

How do we support **FOLK ARTS** in Nebraska?

The Nebraska Arts Council, through its folk arts program, conducts field work to identify folk artists and researches significant Nebraska folk art traditions.

The NAC also provides technical assistance to:

- Traditional artists and ethnic groups that want to develop programs about their folk traditions.
- Organizations that want to develop folk arts components as a part of existing activities, with emphasis on maintaining authenticity and quality.
- Groups developing grant applications and other efforts to fund traditional folk arts and folk artists.

The Nebraska Arts Council's achievements in supporting the state's folk arts include:

- Planning and implementing projects for research, documentation and presentation.
- Initiating public events and media productions which feature Nebraska folk arts.
- Integrating folk arts into other NAC programs.

For information or to find out how you can get involved with Nebraska's folk arts traditions, call the folk arts coordinator at the Nebraska Arts Council in Omaha, (402) 595-2122.

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FOLK ARTS

in Nebraska



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WHAT ARE FOLK ARTS?

■ Traditional folk arts, such as Native American dancing and custom saddle making, are the ways by which groups of people maintain and pass on their ways of life. They grow out of people's shared experiences and express important group values of ethnic cultures, families, occupational groups or geographic regions. Folk arts include traditional music, dance, crafts, architecture, occupational skills, rituals and celebrations.



With the music I say, "I came to this country. Now I don't have parents, cousins or relatives and I feel sad."

—Chue Lo, Hmong traditional bamboo flute player, Omaha

Gospel music touches our own experience right from the start. It's like an adventure we've been on or a feeling that we've all encountered.

—Delores Matthews, gospel musician, Omaha



■ Folk arts are learned informally by observing performance, or by example, rather than through books, recordings or formal schooling.



You use 21 strands. About half of the strands have eight black hairs each and the rest have 10 white hairs. It's very time-consuming work.

—Wayne Connell, teaching horsehair braiding to his daughter, Joyce Snyder, both of rural Tryon



I decided to be a saddle maker when I was 12 years old and my dad took me into Wes Fusner's shop in Ogallala. I hung out there all during high school, asking Wes questions and showing him my work.

—Dennis Rose, saddle maker, Arthur

■ Folk arts are complex and sophisticated. Czech button accordion players or Hispanic piñata makers may make what they do look simple and easy, but mastering the subtle details that give their arts life requires serious commitment and many hours of work.



I learned to make this boat design from a cousin when I was 9 years old. He showed me how the bamboo for the frame has to be just right – not too dry, not too green. I make many different designs now, but the boat is still one of my favorites.

—Oscar Ramirez, piñata maker, Morrill

■ Folk arts are alive and change slowly over time. Rather than being museum pieces or historical reenactments, folk arts are a part of everyone's lives: a family story, an old fiddle tune or a beadwork pattern handed down over the generations. Although every day we lose another old master, each day we also see a younger person re-evaluating the old ways, learning from them and adapting them to fit these times.