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Release Date: April 17, 2023

Native Arts & Cultures Foundation's Founding President & Chief Executive Officer Announces Transition

PORTLAND, Oregon, April 17, 2023 – Native Arts & Cultures Foundation (NACF) announced today that the nonprofit organization's Founding President & Chief Executive Officer, Lulani Arquette (Native Hawaiian), is stepping down at the end of 2023. Arquette's transition will bring to a close a remarkable 14 years of leadership with NACF. It also begins the organization's first leadership transition since its inception in 2009.

"As a founding board member of NACF, I have been witness to the many challenges inherent in growing a Native arts and cultures organization from a start-up to an institution with a full-fledged impactful national presence. Our President/CEO Lulani Arquette's leadership has been visionary and impeccable, from basic administrative oversight to championing a cooperative, and co-visioning culture with staff, board, local, and national community constituents and partners.", says NACF Board Chair and 23rd U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo (Mvskoke).

"It has been a great honor and privilege to serve as the founding CEO of NACF," says Arquette. "NACF is in a stage of tremendous growth and the state of our work is excellent. We are at an opportune time to continue our current grantmaking work and develop our new home in Portland at the Center for Native Arts and Cultures."

The NACF Board of Directors has formed a Search Committee, led by Board Chair Joy Harjo and Board Treasurer Raymond Foxworth (Navajo Nation). They have engaged [Koya Partners](#) to support a national search. To ensure a seamless transition, Arquette will continue to guide NACF until a new leader is hired.

Arquette was hired as NACF's first President and CEO in 2009 and the organization launched its public programming in 2010. Since then, NACF has awarded more than \$14 million in program services to Native organizations and nearly 400 American Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native artists and culture bearers across the U.S. to help advance their careers and increase their national and international visibility. Through its grantmaking programs, NACF has helped develop and advance critical artist social change work and increase education for philanthropy, stakeholders, and the public about Native peoples, cultures, arts, and humanities. Arquette was awarded the 2021 Berresford Prize from United States Artists that honors cultural practitioners who have contributed significantly to the advancement, wellbeing, and care of artists in society.

In February 2020, a first-of-its-kind gathering took place in Washington, D.C., co-hosted by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation (NACF). Native Arts and Culture: Resilience, Reclamation, and Relevance brought together over 225 attendees including members from more than 40 tribal nations, representatives from over a dozen federal/state/regional entities, many Native artists and students, and non-profit professionals and funders who support Native peoples. NACF produced major recommendations from that convening that have been carried forward and worked on today by many agencies, stakeholders and organizations in the Native arts and cultures ecosystem.

Since 2022, NACF's headquarters have been located in Portland's historic Yale Union Laundry building, which was transitioned to NACF in 2021 and renamed the Center for Native Arts and Cultures. Plans are underway to renovate the building into a vibrant local and national gathering place for Indigenous artists, with spaces for exhibitions, events, places to practice culture and make art, and areas for cultural ceremonies and celebrations. It will serve as a place for broad community learning, including artmaking workshops, and seminars covering pertinent issues relative to local tribal cultures, decolonizing institutions, and environmental justice.

"The gift of this historic building has been a powerful validation of our work with Native peoples and communities," notes Arquette. "We have observed how the storytelling and publicity of this generous and necessary action, in some small way, may have catalyzed efforts in other places to enter into creative land and resource arrangements with Native peoples. We are humbled and grateful to learn the importance of co-caring for physical property in an urban area that is on the original lands of tribal peoples that have resided here since time immemorial."

About the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation

The Native Arts and Cultures Foundation's mission is to advance equity and cultural knowledge, focusing on the power of arts and collaboration to strengthen Native communities and promote positive social change with American Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native peoples in the United States. The Foundation has supported nearly 400 artists and arts organizations in 34 states and the District of Columbia. To learn more about the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation, visit www.nativeartsandcultures.org.

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