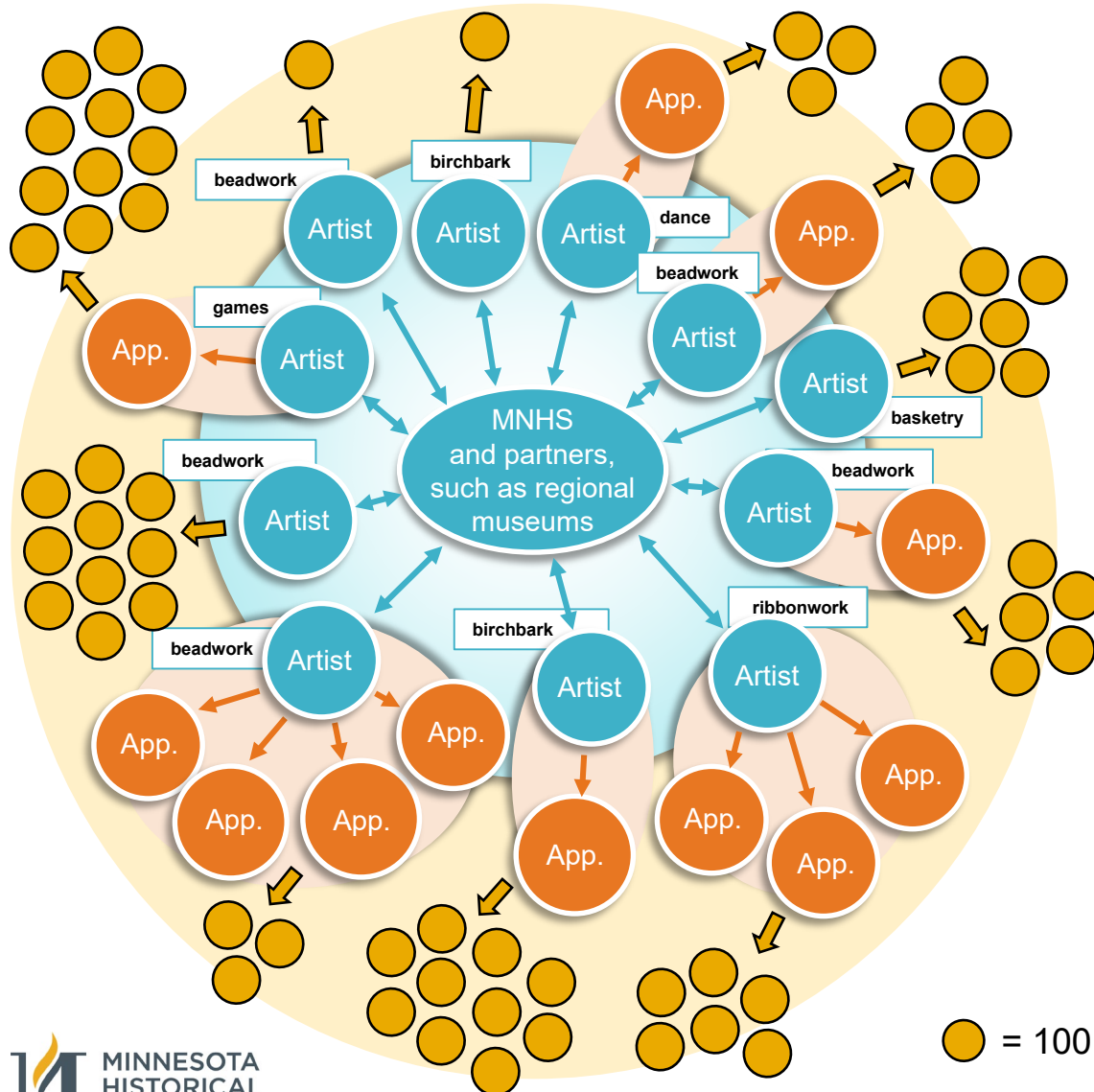


Native American Artist-In-Residence Program

How is cultural knowledge transferred between MNHS, artists, and their communities?

The Native American Artist-in-Residence program (NAAIR) relies on its artists-in-residence to facilitate the transfer of cultural knowledge. The artists study their cultural patrimony in MNHS's collections and in the collections of MNHS's partners, such as regional museums. Then they share the knowledge they gain with their tribal community, other Native American communities, and the Midwestern community at large. The diagram below displays how cultural knowledge was shared during NAAIR's first six years. During this time, NAAIR facilitated knowledge transfer in three main ways:



1. Between MNHS and artist — In its first six years, NAAIR worked with 11 artists. The transfer of knowledge between MNHS and the artists-in-residence is bi-directional. Through their relationship with MNHS, artists gain access to numerous cultural objects; likewise, MNHS learns more about the cultural significance of the objects in their collections as well as adds new objects to their collections. Artists also learn about their cultural patrimony from each other and from elders with whom they have relationships.

"It really didn't dawn on me until I went into the collections and I could hold these things in my hands. The intergenerational transfer was not just from me to my apprentices. Just to touch something that a Dakota person had made 150 years ago brought that idea of responsibility forward to me." —Artist-in-residence

2. Artist to apprentice — Seven artists in NAAIR's first six years chose to work with apprentices. Five artists worked with one apprentice each, one artist worked with three apprentices, and another artist worked with four apprentices—for a total of 12 apprentices. Like artists-in-residence, apprentices have the opportunity to interact with objects in MNHS's collections. Apprentices also receive hands-on teaching from artists about the cultural art form they practice.

"The apprenticeship inspired and motivated me to pass on my knowledge and skills to others, not just to the younger generation. There's a whole generation [older than me] that didn't learn how to do beadwork because of colonialism." —Apprentice

3. Artist/apprentice to wider community — With support from MNHS, artists and apprentices in NAAIR's first six years showcased their work at a number of events, workshops, festivals, conferences, and powwows throughout the Midwest. These showcases took place at MNHS sites, like the Minnesota History Center and the Mille Lacs Indian Museum, as well as at galleries, businesses, and education institutions. In total, in NAAIR's first six years, artists and apprentices engaged about 6,000 community members through these showcase opportunities.