our direction. Prayer, grant dollars, and our own energy. At first, from 1992–1997, we did everything we set out to do with Native Arts Circle—the calendar, networking, exhibitions, space for artists to work and perform. Then we realized we couldn't keep doing it all."

Espinosa worked with the Minneapolis American Indian Center to raise grants for Two Rivers Gallery as a resource for native artists. The partners hoped that the gallery would enhance Native artists' visibility and generate income-earning possibilities. That it would help bring them in touch with each other through gallery talks and gatherings. That it would work as a bridge to the larger community. "I have always been a bridge," she notes, "with foundations, communities, neighborhoods, and the City. I work to find ways to open the door and encourage them so they will walk through it."

Running the gallery has been challenging: "When individual artists

didn't have enough work, I began to do collective exhibits as a means of building a relationship among a group of artists." Presenting visual art in the Native community is a new practice. Espinosa had to learn presentation skills and teach artists concepts that she didn't understand well herself. Because artists often came with raw work, planning simply to tape it up, she bought mats and even picture frames to lend them but insisted that they do the work themselves. Sometimes artists balked at titles, and some didn't want to sell their work. Sometimes reproductions were poor because artists can't afford better than Kinko's printing.

Two Rivers exhibits give artists a morale boost and an opportunity to share insights on the work itself. Over the years, Espinosa has become a coach for artists, helping them learn the skills to market their work elsewhere and giving mini-courses on how to approach coffee houses and enter art fairs and exhibitions. She feels increasingly comfortable in this teaching role especially as she ages with the experience and knowledge that others can use.

Native performance, too, is an important realm. Stories, Espinosa believes, remain the heart of Native culture. "Our kids do a lot of theater at home. So much of our performance happens in our own life." She wonders if people could hear Native stories, hear the pain of what has been lost. Hear that other people "own more than us of our own stuff." In general, Native dance revolves around people who make and own beautiful hand-made outfits and go to powwows. With few exceptions, they are not interested in professional dance.

Espinosa's dream is to see Native Arts Circle work with Two Rivers Gallery and the Minneapolis American Indian Center to be "...maybe I would call it a teaching lodge for people creating stories to present. Or, as a venue to launch exhibitions to travel." In the early years, she curated around themes of the four seasons. She can still see offering the space to individual artists and organizations while continuing the seasonal programming on some level. "Thinking about it the way our people think about it. It's more cultural, not an artsy thing."

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worked to create performance and visual art space without tribal financial support, a subject to which we next turn.

C. Ojibwe entrepreneurs creating spaces for art, literature, live performance

As noted above, Native artists, especially musicians and performers, have found it very difficult to break into non-Native spaces. Tribal venues are developing but inadequate. In scattered locales, Native entrepreneurs are attempting to fill the gap by creating cultural spaces without tribal resources. Those that exist are fragile—they illustrate the possibilities and challenges for cultural entrepreneurship. If successful, they could provide models for others.

One singular effort is the Coffee Bar that Leech Lake tribal member Richard Schulman and his partner, Connie Headbird, have created as a live music and dance space designed particularly to nurture young musicians. In a built-from scratch log building of tennis court length near the Palace Casino, a raised stage is framed by black velvet curtains that Schulman reclaimed from the nearby casino make-over. A sunken dance floor stands in front of the stage, with small tables and chairs one step up on three sides, plus a balcony. The space comes equipped with modern audio and video equipment, so that young performers see and hear how they sound in rehearsal.

Schulman, who works as manager of information services for the tribe, poured his savings and spare time into the space for more than a decade. Leader of a Native country music band, Schulman has been making music for pay for thirty years, about half their gigs in clubs and the rest for anniversaries, yard parties, graduations, country music festivals, and many elders' feasts. His dream of providing a space for music began more than ten years ago, as opportunities in clubs, especially for younger musicians, dried up due to skyrocketing insurance premiums. In its first incarnation, the performance space served alcohol and attracted big names, such as Keith Secola and Hank Williams IV. But with the alcohol, came lots of rowdiness and expensive bouncers.

About two years ago, Schulman decided to go non-alcoholic and renovate the space as a coffee bar. He is targeting Leech Lake Tribal College students from the campus up the road—the college has no coffee shop. When it was a club, Schulman had twenty times the business, “but this feels more comfortable.” Right now, he is not worried about slowness. “People who come will come back.” To keep costs down, Connie manages



Richard Schulman, North Star Coffee Bar

the coffee bar, after her day job. Schulman recently started Wednesday night jam sessions that offer local musicians the big stage, lighting, sound systems, and videos of their work. Once a month, he brings in a band, or sometimes several, from outside the region. Although his own music is aimed at older Native Americans, he encourages young musicians to do whatever they want—rap, heavy metal, hip-hop, mixes.

Schulman is thinking big with the space and gearing up for all kinds of performing arts. He plans to add youth pool tournaments and rap and spoken word sessions, drawing from the res. He knows some folks who need a weekly dance studio. He thinks all kinds of dance might appeal: “This was originally the Star of the North Dance Hall, and we once had lots of line dancing here.” He has a drop-down screen that synchs with the house sound system, permitting film screenings and televised sports events. In the lounge space, he’d like to invite artists to hang their work.

Artists on the White Earth reservation have access to the Anishinaabe Cultural Center and Gallery in Callaway (see profile). The Center, started in 1998 in Detroit Lakes, has exhibited and sold Native visual artwork for more than a decade. The Center’s current mission is to encourage artists’ work by providing a sales gallery and to sell organic groceries, locally made if possible, as part of a diabetes awareness campaign. The Center carries jingle dresses, beadwork, black ash baskets, birchbark work and many other artworks by White Earth artists. Among its featured artists are some under-represented in places like the casino: Connie Engebretson (jingle dresses), Steve Flowers (drums), and Janet Oshkinowe and Jenny Mae Boswell (beadwork).

But the Center has struggled to endure. Its ambitions to thrive off the reservation in the tourist town were continually thwarted by lack of white community support, including active opposition. In addition, even after its move to Callaway, it has never won official sanction or funding from the Tribal Council. According to its current manager, Ray Belcourt, the politics of the reservation and the Casino make it hard for entrepreneurial efforts like the Center.” The tribal government, the Center’s current landlord, “can control every aspect of people’s lives including jobs and housing. The reservation has different committees that make decisions with no appeal in the courts.” In the fall of 2008, the Tribal Council asked the Center to pay \$4,000 in rent. But they would not, as they had promised, apply the \$11,000 worth of renovations the Center had undertaken as credits against that rent. The Center then decided to share space with the White Earth Land Recovery Project, in an old school building in Callaway, a mixed blessing described in the accompanying profile.

Nevertheless the Anishinaabe Cultural Center has been a deciding factor for artists who might otherwise be discouraged and stop making their art. Belcourt buys work directly from artists, especially those who are poorer and have fewer sales outlets, and works on consignment with others. It has also, as described above, played a key role in diabetes education, offering organic and healthy foods right in the middle of the reservation. Its dedicated staff and survival demonstrate the potential for small scale, artist or community-owned and entrepreneured spaces of the sort that many artists long for.

Several other established Ojibwe artists have used their resources to create places for presentation and sale of work. Beadworker Marcie McIntire has started her own gallery on Grand Portage land to present her work and those of other artists. She encourages other artists to create work, helps them buy materials and offers to market their work in her gallery, often buying from them for resale. Currently in her gallery, one can buy work by artists from Lac Courte Oreilles and even New Mexico. Louise Erdrich started Birchbark Books in Minneapolis as a venue to raise the visibility of Native literature (and good books by others, too) and to provide a venue for writers to read their work and meet their audiences. The bookstore also carries a limited selection of visual art for sale. In 2008, with her sister Heid, Louise started Birchbark House, a media clearinghouse, a multi-lingual press, and a distribution service for Native American literature, and Wiigwassi Press, which produces, promotes and distributes books and other media in Ojibwe language.



Jonathan Thunder's *The Psycho-Lounge-Bot and the Treachery*, University of Wisconsin-Superior Annual American Indian Art Scholarship Exhibit, 2009

D. Colleges and universities

While many Minnesota colleges and universities have American Indian Studies programs, few do much for artists in the surrounding community, including their own graduates. Yet college art, music, theatre, film, and creative writing programs have tremendous resources with which they can create forums for sharing ideas and work, stage productions, archive artistic product, and facilitate networking between art students and career artist. In this section, we showcase two colleges that mount Native American shows annually. Each is housed in a different department and offers a unique model for bridging the college and external art world, including artists and audiences.

The Annual American Indian Art Scholarship Exhibit at University of Wisconsin-Superior, now in its thirteenth year, is an innovative use of college space and resources to support accomplished and young Native American artists. Currently curated by Ivy Vainio, a Grand Portage Ojibwe who works for the school’s Multicultural Affairs office, the show invites high school students to submit a piece or two of their artwork to be hung in a juried show. Vainio contacts high school art teachers around the upper Midwest to solicit entries. In 2007, 43 students vied for 1st, 2nd, 3rd and honorable mention placements ribbons in this juried event. The top student artist earns a \$1,000 scholarship to UWS. In recent years, student work has been submitted from as far afield as Bad River, Lac Courte Oreilles, Red Lake, and Leech Lake Ojibwe reservations. It has also reached isolated Native students in

Ray Belcourt and the Anishinaabe Cultural Center |

The Anishinaabe Cultural Center sits on the east side of Highway 59 in the small town of Callaway, Minnesota. Black cutout signs and floral clapboard on the exterior were created by Anishinaabe artist, Connie Engebretson. The smell of smoked leather permeates the storefront. White Earth member Ray Belcourt stands behind the counter wearing a Founding Fathers t-shirt. He gives the impression that he hopes that if he is quiet enough, we will go away. Instead, we bombard him with interview questions: Are you an artist? How did you come to be in the role you are? How long has the Anishinaabe Cultural Center been here? We thought it was in Detroit Lakes?

Belcourt tells us how the Anishinaabe Cultural Center was started in Detroit Lakes in the 1990s in a small rented house. It was created to be an outlet for artists. At the time, because no one was buying art, Ojibwe artists weren't making art. "They would go around to homes, clinics, just to sell things, and they might get one sale a day," says Belcourt. When the Center first opened, people needed beading thread, beads, and jingles, and the Center, thanks to a grant writer who raised money for this purpose, helped artists buy them. When artists sold an item they paid back the Center for the cost of materials.

However, non-native people in the area got upset with too many Natives hanging around and protested. As a result, the Cultural Center moved in 1998 to a storefront by the North Side Liquor Store with Marvin Manypenny as manager. A few years later, Marvin asked Belcourt to work as the gallery manager. Because he appreciated the way the Center created an outlet for local artists' work, Belcourt took the job.

Shortly thereafter, planning to start a Native American Cultural Center, the Center began negotiations for the Holmes School, an abandoned facility in Detroit Lakes. But the City pre-empted this effort by designating the shuttered school as the Holmes Cultural Center. It's non-Native managers were not interested in including Native work and cultural activities. As a consolation prize, the Anishinaabe Center



CHERYL WALSH BELLVILLE

Connie Engebretson with her jingle dresses at the Anishinaabe Cultural Center

won support from the powers-that-be to buy a shuttered plumbing warehouse in an industrial park. They received grants and loans from Bremer Bank to make it into a showcase Center, so successful that they paid off the loan two years ahead of time.

In Detroit Lakes, the Gallery operated as a for-profit storefront, with money from sales supporting children's programs run by the Center: drum and dance classes, beading classes, Ojibwe language, and regalia making. It also had an artists-in-residence component. Francis Paul (Ogema Gizik) and Art Butcher taught flute making. Jeff Grandbois, an alabaster and stone carver, was in residence. They also brought in Native American recording artist Bill Miller. Belcourt hopes for a grant writer to get some of these programs back up and running.

In 2007, the Anishinaabe Center's leadership decided to move the Center to Callaway. Detroit Lakes was becoming too expensive and there were no more grants or grant writers. They had paid \$200,000 for the Detroit Lakes building and added \$100,000 of improvements by hiring local people. But when they sold it, there was barely enough to get a start on the new place in Callaway.

The Center chose Callaway for two reasons. Their experience in the industrial area taught them that they could only attract people who already knew about them. They wanted a site on a main drag, like the Callaway commercial strip that sits astride the highway to and from the Mahnommen casino. In addition, the Callaway building already belonged to the tribe, which was willing to subtract the group's renovations, such as new carpet installation, from the rent owed. Still, Callaway is a tiny town with a struggling main street. Despite the attractive sign and storefront, not that many people stop. The tribe has to date refused to help support the Center, despite its role in helping tribal artists. The 30% markup that Belcourt charges just covers the bills for rent, heat, and light.

Today, the Center encourages artists by buying art directly or selling on consignment. Belcourt negotiates with the artists to buy and set a price depending on the quality and marketability of a product. He travels around the reservation looking at people's work or they bring it to the Center. The poorer artists prefer to sell art directly to him because they need money immediately to get by. He buys outright at a 30% discount. Some artists want him to

pay full price and he has to explain to them that running the gallery requires some expense. Artists who are making more income from their art are more likely to sell on consignment. Belcourt uses the income from sales of artists' work to buy more artwork and to support the programming of the center.

The Center generates income for area Ojibwe artists, mostly from local Native purchases. Top-selling artists Dan Neisen and Steve Flowers make dreamcatchers, drums, and necklaces, with Neisen also fashioning bows and arrows. The Boswell family, especially Janet Boswell and her mother Jenny Mae, are excellent artists. But because the Center currently does not have staff to write grants and cannot convince the Tribe to support its operating costs, it relies primarily on Native people for its sales, in contrast to the Mahanomen Shooting Star Casino up the road.

Yet the Anishinaabe Center has advantages for attracting tourists, including its location and its service flexibility. People ask for certain items like, "Can you find me someone to make a leather jacket, and I do," says Belcourt. The Center enjoys reliable return customers from as far away as Iowa, Japan, Michigan, and Germany. Once two buses of Scandinavian people stopped. They have also talked about an Artists' Guild based out of the Center to market their work together at powwows and on the web.

Belcourt has worked on marketing to tourists. "In Detroit Lakes, we were trying to get our Center as a bus stop as one of the towns in a circle on the Circle of Lakes Tour that included Detroit Lakes, New York Mills, Battle Lake, and other towns. We met with tour operators and bus drivers in the Cities and sponsored a gathering of all the tour bus drivers to try to get them to stop at the Anishinaabe Center for lunch. We worked on this for quite a few years but then we didn't have the funds to keep paying our dues. It hasn't materialized yet. Maybe



MARIE RENDON

someday we can get back into that."

Lean financial resources and thinness of staff hamper the Center's success. Belcourt believes that the Anishinaabe Center could be much more than it currently is, if funders, the tribe, and other institutions and organizations would help out the Center by helping to pay the bills. For instance, says Belcourt: "The tribe could offer this space for free and pay the utilities. We are not getting rich here. This space belongs to the community." In the fall of 2008, the Tribal Council asked the Center to pay \$4,000 in rent. But they would not, as they had promised, apply the \$11,000 worth of renovations the Center had undertaken as credits against that rent." The Center then decided to share space with the White Earth Land Recovery Project, housed in an old school building in Callaway. While they are now less visible from the street, staff and visitors to the Land Recovery project often stop in to buy groceries or artwork. Both organizations are struggling with the fallout from the recession, job loss, and diminished tourism to the area. Belcourt was laid off, though he continues to take care of the books for the Gallery, place orders, and buy work from artists, when they can afford to.



MARIE RENDON

The Center's existence continues to materially improve the circumstances of White Earth artists. "It gives them something to do," says Belcourt, "something to wake up for. It provides opportunities for people who have talents with no place to use them."

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mostly white, rural communities some from tribes other than Ojibwe (Apache, Oglala Lakota).

Unique among student art shows, this one juxtaposes students' art with that of established Ojibwe artists whose work is for sale. One artist is featured each year: Marcie McIntire, a prize-winning beadworker from Grand Portage, in 2007; Gordon Coons, Lac Courte Orielles Ojibwe, who does block print paintings, in 2008; Karen Savage-Blue, painter from Fond du Lac in 2009. At a final evening reception, following a sale of artists' work, the students mingle and talk with the professional artists, a tremendous encouragement for them to pursue their artwork. Hours before the 2009 reception, Savage-Blue gave a workshop for the 42 high school student exhibitors. In 2007, in addition to McIntire, Moses Beaver, a Nibiiamik Ojibwe multimedia artist from a tiny fly-in town north of Thunder Bay in Ontario, gave a talk on his creations in acrylic, pipes, pen and ink and beadwork. The numbers of professional artists eager to join the show grows every year, thanks to Vainio's energetic outreach: 18 in 2009.

The growing number of both student entries and professional artists exhibiting demonstrates the power of an idea and of Native American institutional leadership. The show originated in 1997 when UWS' First Nations Studies Director, Gary Johnson, a Lac Courte Orielles Ojibwe tribal member, wanted to create an opportunity for Native students around the region to meet professional Native artists, be introduced to the university, and think about art as a career. With art professor Pope Wright, he launched the show. In the first years, there were as few as two seasoned artists willing to ship their work and join the reception. By 2007, fifteen joined, "all wonderful artists and wonderful people," says Vainio. "The artists are motivated in part by the idea of making an impact on Native youth."

While UWS' show is lodged in its Multi-Cultural Programs office, Bemidji State's Spring Art Expo, shared with Leech Lake Tribal College, operates out of its American Indian Resource Center. The show's Ojibwe curators are Ben Burgess, Assistant Professor of Indian Studies, and award-winning sculptor Duane (Dewey) Goodwin of the Tribal College faculty. The successor to the Ojibwe Art Expo (see above) that originated at Bemidji State and toured for 20 years, the annual show alternates between the two campuses. A juried event, it exhibits Native visual artwork from around the region, inviting artists of all Native tribes to apply.

A literary scholar without formal art training, Burgess, whom we interviewed in the summer of 2008, described his challenges

in putting together the annual Art Expo. He and Goodwin sent out mailings, including a lovely poster, to all American Indian centers and tribal colleges. Just compiling a list and finding addresses was a lot of work. They received entries from local and regional artists and quite a few Leech Lake students, though fewer Bemidji students. Since the entry criteria was non-competitive, requiring only that the work have been completed in the past three years and be Native-created (identities were not checked), the work exhibited in 2008 ranged from beginners' work to advanced arts and crafts.

Artists could sell their work, marking it for sale or not-for-sale. If they wished, they could put a price on it. Artists left cards out for interested parties. The schools take no cut on sales of work. Burgess and Goodwin hung the show together, a first for Burgess. "We didn't really know how to do it. We spent days screwing in hangers. We needed a strip to hang work from. There was no climate control." The 2008 event ran on an \$8000 budget with help from the Regional Arts Council. The funding permitted awards for winning artists: \$200 for first prize, "best in show" in each category. The budget also enabled them to host opening and closing receptions.

Artists' entries were distinguished as either traditional (35%) or contemporary (65%) and judged by subcategory: beadwork, regalia, pencil drawings, acrylic, oil, basket-making. Goodwin invited someone he knew and admired to be the judge. Burgess's favorites were the bandolier bag by Melvin Losh, "with whimsical bumble bees, snails, and beadwork," and a painting called "Founding Fathers Silent Places" by Wesley May, student at the Tribal College. In the latter, the faces of Native founding fathers are emerging through an American flag. Burgess thinks that the awards bring prestige to the artists, and indeed, both Paula White and Melvin Losh expressed pride in their awards (see profiles). White sold her award-winning quilt for \$3000.

To discover who came to the exhibit, Burgess "would go out there and just sit. I noticed a lot of students who came by, and I did see people from the community come in. Next time, I would like to have a register." Burgess took four classes to the exhibit and asked each student to write a paragraph on one piece. He asks them, "What was your response? What are they trying to convey?" After, they discussed the responses in class. Many of the students said "Wow!" at their first encounter. He feels the show "helps to educate people, to help them see different sides of Native art."

For future exhibits, Burgess and Goodwin hope to headline the exhibit with visitors such as Luiseno performance artist

James Luna. “It would be great for students to be hung side by side with famous artists,” says Burgess. He also hopes to write a book showcasing the artwork and his students’ responses—“ten years of work and ten years of responses” —showing the impact of the exhibit.

E. Museums

Large museums that acquire and show visual art support Native artists through their collecting policies, exhibition programs, and outreach. Native artists would love to have their work exhibited and purchased by major collecting institutions. They would like to step up from Two Rivers or All My Relations Gallery to a major museum, because it would bring much higher visibility to their work and better prices. We have seen above how a few artists, like Paula White and Jim Northrup, have one or a few items in the Smithsonian collection. But until recently, with the exception of the Plains Art Museum in Fargo, the region’s major not-for-profit visual art institutions—the Tweed Museum at University of Minnesota Duluth, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts through its Minnesota Artists Exhibition Program (MAEP), the Walker Art Center, and the Weisman at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities—had exhibited and purchased only a handful of contemporary Ojibwe artists like George Morrison, Patrick Desjarlait, Norval Morrisseau, David Bradley, and Jim Denomie. However, as they seek to distinguish themselves from other competitors across the country, curators are becoming more interested in Woodland Native art, including work by contemporary Ojibwe artists. In this section, we explore pioneering efforts and the attitudinal and financial hurdles Native artists must still scale to win visibility and a place of honor.

1. Exhibiting

Through their decisions on work to exhibit and purchase, museums are powerful arbiters of what is valuable in the visual art world. Large collecting museums have an inherited inventory of artwork, much of it European or early Anglo-American, often given them by donors. Some have an endowment that helps to cover the costs of preservation, storage, exhibition, and new purchases. The museums grouped here also sponsor traveling exhibits or art work they do not own, sometimes mixed with their own holdings and sometimes to showcase new talent or trends. How they decide what to exhibit involves the difficult calculus of coping with an aging collection and appeasing trustees and large donors while meeting curatorial ambitions and desire to innovate. Although Woodland Indian art, both

traditional and contemporary, forms a very small part of these institutions’ collections, some curators and directors have been expanding their offerings by selectively recruiting contemporary Native work.

The Plains Art Museum has long exhibited Native artwork from both Plains and Woodland Indian tribes. Among Minnesota Ojibwe artists whose work has been included in exhibits are David Bradley, Jeffrey Chapman, George Morrison, Frank Big Bear, Joe Savage, Lucy Mudwe Clark, Melvin Losh, Velma Lewis, and Josie Ryan. Beginning in the 1990s, the Weisman Museum at University of Minnesota adopted an explicit commitment to diversity in its strategic plan, aimed at minority and women artists. In 1998, it hosted a traveling show called “Indian Humor,” originating in the state of Washington. When Jeff Chapman, a Minnesota Ojibwe artist, brought it to the Weisman’s attention, the Museum decided to supplement it with an exhibit of local artists’ work, including performance. The Museum’s Colleen Sheehy recalls that Juanita Espinosa helped her identify Minnesota painters, including Jim Denomie and Star Wallowing Bull. The exhibit hosted the first full theatrical performance of Shinnob Jep by Jim Northrup. Sheehy found that “Indian humor is so dry and matter-of-fact—very satirical, as in any culture that has been oppressed, from the Irish to the Jews. The show really connected the campus and local community for us.”

Shortly thereafter, when a planned show of Native artists attending the Institute of American Indian Arts in New Mexico floundered, the Weisman accepted a proposal by Todd Bockley to curate a show of the work of George Morrison, Frank Big Bear, and Norval Morrisseau in 2000 called *Listening with the Heart*. A large exhibit, each artist’s work filled a good-sized section of two galleries. With a companion exhibit of emerging Minnesota Native artists Starr Big Bear, Julie Buffalohead, and Jim Denomie, it drew respectable crowds. The latter exhibit, *Contemporary Native Art in Minnesota*, was billed by the Weisman as follows: “These emerging artists, all of whom are from the Twin Cities, employ distinct styles, techniques, and media to express their personal identity as well as an array of issues and concerns facing Native people today.”

Precocious exhibits of contemporary Ojibwe artists’ work occasionally took place under the auspices of the Minnesota Artists’ Exhibition Program (MAEP) at the MIA. In MAEP’s debut exhibit in 1976, works by Native artists George Morrison and photographer Joe Breidel were included. In the early 1990s, its elected artist-run Board approved a three-person show, *Paper Dreams on Fire*, that included Frank Big Bear’s work. Before

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that, recalls Stewart Turnquist, MAEP's former Coordinator of many years, MAEP relied on putting together shows by clusters of artists identified by themes through questionnaires. But Native artists were rarely included in these, although George Morrison's work was shown, and a 1992 exhibit entitled *Art + Life* included the handwoven baskets of Ojibwe artist Frances Keahna of White Earth's Naytahwaush community. Later, MAEP moved to artist-initiated proposals that produced the show of Big Bear's work and a 2008 show of Andrea Carlson and Jim Denomie's work entitled "New Skins: Painting in a Whole New World." But in general, even with its extraordinarily democratic process, few Native artists became involved with MAEP governance or had proposals accepted.

Since 2000, museums have stepped up the inclusion of new Native work in solo shows and as part of group events. The Plains Art Museum hosted a solo show of Chippewa/Northern Arapaho artist Star Wallowing Bull's work in 2005/06 and an exhibit of Frank Big Bear's drawings in the summer of 2009, and has showcased the work of other Native artists, including internationally-known Jaune Quick-To-See Smith. In smaller spaces in the museum—second floor hallways, its café—the Museum mounts a nimble, low budget program called *Art View*, showing off local Fargo/Moorhead artists. Although there is no opening event for these, artists benefit from being shown in a museum for a stretch of two months and with visibility in press releases and newsletters. It was in this setting that the Museum's recent curator, Rusty Freeman, first saw Star Wallowing Bull's work. Freeman and Jacobson worked at finding and meeting new regional artists to exhibit, building a file of names and images. Through word of mouth, websites, and studio visits, the Plains Art Museum is trying to get the word out that they are interested in Native work.

In the past few years, the Tweed mounted one-man shows for Ojibwe artists Rabbett Before Horses (2008) and Frank Big Bear (2009). David Bradley and Carl Gawboy paintings have been shown as part of the Tweed's exhibit of the Richard and Dorothy Nelson collection of Native American traditional and contemporary art that the Tweed recently acquired.

Whose work is exhibited by major regional museums? Some artists believe that curatorial decisions favor artwork with technical polish and references to art world conventions and style, i.e., subjects taught in formal art schools and colleges. Some museums, they believe, seem more comfortable with work done by artists trained in formal method, whose execution, rather than Native content, stamp it as high art. Artists taking this view point out that curators are themselves schooled in

western traditions and sometimes have career aspirations that involve upward mobility in the small museum world. And that they follow attentively who the external art world, including investors, collectors, and gallery owners, anoints as up and coming artists.

This view is contested by at least one curator interviewed. He argues that curatorial decisions as a matter of course consider the work's content. "A good work of art features form and content so interwoven and connected that a person cannot tell one from the other." He believes that many museums across the country seek to exhibit and collect artists who express themselves in fresh, original, and creative ways, education and studio-training notwithstanding: "Today's curators are sensitive and aware of non-Western traditions and look to include all voices in their museum's exhibitions and programs." Nor is the market the only context they consider when making curatorial decisions. Curators, he points out, make decisions by researching and studying art history, art theory and criticism, social and world histories, economics, philosophy, literature, science, psychology, sociology, and any number of other social contexts (i.e., feminism, Marxism, class, race, gender) that may inform a work of art or motivate an artist.

Native artists without formal training in artistic technique and vocabulary have occasionally been picked up by the museum world. Ojibwe Norval Morrisseau, the Canadian artist, was completely self-taught, and eventually became famous for his earth-shaking work, based on Native myth and story. White Earth enrollee, Minneapolis resident Frank Big Bear, is also largely self-taught beyond a brief period of study with George Morrison at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. Rabbett Before Horses taught himself by studying the great European artists. But it can be difficult. One prominent Ojibwe contemporary artist, withdrawing from a scheduled museum exhibit, expressed a strong distrust of the art world to the curator involved. He felt burned by it, ripped off monetarily. He believed that his work had not sold for what it should be and that dealers failed to tell him when work was sold. Both sides, then, may bring baggage to the negotiation table.

One artist helped us understand the fears that artists have about large institutions. "It took me years to walk into the Minneapolis Institute of Arts," she said. "Native people have totally different concepts of what a museum is and who can go in there. Robert Desjarlait, for instance—there was no museum showcasing Native work when he and his siblings were growing up." Artists' perceptions of curators' power to accept or reject work make encounters with museums traumatic for them.

One curator acknowledged his power and choice criteria candidly: “We will be interested in work that is a little more removed from the marketplace that has educational value, storytelling, fine craft. We help to write the code and break the code. We get it on the wall, we publicize it, buy it, document it.” Artists understand this and strain to hear, and yet fear, the message. “If I were critiquing your work, I would say, do more of that. Explore these roads and ideas. Not the tourist stuff. With the understanding that, of course, you are in charge.” Such advice contains mixed messages. A young artist could be another Norval Morrisseau, with a home full of original and powerful work, but might not know how to have this conversation.

Beyond their roles in raising museums’ visibility, curators’ career prospects, and artists’ future livelihoods, exhibits are targeted at communicating to audiences. Who comes to see the exhibits? Non-Native people do come to see Native art, reports the Plains Art Museum’s curatorial team. The staff works hard to market Native shows to cities and the region, including colleges, multi-cultural centers, and tribal councils. The Tweed has a captive audience of University students and faculty, and markets very broadly to the community at large. In 2008, more than 32,000 people came through the door, in a city of 85,000. In the summer, the audience consists heavily of tourists, many of them visiting Duluth for the first time. Until recently, the museum attracted only small numbers of Native visitors. However, additions to its collection, its new museum internship program, and an ambitious proposal to actively work with and educate the Native community in the region, has helped to change this.

2. *Acquiring artwork*

Exhibits are ephemeral, especially since they are often not accompanied by a catalogue or an enduring web presence. Artists hope that museums will acquire their work for a good price and preserve and exhibit it on into the future. Native artists who have a solo or group exhibition may sell one or two works to the hosting museum, and sometimes, others buy because of exhibit’s imprimatur. In other cases, a museum will buy an artwork without having hosted an exhibition. How do museums choose what to buy?

Museums, like collectors and galleries, are connected in the web of relationships that treat visual artworks as important cultural assets with great value. Even though they are non-profit organizations, museums with endowments, like the Tweed and the Plains, have annual budgets for purchases and may occasionally de-accession works as well. They do so slowly,

because financial resources are limited and space to store and exhibit the work are as well. Furthermore, art markets are not what economists call “pure” markets, especially in cases like Native art. In an oligopolistic marketplace, with relatively few sellers and buyers of note, a museum’s purchases or sales can have a powerful effect on the values and prices of an artist’s work. Executive and museum directors must keep this in mind.

One way that they do this is to work closely with other art collectors, which museums do via advisory boards. The Plains Art Museum, for instance, has a collectors’ committee that consists of people from the community and staff. Explains former curator Rusty Freeman, “They help us decide on acquiring art work,” though the curator plays the lead role. Since some museums can only afford to buy four or five pieces of work a year, and because they want to keep and store it safely as well offer educational outreach, they have to be cautious about it. Indeed, some 80% of the Plains’ new acquisitions come in the form of gifts from collectors. To be savvy about purchases, museum staff consults with knowledgeable collectors, and artists, too, because both groups have aesthetic insights into their choices. In turn, the museum’s validation of work via its purchases influences what collectors buy. “But more often than not,” says Freeman, “museums are following the lead of collectors.” Knowledgeable collectors have more resources than museums and can be very helpful in identifying new and upcoming artists. The same criteria employed in museum exhibition decisions, discussed above, shape the prospects for buying Native artwork: style, polish, narrative, intellectual value, aesthetic quality, but also, unlike exhibition calculus, the likely future monetary value of the work.

The impact of a collector on museum acquisition policy is demonstrated by Richard and Dorothy Nelson’s recent gift to the Tweed of their extensive Woodland Indian collection of treaty portraits, traditional Native basketry and crafts, and contemporary Ojibwe paintings (see profile below). The collection makes the Tweed an extraordinary reservoir of art of this genre, assets that have encouraged its leaders to explore a heightened commitment to unique regional art forms. “Duluth could be,” says Director Ken Bloom, “the Ojibwe Riviera,” a long way from its founding specialization in 19th century European art.

Yet curators often also bring their training to bear, favoring conventions they have been taught or trends that are current in the larger art world. This is often baffling to artists. For instance, Jim Denomie pitched his smaller painting-a-day canvasses (see profile) to a curator who preferred, instead, Denomie’s rabbit

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prints and larger paintings. Nevertheless, curators do keep their antennae out. Says curator Spooner of the Tweed: “We do seek people out. We have determined a direction for collecting: Native American art of the region. We don’t literally advertise. We find them through a network in the art world—people who are already involved to some degree, who have achieved some degree of recognition. We also rely on Native artists themselves, what Wendy Savage calls ‘the underground network,’ ‘smoke signals,’ from one tribe to another.” In the past few years, the Tweed has purchased work by Native artists Jim Denomie, Andrea Carlson, Marcie McIntire, Rabbett before Horses, Julie Buffalohead, Jeff Savage, Patrick DesJarlait, Wendy Savage, Eugene Boshkaykin, Gordon Van Wert, Kurt Buffalo, Orvilla Longfox, Patrina Arnold, and two additional drawings by Frank Big Bear.

Museum acquisition policies change over time, often pursuing one artistic genre or school and then moving on to another. The Tweeds seems to be quickening its interest in contemporary

Native artists in the region while the Plains continues its long-term commitment. While Freeman acknowledges that the Plains would consider an Inuit artwork or a Warhol painting donated by one of its collectors, “We do have the resources to focus on the regional arts scene. For regional museums, this collecting focus will help make us unique.”

In contrast, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts has to date avoided purchasing regional artists’ creations, including Ojibwe work. Despite these artists’ high profile MAEP exhibits, the MIA did not buy paintings from Frank Big Bear, Jim Denomie or Andrea Carlson, although they have purchased ricing baskets from Jim Northrup. The MAEP’s very existence has been in question when artistic leadership has changed at the MIA, and in general, its curatorial preferences are based on national reputation and very much shaped by what’s happening in New York. Although the Weisman has very few funds at its disposal to buy work, it purchased pieces by Star Big Bear, Jim Denomie, and Julie Buffalohead following its exhibit of their work.

Richard and Dorothy Nelson, Art Collectors and Patrons

For more than 30 years, Duluth’s Richard and Dorothy Nelson scoured small towns and regional markets for historical Indian artifacts and works by contemporary Ojibwe artists, educating themselves about quality and contexts. Paintings by Ojibwe artists Patrick DesJarlait, Fritz Scholder, George Morrison, Norval Morrisseau, Carl Gawboy, David Bradley, and Frank Big Bear grace their modest Duluth home, where the couple built a two-story addition to house their collection. Now widowed, Dick still carefully packages materials himself for the loans he frequently makes to museums for shows. Their collection will soon be donated to the Tweed Museum at the University of Minnesota. By raising living Ojibwe artists’ visibility and contributing to their incomes through direct purchases, the Nelsons have critically supported Ojibwe visual artists over the years.

Pursuing a career in campus Presbyterian ministry, the Nelsons’ collecting passion originated in experiments in using art as student outreach. In the 1970s, the Nelsons traveled extensively in Minnesota and the Dakotas, fund-raising for the ministries and stopping at historical societies and museums along the way. Motivated by sheer interest



Richard and Dorothy Rawlings Nelson at Tweed Museum Opening

and enabled by an inheritance from Dorothy’s family, they started collecting seriously, focusing on Woodland Indian art, since they could not afford southwestern Native work. They bought birch-bark, quillwork, willow basketry, split ash baskets, coiled sweet-grass, and beadwork at antique stores, auctions, and flea markets. Before they passed through small towns, they ran classified ads stating their interest in Indian artifacts. Over the decades, they gathered many significant objects, including bandolier bags, treaty portraits, and early maps, as well as utilitarian and decorative work.

Not endowed with the fortunes that other collectors spend hiring resource consultants and art brokers, the couple devoted time, instead, to developing their own expertise. After 30 years, Nelson considers himself a knowledgeable collector. He reflects, “The collector’s eye’ was being educated through a familiarity with materials, by living with the objects in our home, reading the books in our growing library, visiting museums in this country and abroad, and learning from other collectors and dealers.” (Nelson, 2000: 3)

In the late 1970s, the Nelsons began attending the biennial Native American Arts Studies Association (NAASA) meetings and the Algonquian Conference, listening to scholars and curators discuss papers and meeting other self-tutored collectors. The Nelsons hosted the Algonquian Conference in Duluth in 1984. Over the years, Dick Nelson wrote and presented three papers: on Midewiwin bandolier bags of the Ojibwe (1984), incised birch bark scrolls (1983), and Fond du Lac Treaty portraits (1987).

Through time spent in New Mexico, the Nelsons began learning about the workings of contemporary art markets—how pieces become valued and highly sought. They had

3. Outreach and training

Native artists have been incorporated in museum outreach efforts, though the impact on their livelihoods is not as profound as when their work is exhibited or sold to the permanent collection. The Weisman has consistently incorporated the community in its efforts, especially in its diversity programming, through both consultation and educational outreach. Native community resistance to the proposed 2000 New Mexico show, which would have included some Native American painting, helped the Weisman move towards its first big established Native artist exhibit. The planning group from the local Native community said, "This isn't an interesting show," recalled curator Sheehy. "It doesn't relate to our culture here." The Weisman invests quite a bit in its educational programs, bringing in a wide range of people. "The K-12 schools really come out whenever the Weisman does a show from a minority culture, and broadly, not just their own culture." reflects Sheehy.

Some museums see their constituency as regional rather than purely local. From 1993 to 2008, Fargo's Plains Art Museum mounted traveling exhibitions and artist residencies in a large number of regional communities. Dubbed the Rolling Plains Art Gallery, Museum staff converted a semi-trailer into a mobile gallery and drove it out to many rural Minnesota and North Dakota towns. In 2000, for instance, they visited 22 towns with an exhibition of Native artwork and two day artist residencies in each town involving artists Laura Heit Youngbird, Wendy Savage, Ruth Waukazo, and Star Wallowing Bull among others.

Outreach is especially important to Plains Art Museum, which is led by Curator for Outreach, Pam Jacobson. Dedicating staff to outreach has enabled the Museum to raise outside funding for the traveling exhibitions, from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Minnesota State Arts Board, the North Dakota Council on the Arts, and several corporate funders. Jacobson says that tracking down Native artists is not

already purchased a few pieces by living Ojibwe artists. For an early oil that Carl Gawboy had painted as a first year student at UMD in 1964, they paid \$75, in three \$25 installments. In the 1980s, they became methodical collectors of contemporary Ojibwe work. One year at the Santa Fe Indian Market, they overheard someone recommend Ojibwe artist, David Bradley, as a rising talent while standing in line at a bakery. Before leaving town, the Nelsons purchased a painting from him, followed by several others over the years, including a commissioned portrait of the two of them.

As patrons, the Nelsons have faced dilemmas common for owners of Native art. Among the most beautiful, historically significant and valuable objects in their collection are items such as bandolier bags, sacred to the Ojibwe. As pressures for repatriation mount, Dick Nelson grapples with deciding the future of materials he has cherished and protected over the years.

Collecting living artists' work has also presented the Nelsons with quandaries. Artists receive substantial income from purchases and commission payments, often allowing them to devote time and buy materials for new work. Although the artist does not



David Bradley, *American Gothic: Dorothy and Richard Nelson on the Shores of Gitchi Gami*

benefit financially from subsequent sales or loans of the work, being included in the collection gives them considerable exposure, since the collection's visibility continues to grow through large shows, such as at the UMD's Tweed Museum of Art in 2001. Dick acknowledges this power to shape the course of artists' careers. On Bradley's work, for instance, he reflects, "Our collection reveals only a partial vision of his work. It makes us

realize how 'the collector's eye' can distort one's perception of an artist by the selective process collectors use in forming a collection" (Nelson, 2000). He also sees the influence of market valuations and critics' opinions on collectors' choices as problematic.

Dick, retired from the ministry, works many hours weekly managing the collection. He sells items that he feels no longer fit. He has worked in recent years negotiating a large gift to the Tweed. But as he says, "It takes money to give away a collection!"

The Nelson's legacy will have a sustained impact on the visibility and livelihoods of contemporary Ojibwe artists. Few people in Minnesota have used their resources and ingenuity over such a long time to build a collection of this quality, spanning historic cultural artifacts and living Ojibwe artists' work. The public and other collectors will continue to learn about artists such as Morrisseau, Gawboy, Bradley, and Frank Big Bear through shows and catalogues drawing on the collection. As the Tweed acquires the collection, displays its artifacts and paintings, loans pieces, and makes them available for study, regional Ojibwe artwork may finally receive the renown and market interest it deserves.

VI. Gatekeepers: Suppliers of Space, Resources, Markets

always easy, because their locations change and the artists are often not well-known outside their own community. For the 2004–06 touring exhibition, *Identity and Vision in Minnesota and North Dakota*, Jacobson called Native artists she had worked with before, asking them to enter the competition. None submitted the slides and artist statement required for entry into the exhibition. Reflecting on the poor response, Jacobson concluded that invitations to join may work better than competitions and asked a few artists she knew to provide a piece of artwork for the exhibition. Yet relying on those artists she knows means that she doesn't easily reach young artists and newcomers. Also, an artist must submit photos of his/her work, and some don't have these: "Many Native artists sell their work right away and don't take photos first, leaving no record of the breadth and depth of it." Jacobson keeps a list of Native artists for both outreach and exhibition purposes. In the summer of 2008, the mobile Art Gallery had "aged itself out," and the museum staff was re-examining its programming.

In a change of tactics, the Museum recently turned to a well-known Native artist in its outreach efforts. For a school-based program called Outreach on American Art, the Plains is showcasing three newly commissioned works by Ojibwe artist, David Bradley, who now lives in Santa Fe. Bradley has artworks in the Museum's permanent collection, and the Museum

already had a Learning Poster of Bradley's work that they could build upon. Bradley was easy to work with. He agreed to put some original artwork in cases that could remain in schools for periods of time. One of the Bradley works, *Guilty of Being Indian*, or Mankato, is a powerful statement about the Dakota-Minnesota War of 1862 in which 38 Dakota were hung and women and children were forced to march in the winter to South Dakota. When it toured Minnesota, "People would cry and pray, offering sage," Jacobson recounts. "A woman brought in a lithograph on a tin plate, of her grandfather, a soldier, in a formation of people in front of the hangings. Another said, 'We have diaries from that time, but no one has seen them.'" One Dakota person came away from the painting and said, "It's about healing." A show like this has tremendous community impact. It can change how people think and feel about events and social issues. The exhibition created a dialog with other Ojibwe artists' works: Star Wallowing Bull's portrait of the Ojibwe warrior, *Chief Hole in the Day*, and Laura Heit Youngbird's print, *Assimilation Dress*.

Although in the recent past, the Tweed found its staff resources stretched too thin to actively relate to the Native community, this has changed with its acquisition of the Nelson collection and other Native artwork and a recasting of itself as a teaching museum. It has approached a major funder with a proposal to teach Native arts in a more comprehensive way by tying its

Patrick Scully, Patrick's Cabaret |

Patrick Scully, known to most as Patrick, no last name needed, is a dancer, community organizer, thorn in the side of right-wingers, and originator and curator of Patrick's Cabaret in south Minneapolis. Patrick's Cabaret began with an evening in St. Stephen's gym where Scully bartered teaching creative movement for stage access. Since he didn't have enough material of his own to fill an entire evening, he invited others to perform. Over 23 years, the Cabaret grew into a prolific nonprofit performance space that functions on a \$250,000 annual budget out of an old firehouse leased from a "fairy godmother" for \$1/month. In his programming, Scully has been energetically multi-cultural, hosting more Native performances than any other non-Native venue.

Patrick's runs on a pro-artist, rather than organization-first policy. Every take at the door goes to the artist. The Cabaret does

not ask any performer to audition. Scully feels artists are human beings and that they should create what they are most interested in creating. "No one has to convince me of the value of his or her work." Scully asks artists that are new to the Cabaret to come check out a show, so they'll know what to expect, "and won't ask for four mikes."

As for appropriate content, Scully leaves it up to the artist and audience to engage in dialogues, while not signaling that "anything goes" on stage. For example, he doesn't want to see images that are demeaning to women. He hopes that artists will be sensitive themselves to diversity of art and opinion. Scully stays in touch with artists who perform and tries to get them into other programs. Each show features a host to introduce each act, so the audience knows whom each performer is, even the shy ones that might not otherwise introduce themselves.

Patrick's Cabaret has always been multi-cultural. For his very first call to artists for the St. Stephen's gym show, Scully included artists of color he had entered in his address book. Because Patrick's Cabaret presents diverse performers, its audiences are also diverse, each performer drawing in members of their own communities. New people come that have never been to a show before, and "because several different people are on one stage, they build bridges among communities."

Scully works to make the Cabaret accessible to all. Shows only cost \$10, folks can walk in with jeans on, and the old neighborhood fire station looks casually inviting from the street, "unlike the Walker or the Guthrie." Scully extends his commitment to accessibility all the way to the wall décor. When the Cabaret operated out of Scully's home storefront in the Phillips neighborhood,

collections to coursework at tribal colleges, first at Fond du Lac and then perhaps others in northern Minnesota, and to tribal elders and experts in the Native community. The interchange would include museological matters, such as who should maintain and keep Native artwork, who are the spokespersons? It also has written a major proposal to implement a Museum Studies program and has already begun an undergraduate internship program. In the latter, they give twenty students per term—on average one Native American—basic training in museum skills: object handling, the business side, curatorial functions, preservation, registration. “They are doing work on our inventory,” says Peter Spooner, Tweed curator. They are working with UMD’s Native American Studies Center and with faculty and students from similar programs at University of Wisconsin Superior and St. Scholastica.

F. Collectors, galleries, theatres

For Native artists, decisions made by collectors, commercial galleries, and theatres can have a large impact on their incomes and ability to reach audiences. As one museum curator noted, “The curators are going to the galleries, not to the studios of artists. They rely on the gallery system and art magazines, for the most part. In this section, we showcase one Minnesota collector, one gallery owner/curator, a non-profit community-anchored gallery,

and one theatre space artistic director for their pioneering efforts to patronize and raise the visibility of Native artists.

As noted above, the market for Native visual art in the upper Midwest is underdeveloped, especially in contrast to the southwest and Pacific northwest. As a result, people interested in purchasing and collecting Native art have to work harder to find it and learn about the artists. The heightened interest by major museums should help some in the future. The collecting career of Duluth’s Richard and Dorothy Nelson demonstrates the extraordinary effort and energy it takes to develop expertise and build a collection as well as the impact it has had on contemporary Ojibwe artists’ careers (see profile). Because the Nelson collection has been donated to the Tweed Museum, the impact of their commitment will continue on for decades, broadening public familiarity with the artists they have collected and educating the public on Native artwork in general.

The paucity of collectors is also a function of the relatively thin numbers of commercial galleries in Minnesota and the fact that most of them, especially those catering to tourists, do not carry Native artwork. We have reviewed above how various gallery owners attempt to explain this omission by blaming buyer tastes or noting their commitment to long time, white (and mostly male) artists. One extraordinary exception is the Minneapolis gallery of Todd Bockley, located next door to

artist Djola Branner told him, “If I wanted more artists of color I needed to have their visual work on the walls. He was right.”

The Cabaret’s commitment to multi-culturalism stems from Scully’s own experience. He describes himself as a xenophile—someone attracted to other cultures—which he ascribes to having grown up in Roseville longing for something more, something different. Because Scully, a high-profile gay rights activist, experienced homophobia, he is especially sensitive to artists being denied opportunities based on their backgrounds. “I know what it’s like to be excluded for who I am...Lots of places have not wanted to have to deal with me, especially artists in the schools programs...These experiences hurt me.”

As Scully remembers it, the first Native performer at the Cabaret was artist Kohl

Miner. After that, he invited Juanita Espinosa to curate the first Native Cabaret at Patrick’s. Since then, there have been three or four Native Cabarets, most recently curated by Marcie Rendon. Scully tries to work against preconceptions of what Native art should be and reconciles how to best support Native art, given the absence of ‘stage’ in a traditional native community. Rather than removing theater from the community as in a western model, with the audience distanced from the stage and creators, he wants to encourage experimental modes embedded in the Native community. He sees potential to do this by building on Native traditions and values and “taking it to different venues, looking for different spaces.”

Scully ponders the low cultural visibility of Native people in Minneapolis where there is such a large Native community and so many venues. He says, “There is a pernicious

way in which racism towards Native people functions to make them seem invisible. And it’s not just historical. Many people don’t see them as one of the many people who live here.” He thinks this may be compounded by individuals who turn to silently passing as non-Native as a form of protection.

Scully is above all an experimenter and learner. He remembers driving through Mankato, years ago, when there was a pow-wow. In spite of his trepidation over whether he would be welcome, he decided to try it. He asked himself, “How would I handle it, if I weren’t welcomed?” He acted on the freedom to explore his curiosity and found himself richly rewarded. He believes that children can be educated to feel safe to explore their own curiosity. Scully’s openness and commitment to artists and communities of color helps to counter the racism, which as Scully says, “Sits in people and limits us.”

VI. Gatekeepers: Suppliers of Space, Resources, Markets

Ojibwe-owned and run (Louise and Heid Erdrich) Birchbark Books. With a background as a curator and owner of an eleven year downtown gallery, Bockley became intensely interested in Ojibwe artwork when he sought out and found Norval Morrisseau, famed and completely self-taught Canadian Ojibwe painter (McLuhan and Hill, 1984; Hill, 2006), in preparation for a show he curated at the Weisman Museum in 2000. Since 2005, when he opened his Kenwood gallery, Bockley has given 70% of his space and energy to Native artists, including acting as their agent and arranging shows for them in Europe. He is consciously working to create expertise in a niche he sees as growing, and he conceives of his role as a

relationship with the artists he is showing rather than a seller of commodities. His intermediation is boosting the visibility of artists like Andrea Carlson, Frank Big Bear, Jim Denomie, and Julie Buffalohead.

Another Minneapolis venue that is cultivating a Native as well as broader public for contemporary artists is All My Relations, a gallery initiated ten years ago under the curatorship of Shirlee Stone as a non-profit, admission-free, showcase that is embedded in a neighborhood revitalization effort (see profile). The gallery covers its costs from grants so that it does not have to charge artists a commission. Serving a much broader range of Upper Midwest artists than the Bockley Gallery, it curates

Todd Bockley, Bockley Gallery |

Todd Bockley is the owner and curator of Bockley Gallery in Minneapolis' Kenwood neighborhood. Home to premier contemporary Native American artists of Minnesota, the two sidewalls and back room of the small storefront gallery create history. It is a place to see and be seen with Native artists, such as Frank Big Bear, Jim Denomie, Andrea Carlson, and Julie Buffalohead, having shown there.

Bockley is a white guy who bought his first painting with lawn mowing money. His mother, who collected locally, introduced him to art on weekend visits to the Glen Hansen gallery. His father, a businessman, wanted Bockley to learn a skill. But Todd wanted to be writer, though he soon learned that he had no talent for that endeavor.

On a visit to the Nina Nielsen gallery in 1985, he quit his job on a whim and inquired with the gallery about doing an internship there. Glen Hansen's gallery had just closed, and Bockley, age 25, wanted to represent Bruce Anderson. Through Bruce, Bockley met Frank Big Bear. He says, "When I first saw Frank's work, I didn't respond. Mom said his work was interesting and that I should go back and look at it again. But it just didn't interest me." The first Bockley Gallery was downtown in the Wyman Building for 11 years. In 1996 he closed that gallery and pursued curatorial work for more than a decade, before opening his second gallery in Kenwood in 2005.



CHERYL WALSH BELLVILLE

In describing the journey to his own gallery, Bockley talks about the paintings of Norval Morrisseau. In 2000, he curated a show, *Listening with the Heart*, for the Weisman Museum. The Weisman gave Bockley money to go find Morrisseau, of Thunder Bay, Ontario, to personally invite him to the opening. And find him he did, on Vancouver Island. They hit it off and became good friends. Curating the Morrisseau show was the result of luck—the Weisman had another exhibit fall through. Bockley had the time and was willing to pull the show together. He had been working in the community and so

he had a reputation as someone with a real love for painting, something he knew about himself since he was a young person, with no desire to be an artist.

Bockley managed to pull together the Weisman show because Morrisseau is so well collected by museums in Canada. Only a few of the paintings came from private collectors. In answer to my question, "What do the artists get from exhibits?" Bockley explained that a museum will give an artist a stipend for an exhibition. Rarely will an artist get more than \$10,000. The curator generally receives a stipend as well. Morrisseau and Big Bear each

two to four shows a year, often organized around political and cultural themes. While its niche is explicitly “fine arts,” it is also unapologetically Native artist-centric. It has been important in heightening the visibility and sales of Ojibwe artists like Carl Gawboy and Jim Denomie and also hosts spoken word and video fests. Under the current curatorial direction of Heid Erdrich, it has developed a strong artist-centric Advisory Board, many of them younger artists, that is taking on greater responsibility for designing exhibits and for reaching out to multiple audiences in the larger region.

Space to perform is scarce to come by outside of Native-owned venues, even in the larger cities, as we saw in Sarah

Agaton Howes’ efforts to stage young Native spoken word events in Minneapolis and the meager opportunities for music and spoken word that both Agaton Howes and Annie Humphrey experienced in Duluth/Superior. An exception is the outreach and generosity of choreographer and theatre entrepreneur Patrick Scully, whose Patrick’s Cabaret in Minneapolis mounts eclectic, edgy and often multi-cultural performances twice a month. Scully has continually reached out to the Native community (see profile). In 2000, he hosted a production of Marcie Rendon’s “As the Spiritual World Turns,” a spoof on Native spirituality. In 2006, Rendon hosted a Native Cabaret at Patrick’s, featuring her own work, Sarah Agaton Howes, and

got stipends under a couple thousand. And that is how the Morrisseau paintings got to the Weisman in the fall of 2000.

Asked about Ojibwe art of the Midwest compared with the Native art scene in the Southwest, Bockley replied that Frank Big Bear feels like a critical mass is happening right here, now. “I think Minneapolis will be an energy point. All the art schools originated there in the Southwest, but Woodland paintings came out of Canada.”

When asked, “Is there an audience for contemporary native art?” Bockley responded that it depends on how art is marketed. He believes that at present, Native people are increasingly included in contemporary art shows, not just specifically Native exhibits. And buyers are looking for contemporary art. Bockley sees this as a positive for such Native artists as Star Wallowing Bull and Andrea Carlson who don’t want to be pigeonholed into making a particular kind of native art. When he presents their work, it is in a contemporary context. Bockley adds that when he worked with George Morrison, Morrison always said he was an artist first and a Native artist second.

Bockley continued, “I’ve tried to be sensitive to possibilities. Andrea is so savvy, so hip, she’s helping shape how work is perceived. And an artist like Frank Big Bear is blazing a path.” At the time Bockley was interviewed, he was coordinating a show at the October Gallery in London for Andrea, Star, and Frank. He says, “I brought the idea to the gallery, and they

wanted it. With these artists, everyone’s work is different from a year ago. And each artist got to participate in developing the show.”

As a curator, Bockley asks himself, “Why am I so attracted to this?” speaking of his fascination, not just with the Native artists he works with, but the art that attracts him. He doesn’t have an answer to why 70% of the artists he works with are Native. “I grew up in Edina,” he says. For him it was not a conscious decision. When he first started curating, he tried to represent Minnesota artists exclusively. At that point, he incurred the cost of documenting work, insuring the work, and, at times, framing the work. For his services, the gallery got 50% of the sale and the artist 50%. The gallery now enjoys greater involvement with non-profits, and there are more exhibition opportunities. As the strategy of funding institutions has changed, so has the gallery.

Currently, Bockley thinks artists have more opportunities to show their work. In the digital age, requirements have changed for the artist, the curator, and the gallery. He sees it as important for both the artist and the gallery to have websites. “It, the Internet, is very significant for reaching out to new art buyers. You become a part of a larger network. News on the network creates a global network for niche work.” In the current gallery space, the artist now receives 60% of a sale and the gallery 40%. Bockley sees his role as a working out of expectations with each artist and the forging of new relationships among artists,

institutions, non-profits, and patrons of the gallery.

For example, when the Minneapolis Institute of Arts exhibited Jim Denomie’s work, the non-profit MIA took no cut of resulting sales. And after the show, the relationship between the non-profit and the artist is over. With the gallery, Bockley and the artist build a long-term relationship. In his words, Bockley is offering a service, in the form of a gallery and curatorial support, along with a space to create a scene that supports the artist.

When asked if he faces competition, Bockley responds that he is trying to cultivate a niche: to represent and work with living artists, primarily Native Artists from the Midwest. He does not consider himself a seller of commodities. He riffs about the artists he shows: “Frank originated his own style. George Morrison went to New York and established himself in the abstract expressionist scene. The gallery artists influencing each other, especially Frank, Star, and Andrea.” As a curator he perceives that people collect art in two ways. Some collect by genre—for example, only contemporary art or expressionism. Others collect a particular artist’s work—Big Bear’s or Denomie’s.

In the Midwest right now, Bockley believes the area is ripe for Native writers, musicians, and artists to get on the map. “There is a network of museum people who are interested in the ‘new woodland thing’ coming from this community.”

VI. Gatekeepers: Suppliers of Space, Resources, Markets

composer/musician Brent Michael Davids, among others. Scully's artistic and organizational nurturing provides important moral and financial support to Native artists in an ongoing way. So does Minneapolis Community and Technical College hosts in its yearly poetry evening.

The work that Native playwrights and performers have done in Native spaces, through artists' centers, in Scully's Cabaret and at the Minnesota History and Illusion Theatres (which have staged both Rendon's and Northrup's plays) has helped to bring them greater visibility in the Twin Cities. Northrup's first major solo performances took place at the Minnesota Festival Theatre in Albert Lea. In the spring of 2009, Mixed Blood Theater produced a set of short plays, *Red Ink*, that it had commissioned from Native playwrights. The event gave actors as well as playwrights a chance to display their work, and the performances were well attended. However, the terms under which the plays were commissioned created controversy. Mixed Blood insisted contractually on having specific rights to the commissioned work, meaning that each Native playwright will receive minimal financial returns from his/her work if the piece in its entirety is ever produced again.

G. Funders

Through formal and informal conversations, we found a growing interest in understanding why it has been difficult for Native artists to approach and/or win grant moneys from non-profit foundations' arts programs and state and regional public arts boards. Recently, a number of funders have engaged in outreach to Native artists to encourage more grant proposals. Some funders have recruited Native participants for their decision-making panels or advisory bodies. To date neither approach has appreciably increased the numbers of Native artists applying for or winning grants. Some have created programs specifically targeted at Native artists or have funded non-profit arts organizations to do outreach and re-granting.

1. Discouraging perceptions

Ojibwe artists' perceptions regarding grants application processes and prospects for winning awards, explored above and in the profiles, include the following: that funders do not value the significance of natural and traditional materials used in many Ojibwe artists' work; that the hyper-individualized focus of artist funding programs does not value community-embedded creations; that the application procedure is overly complicated and difficult for those with little or no computing skills, internet access, or know-how to document work via cd/

dvds, photography and websites; and that a racial lens is still used to treat Native artists differently from others.

Several experienced artists and gatekeepers shared their experiences with us on these issues. Jim Northrup, maker of fine ricing baskets, spoke to the way that funders dismiss Native artwork by labeling it "traditional." He explains that birchbark basket-making involves 26 stages, from gathering and preparing to cutting, wiigob (basswood), stitching, and finishing. "It's a lot of work to demonstrate this and the quality of the work," he says, pondering a PowerPoint that shows each stage of the work. In other genres, photographers value the particular qualities of certain films and unusual shooting techniques, just as printers value the difficulty of etching and lithography processes. It is not just ignorance about the materials or work process. "A lot of Native Americans are natural-born artists," he says, "but they can't get their foot in the Minneapolis Art Institute door, because part of the mission of their work is to hand down the traditional arts." Many funders and panelists do not value this particular mission.

Juanita Espinosa, serving on panels at the St. Paul-based COMPAS program, discovered that funders often use race and ethnicity to set artists apart. In addition, Federal and state legislation has created a situation where Indian artists may have to prove blood quantum in order to be eligible for grants and other monies that were marked "Indian." But establishing blood quantum is often more complex than it might seem. This makes funders reluctant to identify who is Native. A foundation arts program staffer spelled this out for us: "Because we are not asking people to apply with that information, I'm reticent to report it. What are the ethics of pulling names out and publishing them in a study without an applicant having volunteered that data?"

Choreographer and cabaret entrepreneur Patrick Scully recalls serving on a funding panel more than a decade ago and facing a stiff challenge in evaluating culturally specific work. "We had to ask ourselves, do I know enough to be able to understand this art form and the level of the quality of the work? And how does this compare with the forms of dance I am more familiar with?"

Some funders have made extra efforts to reach and support Native artists: by designing criteria that reward community-addressed work, by asking Native artists to serve on juries, by structuring programs that are explicitly targeted to Native American artists and communities, by supporting non-profit arts organizations that re-grant to Native artists or support mentoring programs for them, and by conducting workshops

and outreach intended to recruit Native applicants. Native artists serving on panels are often grateful for the opportunity. Jim Denomie, for instance, has been serving on the Minnesota Artist Exhibition Program at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Meeting once a month with the six other artists on the panel, learning about different genres and seeing the work of so many other outstanding and good artists makes this volunteer effort a wonderful experience for Denomie.

2. Native-tailored funding strategies

It appears to be easier to fund artists of color when grant programs are structured to reward the embedding of artists in the service of their communities. In 1993, the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, covering the Twin Cities region, revamped its grant strategies to require that all applicants seeking to fund projects articulate the community to be served. Carolyn Bye, the MRAC Director who implemented the strategy, reflects that “under these conditions, groups of color had a leg up. It was often easier for them to describe whom they served than it was for more standard white organizations, who might say, ‘Well, whomever is interested.’” Bye concludes that over the ensuing decade and a half, well-written proposals by artists of color for theatre, dance, and music projects did quite well in a system that asked them who they target as audiences, who is invited in, and how they reach diverse constituencies. African-American theatre and music groups did particularly well, because they were well-organized and knocking at the door (e.g., Penumbra Theatre), but so did Asian projects—Indian dance and music, Theatre Mu, Hmong cultural and music projects. Some Native American efforts won funding: All My Relations Gallery at the Ancient Traders Market, Native Theatre Project, a radio project producing Native documentaries, Rosie Simas’ dance troupe. They were, however, “pathetically small amounts of money,” notes Bye, perhaps \$1000 on average, and were often difficult to sustain.

Two of Minnesota’s eleven regional arts councils have chosen to set up special funds targeted at artists of color, both with dedicated funding from the McKnight Foundation. Since 1993, Bemidji-based Region 2 Arts Council, with funds from the McKnight Foundation, has awarded Anishinaabe Arts Initiative (AAI) grants for individual artists, school residencies, and community projects that include a significant Native American component. Decisions are made by an Advisory Council of Native American artists and arts appreciators from around the region. The grants are small. “A majority of applicants are requesting funds to purchase art supplies or

equipment,” reported Regional 2 Director Terri Widman. In years 2007–2009, 36 grantees (a third of them organizations) received amounts ranging from \$350 to \$1938 for a total of nearly \$27,000, an average of \$750.

Since 2004, the Duluth-based Arrowhead Regional Arts Council (ARAC) has run a small fund totaling \$3000 a year, targeted to artists of color for career development and lumping Native artists in with all other minorities. The Fund was the brainchild of Fond du Lac artist Wendy Savage, who was serving on the ARAC Board. Bob DeArmand, Director of ARAC, explained: “We asked ourselves, how could we ensure that artists of color get funding every year? We decided to have a program just for this group to ensure that outcome, and partly by encouraging more to apply.” In the first rounds, most artists of color who won grants were University faculty and staff. “They are savvy, not like the artist on the reservation that needs help to get a show in a little gallery.” Recently, awards have gone to artists working in a broader range of traditional and non-traditional art forms. Over six years, the ARAC program has awarded grants of up to \$1000 to eight Ojibwe artists: a writer, traditional bead artist, dollmaker, non-traditional craft artist, and painters and musicians. But the impact is small: by design, no artist could be funded more than once. DeArmand believes that artists of color are reticent to seek funding and are discouraged by the required written grant application. In 2010, due to budget cuts from the state of Minnesota, this program will be discontinued and folded into the existing ARAC career development grant program.

However, the ARAC Artist of Color Career Development program has resulted in an increase of funding to Ojibwe artists by encouraging them to apply to other ARAC programs. In 2008 and 2009, four women Ojibwe artists won grants for artwork in ARAC’s regular grant competitions, several of them past recipients of the Artist of Color grant. The Arrowhead Regional Arts Council also presents an annual George Morrison Artist award, given once to Morrison himself and subsequently to Ellen Olson, internationally recognized Grand Portage Band bead artist, and Carl Gawboy, a Bois Fort Band painter, muralist, illustrator, educator, and advocate for Native American art. This follow-on effect demonstrates the value of “foot-in-the-door” Native-targeted programs.

3. Re-granting for Native-tailored programs

Including the McKnight Foundation’s financial support of the two targeted RAC programs, Minnesota’s large foundations have supported intermediary groups such as non-profit arts

VI. Gatekeepers: Suppliers of Space, Resources, Markets

organizations and artist service organizations who explicitly target Native artists in their programming. Funded by the Dayton-Hudson (later Target) Foundation from the late 1980s through mid-1990s, Minneapolis' Loft Literary Center's Inroads program paired Native writers with Native mentors, as they did for other minority writers. Marcie Rendon, for instance, was mentored by Jim Northrup, a seminal experience for her. Rendon, in 2005 interview, reflected that she would never have applied had the program not stated "Native mentor" (Markusen and Johnson, 2006: 42). Other non-profits that have received MRAC and foundation funding used to nurture Native artists

in the metro area include Intermedia Arts, the Center for Independent Artists, and Patrick's Cabaret.

A creative initiative to support composers and musicians in the Native community nation-wide was begun five years ago by the American Composers Forum, a national non-profit based in St. Paul, Minnesota. The First Nations Composer Initiative (FNCI) seeks to broaden audiences for Native artists of all musical genres and to encourage Native people, especially youth, to express themselves through music. It also envisions music as an instrument for language revitalization. "Songs reinforce stories," explains FNCI's director, Georgia Wettlin-Larsen, "and stories

All My Relations Gallery |

All My Relations, a non-profit contemporary Native fine arts gallery, offers emerging and professional Native artists a place to show and sell their work in the heart of the Minneapolis Native community. In its short decade of existence, it has not only helped boost the visibility and careers of a number of artists, but also broadened the market for Native work by bringing in a larger public. At the same time, it is firmly rooted in its urban Indian community, whose members still comprise its largest audience.

All My Relations mounts two to four exhibits a year. A number of them have received critical acclaim, including several unflinchingly political shows. Some have gone on to tour nationally. In *"States, Dates and Places,"* a 2008–9 exhibit inspired by the 150th anniversary of Minnesota statehood, Native artists make visible the presence and land stewardship of Indians in Minnesota's history, recalling broken treaties and the bitter hanging of 38 Indians at Mankato in 1862. The exhibit included work by Dyani-Reynolds-Whitehawk, Jim Denomie, Carolyn Anderson, Gordon Coons, Jonathan Thunder, and Robert Two Bulls (Abbe, 2008b) and traveled to Cornucopia Gallery after its All My Relations stint. A 2006–7 exhibit, *City Indians*, by Dakotah artist Mona Smith, featured her multimedia exploration of the realities of Indian life in the city (Coombs, 2006) and drew 2,500 people during its three month run. In 2006, another high visibility exhibit, *"Impacted Nations,"* illuminated the intersection between American Indian artists and environmental concerns and included



Jim Denomie and Frank Big Bear at All My Relations Gallery opening, 2008

work by Star Wallowing Bear and Jim Denomie. Initiated by Minneapolis-based Honor the Earth, it opened in New York and toured the nation. The Gallery's Exhibits help find and present artists to a broader public. For instance, the Plains Art Museum bought a major work of David Bradley's from All My Relations.

The Gallery opened in 1999, as part of the Ancient Traders Market, an inner city plaza with food, arts, crafts, services, and a community college branch flanking Franklin Avenue. At the core of a high poverty and heavily Native neighborhood, the Market acted as a new anchor in a successful redevelopment strategy by the American Indian Neighborhood Development Corporation and the City of Minneapolis. It

included a gallery showcasing contemporary Native artwork, then known as Ancient Traders Gallery.

Shirlee Stone, its first curator/manager, had a powerful vision for the Gallery. It would showcase contemporary Native art of this region. It would speak across generations and in context, exploring both Native experience in the past and diverse Native experience in contemporary time. It would not privilege art that conformed to the market, but had ambitions to be a space for more challenging work, including pieces that deal with difficult issues. It would be non-profit. Admission would be free, to encourage community access. It would not take a cut from artists' sales to pay its expenses. To implement this

ANNETTE JOY, 2008

reinforce the song. These are traditional ways of teaching for many tribes." Although the Initiative has hosted heated internal debate on what constitutes Native music, Wettlin-Larsen recounts that the prevailing view is that if a Native person is presenting it, it is Native music. FNCI has supported classical and tradition music, rhythm and blues, electronic music, hip-hop out of Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota, and unique mixes of classical and Native instruments and conventions. An annual round of grants might award 3 to 10 Native artists with grants of \$3500 to \$7500 for specific projects, including commissions, residencies, performance and production, travel/study, and outreach. The

Initiative helps folks market and distribute their music to insure that their careers are launched. First funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and successful in finding matching grants, FNCI has been able to win solid support from the Ford Foundation's Native Arts Endowment, an effort that anticipates that tribal enterprises will contribute to the endowment in the future, making it self-perpetuating. To date, two Minnesota-based artists have received support from FNCI: Brent Michael Davids, a Mohican composer of classical/traditional music and composer/musician Lyz Jaakola, whose recent FNCI-funded concert in Duluth is covered in her profile above. Others have

vision, Stone won ongoing operating support from the Redevelopment Corporation and the McKnight Foundation. An early fan, Heid Erdrich, who later became its second and current curator, remembers how the Gallery, along with Two Rivers Gallery nearby, formed a comfort zone in the Native community, serving as a place to meet other artists and experience their work.

The Gallery serves all Native artists—Ojibwe, Dakota, and the many others from tribes elsewhere who now live in the region. Carl Gawboy, Jim Denomie, Jeff Savage, Gordon Coons, Andrea Carlson, and Jonathan Thunder are among the Ojibwe artists who have exhibited at All My Relations, as has Dakota artist Mona Smith and many others. Some artists have received a big boost from their exhibits. Gawboy's show was his first in the Twin Cities in twenty years, and he sold almost all of the pieces in it. Even for artists who don't sell much directly, new opportunities open up for them because of All My Relations exposure.

Today, All My Relations operates as a bridge between commercial galleries with a Native specialization, like Bockley Gallery, and Two Rivers, a community arts space that serves as a first and coaching venue for Native artists. Heid has stayed true to the Stone mission, believing that All My Relations serves a niche that is unique, badly needed, and appropriate to what contemporary artists are trying to do. "It's work that doesn't go to the Indian markets," she says, "Work that is not always that marketable." The Gallery attracts lots

of people from the neighborhood, but also visitors—art lovers who will go anywhere, corporate collectors, tourists.

The community has been consistently welcoming to All My Relations. At the outset, the Gallery enjoyed substantial community involvement, but the closing of Wolf Den, a popular gathering and performance space, and of a Fond du Lac Community College branch, cut into foot traffic. Schools bring their students, though the current fiscal crisis is cutting into gas money for busses. Though the gallery is understaffed and can't afford tacos at openings, more than 50% of those coming through are Native, confirms Erdrich. "They love it. It shows us we are valued." Visitors see relatives and family depicted in the artwork. "They love this. They are surprised, and proud." Of course, there are always some complaints: "That we show too much negative content, that we don't sell arts and crafts."

All My Relations, Stone's idea, underscores that "We are all related," says Heid, "between people and across generations. It is descriptive of mission." Recently, the Gallery has partnered with other neighborhood groups, to fulfill its mission and to keep visible activity in the space between curated shows. It recently hosted a two-week show

of Somali Women's Weaving and is open to events produced by its diverse West African, Latino, and Asian neighbors.

Among the Gallery's challenges is its identity. Advised as a member of the Arts Lab program that its relationship with Ancient Traders Market was confusing, the Gallery changed its name to All My Relations, always the name of the exhibit program but now the name of its space as well. Unlike other

organizations in its Art Lab peer group, All My Relations does not aspire to grow, but to stabilize and better serve Native artists. So, within its fiscal constraints, it is working to increase staffing and share space with other users, including exhibits initiated by individual artists.

Although All My Relations is currently a cultural collaboration of Great Neighborhoods!

Development Corporation, it is transitioning to a new parent organization that may bring changes to its work, but allow it to remain "on the avenue in faith to our mission." It has created an active 14-member Advisory Board that is moving toward artist-centered programming, including two exhibits that artists will curate themselves. The Board, reflects Erdrich, is great for outreach and artist-centered activity at the gallery, because it helps build partnerships beyond the gallery and brings in "all the energy and interest that you need to keep this running."



ANNETTE JOY, 2008

VI. Gatekeepers: Suppliers of Space, Resources, Markets

been included as featured artists on the FNCI website, which invites musicians to become members.

Springboard for the Arts, a broadly funded Minnesota-based artist service organization, has recently reached out to Native artists to help them build careers. Springboard offers individual consultations for artists for a modest fee and conducts workshops throughout the state and beyond to help orient artists to career and business planning and to alert them to a wide range of resources. It has been difficult, to date, for Springboard to attract artists to workshops in Greater Minnesota. Director of Artist Services, Kathleen Richert, recounts a recent effort to run a workshop on the White Earth reservation, set up by a non-Native person from the Mahnomen Economic Development Department who hopes to empower Native artists to make good livelihoods from their work. Despite diligent outreach, only two or three of the six to eight people attending were Native. Richert believes that Native artists would benefit greatly from Springboard's well-crafted services, especially its ability to help artists understand the buyer side of the market. She thinks it is likely that Native artists find it easier and more comfortable to learn from other Native artists. Springboard has held successful workshops through the All My Relations program at Ancient Traders Gallery in Minneapolis. Staff are hoping that through networking opportunities there, they can find emissaries to outlying reservations.

4. Reflections of funders

Funders, whether public or philanthropic, and intermediary organizations express frustration with their inability to attract more and better grant proposals. "The biggest challenge is not having access to technology," says Region 2's Widman. "Poverty is a cause. Some artists do not have telephones—they leave messages with phone numbers of relatives or friends. Many don't know that they could go to a library and get on a computer. And the work samples submitted are often technically poor." Other common complaints include that Native artists often don't consider themselves artists or assume that the word "artist" means "painter."

Funders and intermediaries acknowledge the drawbacks of poverty and racism, but from a Native point of view, don't seem to know how to alter their practices to reach Native artists or value the community and tradition themes and mediums in which they work. Funders and service organization leaders often push Native artists hard to perform or market in non-Native venues and markets, both to raise their visibility and help build careers. But many Native artists are not ready

for such exposure and/or have a strong desire to serve their own communities. Several funders are stepping up efforts to offer workshops to help Native artists learn how to write grant proposals and to structure their art businesses, but even when held on reservations, few Native artists come and fewer apply or follow through. One presenter believes that attempting to present cross-cultural workshops in relatively rural areas is a part of the problem—tribal councils are reluctant to support these, and Native artists feel less welcome.

One funder pinpoints key issues as "trust (the lack of it and the need to build it), lack of experience with grant making processes (both the writing and documentation), lack of access to/understanding about quality documentation, and a general cultural clash with the concept of competition, which is so inherent in these programs." Another puts it this way: "The challenge is establishing trust and a track record, proving to Native artists that the Foundation will support them by actually doing it—making the grants—rather than talking about wanting to do it. Nothing speaks louder than action. Then, once grants are made, being consistent is important." Some funders are showing up more in person in host communities and are hoping that their funding of a number of Native artists in recent years will help to spread the word in the larger Indian community. Another funder, addressing the trust issues, concludes: "It is the best when artists spread the word about a program—then you know that something is working. There are probably not many funders who have exhausted all pathways to best practices. Therefore, I think there is a lot of work to be done."

Pondering the distance between Native artists and funders' views of the funding challenge, we tentatively conclude that the western non-profit arts model, with its emphasis on the individuality of the artist and how the work fits with contemporary conventions about content, audience, and technique, is a large part of the problem. Funders have a process for application and grant-making that fits educated artists, even eccentric ones, and in their outreach, they try to explain this process to potential Native applicants. When they are unsuccessful, they make inferences about why few apply or why the applications that do come in are messy or low quality. More listening to Native artists talk about their work and the significance of materials, traditions, contemporary Native experience and community in its fashioning might help to bridge this distance.

VII. Recommendations for Nurturing Native Artists

The complexity and promise of the art worlds that Minnesota's Native artists animate suggest many ways to amplify their ability to create and share their work. Forums where they can learn from each other, find comfort and encouragement in collectivity, and share know-how about particular challenges would quicken their commitment to their artwork. It would also increase their satisfaction and financial returns from it.

The recommendations that follow are addressed to multiple actors: artist-serving organizations, funders, managers of museums and theatres and markets, tribal councils, casinos, schools and colleges. Each recommendation lists specific ways that tribal governments, casinos, tribal colleges, and native communities can offer more support. Some of the proposals require partnerships among sets of actors, while others can be initiated by individuals, groups of artists, or entrepreneurs.

The recommendations envision parallel tracks for Native artists: one that emphasizes Native solidarity and mutual support, as in grant or scholarship programs, business training, and convenings targeted at Native artists, and another that opens up doors, forums, and venues that have been closed to them, helping them land grants, exhibits, gigs, and book contracts from mainstream arts intermediaries. Native artists should have the choice to work along either track and to switch tracks when they wish to or are ready.

A. Employment

More opportunities to work as an artist for pay would be welcomed by Ojibwe artists and would encourage more young Natives to pursue artwork as a career. The following recommendations emerge from our conversations with artists and gatekeepers.

Hire Native artists as curators, producers, designers, and cultural space managers

Museums, cultural centers, community facilities, and governments, Native and non-Native, should do more to employ Native artists in roles such as museum director and curators, special projects technicians, and graphic artists. At present, tribal governments are more likely to provide regular employment of this sort or to offer long-term contracts for artistic work than non-Native arts venues. Ojibwe artists are conspicuously absent from the rosters of museum professional staff. The Tweed Museum at the University of Minnesota Duluth hopes to create a degree program for Native

curators that would improve graduates' chances of being hired. In many other organizations, Ojibwe artists could be hired to beautify and enliven spaces, write news, histories, and promotional materials, give tours, and design and produce videos, ads, commercials, posters, and newsletters.

Expand K–12 arts teaching jobs and curricular development

So many of the artists interviewed stressed the critical role of one or more K–12 teachers in his/her artistic career. As with public and private schools in general, art teaching has suffered from a pre-occupation on math, reading, and science, exacerbated by No Child Left Behind. Yet for Native children, tools and techniques for cultural expression through art, music, performance, and writing are even more important than for Minnesota children in general. All Minnesota children should learn about unique Ojibwe cultural forms of expression, both traditional and modern.

While a few Native artists do hold full-time arts teaching jobs at elementary and secondary levels, many others are brought in only on an adjunct basis. It is almost impossible to create and teach good arts curricula with less than full-time artist teachers. Mentoring and progress in artistic development require continuity as well as excellence in teaching staff. Teachers should be individuals who want to be arts teachers first and artists second. Otherwise, they are just doing it to make a living. Rather than move artists into roles as teachers, schools of all types—tribal, public and private—should expand their recruitment of Ojibwe arts teachers. School boards, parents, artists, State of Minnesota Department of Education staff, college education degree programs, and foundations can all play a role in training and hiring more Native arts teachers and supporting their development of arts curricula.

Create a Minnesota Native Artist Roster for school residencies

To supplement full time art curricula, visits by practicing artists to classes should be expanded for all types of K–12 classrooms. Currently, most short-term Native artist visits to schools are arranged informally and on the basis of local knowledge. For the most part, they occur only in Native-oriented schools. The Minnesota State Department of Education should create and keep timely a roster of Native artists available and willing to do residencies, listing expertise, a brief statement of type of interaction offered, and contact information. The roster would then be shared with all schools in the state, public and private, and with non-profit organizations who run school arts programs.

VII. Recommendations for Nurturing Native Artists

Recruit and nurture Native arts faculty in higher education

The paucity of Ojibwe members of art, music, literature, and creative writing, drama, dance, media and design faculties in Minnesota's institutions for higher education cries out for attention. Our interviews with several who have tenure track jobs at tribal and community colleges, and public and private universities underscore the challenges. In addition to more affirmative action in hiring (and in admissions and mentoring through graduate programs), Native artists need lighter teaching loads that will permit them to develop new techniques and courses and to produce or curate performances and exhibitions. Grants for release time, materials and space acquisition, and productions could be much expanded from current meager levels. In addition, to ensure that Native faculty members will be granted tenure, creative arts departments must expand their notions of permissible style and content, expanding the canon beyond Euro-centric conventions that still dominate the curricular core. While colleges and universities will play the lead financial, recruitment, and promotion roles on this front, funders, patrons, students, and artists themselves can help to initiate, plan and seek funding for expanding the ranks of Native artist faculty in higher education. Master artists like Melvin Losh,

Jim Northrup, and Jim Denomie could be grandfathered in as practitioner instructors similar to the way Native speakers serve as Ojibwe language instructors at institutions of higher learning.

To ensure a pipeline of Native students going on to college arts and graduate degree programs, the state's arts community should expand activities aimed at ensuring that Native students complete high school. The University of Wisconsin Superior's annual American Indian Art Scholarship Exhibit, which recruits high school artist exhibitors from all over the region, is an outstanding example of an activity that both encourages students to finish high school, brings them to a college campus where their work is hung, introduces them to professional artists, and encourages, through the scholarship competition element, them to think about pursuing their art passion in college. Such door openings are essential if the State is to produce students who even think about teaching at the college level.

B. Self-employment

Although Ojibwe artists are more likely to create their work outside of formal jobs than are artists in general, they face formidable challenges in making income from it. Help with

Gordon Van Wert |

Red Lake Nation Elder Gordon Van Wert lives on the northern prairies of Minnesota. As we drive into his yard we see a sculptural work in progress at the end of the driveway as well as remnants of almost completed work. It all feels like beauty in the process of coming to life.

Van Wert tells us his art career began at fourteen when he was given the forced choice of attending the Institute of Arts in Santa Fe or going to Red Wing as punishment for stealing a car. At IAIA, Van Wert's sculpture teacher was renowned Chiricahua Apache Allan Houser. Houser's work "blew him away" and set Van Wert on the road to becoming a sculptor himself. Fritz Scholder was his drawing teacher, and RC Gorman was also a presence. Vincent Price, another luminary, would come by and purchase everyone's writing.

The resources and incentives at IAIA were remarkable. At the time, IAIA was one of Lady Bird Johnson's pet projects so it was well stocked with art supplies. "If the artists need something, they requested and received." Van Wert recalls that every year, everyone got an award and a check. If an IAIA student's work



CHERYL WALSH BELVILLE

won a school award, it became the property of the school. Van Wert knows they have at least six of his pieces.

After serving two years in the army in the early 1970s, Van Wert became a student

teacher at IAIA because Houser was retiring. The Rhode Island School of Design gave him and his friend Doug Hide accreditation. Hide showed up at the school with a Dremel drill and a bunch of other Italian carving tools.

the business side of art was perhaps the most often cited desire among the artists interviewed.

Offer business of art classes targeted to Native artists

Many Ojibwe artists expressed a strong desire to learn how to manage their own businesses. Most lack mentoring or access to formal instruction. They desire help with career and business planning, budgeting and money management, pricing and property rights, financing creative work, and marketing and promotions. Good accessible textbooks like the Center for Cultural Innovation's (2008) *Business of Art: An Artist's Guide to Profitable Self-Employment*, can support such training. While artist-oriented organizations like Minnesota's Springboard for the Arts have occasionally offered workshops on reservations, they reach disappointingly few Native artists.

Native artists are more apt to respond to teaching environments that are Native-only, especially in early stages of their careers, at whatever ages. Funders, artist-serving organizations, tribal councils, regional arts councils, and tribal colleges could collaborate to offer comfortable, encouraging sessions for artists in their own communities in Indian-run spaces. The St. Paul-

based American Indian Economic Development Fund (AIED) could research and set up an entrepreneurial track tailored for Native American artists around the state.

Train and pay Native artists to run business of art sessions and act as follow-up mentors

The predominance of non-Native teachers in artist business training offerings in the state is a further deterrent to Native access. The income-earning potential of Ojibwe artists could be greatly enhanced if self-employed artists who have been successful could be trained and paid to convene and teach business of art sessions and act as ongoing mentors to those students who wish for ongoing support. We interviewed at least a dozen artists who would be good candidates for this role. In addition, a publication that builds on existing manuals for self-employed artists, like the CCI book, could be commissioned and written by a Native writer who adopts the lessons to Native experience. The book could use examples from contemporary Native artists' careers with chapters that cover Native-specific issues, such as cultural and spiritual values, challenges in accessing traditional materials, how to deal with racism in arts markets and rural regions, and the potential

"Where Al (Houser) taught us patience, Hides' tools revolutionized the making of sculpture for us."

Van Wert and Hide at times shared a studio, did gallery shows, and went on the road to sell their work. Van Wert learned he could make money from his art. Initially he didn't know what to charge, so he threw out the asking price of \$100. When his work sold for \$100, he knew he could raise his prices. Houser advised him to work on a smaller scale, make the results available to everyone, and date his pieces to signal to collectors how long he has been working as an artist.

Today Van Wert works in stone: alabaster, limestone, and pipestone. He likes using North American stone as a way to honor where he is from. He works with different materials, styles, and sizes. He admits that today, he couldn't afford to buy his own work.

The first person to give him his own show was John Codswell in Colorado. He has work in numerous museums and galleries around the world and has numerous collectors of his work. He describes his connection to collectors:

"When my work can move someone to tears or give them goose bumps, you know that as an artist you are going in the right direction."

He would like to be better known here in the Midwest and felt shunned by the Walker when they told him he was too young. Art Holdings, a group that sells and rents art to corporations first asked him to submit a proposal and then told him his work was "too ethnic." He would like to have a retrospective showing of his work, and like many native artists he wishes he wasn't always pigeonholed as a Native artist. "We are the only group who has to prove who we are," he says. He would also like to have a show at the Tweed. While there have been talks with museums and galleries in the Cities, which Van Wert feels honored to be considered for, he would really like to have a major show up north where he is from.

Van Wert feels that he could move forward faster as an artist if someone stepped forward and became his patron. He would like to see younger artists get some recognition to encourage them to keep going: "For them to talk to accomplished artists and to hear positive

feedback from elders could do younger artists a world of good." Van Wert tells younger artists that they need tenacity, consistency, and a body of work in order to make a living as an artist.

The Red Lake tribe is one place he does feel fully supported. They have bought 25 pieces for their tribal collection. Also, when he had a stroke four years ago, Red Lake flew him home from Washington, DC in a private jet so he could get treatment at home. He was in the hospital for three weeks and then needed extensive physical therapy. Van Wert says, "My sculpture has always been my emotional therapy. When my physical therapist saw me work on a sculpture she told me, 'What you are doing with your art, you can't buy that kind of physical therapy.'" His art is helping him heal from the stroke. He is also creating a medicine bag sculpture that will be placed in a meditation healing space at the Bemidji hospital as a way to thank them for the help they gave him in his recovery from the stroke. Thus his healing circle began with a stolen car, an IAIA recruiter offering another option, and Van Wert following the healing journey.

VII. Recommendations for Nurturing Native Artists

for building a larger regional and national market for Woodland Indian arts. The AIED could play an integral role in identifying Native artist teachers, organizing mentors, and facilitating the business trainings for Native artists.

Create a roster of working Native artists for state businesses

Many businesses in Minnesota would be willing to hire Native artists for commercial work in cultural industries such as advertising, publishing, recording, media, and performance venues, but they do not know how to find them. The American Indian Chamber of Commerce could compile a roster of Minnesota Native artists available for various kinds of work and circulate this through the various chambers of commerce, industry associations and state and local economic and workforce development agencies around the state. The roster could include a description of each artist's skills and accomplishments, references and contact information, as well as links to websites with additional information, and where appropriate, slides or videos of their work. If adequately funded, the roster could help artists develop their resumes and websites as well. Compiling and updating a roster takes resources: a precedent has been set by the Minnesota Artists Exhibition Program at the MIA which has created and continually added to a list that helps it generate proposals and reach artists for exhibit openings. The Native American Community Development Institute could include listings of artists available to create work in its resource directory.

Highlight Native artists in search mechanisms for existing artist rosters

The Minnesota State Arts Board could do better recruitment of Native artists for its artist-in-residence file. It could also create a separate category for native artists within the artist-in-residence file. Similarly, MNartists.org could create a heading/listing to enable quick routes to Native artists.

C. Encouragement, education, training, and mentoring

Many artists told stories of receiving mixed messages from parents, teachers, and colleges about the desirability of a career in art, music, performance or writing. Most successful artists cited at least one parent, extended family member, teacher or mentor who encouraged them and gave them materials and skills to embark. Most also recounted multiple instances of discouragement, some personal, some cultural, some institutional. It is likely that many other would-be Native artists never pursued their dreams for lack of encouragement and

training. Several steps could be taken to amplify encouragement and training, crucial conditions for launching young artists.

Challenge art world practices that privilege formal Western-centric art training

Formal art training, as in other creative fields like software development, does not guarantee quality or success in the artist corp. Many self-taught artists, including Ojibwe, have created exceptional bodies of work. Yet many gatekeepers, including gallery managers, museum curators, publishers, and funders, place a premium on formal educational experiences that reproduce reining conventions (Becker, 1982). An artists' formal education often operates as a subtle tag for distinguishing between art and craft regardless of the originality and power of the work. Artists, patrons, customers, and gatekeepers should broaden their conceptions of the high arts to acknowledge the uniqueness and beauty of traditional and contemporary Native art forms, musical expression, writing (including in Anishinaabe), and performance.

Nurture mentoring relationships between accomplished and emerging Native artists

Many artists interviewed want to learn from their artist elders, hear their stories of their career-building, and receive supportive feedback on their work. Rural Native artists feel particularly distanced from established Native artists, who may have moved to the cities, work on distant reservations, or mainly perform outside of their own communities. Formal mentoring programs offered by tribes, cultural centers or artist organizations would help form and consolidate such relationships. Pay and travel stipends could compensate mentors for their time and energies. Native Arts Circle was mentioned by many, many artists interviewed as providing forums where mentorships have formed spontaneously. Funding could be provided for Native Arts Circle to sustain a long-term program of matching up artists and fostering effective mentorship.

In large metro areas, discipline-specific centers in all the arts forms could cultivate relationships among mentors and mentees. On reservations, existing education committees could set aside funding for such mentorships. For instance, for a year or more, Carl Gawboy could be supported to mentor a young artist from Bois Forte and Marcie McIntire to mentor a Grand Portage artist. Casinos, tribal councils or tribal colleges could fund artist residencies at casinos, where lodging is extremely affordable, and require that artists interact with the local community and its artists during the residency.

Signal to parents and communities that an arts career is viable and valued

Many parents and community members caution young Ojibwe that an arts vocation will fail to become a livelihood. Some convey to young people that cultural activity is a gift and a community practice and should not be pursued for income. Teachers, community leaders, and successful Native artists can help temper these views, via forums and news articles that showcase artists' careers in their own communities. Funders could enable artists to tour schools with their work rather than the silent exhibition of artwork in their absence. Schools could host artists to talk about their careers in classes at all levels. As give-backs to their communities, successful artists could talk to younger aspiring artists and give every tenth creation or performance for free, as Fond du Lac writer Jim Northrup has a habit of doing. Since in Native communities, people are collectively in charge of determining the values, ideas, and concepts they pass on to the next generation, a gathering of 'elder' artists might be held to address this question, written up subsequently as articles in tribal newspapers and on websites.

Expand teacher training in Native literature, music, art, performance, and media

Most K–12 teachers in Minnesota, including Native teachers, know little about contemporary Native artwork or traditional Native expression and cultural meaning. Children's learning in these areas requires greater knowledge on the part of teachers, not just arts teachers, but all teachers. Arts education researchers are exploring ways of mainstreaming arts into other areas of the K–12 curricula, using movement and music as ways of learning non-arts subjects, an innovation aimed at non-arts teachers. Native arts should be included in these efforts. In addition, most art teachers, even in Native schools, have never been educated about Native art, contemporary or traditional. An insistence that K–12 art requirements include an appreciation for Native art expressions and tools would evoke a demand for expanded teacher training and curricular development.

Create more college programs and scholarships for Native arts students

Many artists attest to the absence of training in and appreciation for Native artistic expression in Minnesota's public, private, and community colleges. While the colleges elsewhere offer majors or specializations in Native artmaking, and some actively recruit Native artists for tailored instruction, no such programs were identified in Minnesota. Several artists who attended the

Institute for American Indian Arts in Santa Fe and other Native-focused college programs attested to the extraordinary career lifts they received from studying with Native teachers and peers. Several artists mentioned to us that they had only been willing to compete for funding at or attend schools that displayed their inclusiveness of and expertise in Native arts. With the relatively high concentrations of Native artists in Minnesota, the state's higher educational institutions could invest in arts programs that include and feature Native themes and methods as well as scholarships to attract Native students. Funders and patrons could incentivize the expansion of such programs through financial commitments. Arts students should press their faculty and administrators for expanded offerings.

D. Space, materials, equipment, resources, technology

Poverty, low earnings from artwork, absence of mentors, and isolation from markets often mean that aspiring Ojibwe artists do not have space to work, adequate materials and equipment, a financial cushion to create new work that they can then sell, or knowledge of and access to technology. While they share these needs with many others, Native artists face special challenges, including access to natural materials for working in traditional art forms and cultural practices that make applying for grants traumatic for some. On a number of fronts, new initiatives could improve their ability to create new work.

Provide new and use under-utilized space for creation of artwork

Ojibwe artists frequently cite lack of space to work and are often trying to do their work on the dining room tables or in family space filled with interactions. In their communities, whether urban or rural, there are often underutilized spaces in schools, community centers, and other structures that could be dedicated to workspace, at least part-time. Managers could think creatively about how such workspace could be offered and how artists' materials, props, and equipment could be stored on site. Non-Native artist membership organizations that provide workspace, such as the Loft Literary Center, the Northern Clay Center, and Highpoint Center for Printmaking in the Twin Cities, could extend special invitations to Native artists to visit and use the affordable spaces offered. They could also create weeklong residencies for Native American artists, facilitated by an artist of color, if there is not a working Native artist in this field.

Very few Native artists reside in the live/work buildings for artists that have been developed in the Twin Cities, Duluth,

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Brainerd, Fergus Falls, and elsewhere since the early 1990s. Artspace Projects, artist coops, and other managers of live/work spaces could market their units to Native artists and encourage them to consider living there. Funders could design special grant programs and criteria for incentivizing the use of existing or building new workspaces for artists.

Develop collective work/marketing spaces for Native visual artists

A number of Ojibwe artists envision a space to work in the presence of other artists that would also serve as a marketing venue. Casinos, for instance, could devote some of their ample hallway spaces to artists at work near display tables of their finished art, with nearby closets where artists could leave their materials and

work-in-progress. Storefronts in high foot-traffic locations such as entry-ways of restaurants, galleries, and museums could raise visibility and offer artists a place to converse, share techniques, and encourage each others' work. Galleries and coffee shops in regional tourist towns might serve as a good place for such activity. Funders and tribal leaders might consider investments in expertise that would help Native artists identify good locations, bargain with building owners and proprietors, and design the use of space and street-friendly marketing signage.

Amend and enforce public land use regulations to permit gathering of Native materials

Federal and state regulations regarding access to materials, such as birchbark, sweetgrass, bird feathers, turtle shells, porcupine

Robert "Punk" Wakanabo |



Punk Wakanabo settles into an easy chair at his mother's, taking charge of the interview. His mother, a lovely lady, presides on the sofa of choice, occasionally prompting him. His brothers Vern and Ron (Dood), his marketing team, sit behind him at the kitchen table. From time to time, Dood jumps up and brings out another meticulously framed print to display, setting it against an empty chair to best advantage. They point out the "ghost" features deep in the paint.

In colored pencil, Wakanabo depicts animals and Native portraits, often together. His Indians wear traditional regalia, sometimes with bright beaded floral patterns and ceremonial items with feathers, fur, and bone. In one painting, two huge buffalo stand with an Indian staff between them; a non-Native hat tops the staff. If you look hard, you can

Above right: Punk Wakanabo with Notah Begay, famous Native golfer, and his portrait.



see the painting's title, "No Hunting," written on the brown hides. In "The Beginning," a Native elder about to go to his Maker holds a traditional pipe and is surrounded by creatures significant in his life, a wolf and butterfly. Many people cherish these prints and others, including Wakanabo's "Wolf Clan," "Spotted Eagle Dancer," and a large rendering of two beaded moccasins. His large works, twice the size of the prints made from them, take Wakanabo as long as 380 hours or 29 days to create. To date, the team has sold more than 6,000 prints.

Wakanabo recalls sketching all the time as a child. He became a serious artist following a major trauma in his life. His daughter,



quills, and badger parts, make it particularly difficult for some artists to create their work. The State of Minnesota should lead a review of such practices and adopt guarantees for Native artists' uses. It should negotiate with Federal and neighboring state resource agencies to coordinate and streamline such policies and to train game wardens and public sector workers to help rather than prosecute Native artists who need these kinds of materials. The quantities required for artwork are not great and are very unlikely to harm the environment. Native gathering rights for these materials should be affirmed the way that the courts, in some cases, have affirmed Native hunting and fishing rights, freeing them from general public rules and limits. Tribal councils, arts organizations, and funders can play an advocacy role in this effort.

Provide multiple and larger funding pots for Native artists

So few Native artists apply for and receive funding from foundations and public programs that funders express concern and a desire to improve the record. Many Ojibwe artists are put off by the competitive, individualistic application process that characterizes most artist funding opportunities, not wanting to compete and not willing to try after an initial rejection. Co-existing funding programs that permit nomination or other referral routes to awards, including for young and emerging artists, could help improve prospects. More funds and programs designed expressly for Native artists, as in Region 2 and Arrowhead Regional Arts Councils' dedicated awards competitions, the Loft's 1990s Inroads program (providing mentoring by an artist of one's own race or ethnicity), and the American Composers Forum's First Nations

Breanna, was killed in a school bus accident, in front of his mother's house. In despair, he drank heavily for two years. Finally, he threw his last three beers out the window and bought the largest piece of heavy paper he could find for five dollars. On it, he sketched eagles until the light faded. When he finished in pencil, he added to it with a tech pen and used his little girl's watercolor set to complete it. Everyone who saw it wanted a copy. He made his first prints to share it.

Wakanabo started using his painting to finance his activism as a school bus safety advocate. He spoke out at a Cass Lake meeting and shortly thereafter the Governor appointed him to a statewide advisory committee. To get to the Capitol to testify, he began creating and selling artwork to cover the driving, food, and lodging costs. Through TV and newspaper interviews, people became familiar with his story. As demand for his work snowballed, he started selling prints so that he didn't have to paint so much.

Starting out, Wakanabo knew little about the business end of art. Printing an edition of 500 for one of his first significant works, "Grand Entry," he and his brothers sold them without frames, carting them around in plastic. "We thought it was great if we sold 120 at \$10 apiece. If they went fast, we'd raise the price to \$20." Then they met Jim Mondry, a man who sold birchbark baskets, potatoes, and guns—anything, out of his trunk. Mondry

came across Wakanabo's art in a Bemidji pawnshop and had to know who created it. He taught them how to dress up the prints with mats and frames, allowing them to charge \$65 instead of \$10. As more prints sold, they increased the price to \$200 and then \$300.

Wakanabo began attracting national recognition. Indian papers wrote about him, and television stations filmed his work. His prints hang in Norway, Palo Alto, and Hawaii. *Twin Light Trail*, a classy London magazine did a feature on him. At the Target Center in Minneapolis, he presented a print to Henry Bousha, the first well-known Native professional U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame player, and on another occasion at the Metrodome he gave a print to Notah Begay, Native golfer of PGA fame.

Across the country, Wakanabo's large prints hang in casino lobbies and restaurants and in many other venues. His high-energy marketing team approaches hospitals, architects, banks, tribal councils, radio stations, sheriff's offices, and jails. The Northern Lights Casino and Northern Exposure gift shop, both in Walker, Minnesota, and galleries in Minneapolis and elsewhere buy his prints for resale, some placing standing orders for a particular number in each print series. Brother Dood frames the prints in complementary high quality mats and metal frames in subtle colors that bring good prices.

Some high traffic restaurants and galleries take his work on consignment, but Wakanabo finds the large cut intermediaries take problematic. Recently, he turned down an opportunity at a regional art gallery because they take 40% of the sales price, up from 30% in the past. He thinks this is too high for a non-profit gallery that is heavily supported by public funds.

Wakanabo participates in large art markets across the country. But he objects to non-Indian works posing as Indian in markets like that in Texas, where cowboy and Indian art sells well. He would love to see his work in a gallery that had nothing but Indian art and not stereotypical renditions.

Wakanabo researches the historical veracity of his portraits by extensively reading about each Indian tribe he paints. When he travels to Native art shows, he finds out who will be judging and paints for them, since he believes they value authenticity above artistic value. He studies colors and designs—the meaning of everything on an Indian horse in that region, what Natives of that tribe wore. He finds an elder and gives him a cigarette: "They tell me the way things should be, what they believe is wrong with modern portrayals, how things have changed, why certain dances shouldn't be done in public, and how certain colors came to be used, like the berry red of the red shirts in Kiowa dance." Wakanabo strives to honor these details in his work.

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Composer Initiative, would help bring more Native artists over the transom by encouraging and enabling them at early stages. At the same time, Native artists should be welcomed to compete in or apply for any artist grant or loan program.

In developing these parallel streams, program managers should work to clarify for artists where they best might seek funding and help them develop a longer-term strategy for seeking support at crucial stages. The selection process, including information on who decides and on what basis, should be as transparent as possible, and funders should share constructive feedback on success or failure to be funded with artists considered. All funders, including schools deciding upon admissions and awarding scholarships, should expand the participation of Native artists in their juries and decision-making processes. The imbalance in funding, where visual art is privileged at the expense of writing, music and performance, should be corrected. Notices of funding programs and deadlines should be sent out to tribal colleges as well as state and private schools, and to tribal and Native list-servs.

Create targeted funds for equipment, materials, services, skill upgrading, and travel

Currently, limited pots of money are available through a few Regional Arts Councils and foundations for small grants and revolving loan funds (generally \$500 to \$2500) for funding individual artists' supply, marketing, and travel needs. In two regions, these are earmarked for Native artists, but in others, they are open to all artists. Most Ojibwe artists interviewed were successful at most once in tapping such funds. To enable artists to buy materials and equipment or improve their presentation of their work, whether on the web or in a booth at an art fair or a music venues, larger revolving loan funds should be created, perhaps through consolidation of existing funds. They should provide greater flexibility in funding and payback periods for artists whose resulting earnings would likely enable them to repay the loans. Grants for one-time upgrading of equipment, or to purchase services helping artists reach paying audiences or obtain business or further artistic training would also be an excellent investment.

Tribal councils and local economic development agencies should create these kinds of funds for resident artists as part of their business development strategies. They might also design and fund monetary awards for "tribal artists," an equivalent to a poet laureate or the Bush Foundation's \$50,000 fellowship, to be awarded to an outstanding career or emerging artist whom the tribe would then support for one year. Such an investment

would greatly enhance the visibility of each artist and thus contribute to his or her longer-term livelihood. It would also bring recognition to the tribe. Every artist we spoke with is proud of his or her tribal heritage. It would be good if tribes demonstrated pride in their artists.

Mount Native artist-led workshops for funders to review issues of aesthetic content, artistic process, and communication from a Native point of view

Funders and artist service organizations have tried to encourage Native applications for grant competitions and participation in business service training. The formats they use often consist of one-way communication: this is the way that you should think, write, and present your work to us. The trust gap that keeps Native applications low could be addressed by turning the tables, setting up workshops in which Native artists and arts entrepreneurs tutor program officers and staffers on how Native artists perceive their own challenges, support needs, and aspirations. The workshops should include explorations of differences in cultural meaning around communications and criteria such as invitations to submit, innovation, and community orientation of artist work.

Offer Native-taught digital training services for artists to improve their on-line learning and marketing

Because Native artists face high digital barriers, they need training in the advantages of digital technologies for exposure to, creating, and disseminating work. Many otherwise excellent artist training programs at Springboard for the Arts and elsewhere assume that everyone has a computer or computer access and a cell phone. Many funders' grant procedures require on-line submission. Educating artists on the desirability of digital literacy and helping them figure out how to procure hardware, software, and internet connections, and the training to use them would make a huge difference. So would efforts to work with telecommunications companies to ensure that cell phone and high speed internet reaches artists on reservations. Such training could be incorporated into business of art training or it could be taught as stand-alone offerings in artists' communities. Supporting a cohort of internet-savvy Native artists to serve as the tutors would improve the prospects for success.

E. The marketing and sale of Native work

In contrast to the multiplicity of outlets that southwestern Native artists have for their work, Ojibwe artists face a paucity of selling and performing venues, complicated by market failures

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in information and marketing. The potential constituency for Native artwork is likely much larger in this region than it is currently. A number of interventions and initiatives could raise the visibility of Native American artists, helping supply meet demand and expanding the numbers of artists who can live on their artwork earnings.

Build a non-profit marketing organization to market Native artists' work

Although a few Native artists, gallery owners, and retailers bring artists' work to powwows, art fairs, and other selling events around the region and beyond, no organization systematically does so with the visibility of the Ojibwe Art Expo, which for years toured Minnesota visual artists' work widely. A Minnesota counterpart to the Canadian government's active marketing of Ojibwe, Inuit, and other First Nations' visual art could heighten the visibility of and cultivate demand for Minnesota's artistic work. The organization could have a participatory structure, like the MIA's Minnesota Artist Exhibition Program, a staff that includes an executive director, artistic director, marketing director, and publicity person at a minimum, and a website that highlights artists' work, including all artistic disciplines, and puts interested patrons and buyers in touch with them. An expansion of Native Arts Circle's staff might be one way to do this. An annual art and performance exhibit could tour regional colleges, casinos, tribal community centers, and other public venues like the Minnesota State Fair with artists selling and performing their creations. Such an organization could help create camaraderie among Native artists and help them learn from each other.

Create an on-line marketing website featuring Ojibwe art and traditional crafts

Artwork, especially visual art, but music and writing, too, are increasingly being purchased on the web. Some Ojibwe artists have individual websites, but it is hard to find them if you do not already know the artist. An on-line marketing website could showcase Ojibwe art and traditional crafts similar to the Etsy site (<http://www.etsy.com/>) that serves hundreds of thousands of artists from around the world and their customers. It could offer links to artists' own websites and links to sites where Native artwork is on display or for sale.

Institute "buy local" policies for artwork in tribal buildings

Although several clinics and casinos have commissioned and purchased local Native artwork to grace their walls and showcase in their gift shops, the potential for expanding this practice is

great. Huge empty walls line casino corridors, and many casino hotel rooms are decorated with made-in-China assembly line art. Tribal leaders and casino Boards could develop and enforce policies of buying local for artwork and committing a certain number of nights per year for regional Native performances, both live and film festivals. They could also forbid decorators and gift shop managers from selling non-Native made cultural items like dreamcatchers and encourage the marketing of local artists' work, including authors' books, musicians' CDs, and film-makers' videos in prominent displays.

Commission and publicize more Native public art

Despite Minnesota's tremendous contemporary Native talent, state and local public art programs have rarely sought to highlight Native heritage and contributions. For instance, Native artwork was conspicuously absent in the recent Minnesota Sesquicentennial celebration. Native artists rarely receive commissions for work in our federal parks and recreation area or corporate or developer-commissioned artworks incentivized by public percentage programs (where the buildings are subsidized by local or state governments). They are only sporadically represented in local or state-sponsored commissions including those by the Minnesota Historical Society. Public art agencies and managers should dedicate a portion of annual funds to the commissioning of Native visual art, performance, and music. A list of Native artists interested in such commissions should be compiled and distributed to the various agencies and institutions that make such investments, including corporations, tribal councils, casino managers, universities and schools as well as state and local governments.

Existing Native public art could also be given pride of place in state and local tourist publicity. Although there are some beautiful Native murals and sculptures in state and city parks, tourist-oriented literature, press coverage, and websites (e.g., Explore Minnesota) do not give these places of prominence. Artists and Native tribal organizations can help pressure public agencies into recognizing the state's unique Native culture through such commissions and by highlighting existing Native public art in tourist-oriented publications and media. Powwows, as Native festivals that encompass music, dance, and stunning hand-made regalia, should be included in such citizen-underwritten publicity.

Develop more presentation space for Native music and performance

Currently, many Ojibwe artists have few venues where they can perform spoken word, music, and theatre. Tribal councils

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and casinos could expand opportunities, including booking Native artists as casino acts and using their entertainment and community center spaces as rehearsal and performance space. In larger urban areas, young Ojibwe artists report that café and bar venues are not welcoming to them. An organized effort to publicize and book their acts with managers of presenting space would help. Where non-profit organizations offer such space and have a poor record of inclusivity, funders and arts organizations could put pressure on them to change their ways.

Revamp participation and pricing policies at powwows and other tribal events

Many Ojibwe artists have been discouraged from showing and selling their work at powwows because of high prices for booth space and electricity hookups or because of competition from large retail vendors from far afield. Powwow committees that determine booth fees could rethink the function of artist vending at powwows, prioritizing local and regional Native artists and eliminating or minimizing the prices charged for those who sell only their own work. Space dedicated to artist exhibitors could

be separated from the large commodity vendors. The committee could purchase an outstanding local Native artwork to showcase and raffle to raise money for the powwow, honoring the artist in person at public events. They could institute “best in show” awards for artwork as they do for powwow dancers, helping to showcase the artists who participate. Accomplished artists could be recruited to show and sell their work and asked to serve on juries. Actions like these would signal a greater respect for and endorsement of a band’s own artists and other Native artists who make a living from beautiful and challenging work.

F. Addressing community orientation, Native values, and reservation/town relationships

Although they share many resource and space needs with other Minnesota artists, Ojibwe artists work from unique vantage points and face common problems that can be addressed in artist support, funding, and marketing efforts. These include strong community orientation, Native values like generosity and cooperativeness, and the insidious racism they continue to experience in the larger communities. The many dozens

Laura Youngbird |

Through her art, Laura Youngbird offers testimony to her ancestors’ trauma and survival. After her grandmother died, Youngbird found photos taken of her grandmother’s boarding school days. Youngbird uses the images, from which her grandmother scratched out her face, as inspiration.

Growing up, Youngbird’s family supported her artistic inclinations. An Air Force brat, Youngbird traveled from base to base with her father, an airplane mechanic. When the family moved out of a trailer into base housing, and Youngbird met the new buyer, a commercial artist, her career goals snapped into focus. She remembers thinking at the age of 4, “Yes, this is what I want to do. I was an artist before that, I just didn’t know it!” Her parents provided sketchbooks, paper, and oil paint, although seven kids strained the family budget. But when she wanted to go to art school, they asked, “What are you going to do with an art degree?” So, she went to school for drafting and worked for years as a mechanical designer in HVAC and plumbing.

Then, twenty-five years ago a culmination of events triggered Youngbird to recommit



PEG RUPSHONG

to art. Her 19-year-old brother died in a car accident. At the time, she had children of her own, and the business she worked for closed. Having contracted hepatitis from her own drinking, she grieved his death and thought, “This is the only lifetime I have, that I can remember anyway.” She started taking art classes and earned her BFA.

Although Youngbird always swore she didn’t want to teach, mainly because of the status of Art in education, her life unfolded quite differently. Early on she got a job as an artist-in-residence, traveling around to different schools. She found the travel, hours, and low compensation challenging, especially while parenting young children. She didn’t seriously consider teaching until she started working at Circle of Nations School in Wahpeton, ND, which has 200 students from all over the U.S. representing 32 Native nations. Though hired as the cultural coordinator, she started serving as the art teacher when the school art therapist received a cancer diagnosis.

Youngbird earned a degree in education and still teaches art at Wahpeton today. She teaches about the different cultures, recognizing the importance to youth of having their traditions acknowledged. She creates prayer rattles with the children and they make pinch pots filled with sage. The sage prevents the pots from collapsing and when fired, the prayers go up to the Creator. Her students also have adopted two bald eagles and a spider monkey at the

of artists profiled here possess a remarkable store of skills and insights about their work and careers, including ways of accessing resources and markets outside of their own communities. But few find it easy to share these with their peers or learn from them. Self-education and spatial and digital distance minimizes chance encounters that forge the networks and mentorships which have proven so important to self-employed artists at large. A number of innovations and practices could raise Native artists' stature and access to support in the state and forge working relationships among them.

Organize one or more convenings of Minnesota Native artists
Many Ojibwe artists expressed frustration at their lack of connectedness to each other and the financial and spatial barriers that make it difficult to confer and share knowledge about artistic practices and careers. A convening of Minnesota's Native artists in which they can meet each other, see each and hear others' work, and talk in roundtables organized by topic about their experiences and questions would go far to build on the incipient networks that Native Arts Circle has

fostered over the years. In such a convening, artists would not sit and listen to experts speaking from the stage, but learn from each other, across degrees of expertise and disciplines, in a relatively slow and leisurely format that encourages sharing. A two-day convening could include a two-hour art fair each day where artists can demonstrate, show, and sell their work and circulate around to see each others' work, and an evening performance of readings, spoken word, music, and short plays. Roundtables could include topics such as:

Further training in art forms

- Grants: how to find opportunities and write proposals
- Access to traditional materials
- Issues around use of sacred objects, ceremonies, texts in artwork
- To whom do we address our work?
- Finding space to work, live, exhibit, perform
- Marketing techniques and the business of art
- Documenting our work
- Website design and maintenance

zoo, by creating art and auctioning off the work as a zoo fundraiser.

Youngbird finds carving out time and space for her own artistic work challenging. She does most of her art over the summer, although she says, "While I am working at the school, I am doing artwork; a lot of it is processing stuff in my head." Through her teaching position, Youngbird can access the classroom as workshop space and a kiln and potter's wheel (although not over the summer). She is considering renting a studio to accommodate her large pieces, especially since her home workspace is increasingly committed to storage. She found her previously rented Fargo studio space, in a converted fire station that she shared with two other artists, ideal.

She misses living in Fargo for other reasons. She has taken advantage of several summer printmaking workshops at North Dakota State University's wonderful facilities and of the North Dakota Council for the Arts' Artist-in-Residence program that brings in visiting artists. (For instance, the now famous Commod Squad, a diabetes prevention video, was made there under the guidance of artist Mike

Hazard.) The Fargo-based Plains Art Museum and individual residents have purchased her work. While living in Fargo, Youngbird became active in the Native community. Her studio was upstairs from the Native American Center. Youngbird recalls how her son taught blues artist Shannon Curfman how to play guitar there. And how at the opening for the Gladys Ray Shelter, Ray's granddaughter, Shannon, was singing when suddenly a storm rolled in, thunder clapped and the storm was over in a matter of minutes—Gladys' Indian name is Hear the Thunder Coming.

Youngbird's body of work spans twenty years, but she still needs more exposure to make a living from her art. To increase her visibility, she enters shows and applies for grants. She received a 2009 MN State Arts Board Artist Initiative Grant to create a website and visit galleries to promote her work and a 2003 Emerging Artist grant from the Jerome Foundation to work with Richard Breshnahan. Peg Furshong, now at Southwest Minnesota State University, served as a crucial advocate for Youngbird. Furshong sent her work to the ND Gallery Association,

which created a one person show that toured the Dakotas, Montana, and Minnesota for six years and opened artist-in-residence opportunities for Youngbird in Rapid City, SD and Helena, MT.

Youngbird knows people like her art, but she wonders if the boarding school topic is too serious for people to hang in their homes, or if people do not want to face the historical guilt her paintings evoke. However, at least five collectors acquire her work, and her ceramics sell easily because, "people don't feel threatened by them."

Youngbird wants to apply for other grants and devote more time to securing exhibitions. "I need to be more pro-active," she says. She has a website in the works, created by her son. She joined Fargo Moorhead Visual Artists and is psyched about the potential of the New Bohemian, a virtual arts community, to bring in money to the community. If she had a million dollars, Youngbird says she would love to hire Peg Furshong as her manager. But as things stand, she works to get into as many shows as possible by drawing on her networks and her own resources.

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- Passing on skills and nurturing younger artists
- Native arts/artists in our schools
- Blending work with family and personal life
- Learning and using new technologies
- Collective approaches to casinos, schools, art centers
- Finding a publisher, agent, gallery

On a final afternoon, a resource and space provider fair could give artists an opportunity to meet and talk with people who manage Arts Councils, Foundation arts programs, museums, galleries, retail shops, performance spaces, artist service organizations, training programs, colleges, and artist live/work buildings about their services and resources. A convening would enable spontaneous and enduring mentoring and networking relationships among the participants.

Use community orientation as a positive criterion for support of Native artists

In many different ways, Ojibwe artists see their work as designed in whole or part to address and serve their communities. Often the criteria used by funders, critics, curators, and patrons in choosing to support, exhibit, or purchase work privilege individualism and/or conformity to prevailing modern or post-modern artistic conventions (i.e., “art worlds” that are in fact insider communities). Community orientation should not be used as a screen to stigmatize artists’ work or to tag it as unworthy of support. Instead, it should be rewarded. In the recent Metropolitan Regional Arts Council’s practice, described above, all artists and arts organizations seeking funding were asked to articulate what community they intended to serve or communicate with as a part of their application. Resource managers could follow suit, signaling that community orientation is important, can be diverse in character, and need not have to pass the market test of willingness to pay (difficult in poor communities). And, since cultural expression can generate bridging as well as bonding social capital, funders can also encourage (but not require) artists to present their work to other communities as well.

Integrate artistic practice and creations into community healing activities

Ojibwe artists often conceive of their work as an act of personal and community healing. In a society where the health sector is growing and ubiquitous, many opportunities exist to harness artistic expression, including participatory art forms, to healing. The spaces in which health care is delivered often lack powerful visual images and music or performance that might quicken the

recovery. The Min No Aya Win Human Services Center on Fond du Lac has pioneered in the installation of contemporary Ojibwe artwork in every room, putting its resources behind its philosophy that art enables healing while simultaneously generating income for artists. Several artists use their artwork as a way of helping encourage others to heal. Drama, song, dance, and spoken word can be used in programs to address illnesses like diabetes and alcoholism. Encouraging those suffering to express themselves through participatory arts and craft work can ameliorate pain and open up lines of communication. Managers of health care clinics, doctors, nurses, and other health care practitioners could do a great deal, at limited cost, to incorporate Native art and performance into their workplaces.

Open and support a network of Native art galleries in towns near reservations

Many Ojibwe artists believe that the region’s diverse publics, including tourists, are ready for Native-dedicated galleries. In the Twin Cities, there are two Native-dedicated galleries. In smaller towns, Minnesota currently supports many specialized craft and landscape galleries, but these carry almost no regional Ojibwe artwork. On reservations, artists long for galleries in nearby towns like Duluth/Superior, Grand Marais, Fargo/Moorhead, Bemidji, Detroit Lakes, Hinckley, Park Rapids, and Walker—places with both a sizeable resident population and a good tourist trade—that would be dedicated to Native American artwork and if possible, run by Native American owners/managers. Several have been tried in the past, but have struggled because of lack of initial resources for space design and purchases of inventory and for acquiring managerial know-how and marketing savvy. Tribal councils, patrons, foundations, Native non-profits, and schools could take the initiative in this effort, cooperating across the state. The success of galleries like these could act as a powerful wedge for greater interest in and acceptance of Native cultural practice and expression in the area, with many payoffs beyond the arts sphere.

VIII. Conclusions and Remaining Questions

Contemporary Native art, music, performance, and literature have the potential to become an honored and distinguishing feature of our region, serving Native communities, residents, and tourists. We hope our gathering together of the insights and work of Minnesota's Ojibwe artists here will help to make that case.

There is quite a bit of work to do, by many parties, to improve the livelihoods of Native artists. Lots of discussion, strategizing, communication. Some institution-building. Some figuring out how to do productive things with the modest resources available at present. Imagining how to use space and people's skills to create and disseminate more art work. How to educate a broader public on the values and uniqueness of Native art forms and what they offer to all of us.

There is also research and outreach to be done. What can Minnesota learn from other Native cultures around the US, Canada, Mexico, and beyond? Where are there better-developed and broader markets for Native work, performance, writing, music, and how did they evolve? We look forward to participating in these conversations and to seeing Native artists win a place of honor in their own communities and beyond.

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Artwork on back cover, clockwise from upper right: Laura Youngbird, *3/4*; Laura Youngbird, *Relocation* (Photo credit North Dakota State University); Carl Gawboy, *The Seven Hills of Life*; Carl Gawboy, *Winter Spearfishing* detail (Photo credit Cheryl Walsh Bellville); Jim Denomie, *Untitled Portraits* (Photo credit Cheryl Walsh Bellville)

