Native Fashion Now

Mylar dresses. Stainless-steel boas. Iridescent-leather bomber jackets with a futuristic vibe. Stunning clothes and accessories you’ll find on the runway, in museum collections, and on the street. Welcome to Native American fashion and the contemporary designers from the United States and Canada who create it! They are pushing beyond buckskin fringe and feathers to produce an impressive range of new looks.

In this exhibition you’ll find the cutting edge in dialogue with the time-honored. Some Native designers work with high-tech fabric, while others favor natural materials. Innovative methods of construction blend with techniques handed down in Native communities for countless generations. Mind-bending works such as a dress made of cedar bark—a reinvention of Northwest Coast basket
weaving—appear alongside T-shirts bearing controversial messages. This wearable art covers considerable ground: the long tradition of Native cultural expression, the artists’ contemporary experience and aesthetic ambition, and fashion as a multifaceted creative domain.

Native Fashion Now groups designers according to four approaches we consider important. Pathbreakers have broken ground with their new visions of Native fashion. Revisitors refresh, renew, and expand on tradition, and Activators merge street wear with personal style and activism. Get ready for the Provocateurs—their conceptual experiments expand the boundaries of what fashion can be.

So let’s get started! Native fashion design awaits you, ready to surprise and inspire.
Designers like Patricia Michaels are actively redefining contemporary Native fashion. For a long time, Michaels’ work ranged so far from typical expectations of Native clothing and accessories that Native fashion shows would not accept it. Not anymore. Her ensembles turned heads throughout the fashion world when she participated in the hit reality-TV show Project Runway, in the season that aired in 2013.
Pueblo principles of balance govern Michaels’ work. She integrates the handmade and the machine-made, the representational and the abstract. The hand-painted feathery brushstrokes of her Cityscape dress evoke Manhattan buildings reflected in water, yet from a distance they read as pure pattern.

Michaels often has her models carry parasols. To her they are physical embodiments of prayer, a connection to the natural world—a way to express an uninhibited inner voice.

Patricia Michaels
Taos Pueblo
Born 1966, works in Taos Pueblo, New Mexico
Cityscape dress, Project Runway, Season 11 Collection, 2012
Leather, paint, and silk
On loan from Kathryn Rossi
Parasols, 2015
Patricia Michaels
Handles by James Duran (Taos Pueblo)
Blacksmith work by Frank Turley
Salt cedar, metal, cloth, dye, hide, beads, and paint
Commissioned by the Peabody Essex Museum

[MEDIA – RUNWAY FOOTAGE]
Runway show
Ensembles and parasols by Patricia Michaels
Indian Market, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 2011
Runway show, PM Waterlily
Fashion Week El Paseo, Palm Desert, California, 2015

Gabriel Mozart Steven Abeyta
Taos Pueblo, born 1992
5 minutes, 15 seconds, looped
Courtesy of Gabe Abeyta/Claymo productions
Pathbreakers

It’s such a common cliché—Native design is ultra-traditional. Yet since the 1950s and right up to the present, indigenous designers have been blazing trails in daring and distinctive ways. The result? They have overturned the simplistic notion that all Native design tends to look the same.

These designers dare to dream. They marry the worldview and aesthetics of their communities with modern materials and silhouettes. Clothing is their language, and they write it in silks and stainless steel, in rhythm, shape, and line.

These Pathbreakers increasingly source their fabrics globally and use New York runways as a jumping-off point for their careers. Along the way they create opportunities for those who follow in their footsteps.
Lloyd “Kiva” New is the father of contemporary Native American fashion. He was the first Native designer to create a successful international high-fashion brand, under the label Kiva, which refers to an architectural structure used for Native religious ceremonies in the Southwest. New developed a signature style featuring a Native aesthetic—abstract and figural symbols—and modern cuts and color palettes. Working with silks and cottons, he created clothes that evoke the Southwestern landscape: patterns from riverbeds, striated cliffs, and desert scrub. Just as important to his legacy is his promotion of Native art and artists in the mid-20th century, when Native Americans and other marginalized peoples faced widespread discrimination.
Lloyd “Kiva” New
Cherokee
1916–2002, worked in Santa Fe, New Mexico
Dress, 1950s
For Kiva
Screen-printed cotton and metal
On loan from Fashion by Robert Black with Doreen Picerne

Lloyd “Kiva” New
Cherokee
1916–2002, worked in Santa Fe, New Mexico
Dress, about 1960
For Kiva
Screen-printed cotton
On loan from Fashion by Robert Black with Doreen Picerne
Frankie Welch
Cherokee
Born 1924, worked in Alexandria, Virginia
Dress designed for First Lady Betty Ford, 1974
Silk brocade
On loan from the Gerald R. Ford Museum
1983.88.3

In her posh boutique in Alexandria, Welch styled Washington’s elite, including five First Ladies, from the 1960s through the 80s. She sold her own line alongside those of Halston, Oscar de la Renta, and other leading designers. This brocade gown, designed for and worn by First Lady Betty Ford, combines a sleek modern silhouette, exquisite workmanship, and colors that suggest power and prestige—a combination well-chosen for the president’s wife.
[caption for label photo]
First Lady Betty Ford wearing this dress, White House Christmas Party, December 17, 1974
[credit line] Courtesy of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library
Dorothy Grant
Haida
Born 1955, works in Vancouver, British Columbia
Eagle Gala dress, 2013
For DG Gold Label
Silk, tulle, synthetic fabrics, sequins, and floral appliqué

Dorothy Grant
Haida
Born 1955, works in Vancouver, British Columbia
She-Wolf tuxedo jacket and pants, 2014
For DG Gold Label
Italian wool and embroidery
On loan from Michael Horse

Dorothy Grant blazed a trail as the first Native woman to gain an international following—paving the way for other Native designers with her stunning Feastwear tuxedos and other iconic
Northwest Coast fashions for men and women. Dorothy Grant’s over 30 year career reached a high point this year when actor Duane E. Howard, portrayed as Elk Dog in the Academy Award winning motion picture, Revenant, wore Grant’s Eagle Raven Shawl tuxedo design on Oscar’s red carpet.

[caption for label photo] Howard pictured at his fitting in Grant’s studio, February 2016
[credit line] Courtesy of Dorothy Grant
Orlando Dugi
Diné (Navajo)
Born 1978, works in Santa Fe, New Mexico
Dress, headpiece, and cape, Desert Heat Collection, 2012
Dress: dyed silk, organza, feathers, beads, and 24-karat gold
Cape: feathers, beads, and silver
Headpiece: African porcupine quills and feathers

This ensemble reveals Dugi’s keen eye for elegant eveningwear and luxurious detail. The headpiece’s sharp quills add a sexy danger to the dramatic volume and fluidity of the dress. Glittering beads capture the experience of watching all-night Diné ceremonies under a starry sky. Dugi owes a debt to the fashion designers Yves Saint Laurent and Valentino and to Dugi’s Diné grandmother, who wore elaborate clothing and accessories every day. Their love of opulent adornment, layering of textures, and
draping are qualities that drive his work.

Wendy Ponca
Osage
Born 1960, works in Fairfax, Osage Reservation, Oklahoma
Dresses, 2015
Dresses and accessories: Mylar, fox fur, golden and bald eagle feathers, crystals, space-shuttle glass, and shell
Mannequins painted by the artist

Mylar, a material used in space shuttles, doesn’t seem like the typical stuff of Native fashion, but these are the real deal. This reflective fabric recalls the Sky World, home of the ancestors in Osage creation stories. And in motion, Mylar actually makes a crinkling sound, an auditory reminder of this ancestral connection.

Ponca taught fashion at the Institute of American
Indian Arts. In the mid-1980s she cofounded a collective of Native designers, models, and artists, establishing Santa Fe as a center for Native haute couture.

Virgil Ortiz
Cochiti Pueblo
Born 1969, works in Cochiti Pueblo, New Mexico and
Donna Karen
Born 1948, works in New York City
Skirt, Spring/Summer 2003
For Donna Karan
Cotton
On loan from Ellen and Bill Taubman

In 2002, Ortiz was selling his ceramics and couture at Santa Fe’s Indian Market when the New York fashion powerhouse Donna Karan strolled over. Struck by Ortiz’s bold forms and
motifs, she invited him to collaborate on her 2003 couture collection. They worked together to marry her silhouettes and fabrics with his graphic patterns, which symbolize wild spinach, clouds, and fertility. Their partnership is an inspiring example of collaboration between artists, cultures, and businesses.

[MEDIA: RUNWAY FOOTAGE]
Runway show, Donna Karan, New York, Spring/Summer 2003
Courtesy of Fashion Channel Publishing
fashionchannel.it
27 seconds, looped
Derek Jagodzinsky
Whitefish Cree
Born 1984, works in Edmonton, Alberta
Dress, belt, and handbag, Four Directions Collection, Spring/Summer 2014
For LUXX ready-to-wear
Spandex and synthetic blend

Cree language syllabics swirl around the waist of this fringe dress, encircling the wearer at the center of her being. This garment celebrates the Cree language, still spoken daily by tribal members in Canada despite government efforts to suppress it in the past. Its appearance on the runway conveys Jagodzinsky’s ongoing message: “We will succeed.”
Charles Loloma
Hopi Pueblo
1921–1991, worked in Hotevilla, Hopi Pueblo, Arizona
Bracelet, about 1975
Ironwood, silver, lapis lazuli, turquoise, coral, fossil ivory, and abalone shell
On loan from Leslie M. Beebe and Bruce Nussbaum

Loloma is widely considered the most renowned Native jeweler of his day. This landscape-in-miniature reveals his sources of inspiration: the colorful stepped mesas of Arizona and the sharp angles used by Frank Lloyd Wright, the 20th-century architect. Loloma’s chunky inlays, vertical slabs, and exotic woods and stones depart from Southwestern silversmith conventions, heavy with silver, turquoise, and stampwork.
Robin Waynee
Saginaw Chippewa
Born 1971, works in Santa Fe, New Mexico
Necklace with detachable brooch pendant, 2014
18-karat gold, blackened sterling silver, Tahitian pearl, sphene, diamonds, and pink sapphires

Orlando Dugi
Diné (Navajo)
Born 1978, works in Santa Fe, New Mexico and
Troy Sice
Zuni Pueblo
Born 1977, works in Albuquerque, New Mexico
The Guardian—Bringer of Thunder, Lightning and Rain handbag, 2013
Elk antler, stingray leather, parrot feathers, bobcat fur, rubies, shell, glass beads, and sterling silver
On loan from Ellen and Bill Taubman
Denise Wallace
Chugach Aleut
Born 1957, works in Hilo, Hawai‘i
and
Samuel Wallace
1936–2010, worked in Hilo
Craftspeople Belt, 1992
Sterling silver, 14-karat gold, fossil ivory, and semiprecious stones
On loan from the Museum of Contemporary Native Arts
AT-58

This belt tells Denise Wallace’s story of meeting influential Alaska Native artists during a group exhibition in Anchorage. Ten figures appear, separated by scrimshawed medallions, to celebrate the makers of boats, dolls, and masks, as well as basket weavers and ivory carvers. Northern Alaskan jewelry often condenses a story through imagery—a more permanent
version of what is conveyed through dance and ceremony.

Wallace’s Aleut heritage is a major influence shaping her jewelry. She combines older Arctic artistic genres, such as stone carving, mask making, and storytelling, with Southwestern-style stone inlay and silver.

Frankie Welch
Cherokee
Born 1924, worked in Alexandria, Virginia
Cherokee Alphabet scarf, about 1970
Printed synthetic fabric
Peabody Essex Museum
Gift of Karen Kramer
2015.11.3

In 1966, Virginia Rusk, wife of Dean Rusk, the U.S. secretary of state, commissioned Welch
to design a scarf as an official presidential gift. She requested an “all-American design.” What could be more American than the first Native American language to be expressed in writing? Welch’s bold graphics and esteem for her Native heritage come through clearly in this design, which features syllabics from the Cherokee language. This is the most popular of her 2,000 scarf designs.

Maria Samora
Taos Pueblo
Born 1975, works in Taos, New Mexico
Lily Pad bracelet, 2014
18-karat gold, palladium white gold, and diamonds
Revisitors

One tradition never changes in Native art: things change. Native artists have always brought new materials and ideas into their work. This gallery celebrates fashion designers who refresh and expand on time-honored symbols, forms, and techniques even as they adopt new ones. In turn, Revisitors use contemporary and innovative approaches to strengthen and carry forward ancient understandings of the world that sustain their tribal communities. Some make clothing and other objects specifically for powwows and Native ceremonies, while others intend their work for outside markets.

Revisiting also has other connotations worth thinking about. Some of today’s non-Native designers are inspired by Native patterns, motifs, and styles past and present—a common practice not without controversy. When symbols
used in Native cultures are employed out of context, their intended message can become garbled. Also, profits from the sale of such items will never reach the Native artists who created the designs.

Revisitors
Trending Tribal

Totem-pole designs of the Pacific Northwest Coast captivated the fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi, inspiring him to create this MASTERFULLY EMBROIDERED dress. The characters and symbols on totem poles chronicle histories, indicate social status, and represent family identity among the Northwest Coast Native communities. And yet Mizrahi is not Native—so what to think of his appropriation of these motifs?
CULTURAL BORROWING is complex. Fashion designers are RENOWNED REMIXERS—voracious consumers of images and ideas. Mizrahi makes reference to totem poles, but he does not replicate one exactly. He emulates, yet he also produces a new style.

In fact, this garment deeply influenced the Taos Pueblo designer Patricia Michaels. She saw a part of herself embraced by the mainstream in this Native-inspired piece, a CATALYST to pursuing her dream of a career in fashion.
Bethany Yellowtail
Apsáalooke (Crow) and Northern Cheyenne
Born 1988, works in Los Angeles, California
Old Time Floral Elk Tooth dress, Apsáalooke
Collection, 2014
For B.Yellowtail
Lace, leather appliqué, and elk teeth
Peabody Essex Museum
Museum purchase
2015.22.1

Bethany Yellowtail’s family heirlooms, including beaded garments and photographs of her relatives wearing elk-tooth dresses, inspired this piece. A line of elk teeth, symbolizing Apsáalooke wealth, runs along the sleeves and chest, popping against the garment’s delicate Italian-made lace and leather floral appliqués. The interplay between dark and light, foreground and background, defines Crow aesthetics and suggests balance—something Yellowtail aspires
to achieve aesthetically and spiritually while living in Los Angeles, far from her Montana home.

[HOTSPOT #3]
Convergence

For centuries, Native designers have found inspiration through cultural exchange. In the second half of the 19th century, Plains artists began using colored pencils and Euro-American accounting books, or ledger books, instead of painted buffalo hides to record pictorial histories. Plains Indians also adopted the fashionable top hats and parasols of the era, adding personal embellishments such as porcupine quills, lace, and beads to give them new meaning.

Wilcox’s hat refers to those sported by stylish
19th-century Plains Indian men. Wilcox made his from vintage paper. The dragonfly on top symbolizes protection. Greeves found inspiration for her parasol in the ones carried during parades at the annual Crow Fair in Montana and in the umbrella her mother always brought to what she called “Indian doings.” Williams depicts horses galloping across a kimono in response to a friend’s mixed Native and Asian heritage. Like their Plains predecessors, these artists have imaginatively fused Plains iconography with their current experiences.

Toni Williams
Northern Arapaho
Born 1953, works in Taylorsville, Utah
Kimono and obi, 2011
Silk with appliqué
Anonymous loan
Dwayne Wilcox
Oglala Lakota
Born 1957, works in Rapid City, South Dakota
Medicine Hat, 2013
Vintage paper and pigments

Teri Greeves
Kiowa
Born 1970, works in Santa Fe, New Mexico
Indian Parade Umbrella, 1999
Brain-tanned deer hide, glass beads, abalone shell, Bisbee turquoise, cloth, brass and nickel studs, Indian bead nickels, and antique umbrella frame
On loan from Gilbert Waldman
Dallin Maybee
Northern Arapaho and Seneca
Born 1974
and
Laura Sheppherd
Born 1957
Both work in Santa Fe, New Mexico
Corset and skirt, 2010
Corset: silk, cotton, and steel
Skirt: silk shantung
Necklace: dentalium shell and brain-tanned hide
Earrings: sterling silver, 24-karat gold, and mammoth ivory
Jewelry by Dallin Maybee, 2015
Juanita Lee
Kewa (Santo Domingo) Pueblo
1910-1974
Dress and belt, 1970
Commercial fabric and embroidery thread
On loan from the Heard Museum
Gift of Mareen Allen Nichols
4353 29 a–c

Margaret Wood
Diné (Navajo) and Seminole
Born 1950, works in Phoenix, Arizona
Biil (Blanket Dress), 1980s
Wool
On loan from the Heard Museum
Gift of Mr. Tom Galbraith and Ms. Margaret Wood
NA-SW-NA-C-82

In this re-creation of the classic 19th-century Navajo blanket dress, Wood kept the
characteristic palette of navy and red and the stepped pattern. She updated the cut, changing it from knee-length to floor-length, and added a bateau neckline.

D. Y. Begay  
Diné (Navajo)  
Born 1953, works in Santa Fe, New Mexico  
Biníghádzíltł́’óní (Woven Through) serape, 2012  
Wool and natural dyes

After visiting Peru, the fourth-generation weaver Begay created this Diné version of a Peruvian serape. Its abstract pattern derives from the landscapes of the Diné homeland in the American Southwest, and the T shape refers to Spider Woman’s cross. This holy character in Diné cosmology holds particular significance for Begay: Spider Woman taught the Diné people to weave.
Niio Perkins
Akwesasne Mohawk
Born 1980, works in Akwesasne, St. Regis Mohawk Reservation, New York
Emma ensemble, 2010
Cotton, velvet, glass beads, and metal pins
On loan from the Southwest Museum of the American Indian Collection, Autry National Center, Jackie Autry Purchase Award, American Indian Arts Marketplace, 2010
2010.62.1–7

For Perkins, a box of beads holds endless possibilities. She poured her heart into this elaborate ensemble—fit for a traditional wedding—and titled it Emma, a favorite name. She likens the outfit to a close friend she spent months getting to know.

Beadwork is deeply rooted in Perkins’ Native heritage. She embraces its power to stimulate
community involvement and pride: “Our designs are like stories, thoughtfully woven into a ceremonial dress. They capture personality and identity.”

Elizabeth James-Perry
Aquinnah Wampanoag
Born 1973, works in North Dartmouth, Massachusetts
Blouse, skirt, sash, moccasins, wampum friendship collar and earrings, and bracelet, 2014–15
Blouse and skirt: linen with trade silver and ribbons
Sash: oblique-weave wool and beads
Moccasins: leather with glass beads
Collar and earrings: leather, glass beads, and quahog shell
Bracelet: porcupine quills
“The colors, textures, the creative rhythm of someone . . . weaving and threading and beading together a certain pattern; it’s like telling a story. Being part of that storytelling process is central to my identity as a Wampanoag woman.”
—Elizabeth James-Perry

Jonathan Perry
Aquinnah Wampanoag
Born 1976, works in Aquinnah, Massachusetts
Blue Heron necklace, 2014
Slate, copper, glass trade beads, and sinew

“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.”
—Jonathan Perry

[HOTSPOT #4]
It’s All in the Mix

There’s style, and then there’s styyyyle. These elegant boots demonstrate how personal fashion sense can mix the antique with the contemporary, the accessories of one culture with those of another. Jamie Okuma catapults moccasins into the 21st century. She hand-stitched thousands of antique beads onto boots by the French designer Christian Louboutin. Only his signature red soles (a symbol of the French aristocracy) remain exposed. The graceful swallows and abstract floral motifs evoke Okuma’s childhood on her grandmother’s land.
Jamie Okuma
Luiseño and Shoshone-Bannock
Born 1977, works in La Jolla Indian Reservation, California
Boots, 2013–14
Antique glass beads on boots
Boots designed by Christian Louboutin (born 1964, France)
Peabody Essex Museum
Commissioned by the Peabody Essex Museum with support from Katrina Carye, John Curuby, Karen Keane and Dan Elias, Cynthia Gardner, Merry Glosband, and Steve and Ellen Hoffman
2014.44.1AB

Mike Bird-Romero
Ohkay Owingeh (San Juan) and Taos Pueblos
Born 1946, works in Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, New Mexico
Four bracelets, 2000–2010
Top left: sterling silver, spiny oyster shell, and turquoise

Top right: sterling silver, spiny oyster shell, and abalone shell

Bottom left: sterling silver, abalone shell, and onyx

Bottom right: sterling silver, onyx, and turquoise

Left Center

Eddie Begay
Diné (Navajo) bracelet, 2000–2010
Sterling silver, turquoise, coral, and jet
Right Center

Ray Adakai
Diné
Born 1965
and
Alice Shay
Diné
Both work in Gallup, New Mexico
Bracelet, 2000–2010
Sterling silver, spiny oyster shell, and stones

All six bracelets on loan from Catherine B. Wygant
Keri Ataumbi
Kiowa
Born 1971, works in Santa Fe, New Mexico
Beach Water Drop earrings and Mussel Shell necklace, 2013–14
Sterling silver, diamonds, and 22-karat gold

Each piece of Ataumbi’s jewelry forms a small sculpture, enhanced when worn on the body. She created the delicate mussel-shell beads using a hydraulic press, etching tools, and a soldering iron. Rather than focus on traditional form or potential markets, she seeks inspiration in current visual culture, the history and theory of modern art, and her personal aesthetic, which blends natural organic forms with sleek modern design and technology.
Kevin Pourier
Oglala Lakota
Born 1958, works in Scenic, Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota
Rez Bans glasses, 2009
Buffalo horn, malachite, gold and white mother-of-pearl, coral, lapis lazuli, sandstone, metal, and glass

Kenneth Williams Jr.
Northern Arapaho and Seneca
Born 1983, works in Santa Fe, New Mexico
He Was Iconic, 2014
Glass beads, turquoise, coral, seed pearls, brass, wool, yarn, brain-tanned hide, gold, and human hair

On loan from the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art
Reverse side of He Was Iconic. This piece honors the Native jeweler Charles Loloma, whose work can be seen in the Pathbreakers gallery. Photo courtesy of the artist.
Activators
Speak Your Piece

Self-representation, a recurring theme in contemporary Native fashion, is a major focus for the artists who use fashion to express identity and political ideas. When you think about it, what you wear and how you wear it can say a lot—about yourself and your engagement with others. Clothing can help get a message across.

Activators design and style casual-chic outfits, blending tribal-specific patterns and colors with street-style sensibilities and bypassing the catwalk and the corporation. Many younger Native designers are Activators, constantly responding to trends and current events by way of the Internet and social media.
Kenneth Williams Jr.
Northern Arapaho and Seneca
Born 1983, works in Santa Fe, New Mexico

Styling of the ensemble

Blazer: linen with painted designs by Thomas Haukaas (born 1950, Sicangu Lakota), 2013
Moccasins: glass beads, wool broadcloth, brass, wool, yarn, and brain-tanned hide
Shirt and pants: dyed cotton

Thomas Haukaas designed this stunning linen blazer for his friend Kenneth Williams Jr. to wear for the opening of a museum exhibition of Williams’ work. Haukaas decorated the jacket in a classic Plains pictorial style, showing high-ranking warriors on horseback. Traditionally painted on buffalo hides and tipis, such images often recorded “counting coup”—feats in battle or hunting that brought prestige to the warrior and his family. The designs on this jacket serve a similar function: Haukaas’s riders and horses
celebrate his friend’s achievements as an artist, a contemporary equivalent of counting coup.

Tommy Joseph
Tlingit
Born 1964, works in Sitka, Alaska
My Ancestors, 2009-15
Wool and dye
On loan from The Fabric Workshop and Museum

This piece references Joseph’s Tlingit clan group, Ch’aak, or Eagle (Wolf is sometimes used interchangeably). The flattened Eagle figure, rendered in heavy black outlines, wraps around the wearer’s body. Joseph collaborated with Philadelphia’s Fabric Workshop and Museum to create this experimental three-piece suit. By profession a carver of masks and totem poles, Joseph translates Tlingit stories into three-dimensional art.
Winifred Nungak
Inuit
Born 1987, works in Kangirsuk, Nunavik, Quebec
Parka and Nasaq (hat), 2015
Parka: Commander fabric, Hollofil, and fox fur
Nasaq: wool and fox fur

Jamie Okuma
Luiseño and Shoshone-Bannock
Born 1977, works in La Jolla Indian Reservation, California
Jacket, pants, and purse, 2013–14
For J.Okuma
Jacket: holographic Italian lambskin
Pants: leather and lace
Purse: leather, pony hair, dye, and brass
Bethany Yellowtail
Apsáalooke (Crow) and Northern Cheyenne
Born 1988, works in Los Angeles, California
Yellowtail shift dress, 2013–14
For Project 562
Polyester, satin, and polyester mesh printed
with photograph by Matika Wilbur (born 1984,
Swinomish and Tulalip)
On loan from Karen Kramer
Yellowtail’s dress reflects a fast-growing trend
in fashion: photoprint fabrics. She created
this limited-edition garment as a reward for
the Kickstarter campaign for Project 562,
the photographer Matika Wilbur’s effort to
photograph contemporary Native America in all
its diversity. The cut of the fabric positions the
horizon of one of Wilbur’s photograph along
the hems of the skirt and the sleeves. The filmy
black band at the bottom evokes the flutter of
wings and the spirit of birds in flight.
Blechert lives where the arctic winters are long and dark—snow covers the tundra for eight months at a time. But in the summer, flowers, mosses, and lichens fill the landscape with bursts of purples, greens, and rusts—colors Blechert uses in her jewelry. Natural materials reflect the art of her Inuit roots. The laser-cut beads and contemporary color scheme ground her in the present.
Douglas Miles
San Carlos Apache and Akimel O’odham
Born 1963, works in San Carlos, San Carlos
Apache Indian Reservation, Arizona
T-shirt, pants, cap, belt with buckle, and skate
shoes, 2008–15

Miles fuses bold, graffiti-inspired graphics
with Apache iconography and language. Years
ago he painted his first skateboard, for his
son. His brand, Apache Skateboards—the first
Native-owned skateboard company—grew from
that first deck, and soon it included a line of
streetwear. In 2009–10, Miles collaborated with
the internationally popular skate brand Volcom
to create its Stone-Age product line. His mission
is to empower Native youth and highlight social
issues that confront their communities today.
For Apache Skateboards and Volcom Stone-Age
T-shirt: cotton, 2010
Pants: denim and paint, 2015
Cap: cotton, 2010
Belt with buckle: leather and pewter, 2010
Skate shoes: suede and rubber, for Ipath, 2008

Douglas Miles
San Carlos Apache and Akimel O’odham
Born 1963, works in San Carlos, San Carlos
Apache Indian Reservation, Arizona
The Original Apache Skateboard deck, 2007-08

For Apache Skateboards
Acrylic on wood
[MEDIA: FILM]
Dustinn Craig
White Mountain Apache and Diné (Navajo), born
1975
Young Raiders, 2014
For 4-Wheel War Pony
9 minutes, 38 seconds, looped

Rico Lanaat’ Worl
Tlingit and Athabascan
Born 1984, works in Juneau, Alaska
Raven and Eagle skateboard decks, 2014
For Trickster Company
Wood and paint
Peabody Essex Museum
Museum purchase
2014.53.1–2
Ever since the graphic tee emerged as a fashion statement in the 1970s, designers have used T-shirts to flaunt individuality and voice political protest. For young designers, these affordable, easy-to-produce shirts offer a way to grab attention and express opinion.

Jared Yazzie’s Native Americans Discovered Columbus T-shirt reclaims America as indigenous country, and his Mis-Rep tee challenges the use of images of Native people as sports mascots. For Yazzie and the other T-shirt designers, words are weapons, provoking people to think harder about history.
Dustin Martin
Diné (Navajo)
Born 1989, works in Albuquerque, New Mexico
Ceci n’est pas un conciliateur (This is not a peacemaker) T-shirt, 2013
For S.O.L.O.
Cotton

Peabody Essex Museum
Gift of Karen Kramer
2015.11.6

Jeremy Arviso
Diné (Navajo), Hopi, Pima, and Tohono O’odham
Born 1978, works in Phoenix, Arizona
Definition T-shirt, 2013
For Noble Savage
Cotton
On loan from Jeremy Donovan Arviso-Noble Savage LLC
Jared Yazzie
Diné (Navajo)
Born in 1989, works in Chandler, Arizona
Native Americans Discovered Columbus T-shirt, 2012
For OxDx
Cotton
Peabody Essex Museum
Gift of Karen Kramer
2015.11.4

Jared Yazzie
Diné (Navajo)
Born in 1989, works in Chandler, Arizona
Mis-Rep T-shirt, 2014
For OxDx
Cotton
Peabody Essex Museum
Gift of Karen Kramer
2015.11.5
Jolene Nenibah Yazzie
Diné (Navajo)
Born 1978, works in the Southwest
Warrior Women T-shirt, 2012
For Asdzaan
Cotton
On loan from M. McGeough

Virgil Ortiz
Cochiti Pueblo
Born 1969, works in Cochiti Pueblo, New Mexico
Scarf, Indigene Collection, 2013
For VO
Silk
On loan from Madeleine M. Kropa
Ortiz’s fashion line features hard-edged looks in leather jackets, luxury handbags, and silk scarves like this one. This scarf depicts Kootz, a character in Evolution, a film script that Ortiz is writing. A futuristic reimagining of the 1680
Pueblo Revolt, it will feature Ortiz’s costumes. Through his art, he hopes to engage Cochiti youth in their own culture and its language, artistic practices, and history.

Alano Edzerza
Tahltan
Born 1980, works in West Vancouver, British Columbia
Chilkat tunic, 2013
Cotton
Peabody Essex Museum
Gift of Karen Kramer
2015.11.2

Edzerza’s tunic draws from the formline style of Northwest Coast indigenous art—particularly its heavy black outlines, oval-like shapes, and U-forms. This design is borrowed from woven ceremonial-dance blankets. Edzerza works in
many mediums, from clothing and silver jewelry to painting and glass.

Maya Stewart  
Chickasaw, Creek, and Choctaw  
Born 1979, works in Los Angeles  
Carmen clutch, 2010  
Calfskin

Marcus Amerman  
Choctaw  
Born 1959, works in Santa Fe, New Mexico  
Untitled (Lone Ranger and Tonto Bracelet), 2004  
Glass beads, leather, thread, rubberized cotton, and brass  
On loan from the Museum of Arts and Design  
Museum purchase with funds provided by the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation  
2004.27
In the 1980s Amerman created a new genre of beadwork portraiture featuring bold, colorful mashups of history and pop culture. This cuff is a commentary on the Lone Ranger and Tonto, characters from the popular 20th-century radio and TV Westerns who embody cultural stereotypes of the white male leader and the faithful Indian servant. By depicting such characters with humor and irony, Amerman aims to raise awareness of misunderstandings and myths about his Native heritage.

MaRia A. Bird  
Diné (Navajo), Hopi, and Santa Clara Pueblo  
Born 1982, works in Arizona  
American Horse earrings, 2013  
For Mea B’fly Designs  
Graphic adhered to balsa wood  
On loan from Karen Kramer
Nathalie Waldman
Yellowknives Dene
Born 1974, works in Santa Fe, New Mexico
Abalone Fringe bag, 2014
For Urban Dogrib Designs
Deer hide, abalone shell, silver, and tin
Peabody Essex Museum
Gift of Karen Kramer
2015.11.1

Lloyd “Kiva” New
Cherokee
1916–2002, worked in Santa Fe, New Mexico
Handbag, 1955–65
For Kiva
Leather
On loan from the Heard Museum

Gift of Selma E. and Jerome Targovnik
4734-1
Paul E. LaPier
Haida and Tlingit
Born 1977, works in Portland, Oregon
Flat cap, 2014
Red cedar bark
Peabody Essex Museum
Gift of Lynda Roscoe Hartigan
2014.55.1

Dylan Poblano
Zuni Pueblo
Born 1974, works in Zuni Pueblo, New Mexico
Knuckle ring, 1999
Silver and gemstones
On loan from the Museum of Arts and Design
Gift of Natalie and Greg Fitz-Gerald
2008.42.3
Cody Sanderson
Diné (Navajo), Hopi, Tohono O’odham, and Nambé Pueblo
Born 1964, works in Santa Fe, New Mexico
Polished Wet Spider bracelet, 2013
Sterling silver
Peabody Essex Museum
Gift of Lynda Roscoe Hartigan
2015.51.1
Louie Gong merges art and activism in his custom-designed sneakers. Bored with the styles available in stores, he bought a plain pair of Vans, the classic skateboarding slip-ons, and used Sharpies to decorate them—a spontaneous moment of self-expression. He has since decorated more than 200 pairs of street sneakers, giving each its own contours, colors, and lines.

His designs integrate graffiti influences from Seattle’s urban environment with designs called formlines—heavily outlined abstract figures and motifs—derived from his Coast Salish background. Gong aims to raise awareness of issues related to his mixed heritage and has established programs in the Seattle area that help kids express themselves by decorating their
footwear.

Louie Gong
Nooksack and Squamish
Born 1974, works in Seattle, Washington
Wolf Chucks, 2015
Fabric dye and acrylic on sneakers

REPRODUCTION
Yatika Fields
Cherokee, Creek, and Osage
Born 1980, works in Seattle
Dreaming Beyond the Horizon, 2015
Inkjet photomural
Provocateurs

Some Native designers can be thought of as Provocateurs. They embrace the experimental and erase boundaries between art and fashion. Their one-of-a-kind clothing and accessories demonstrate remarkable craftsmanship and at the same time hurl familiar materials and forms into an entirely new dimension. Some of these works stretch the concept of wearability. How would such garments feel on your body? Can these clothes truly be worn?

As these designers work from drape to pattern to fabrication, they deconstruct typical ideals of beauty while constructing new ones. Their fashions dance between the imposing and the delicate. Our Provocateurs carry on a question-and-answer dialogue between material and concept, inviting viewers to engage with issues of identity, sovereignty, and creativity.
Kent Monkman
Cree
Born 1965, works in Toronto, Ontario
Louis Vuitton Quiver, 2007
Leather, printed fabric, and arrows

This quiver, inspired by a luxury brand, belongs to Monkman’s alter ego, Miss Chief, who plays a starring role in his artwork. Miss Chief is “two-spirit”—physically male but self-identified as female. Two-spirits were historically revered in Native communities but mostly reviled by outsiders.

According to the classic Hollywood Indian stereotype, a quiver holding a bow and arrows was standard gear for all Native people, whatever their specific background. Miss Chief, hunter of men and irony alike, slyly transforms this object. If audiences want Native people equipped with a quiver, she will satisfy expectations—with
her own special twist. In her hands it becomes a high-fashion vehicle for Native identity and gender politics.

Margaret Roach Wheeler
Chickasaw
Born 1943, works in Joplin, Missouri
The Messenger (The Owl) cape and headpiece, Mahotan Collection, 2014
For Mahota Handwovens
Cape: silk-wool yarn
Headpiece: silk-wool yarn, metal, silver, glass beads, and peacock feathers

This ensemble turns two-dimensional handwoven fabric into a three-dimensional soft sculpture. In the Native worldview of the Southeast, birds figure prominently as warriors, hunters, protectors, and messengers. This ensemble evokes traditional dancers who wear
feathers to embody these beings and to summon their powers. Owl, a messenger from the spirit world, often warns people of danger. Wheeler’s Mahotan Collection also features Raven, Crane, and Snow Goose, demonstrating the enduring role of birds in Chickasaw art and culture.

Lisa Telford
Haida
Born 1957, works in Everett, Washington
PochaHaida dress, 2009
Red cedar bark, cordage, and faux-leather fringe
On loan from the Bill Holm Center for the Study of Northwest Coast Art, Burke Museum
2014-50/1
Pilar Agoyo
Ohkay Owingeh (San Juan), Cochiti, and Kewa (Santo Domingo) Pueblos
Born 1969, works in Santa Fe, New Mexico
Dress, 2009
Vinyl

[HOTSPOT #7 ]
Lavish and Luxe

This dress’s title, Wile Wile Wile, means “the sound of wings in flight” in the Kaska Dene language. Its surprising textures update a classic feminine silhouette. The dress honors Esquiro’s departed loved ones—she designed it for them to wear at an imagined joyful reunion.

Taking visual cues from Mexico, including the paintings of Frida Kahlo and the observance of the Day of the Dead, this dramatic evening
gown demonstrates Esquiro’s hallmark love of juxtapositions as well as technical sophistication and artistry—qualities associated with European couture houses and with indigenous art.

Sho Sho Esquiro
Kaska Dene and Cree
Born 1980, works in Vancouver, British Columbia
Wile Wile Wile dress, Day of the Dead Collection, 2013
Dress: seal fur, beaver tail, carp, beads, silk, and rooster feathers
Fascinator: tulle and skull by Dominique Hanke (United Kingdom) for Sho Sho Esquiro
[MEDIA: RUNWAY FOOTAGE]
VIDEO
Runway show, Spring 2014 Collection
Sho Sho Esquiro
Couture Fashion Week, New York, 2013
Couturefashionweek.com
40 seconds, looped
Nicholas Galanin
Tlingit and Aleut
Born 1979, works in Sitka, Alaska
Shoes, 2015
Leather and copper
Crowning Glory

The feather boa is one of those accessories that scream flamboyance, turning the fashion volume to 10. In this collaboration, the brothers Gaussoin kick it up to 11. They have transformed the feather boa’s flounce and fluff into something sleek, even ominous. Is Postmodern Boa dangerous or whimsical? Can it be both? This work is in step with the Gaussoins’ jewelry designs, which showcase the human body and push materials into new sculptural realms. As 21st-century designers with a long family tradition of artistic expression, they interpret their culture in a progressive way.
David Gaussoin
Diné (Navajo) and Picuris Pueblo
Wayne Nez Gaussoin
Diné and Picuris Pueblo
Born 1982
Both work in Santa Fe, New Mexico
Postmodern Boa, 2009
Stainless steel, sterling silver, enamel paint, and feathers

Consuelo Pascual
Diné (Navajo) and Maya
Born in 1981, works in Mesquite, New Mexico
Gunmetal Pleat dress, 2010
Taffeta
Wendy Red Star  
Apsáalooke (Crow)  
Born 1981, works in Portland, Oregon  
and  
Terrance Houle  
Blood  
Born 1975, works in Calgary, Alberta  
Síkahpoyíí, bishée, baleíítaashtee (Motor Oil, Buffalo, Dress), 2013  
Vinyl, and plastic beads  
Dress on loan from Portland Art Museum  
Museum purchase  
Funds provided by Barbara Christy Wagner  
2014.19.1a–c  
Vinyl silhouettes on loan from Terrance Houle

Red Star’s dress stands before buffalo silhouettes designed by Houle. Their collaborative piece draws attention to the depletion of natural resources on Native lands—both the environmental destruction and the
economic exploitation involved in drilling for oil and gas. The drips of vinyl from Houle’s black buffalo suggest both oil and blood, while the long, trailing fringed dress—a traditional garment still worn among the Apsáalooke—and the elaborate breastplate invoke the strength and resilience of Native people.

Barry Ace
Anishinaabe (Odawa)
Born 1958, works in Ottawa, Ontario
Reaction shoes, 2005
Leather shoes, computer components, wire, paper, rubber, and metal
On loan from John Cook

Ace made these modern-day “moccasins” out of reclaimed computer parts. Clusters of coated copper wire stand in for traditional ground-trailing fringe, originally designed to
erase the wearer’s tracks. Reaction, the brand name for Ace’s shoes, gives the piece its title; it suggests responsiveness, a theme important to Ace’s work. He does more than upcycle—he completely reimagines the cast-off remnants of our culture of consumption, turning found objects into art.

Kristen Dorsey
Chickasaw
Born 1985, works in Los Angeles, California
Stingray breastplate and ring, Shokmali’ Collection, 2013–14
Sterling silver, stingray leather, larimar, copper, and brass
Ring on loan from Sarah Jay

This breastplate and ring embody the duality of Sky Serpent, the fearsome yet gentle Chickasaw deity who controls the movement of celestial
bodies. The delicate wings in this jewelry offset the snake’s angular lines, creating a sense of sweeping movement.

Pat Pruitt
Laguna Pueblo
Born 1973, works in Paguate, Laguna Pueblo, New Mexico
Tahitian Bondage necklace and earrings, 2008
316L stainless steel and natural Tahitian pearls
On loan from Catherine Sullivan-Kropa and William Kropa

Pruitt’s pearls roll freely yet remain trapped inside clawlike pendants. Compare this work to the familiar turquoise-and-silver jewelry of the Native American Southwest—the difference is radical. Industrial design, fast cars, and tattoos infuse Pruitt’s aesthetic, and computer-aided technology drives his jewelry production. Pruitt’s
use of color is refined—a spectrum of subtly varied grays and blacks.
Motivators

Bunky Echo-Hawk (Pawnee/Yakama), b. 1975
War Cry, 2015
Acrylic paint on canvas
Courtesy of Nike, N7 Collection

Bunky Echo-Hawk (Pawnee/Yakama), b. 1975
Paths We Walk, 2014
Converse Shoes, acrylic paint on cotton canvas and rubber
Courtesy of Nike, N7 Collection

When I was young, I was a basketball player who was into skateboarding and punk rock. I always customized my own clothes to better fit my personality, whether it was a leather jacket or a pair of Chucks. My inspiration for these Chucks came from the Native quest for environmental justice.
Bunky Echo-Hawk (Pawnee/Yakama), b. 1975

Triple Threat T-Shirt, 2011
Cotton and acrylic blend fabric
Courtesy of Nike, N7 Collection

Nike N7 Shoes
Synthetic fabric and rubber
Courtesy of Nike, N7 Collection

Painter Pants, 2015
Acrylic paint on cotton denim cloth
Courtesy of Nike, N7 Collection

My painter pants mean the world to me. My ancestors would go into battle wearing their finest leggings--they dressed up for the occasion. In that spirit, I wear my finest jeans into the studio, onto the stage, in front of my canvas. I use my jeans as a palette, and as a rag; I mix colors on them, straighten my bristles, remove excess paint on them, and sometimes
take notes on them. Each color, each splatter, each stroke, each word represents a community I’ve visited, a story I’ve been told, and a painting I’ve created. My pants carry the thoughts, concerns and dreams of so many people.

Marcus Amerman
American and Choctaw, b. 1959
The Gathering, 1997
Glass beads on cotton cloth
Museum Purchase: Caroline Ladd Pratt Fund, 1999.7
Tessa Sayers
Chippewa/Cree, b. 1982

Anishinabe Men’s Tie, from the Love and Culture Collection, 2016
Glass beads on wool
Courtesy of the artist

Anishinabe Women’s Necklace, from the Love and Culture Collection, 2016
Glass beads on wool
Courtesy of the artist

Anishinabe Women’s Satchel, from the Love and Culture Collection, 2014
Glass beads on velvet
Courtesy of the artist

Tessa Sayers is a Chippewa/Cree artist, poet, and historical enthusiast. Inspired by traditional Anishinabe design, Tessa creates original contemporary pieces that are unique and sophisticated. Fueled by her personal
struggle with autoimmune disease, she uses art as spiritual medicine to the soul. Every piece is imbedded with rich storytelling that makes each design a true representation of the human experience. Through art therapy and teachings of the medicine wheel, she hopes to inspire others to live authentically and find their own spiritual medicine.

Her “Love and Culture Collection” is inspired by her affinity for vintage fashion, romantic love, and culture. The men’s tie and women’s necklace feature the same red flower that unites the couple as one. The black background of the tie and white background of the necklace represent duality and contrary energies between genders, highlighting the important of independence, balance, and strong identity of self. When we heal and honor ourselves, we compliment and have the ability to truly love others.
Sarah Agaton Howes
Anishinabe, b 1976
Restoration, 2016
Wool and commercial dyes
Courtesy of 8th Generation

Sarah Agaton Howes is an artist, teacher, and emerging community organizer from Fond du Lac Reservation in Minnesota. Widely known for her handmade regalia and moccasins featuring Ojibwe floral designs, which are in demand across Minnesota and Wisconsin, Sarah is the second art entrepreneur to participate in Eighth Generation’s Inspired Natives Project. Sarah started creating art as a teen with guidance from her mother. Later, when she expressed interest in traditional dance, she learned to bead from her brother so she could make her own traditional regalia. Her current work – which specializes in Ojibwe Floral – represents the perpetuation of that tradition.
Michelle Lowden
Acoma Pueblo, b 1989
Reflection,
Wool and commercial dyes
Courtesy of 8th Generation

Michelle “Milo” Lowden is the founder and owner of Milo Creations which specializes in hand-painted Pueblo jewelry. She is the first arts entrepreneur to participate Eighth Generation’s Inspired Natives Project. Michelle is the youngest of two, born to Roberta Charlie and Aaron Lowden, both from the Pueblo of Acoma.

She currently operates and resides on the Pueblo of Acoma Reservation in New Mexico. Michelle has been creating jewelry for nearly five years. Her inspiration to reconnect traditional designs through a contemporary medium began with studying her family’s history of illustrious potters.
The “Reflection” blanket represents the prayer for rain. During monsoon season, the cisterns at Acoma become full again. It is then the people visit the cisterns to gather water for drinking. When you look down to see the cisterns full and you are met with your reflection, you can’t help but smile with gratitude. It is a reminder that “water is life.” The design features Acoma Pueblo abstract symbols representing mountains, clouds, and rain.

Blankets as Ceremonial Wear
Wearable Art

Blankets often serve as honor gifts, presented to individuals for their achievements and contributions to the community. In an honoring ceremony, a blanket is wrapped around the shoulders of the honoree as a symbol of warmth and protection of the community. Though each community has its own unique method of
wrapping, honor blanket ceremonies are a long-held tradition across Indian Country. While consumers may purchase Eighth Generation blankets as decorative household items, each blanket is created with the traditional honoring function in mind, as with the outstretched wings of the Thunderbird or the expansive tendrils of Woodlands florals. The aesthetic follows the function, and the designs look equally vibrant as wearable art or as utilitarian home decor. Eighth Generation’s blankets are always designed by Native artists. By creating opportunities for Native artists to apply cultural art to blankets, Eighth Generation helps ensure a sustainable future for this significant aspect of cultural heritage.

“Salish Pattern” Wool Blanket
Louie Gong first developed this signature Salish Pattern design to honor the tradition of
Salish textile weaving. Although referred to as a pattern, it does not repeat in a fixed order, but continues as a random sequence of individual design elements.

Prior to European contact, a blanket with similar artwork would have been created using traditional materials such as mountain goat wool and dog hair. The basis for the pattern is hundreds of years old, but the simple design, using only two contrasting colors, has a highly contemporary feel to fit a wide range of uses and environments.