

# Native Arts Matter

**Over 65,000 Native Americans call Kansas home.** Approximately 14,000 of these people are citizens of the 4 Federally-recognized tribes located within Kansas. The remaining 50,000 are citizens of other tribal nations, living at-large, and have chosen Kansas as their home.

***For Native people, art is inseparable from a tribe's particular philosophy, spirituality, and flow of daily life.***

**Native American artists have a different perspective on art.** It is not generally looked at as being 'creative' or expressing oneself, but a part of the culture and everyday life that is spiritual, ceremonial, documents history or teaches about cultural practices. Surveyed artists\* have identified art as a way of life and giving knowledge to the next generation.

*"Native art and culture is the foundation for tribal sovereignty. It's literally the glue that has held tribal communities together, sometimes in the face of adversity." - Walter Echohawk*

Concerns, priorities, needs, and many other facets are slightly different among Native American artists. Surveys\* have shown that **the top 4 needs identified by Native artists are:**

- Grants & fellowships
- Gathering traditional materials
- Networking
- Archiving/documenting work

**785** **NATIVE**  
**ARTS**  
**COUNCIL**

*serving at-large Native American  
artists in northeast Kansas*

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Currently, Native American artists generate most of their income through workshops and demonstrations, giving artist's talks and visiting schools. Surveys\* indicate that the **non-Native arts community can be an ally by**

- becoming more culturally aware, and include reaching out to Native artists to build relationships and include them in programming and decision making
- compensating cultural consultants and culture bearers and replace ad hoc arrangements
- include tribal government and at-large Native individuals on art council boards, review panels, developing Native cohorts and providing funding opportunities
- being aware of federal laws regarding Native American art
- sending Calls for Art to Native American artists for shows that are not specifically targeted to Native art

## #indigenizetheartworld

The original clash of cultures between Euro-Americans and Native Americans continues to feed situations of appropriation, misrepresentation, and alienation.

For example, non-Native audiences can struggle to understand work that incorporates tribal stories and symbols, which has led to a ghettoization of Native artwork to venues dedicated solely to indigenous art. On the other hand, the work may confuse or disappoint audiences who wrongly consider Native Americans as “people of the past,” especially work that may look insufficiently traditional when familiar art forms such as pottery, rugs, or beading are used in dramatically different and potentially discomforting ways. This discomfort has also led to perceptions that Native-American artwork is political, or too steeped in identity.

*Out of the Box*, Victoria Hutter, National Endowment  
for the Arts/arts.gov