

# NATIVE NEW ENGLAND NOW



**CELEBRATING NATIVE ARTS**  
AT NEFA





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## CONTENTS

LETTER FROM NEFA . . . . .	1
NATIVE ARTS AT NEFA. . . . .	2
THE TALENT OF GENERATIONS . . . .	4
Jennifer <b>Neptune</b> . . . . .	6
Hawk <b>Henries</b> . . . . .	7
Eric Otter <b>Bacon</b> . . . . .	8
Rhonda <b>Besaw</b> . . . . .	9
Elizabeth <b>James-Perry</b> . . . . .	10
David Moses <b>Bridges</b> . . . . .	11
Barry <b>Dana</b> . . . . .	12
Gabriel <b>Frey</b> . . . . .	13
Jeremy <b>Frey</b> . . . . .	14
Jonathan <b>Perry</b> . . . . .	15
Sierra <b>Henries</b> . . . . .	16
Tim <b>Shay</b> . . . . .	17
<b>Aquinnah Cultural Center</b> . . . .	18
Julia <b>Marden</b> . . . . .	20
Brenda <b>Hill</b> . . . . .	21
Watie <b>Akins</b> . . . . .	22
Jeanne <b>Kent</b> . . . . .	23
Aron <b>Griffith</b> . . . . .	24
Anita <b>Peters</b> . . . . .	25
Robert <b>Peters</b> . . . . .	26
Venus <b>Reels</b> . . . . .	27
Theresa <b>Secord</b> . . . . .	28
Emma Jo <b>Brennan</b> . . . . .	29
Richard <b>Silliboy</b> . . . . .	30
Sarah <b>Sockbeson</b> . . . . .	31
Fred <b>Tomah</b> . . . . .	32
Annawon <b>Weeden</b> . . . . .	33
Jennifer <b>Kreisberg</b> . . . . .	34
GRANT RECIPIENTS . . . . .	35
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS. . . . .	38
ABOUT NEFA . . . . .	39



Dear Friends,

In 2005, we had the good fortune of a call from Elizabeth “Betsy” Theobald Richards (Cherokee) at the Ford Foundation. We were acquainted with Betsy from her five years at the Mashantucket Pequot Museum & Research Center (MPMRC), New England’s newest cultural institution at the time, where we had worked along with Trinity Repertory Company in Providence on a project bringing attention to Native American playwrights.

In that call, Betsy outlined her plan at Ford to strengthen support to Native American artists and organizations, and she invited NEFA to be a part of IllumiNation, a Ford initiative that would expand the national philanthropic network for Native arts and culture.

Up until this point, NEFA’s support for Native artists and projects had been offered through our New England touring programs. Betsy was suggesting a Native-led effort at NEFA that would build on our grantmaking and convening capacities. It fit our mission and values—and would connect us to a national network of aligned efforts.

Many discussions and convenings later—in Bar Harbor, Maine, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and Mashantucket, Connecticut—and working closely with Theresa Secord—an award-winning Penobscot basketmaker, founding executive director of the Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance, and a NEFA board member at the time—the Native Arts program at NEFA took shape. It would challenge us. We would meet constituents previously out of our view. We would be entrusted with new resources for grantmaking and services. We would make a difference.

The exhibition *Native New England Now*, made possible through the partnership and generous support of the Mashantucket Pequot Museum & Research Center, and this companion publication, celebrate NEFA’s Native Arts program and its impact thus far as we look ahead to future directions for the program. Our aim has been to bolster a unique and often invisible part of our region’s contemporary culture and artistry, and, in a small but focused way, champion a hopeful future.

NEFA is deeply indebted to the Ford Foundation and Betsy Richards for extraordinary vision, leadership, and commitment. The National Endowment for the Arts and the state arts agencies of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont are primary to NEFA’s efforts, and we are grateful for additional support from the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation, the Barr Foundation, and from an anonymous funder.

Our heartfelt appreciation to Meredith Vasta and the entire staff of the MPMRC whose unwavering support as the location for workshops, gatherings, and special events like *Native New England Now* have made them an invaluable partner in this work.

Most of all, we thank the artists—including program manager Dawn Spears (Narragansett)—whose incredible work, dedication, and spirit have been the force behind the Native Arts program at NEFA.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

**Rebecca Blunk**

*Executive Director, New England Foundation for the Arts*

October 2013



# NATIVE ARTS AT NEFA

Fueled by a commitment to increase the visibility, self-determination, and sustainability of Native artists and art forms, the Native Arts program at the New England Foundation for the Arts was seeded in 2005 with funding from the Ford Foundation. The development of the program was informed in invaluable ways by NEFA's participation in IllumiNation, a national cohort supported by Ford which included the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, the First Nations Composer Initiative at the American Composers Forum, First Peoples Fund, the Longhouse Education and Cultural Center at Evergreen State College, the National Museum of the American Indian, and the Seventh Generation Fund.

The Native Arts program at NEFA was designed to address needs identified by Native artists and community leaders, drawing from a series of gatherings in 2005 and 2006 that were developed in close collaboration with colleagues at the Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance led by Theresa Secord (Penobscot). Key needs identified in those gatherings and synthesized by ethnographer Darren Ranco (Penobscot) included:

- 🌀 Market expansion and development;
- 🌀 Development of capacity and infrastructure to support Native artists and connect them to funding;
- 🌀 Programs that recognize the importance of cultural context in supporting Native artists in carrying out their work and passing on traditions to the next generation;
- 🌀 Educational programs for Native youth, adults, and the general public; and
- 🌀 Work that addresses the resource needs of artists, particularly with regard to threatened natural resources.



First artist gathering, 2005, Abbe Museum, Bar Harbor, ME.  
Photo Courtesy of NEFA

Since the first round of grants made in 2007, the Native Arts program at NEFA has funded artists and organizations representing over 35 tribes. The program has provided financial support and critical connection-making to Native American artists in New England and beyond, and access to regional grant funding that did not exist prior to this program. Its offerings have evolved organically over time in response to the needs expressed by Native artists and organizations along the way.

Guided by program manager Dawn Spears (Narragansett), program associate Summer Confuorto (Gros Ventre/ Mi'kmaq), former NEFA board members Trudie Lamb Richmond (Schaghticoke), Theresa Secord (Penobscot), Charlene Jones (Mashantucket Pequot), and many other Native artists and leaders who have served as program advisors and panelists, Native Arts offers:

- Funding in the form of grants that nurture the continuation of traditional art forms and the creation of contemporary artwork, deepen connections between artists and communities, engage youth, address environmental resources, and promote the preservation of cultures;
- Community building through gatherings and network development that bring Native artists and organizations together;
- Technical support and workshops in marketing, entrepreneurial skills, and grant writing to guide applicants in the submission of proposals to NEFA and other funders;
- Increased visibility through exhibits, network building opportunities, and an online directory of Native American artists and organizations in New England, accessible to the public for planning exhibitions, markets, events, and other opportunities.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JEREMY CHARLES/  
NATIVE AMERICANS IN PHILANTHROPY



*Native New England Now* represents work from artists from throughout their careers. Not specifically about current work, it is an opportunity to raise visibility for Native Arts in New England, to showcase that we are living and breathing and that we are still here—expressing ourselves in both traditional and contemporary art forms. The work that is happening now is amazing, and we are fortunate to be able to share earlier works that really show the evolution of many of the artists supported by the Native Arts program at NEFA.

**Dawn Spears** (Narragansett)  
*Program Manager, Native Arts, NEFA*



**Native New England Now**  
Celebrating Six Years of  
NEFA's Native Arts Program

This publication accompanies ***Native New England Now: Celebrating Six Years of NEFA's Native Arts Program***, an exhibit on view from October 5, 2013 through January 4, 2014 at the Mashantucket Pequot Museum & Research Center in Mashantucket, Connecticut.



# THE TALENT OF GENERATIONS

By Trudie Lamb Richmond (Schaghticoke)

*NEFA board member, review panelist, program advisor, and most importantly as an elder, Trudie Lamb Richmond (Schaghticoke) has been an advocate for the Native Arts program at NEFA since the early stages, and has been integral to its success. She is the former director of public programs at the Mashantucket Pequot Museum & Research Center, a story teller, and researcher.*

Historically, indigenous people did not treat art as a separate discipline, although it was an important part of their lives; items that are now considered to be rare forms of art were historically in many cases utilitarian in nature. Native people were cognizant of the beauty of the natural world which surrounded them and contributed to their survival. The materials they gathered and crafted into the essential items they needed, such as clothing, household items, tools, and canoes, were often decorated with images from the animal and plant world. Following the talent of generations, Native artists create works of value, beauty, and function. These wonderful cultural expressions confirm that art has held and continues to be an important part of tribal communities.

Native people of New England, often described as the “invisible minority,” have not vanished or fully assimilated into the dominant society. In 2005, when the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) established its Native Arts program, it made a commitment to support and promote the preservation of Native American traditional art forms and contemporary expressions. The goal was to increase the visibility of New England Native artists.

The exhibit *Native New England Now*, at the Mashantucket Pequot Museum & Research Center (October 5, 2013–January 4, 2014), represents tribal communities from all six New England states and displays the talents of 27 master artists and one tribal organization, the Aquinnah Cultural Center.

It is no surprise that among many forms of expression, this exhibit includes wood splint baskets and birch bark containers. Native people throughout New England were known for their skills as basketmakers. In the 1700s, making and selling of baskets became a means of survival for many of the tribal groups in New England. In southern New England, where potato stamping was used, this art form has diminished to just a few basketmakers, whereas in the north it continues. This tradition continued for another 200 years. Today, the emphasis is on the artistry rather than function. “Baskets have always been made for use. The statement my basket makes is that it is art and that is its use.” (Jeremy Frey, Passamaquoddy basketmaker).

Native people believe that their culture is in the land, and the land is their culture. This concept is expressed throughout the exhibit as the visitor enjoys an amazing visual journey. The majority of objects are created from materials harvested from the earth: sheets of birch bark folded and sewn together with spruce root, wood splints intricately woven into baskets, clay from the river bank shaped into beautiful pottery, quahog shells artfully turned



into wampum pieces, and gourds carrying traditional designs sharing a peoples' history. An unexpected but culturally important inclusion in the exhibit is the addition of traditional Native music which emphasizes the importance of preserving different styles of Eastern Woodland music. The visitor has an opportunity to learn about as well as listen to music specific to New England for the drum, the flute, and the voice.

There is a Wabanaki Creation story which describes how Gluscabe, a legendary culture hero, shot an arrow into the trunk of the ash tree, and the first human people came out singing and dancing. Native people throughout the Eastern Woodlands made their baskets primarily from black and brown ash. The ash tree was called the basket tree because it provided the best natural material for making baskets and the wood splints were the most pliable for weaving.

Native elders also explained how Gluscabe had created the white birch to take care of his people. Birch bark was used to create wigwams, animal calls, household items, storage containers, and canoes. It is insect and water resistant. Birch bark was the oldest form of Native basketry; the bark was simply folded and sewn with spruce root. The inner bark, collected in the winter time, served as a wonderful canvas to draw on and create designs that told the stories and acknowledged the people's relationship to the natural world. A number of Maine basketmakers continue the tradition of creating birch bark containers and a few continue the tradition of making birch bark canoes.

Today, Native people, as they participate in the continuance of their culture and traditions, see art as an essential part of their lives, taking the talent of generations and creating something of value, beauty, and function. In the words of award-winning artist, Julia Marden (Wampanoag) "...it is an honor to be able to create, teach, and share."

*"Following the tradition of generations, Native artists create works of value, beauty, and function... (confirming) that art has held and continues to be an important part of tribal communities."*





PHOTO BY ALEXANDRA CONDOVER BENNETT

## JENNIFER NEPTUNE

Penobscot

"Mix the old and the new and walk down the middle" was the advice from a dream I had. All the paths I have followed in my life have come from dreams. I dreamed of an old man who taught me to bead—I became a beadworker. I dreamed of an ancient woman who gave me a basket—I became a basketmaker. I dreamed of basswood baskets lying forgotten on the forest floor singing my name—I taught myself to weave with basswood. I dreamed of plants that shimmered, danced, and knocked at my door—I learned to use them to help myself and others. My goals as an artist are to create work that is both traditional and contemporary, to revive some of the traditional weaving styles that have been forgotten, and to teach others. I am inspired by the old ones whose creations left a trail of beauty for me to follow, the natural world in all its forms, and my home—Indian Island, an island in the Penobscot River that has been one of my tribes main villages for thousands of years.

*"I am inspired by the old ones whose creations left a trail of beauty for me to follow, the natural world in all its forms, and my home—Indian Island."*



*Beaded Bag*, 1998. Wool cloth, satin ribbon, glass beads (MPMRC collection). Photo by Doug Currie

There is a remarkable thing that happens when one spends time with the trees. A sense of rejuvenation, of healing, of remembering the connection to ALL occurs. This sense of connection moves beyond the boundaries that serve to keep people and peoples separate.

In my eyes and heart, the building of a flute is more than the making of a musical instrument. Building flutes informs and strengthens my relationship to the Common Source of Life while celebrating and honoring our individual and cultural differences. Flute has a great potential to cause a healthy relationship with self, each other, and to the whole in hope of creating more peace.

Over time, I developed a deep sense of relationship with, and responsibility to, the flute and its power to remind us of our sacredness and our interconnection with everything in Creation. The flute's voice calls to the Sacred in every person and aspect of life, in ways that transcend words or normal consciousness. I so very much love building and playing the flute.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HAWK HENRIES

## HAWK HENRIES

Nipmuc

*"Over time, I developed a deep sense of relationship with, and responsibility to, the flute and its power to remind us of our sacredness and our interconnection with everything in Creation."*



*Butterfly Flute*, 2011. Wood unknown, collected from a tree destroyed in a tornado in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Photo by Doug Currie





# ERIC OTTER BACON

Passamaquoddy



PHOTO BY DAWN SPEARS

*"There tends to be a disconnect with our elders across generations. By doing this work, it helps bridge the gap, it eliminates the gap, it connects us. This is our tradition, it is deep-rooted."*



My passage into becoming a Passamaquoddy artist began in May 2004. Since that time I have put considerable effort into learning all aspects of the basketmaking process. Using both traditional materials and techniques, I create a contemporary and diverse style of baskets in which each is unique. My experience within all stages of basket creation has made it possible for me to teach workshops to both Native and non-Native groups. It has allowed me to pass down traditions and techniques while also broadening the market and appeal of the art. In working in these mediums, there is a connection with culture and a connection with my elders. There tends to be a disconnect with our elders across generations. By doing this work, it helps bridge the gap, it eliminates the gap, it connects us. This is our tradition, it is deep-rooted.



# RHONDA BESAW

Abenaki (Metis Canada)

*"Just as breathing keeps the physical body alive, beadwork keeps my spirit alive."*



PHOTO COURTESY OF RHONDA BESAW

My ancestors have lived in southern Quebec, Canada, and on both sides of the Kwinitekw (Connecticut) River in New Hampshire and Vermont for hundreds of years. By doing beadwork in the same style and manner as my ancestors, I honor those who have gone before me and give to those in the future. Through beadwork, the reality of Abenaki survival can be shared and acknowledged.

To me, beading is breathing. It is that natural and essential. Just as breathing keeps the physical body alive, beadwork keeps my spirit alive. Beadwork designs influenced by the world around me, such as mountains or medicine plants, keep me observant, grounded, and grateful to Mother Earth. Designs received from the dream world and visions are a most treasured gift. I marvel at waking up in the morning with a beadwork design fully developed in my mind. The colors, the patterns, the symbols, and the meaning—it's all there! Every stitch becomes a prayer of thanksgiving to my ancestors and the Creator.

*With Open Arms*, 2013. Chief's coat made in honor of Wabanaki elders: wool, linen, silk ribbon, glass seed beads, metal sequins. Traditional double curve pouch (2009). Wool, linen, silk ribbon, glass seed beads, metal sequins. 35" in length (Courtesy of the Artist).  
Photo by Doug Currie





PHOTO COURTESY OF MPVRC

## ELIZABETH JAMES-PERRY

Aquinnah Wampanoag

I have been working long enough now to have come full circle, from being taught, mentored, and encouraged by my teachers, to influencing styles, patterns, materials, and even the way artists interpret their work to others.

Traditional Native art has always had a certain draw for me. The colors, textures, the creative rhythm of someone putting together a mat, weaving and threading and beading together a certain pattern; it's like telling a story.

Being part of that story telling process is central to my identity as a Wampanoag woman. Staying connected to the same ocean my ancestors depended upon for everything. Going outside—all seasons, any weather, whatever critters are around—capturing those experiences and perceptions in a piece of artwork and waiting to see how the public interprets what is before them.



*"The colors, textures, the creative rhythm of someone putting together a mat, weaving and threading and beading together a certain pattern; it's like telling a story."*



*Wampum Friendship Collar.* Handwoven wampum bead bias collar based on early examples. Wampum shell, sinew, deerskin, 1.75" x 20" (Courtesy of the Artist). Photo by Elizabeth James-Perry



# DAVID MOSES BRIDGES

Passamaquoddy



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID MOSES BRIDGES

*“Every Native artist will eventually feel compelled to return the ancestor’s gift to the younger ones.”*

The work I do is a natural response to the relationship I developed with my great grandfather Sylvester Gabriel at a very young age. He was a mentor to me in many ways, but I truly admired his work as a bark canoe and basketmaker even before I understood the entirety of it. It was always more than just a finished product; there are generations of knowledge and design behind every piece. An individual needs to understand our ancestral homeland and the forest in all its diversity to even begin. That in itself is a great motivator for me; to understand the land, the material, the processes, and function of the finished piece is something many artists are detached from. For the Native artist, there is always that element of hope that comes with something that was given to the next generation.



# BARRY DANA

Penobscot



PHOTO BY DAWN SPEARS



*"I am deeply connected to the land, the people, the stories, and the Penobscot experience and I convey this in my art."*

I am a Penobscot tribal member who has dedicated my life to weaving traditional lifeways into our modern world. I have experience as a formal educator as well as my own business, Native Studies, that are both centered around bringing my people back to our culture. I am a father of five and a grandfather of two, and in addition to my immediate family, I am very enriched by my indigenous Penobscot family, and I do my art for them: past, present, and future.

The medium for my art is the natural materials mainly birch bark. I harvest my materials by hand in the woods of Maine, our Penobscot homeland. I etch pictures onto this birch bark once I have formed it into a basket, and I tell a story with each unique piece I create. I am deeply connected to the land, the people, the stories, and the Penobscot experience and I convey this in my art.





# GABRIEL FREY

Passamaquoddy

I have always lived among basketmakers. For as long as I can remember, basketry has been a part of my life. My grandfather has been my mentor in relation to my basketmaking skills. It is because of his teachings that I am able to make utility baskets that are both strong and beautiful. When I made my first basket, he was beginning to age rapidly and no one else was picking up his craft. To me, it felt like a necessity to learn before it was lost forever. As I teach and share, I will continue to learn from the wisdom of his experience.



PHOTO BY DAWN SPEARS



*"I have always lived among basketmakers. For as long as I can remember, basketry has been a part of my life."*

Pack basket. Ash (Private Collection).  
Photo by Doug Currie

# JEREMY FREY

Passamaquoddy



PHOTO BY DAWN SPEAKS



I base all my work on my tribe's traditional weaving techniques. Every basket I make, I try to refine a little more than the last. Almost all of my designs have a silhouette that is curved or arched. As well as being a beautiful shape, the arches contribute to a basket's strength. I never compromise integrity with my designs. I won't make a pretty basket that isn't structurally sound. There is a sense of empowerment to creating anything. To me, it always goes back to self-respect. If you are in a community that develops an artist that gets respect, your community can share in that respect. If I can get the Passamaquoddy name and art out on a national scale, it may help to uplift the community.

*"There is a sense of empowerment to creating anything. If you are in a community that develops an artist that gets respect, your community can share in that respect."*







PHOTO COURTESY OF JONATHAN PERRY

## JONATHAN PERRY

Aquinnah Wampanoag

I am grounded in the traditions of my ocean-going ancestors. I consider designs by examining the raw materials closely and drawing my images from the grain, hues, and patina of wood, stone, and copper. I enjoy using the materials and knowledge handed down from my ancestors to express my understanding of the natural world as well as the changes over time since our creation.

*"I consider designs by examining the raw materials closely and drawing my images from the grain, hues, and patina of wood, stone, and copper."*

*Pendant Pipe*, 2010. Hand-carved steatite pipe and beaded necklace. Green Oregon steatite, copper beads, sinew, copper findings, 3" x 2.75" (Courtesy of the Artist). Photo by Doug Currie





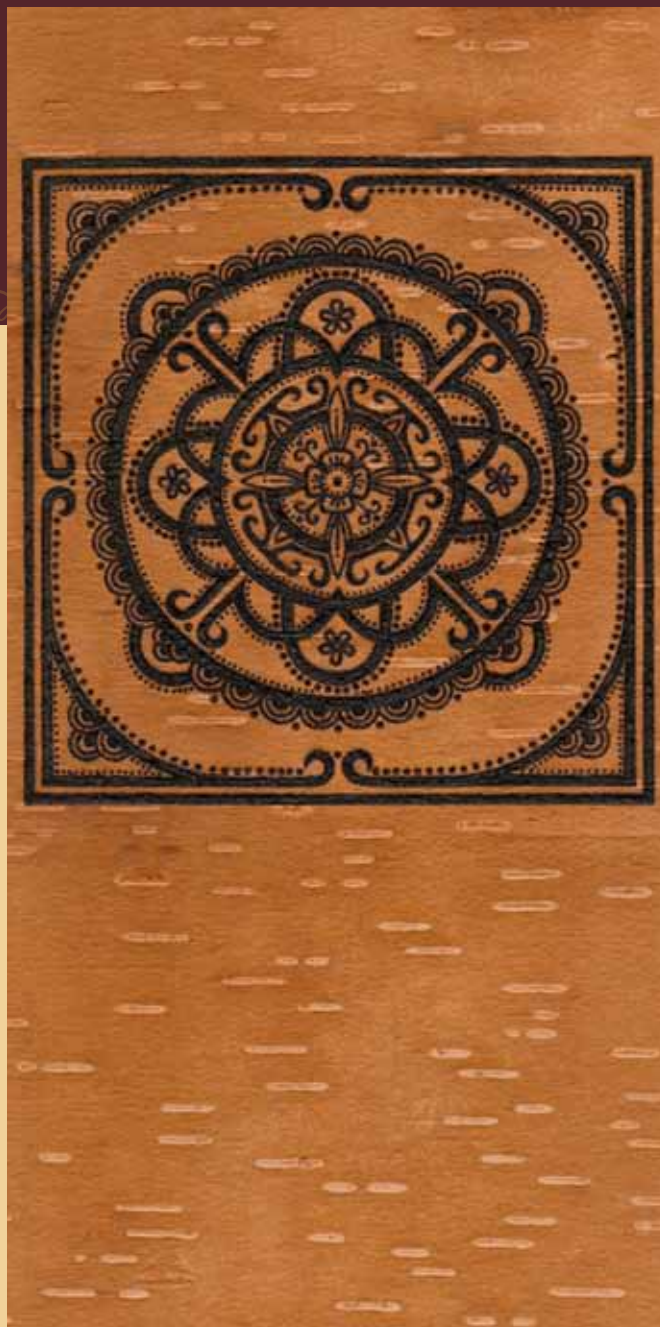
PHOTO COURTESY OF SIERRA HENRIÈS

## SIERRA HENRIÈS

Nipmuc

Many Native cultures across the world, including my own, have been using birch bark for countless generations, and I feel honored to carry on that tradition. Birch eased itself into my work naturally and has been ideal in allowing me to be creative with my art. From spending time with the trees and collecting the bark, to the moment when I finish a piece, working with birch always puts a smile on my face. It is such a beautiful tree in its entirety, and when examined closely, reveals a rainbow of colors. I have seen bark ranging in shades from white and tan, to orange and purple. What a pleasure it has been.

*“Many Native cultures across the world, including my own, have been using birch bark for countless generations, and I feel honored to carry on that tradition.”*



*Decorated Birch Bark, 2006 (Private Collection).*  
Photo by Doug Currie





*"To create something of nature to show appreciation for life, and come to understand art as an ultimate expression of freedom."*

*Penobscot Deer Clown, 2004. Limestone sculpture of a deer clown figure, Texas limestone, 23" x 8" x 6" (Abbe Museum collection). Photo by Doug Currie*



PHOTO BY DAWN SPEARS

## TIM SHAY

Penobscot, Maliseet

As an artist, it is important for me to acknowledge the cultural lineage and the creativity that is innate to my people. I think of the way they came to make a basket, a canoe, or a shelter from what the earth offers. Pondering the original thought that enabled people to create something to better life on a daily basis, and show appreciation for life, creativity, and the materials used by beautifying their everyday implements. The idea is that creation and creativity are of one mind, the creative process being an ever evolving process from individual to individual. But yet, as one, has enabled me to experience a view through windows of space and time to create something of nature to show appreciation for life, and come to understand art as an ultimate expression of freedom, the freedom to be one with creation and its Creator. Free from all that limits our creative abilities to enjoy life and our true nature as human beings.







THE AQUINNAH CULTURAL CENTER







The Aquinnah Cultural Center is helping to keep many Native art forms alive with comprehensive, multi-day workshops, where participants are immersed in the collection and processing of materials. Projects include pottery (pictured, including digging for clay from the Aquinnah Cliffs), as well as workshops on wampum, basketweaving, beadwork, and twining (pictured). Some of these art forms, which were practiced by only a few artists, are now being learned by many.



Photos from left to right: Digging for clay, pottery firing, and twining workshop. (Courtesy of the Aquinnah Cultural Center).





# JULIA MARDEN

Aquinnah Wampanoag



*"From my earliest memories  
I felt compelled to be  
an artist. When I found  
traditional art, I felt at home."*

I have been demonstrating and teaching twining for 23 years. From my earliest memories I knew art was my passion, and I felt compelled to be an artist. When I found traditional art, I felt at home. Because some art forms are dying out, keeping them and passing them on is extremely important for our communities and our youth. Anyone who learns about their traditions has to learn the art. I draw inspiration for my work from nature, life in general, and particularly my grandchildren. I feel that art is my gift and it is an honor to be able to create, teach, and share it with others; it feels like a lifelong dream that's been fulfilled.





# BRENDA HILL

Six Nations Tuscarora



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRENDA HILL



Pottery making has fulfilled several aspects for me as a Native woman. I feel a strong sense of responsibility to carry on this once traditional part of my tribal material culture. As a Native woman, I feel I should be making and teaching pottery as a way to sustain my tribal culture and history. Our ancestors used pottery as a tool for survival. Pots held seeds of future crops as well as being the vessel that such food sources were cooked in.

My mother has been a major influence in my career as a Native American potter. I took to clay at a young age after being exposed to a variety of traditional arts. Before I was 20 years old, I lost my mother to cancer. Working with clay has always given me a sense of calm and allowed me to feel closer to her even though she was not present in this physical world. It has become a way for me to honor her.

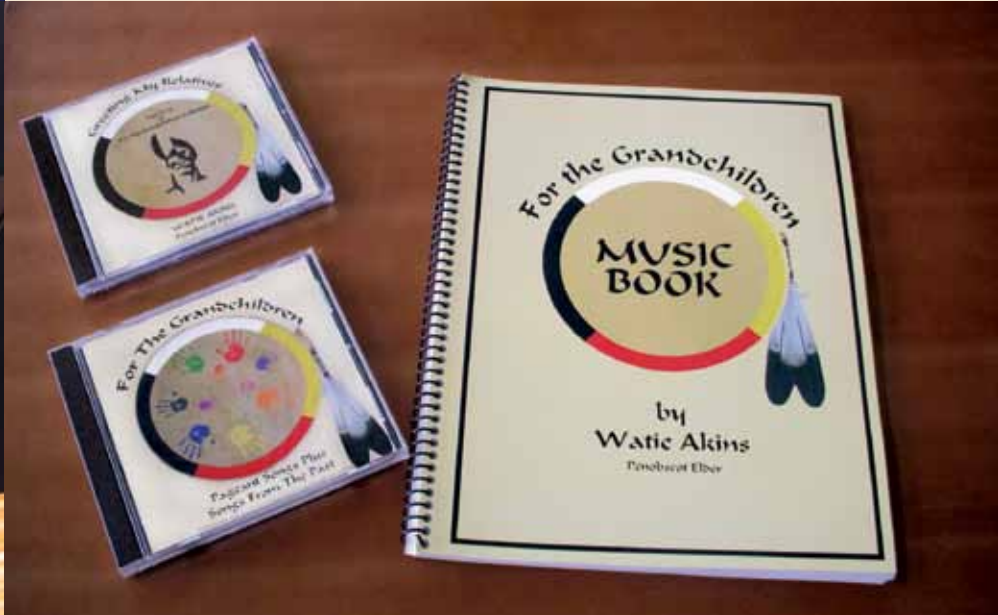
*"Working with clay has always given me a sense of calm and allowed me to feel closer to her even though she was not present in this physical world. It has become a way for me to honor her."*



# WATIE AKINS

Penobscot

PHOTO COURTESY OF WATIE AKINS



*"My art form is important to me because it helps to preserve a part of the traditional style music that has been forgotten or lost to us. My goals are to retain what we have and to recover what we have lost."*

I was fortunate to have been born into a musical family beginning with my father's mother's generation and my father and mother. I have been exposed to both singing and drumming since childhood, first participating in Indian pageants when I was six years old. My art form is important to me because it helps to preserve a part of the traditional style music that has been forgotten or lost to us. It is scarcely known now and not pursued in Nedakinna, the land of the Abenaki people. Its importance has led me to produce two CDs, a Music Book, and perform three apprenticeship programs since 2007. My goals are to retain what we have and to recover what we have lost.

The Abenaki tribes in the Northeast are losing the teaching and passing on of their traditional culture. I believe that retaining traditional music by vocalization, hand drum, and shaker will strengthen our culture.



# JEANNE KENT

Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk Abenaki of Vermont



My interest lies with the designs of the Northeast Wabanaki People. With that in mind, I create objects from gourds which utilize the designs and stories of the People. In this way, I hope to keep alive the visual heritage of our People as much of it has disappeared due to the New England weather. I also hope to let the public know that we are still here. There has long been a myth that many of our tribes no longer exist and by continuing to bring the old with the new, it is a way of keeping our culture alive in ways that can continue to be passed down to future generations.

*“There has long been a myth that many of our tribes no longer exist and by continuing to bring the old with the new, it is a way of keeping our culture alive in ways that can continue to be passed down to future generations.”*



# ARON GRIFFITH

Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians



*"I draw my inspiration from nature and other wild things. I specialize in Northeastern tribes and wildlife. It is a beautiful and unique culture that has remained with only a few artisans left in our community."*

Birch bark basketry has been made for centuries by Maliseet people of Maine and New Brunswick, Canada. Each piece of bark is selected carefully and with respect to the birch tree. Each basket normally takes 20–30 hours from gathering materials to forming the basket and slowly etching the artwork on to the bark. Birch bark baskets are completely functional pieces and done in traditional Maliseet form.

I, as a Maliseet, began making my birch bark creations at the age of 32, and knew then that I wanted to pursue a career in traditional art. I am self-taught and I have developed my own unique style. I draw my inspiration from nature and other wild things. I specialize in Northeastern tribes and wildlife. It is a beautiful and unique culture that has remained with only a few artisans left in our community. My goal is to raise awareness of my heritage and teach people about Maliseet tradition and culture.





# ANITA PETERS

Mashpee Wampanoag



I am proud to be the Bear Clan mother of the Mashpee Wampanoag. As such, it is my duty to do anything within my power to instill pride for our culture in my people. My Creator-given gift is to make regalia and I am glad to share it.

My passion is to make traditional clothing, and it gives me great pleasure to see my tribal members proudly wearing them.

*"My Creator-given gift is to make regalia and I am glad to share it."*



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBERT PETERS

# ROBERT PETERS

Mashpee Wampanoag

My art is a reflection of me, what I value and the things I know. The three paintings on display are images from my youth—the not-so-distant past—but still a time that is gone forever. If I didn't take the time to paint our way of life at that particular time, there is a strong possibility that no one else would.

*"My art is a reflection of me, what I value, and the things I know."*



Vision from Doug, 2012, Acrylic, 36" x 48" (Courtesy of the Artist). Photo by Doug Currie

*"I was asked by an elder to represent my talent to pass on the art form of our ancestors."*



## VENUS REELS

Seaconke Wampanoag

I was asked by an elder to represent my talent to pass on the art form of our ancestors. I started creating Native art through study and history, learning techniques of different styles and using them in creating my art work. This work is my passion: to teach and carry on the knowledge to the Native community and also to my daughters so that they can continue the art and then pass it to the next generation.





# THERESA SECORD

Penobscot



PHOTO COURTESY OF SWAIA 2013 BY STEVE WEWERKA

*"I learned traditional Penobscot basketry 25 years ago at a time when there were fewer than a dozen basketmakers younger than the age of 50 in all four tribes in Maine."*



I learned traditional Penobscot basketry 25 years ago at a time when there were fewer than a dozen basketmakers younger than the age of 50 in all four tribes in Maine. My teacher Madeline Shay would become known as the last fluent speaker of the Penobscot language when she passed in 1993. She was dedicated to passing on her basketry skills to me, and I was determined not to watch traditional basketry die. In the same year she passed, together with about 55 basketmakers from the four Wabanaki tribes, she helped form the Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance, and I became the founding director.

*Sewing Basket with Needle Case and Pincushion, 2008. Brown ash, yellow cedar bark, sweetgrass, blueberry and raspberry dyes, 5.5" x 10.88" (The Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH). Photo by Doug Currie*





# EMMA JO BRENNAN

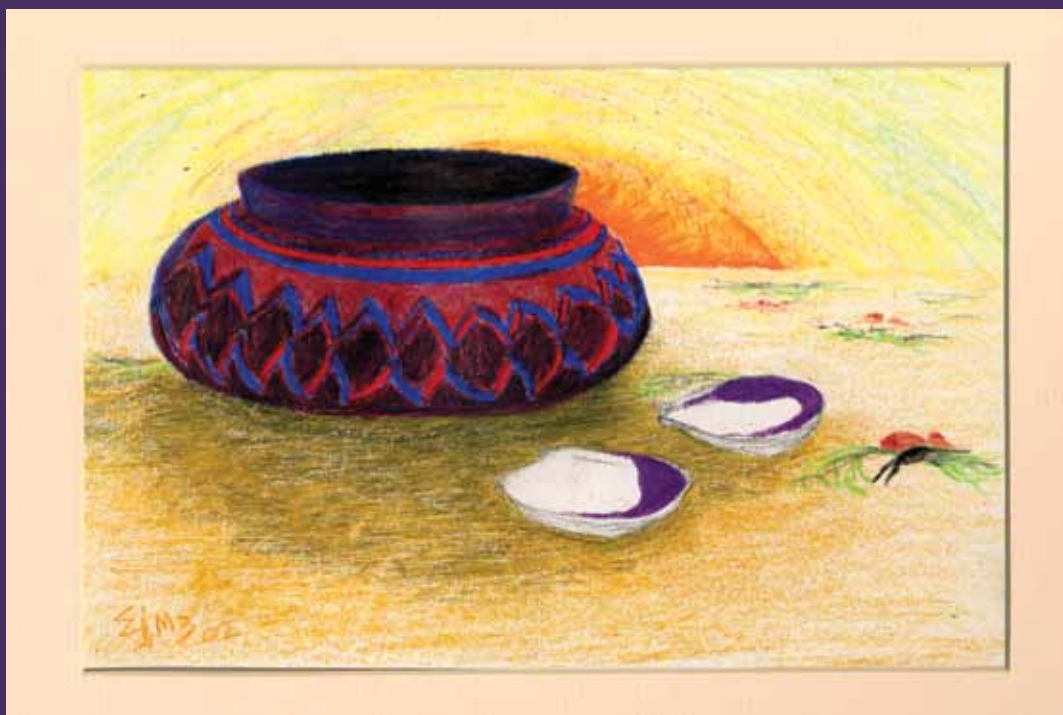
Mashpee Wampanoag

My history as an artist began many years ago when I entered a drawing contest in an artist magazine. I always loved art as a child in school, as well as working clay with my mother and sketching at home. I was brought up within the Mashpee Wampanoag culture, very connected to the Earth.

Definitely a "multi-media" artist, I enjoy painting, sculpting, felt and fabric applique, hand weaving, and various other crafts, but my real passion is sculpture. I believe in the Healing power of the Arts. My inspiration comes from Earth and Sky and the many shapes and hues of the Creator's palette. Many of my paintings depict painted clay pots, as the challenge of geometry in two-dimensional work appeals to me.



PHOTO COURTESY OF EMMA JO BRENNAN



*"I believe in the Healing power of the Arts. My inspiration comes from Earth and Sky and the many shapes and hues of the Creator's palette."*



# RICHARD SILLIBOY

Aroostook Band of Micmacs



PHOTO BY DAWN SPEARS



*“My goal has always been to keep the art of basketmaking alive within my tribe, the Micmac, and the Native Arts program has allowed me to continue teaching others so that the tradition passes to the next generation.”*



My art work today is a cultural and traditional statement, not only to non-Natives but to all of my brothers and sisters from the four Wabanaki tribes of Maine. Carrying on this wonderful tradition is very important to me. I am motivated by the knowledge that basketmaking has been a dying art form. I, like many others, learned this art as a child while working with the family, because our basketmaking was a family business. However, I didn't start making my own baskets until I realized all the basketmakers were elders and couldn't get wood for themselves.

My goal has always been to keep the art of basketmaking alive within my tribe, the Micmac, and the Native Arts program has allowed me to continue teaching others so that the tradition passes to the next generation. I truly enjoy the art of basketmaking, it is very spiritual for me whenever I am working with the brown ash tree.



# SARAH SOCKBESON

Penobscot

*"I want to honor my ancestors and I take pride knowing that I'm able to perform this tradition in almost every way it was done years ago."*



PHOTO BY WILLIAM DRAKE, COURTESY OF THE HUDSON MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF MAINE ORONO



I have been an artist my entire life. Being Penobscot, I was always fascinated by traditional ash and sweetgrass baskets. As for my inspiration, I look to the past, present, and future. I want to honor my ancestors and I take pride knowing that I'm able to perform this tradition in almost every way it was done years ago. Not only do I aspire to create things that are visually appealing and a reflection of myself, I strive to preserve Wabanaki basketry to prevent it from being lost forever.





# FRED TOMAH

Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians



*"To know the people of the Wabanaki is to see a little further into the woods."*



I am a Maliseet basketmaker who learned the art from my ancestors. Learning this gifted art was not assigned to me by tribal elders nor was I directed by my parents to learn. The desire was within me and recognized by those willing to pass on their art.

Most baskets I make have tribal cultural significance woven into them. From the Wabanaki basket to the Katahdin series and the Eagles Nest Basket, each reflect a little part of who I am, and to know the people of the Wabanaki is to see a little further into the woods.



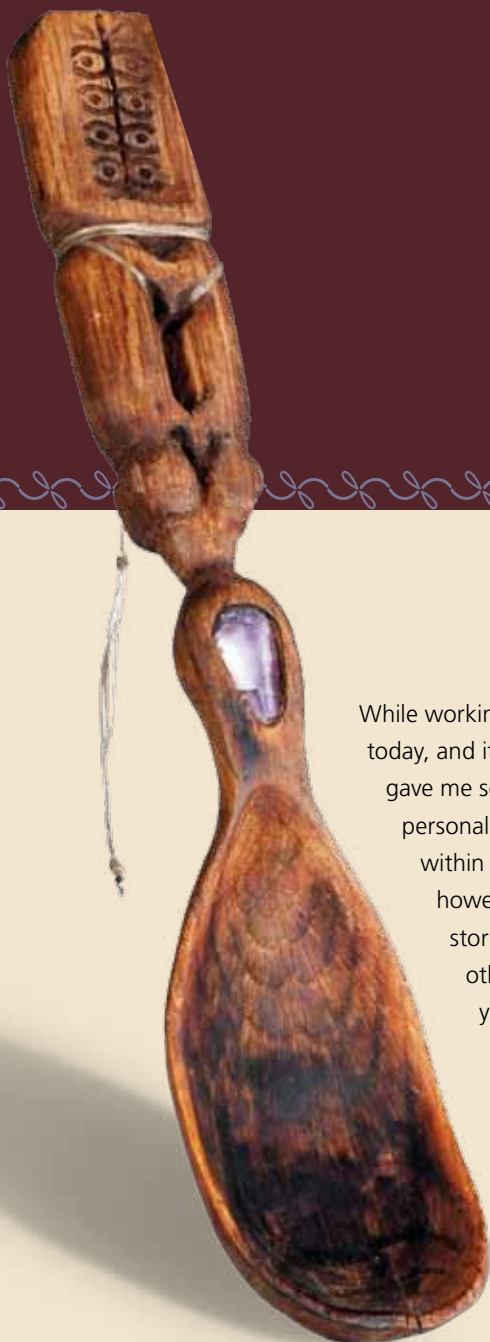
*"There are many reasons I do what I do, many forms in which I choose to do it. All of what I do is a form of spiritual expression. Every piece of art I create is an expression of who I am and all I have to be thankful for."*



PHOTO BY DAWN SPEARS

## ANNAWON WEEDEN

Mashpee Wampanoag



While working at Plimoth Plantation, I found many of the skills I continue using today, and it became important for me to give back to the communities that gave me so much to share with others. Artwork became a great form of personal expression. Dance had been the only form of sharing my spirit within and could only take place during Powwow or other events. Artwork, however, has helped me cope with depression, offer thanksgiving, share stories from our past, create stories for our future, show appreciation to others, and capture a moment that can be shared for eternity. Over the years, I have learned so much from so many. It has all proven to be more rewarding than I ever expected. When ancestors speak to me from beyond, they inspire what I get to do today. There are many reasons I do what I do, many forms in which I choose to do it. All of what I do is a form of spiritual expression. Every piece I create has meaning. Every piece of art I create is an expression of who I am and all I have to be thankful for.





## JENNIFER KREISBERG

Tuscarora Nation of North Carolina

*"I make musical art because I am compelled to do it. I hear songs in my dreams and during my waking hours of most days."*

I have been singing professionally since I was 17 years old. I have been very blessed in those years to have worked with so many talented First Nations artists. I am at a point in my life where I enjoy telling our stories and teaching up-and-coming Native singers. I hope to be doing this until I'm done here on earth. I am grateful.

I make musical art because I am compelled to do it. I hear songs in my dreams and during my waking hours of most days. I feel that the Creator has gifted me with this for the reason that I may share it with the world and now that I'm older, to pass it on as my mentors and those who came before me have passed it to me. We, our people, live in a continuum, and my place in that is to make songs and now teach others to make songs in the way our people have along that continuum. All I know how to do is make these songs, I enjoy doing this, and I enjoy working with my sister nations. A lot of what I have learned has been from women of other sister nations, so it all makes a circle.



The exhibit includes Jennifer's performance in the short film, *The Road Forward*, which was originally commissioned by the 2010 Cultural Olympiad and presented by The Four Host Nation's Aboriginal Pavilion as the closing performance.





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Watie Akins . . . . .	Penobscot . . . . .	Brewer, ME
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Gerri Grady . . . . .	Cherokee . . . . .	Cherokee, NC
Teri Greeves . . . . .	Kiowa . . . . .	Santa Fe, NM
Aron Griffith . . . . .	Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians . . . . .	Houlton, ME
Joy Harjo . . . . .	Muscogee (Creek) Nation . . . . .	Albuquerque, NM



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<i>William Yellow Robe</i>	<i>Assiniboine</i>	<i>Old Town, ME</i>

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**Sherry Gould** (Abenaki), artist

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**Ramona Peters** (Mashpee Wampanoag), Artist, Historian, Archivist Curator for Wampanoag Repatriation Project, Cultural Sensitivity Trainer

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**Theresa Secord** (Penobscot), artist, Executive Director, Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance, NEFA Board of Directors (former)

**Duane Slick** (Sauk, Fox, and Winnebago Nations), artist

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