

From the Heart and Hand

From the Heart and Hand contains descriptions of thirty Montana Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Awards distributed from 1992 to 1996. These reports were originally published in booklet form under the same title in 2001. Though some of the masters documented here are now no longer living, we believe that this information about Montana's vibrant art forms and artists is worthy of preservation.

Folk Art is Beauty with a History

The words "folk artist" often bring to mind someone like Grandma Moses, who learned to paint without any formal training. But traditional or folk art refers not so much to personal expression by an individual, as to the kind of knowledge and techniques developed and passed on within groups of people who have something in common—either ethnicity, occupation, or the region they live in. Hmong or Norwegian embroidery bears the stamp of a long-shared experience which is unmistakable to people who are familiar with the designs of that culture. A floral design on a Guatemalan *huipil* (woman's blouse) is very distinct from that on an Ojibwe dress. There is a time dimension that can be felt or sensed in these forms, it resonates with the many peoples who have valued this unique way of making beauty.

Folk Art Expresses the Identity of a People

Artistic traditions like geometric and floral patterns are most often passed down to the next generation with very little alteration in the design. Individual artists may make subtle

changes in their work, but they are also often aware that these designs are one of the ways their community defines itself, and they want to help preserve this community identity for the future. Many folk artists don't even call themselves artists; they just do something they learned from their elders: embroidery, playing fiddle tunes, making saddles or spurs. They do it from keen interest, sometimes from necessity, and because they are who they are. Sometimes folk art springs from the requirements of making a living or the character of the places where people live. But as with all aspects of living, within these groups there are people who strive to excel as artists, and though they may not call what they do "art," they are usually known for the excellence of their work.

The Montana Arts Council Folklife Program

The Montana Arts Council's Folklife Program is part of a long-range strategy to identify, document, reinforce and present the traditional arts made in the Big Sky. Why do we have to encourage these kinds of arts if they flourish naturally in life? Well, they don't necessarily flourish anymore. With the internet and television competing for our attention, these arts are not automatically passed on anymore. Sometimes too, they are seen as being of lesser value than the fine arts, in the same way that the "crafts" are sometimes devalued, and their genius and the excellence required to achieve good results is overlooked.

But folk arts and folklife programs are a kind of cultural democracy. They recognize that America is still a nation of great pluralism, encompassing many cultures each of which has very developed forms of expression. It also recognizes the layers of group migrations that have brought people to this place. Now living in Montana there are Indian tribes

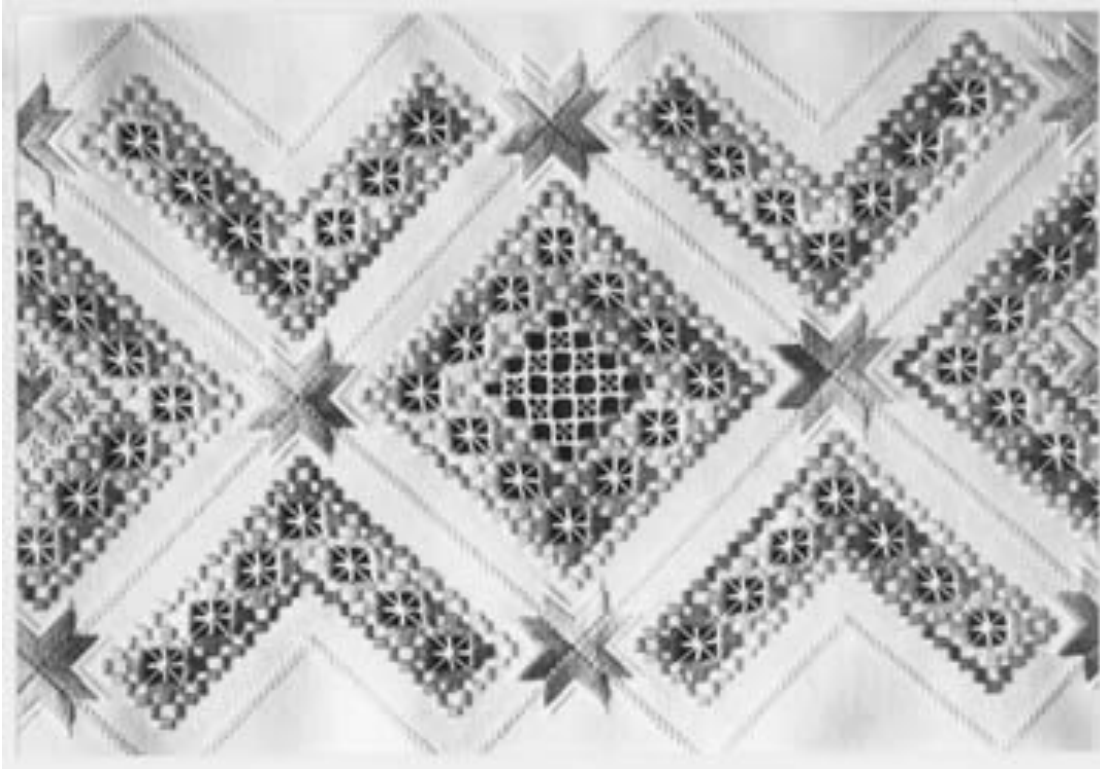
whose ancestors have lived here for thousands of years together with the descendants of European American immigrants, most of whom arrived in the last one hundred and fifty years. Some of those Europeans came to find gold, some to find land, and some to escape the scarcity of opportunities in their homelands. People from all over Europe flocked to Butte at the turn of the century to work in the mines, making it the most ethnically diverse city in Montana. Chinese people too were economically crucial in the Gold Rush era; despite the prejudice they often suffered, their manual labor built much of Montana's infrastructure and their enterprise enlivened the economy. Many Mexican American people migrated to the Billings area to work in the fields. The Hmong people of Missoula and the Bitterroot Valley were brought here by our government a scant thirty years ago, after the war in Viet Nam.

All these groups carry with them extremely refined skills and techniques embedded with the thinking and inspiration of generations of people.

But it is not just people's ethnicities that we honor here, it's also our ways of living in this land. There were European, and Indian and African-American cowboys riding Montana's ranges. It was what you did that was important, and that made you who you were. Whether you are Irish or Norwegian or Crow, if you make your living as a cowboy, you have to ride a horse, and you need a saddle to help you do it. In the days when cowboys really did spend lots of time sitting around campfires, they told stories and sang songs and recited poetry to pass the time, and this became a cowboy tradition that survives today, campfire or no campfire. Then too, in cold climates, everybody has to keep warm. Quilting bees became a way for all kinds of women to recycle used clothing materials, to do something useful while

having a good time socializing. The logging and mining industries too have produced their own songs that carry the stories of the men who worked in them.

It is good for Montana to encourage pride in our heritages, and to celebrate the arts of the diverse peoples who live here. Despite their persecution and forced acculturation, Indian people still celebrate their culture with powwows and carry on ceremonies that are hundreds of years old. They struggle to keep speaking their languages. Hmong people celebrate their new year at the traditional Hmong time—early in December—partly so that their young people can court each other in the old way, with beautiful dress, songs and dances. Through music, dance and celebration and storytelling, people carry on what is important to them from the past. As author Sir Laurens van der Post noted, "When people have lost their stories, they have lost their meaning, and when they have lost their meaning, they lose the will to be a people."



The Montana Arts Council Apprenticeship Program

It is the council's aim to support, celebrate and present all arts, including folk and traditional arts, to all the people of Montana. This publication documents 30 apprenticeships that were awarded to Montana artists from 1992 to 1996. The Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program was established with funding support from the National Endowment for the Arts and is part of the council's long-range strategy to recognize, encourage and present the folk and traditional arts of Montana.

This program distributes awards of \$1,500 to \$2,000 to pairs of master artists and apprentices. This format recognizes that folk and traditional arts are often—and sometimes only—learned through a one-on-one teaching situation that lasts over a period of time, that doesn't follow a school

calendar and most often is best accomplished outside a classroom situation. Awards are decided by a panel of folklorists and folk artists on the basis of excellence of work of the master and apprentice, the integrity of master-apprentice relationship and the service potentially rendered to the community through carrying out this apprenticeship. This usually means that if ethnicity or occupation is a factor in the apprenticeship, it is best if master and apprentice belong to the same community, culture or ethnic, occupational or regional group. The goal is both to encourage individual artists and to preserve the arts within the group for the future.

The Montana Folk Arts Survey

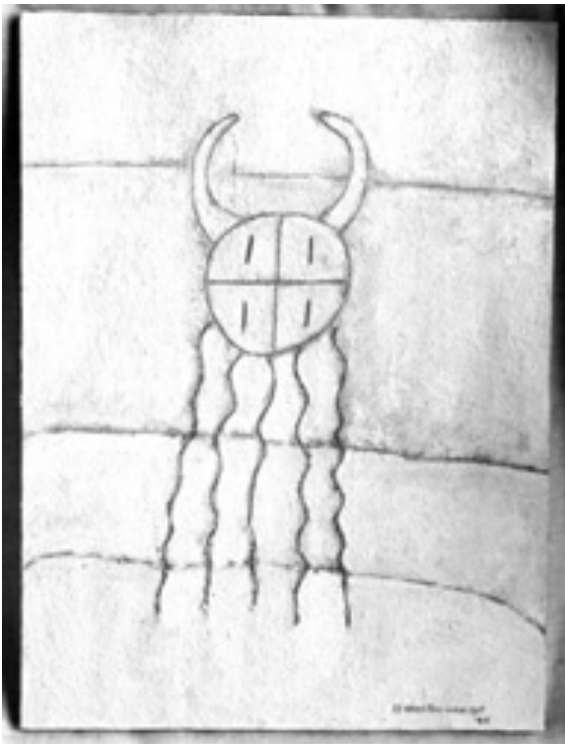
In 1995 and 1996, with grant support from the Folk Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts, field workers Blanton Owen, Dr. Patricia Sawin and Dr. Alexandra Swaney contacted, interviewed, taped and photographed traditional artists from every region of the state. The field work helped to identify the many different cultures that make up Montana: 40 different ethnic groups as well as many different regional and occupational groups and communities. This survey helped to find new artists for the apprenticeship program as well as artists to include in Montana's first-ever touring exhibit of traditional arts, *Bridles, Bits and Beads*, which toured ten Montana museums and galleries from 1998 to 2000.

Alexandra Swaney
Director of Folklife Programs
Photos by Blanton Owen

Acknowledgement and Thanks to:

The Montana State Legislature for bringing the Folklife Program into being in 1979 and to Cultural and Aesthetics funding from the Montana Cultural Trust.

The American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress for its support and interest in Montana folk and traditional arts, especially for the Montana Folklife Survey of 1979.



*Rendering of northern plains
petroglyph by Blackfeet artist
Darrell Norman*

All of the Montana Arts Council's previous Folklife directors, for laying a solid foundation with their high-quality work, and for their continued interest and advice. They are Michael Korn, Nicholas Vrooman and Francesca McLean-McCrossan, who was principle author on the following reports contained in this booklet: Cowboy Poetry, Hardanger Embroidery, Mexican Dance, Scottish

Highland Pipes and Traditional Quilting.

The members of the Montana Arts Council, Arlynn Fishbaugh, Carleen Layne and all MAC staff for their support, dedication and love for all the arts.

The National Endowment for the Arts, which provided funding for three rounds of apprenticeship awards and the Montana Folk Arts Survey of 1995-96, as well as encouragement, wisdom, and support in the persons of Dan Sheehy, Rose Morgan and Barry Bergey.

Charlie Seemann and Betsy Peterson, past and present program directors of the Fund for Folk Culture, and to the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Community Folklife Program, for the funds to curate, assemble and travel *Bridles, Bits and Beads*.

Blanton Owen, for his sterling fieldwork and for locating many of the artists exhibited in *Bridles, Bits and Beads*. Peter Held, Director of the Holter Museum of Art, for co-curating and encouraging the first exhibit.

The Montana Art Gallery Directors Association and Patty Bergquist, for sponsorship of the exhibit; and to gallery directors and staff at Liberty Village Art Center, Chester; Jailhouse Gallery, Hardin; People's Center, Pablo; Arts Chateau, Butte; Copper Village Art Center, Anaconda; Art Museum of Missoula; Livingston Depot Center; MonDak Heritage Center, Sidney; and Custer County Art Center, Miles City; for their hard work in caring for, presenting and promoting the exhibit. The Montana Historical Society for the loan of two mannequins for the exhibit.

Helen Bibler and the Bitter Root Valley Historical Society for opening and closing the exhibit.

Laura Millin, who envisioned an expanded exhibit at the Art Museum of Missoula, and who made sure all Missoula's fifth graders saw it.

Dr. Margaret Kingsland, who curated the expanded Missoula exhibit and wrote beautiful text for the exhibiting artists.

Jackie Parsons, Blackfeet Tribal Treasure, for her good-humored advice and support.

Dr. William Farr, Al Chandler Goodstrike, Linda King, Wallace McRae, Mike Witt and Paul Zarzyski for their good counsel.

And especially thanks to Montana's folk and traditional artists, without whom our treasure state would be an immeasurably poorer place.

Artist List:

Montana Indian Traditional Arts Apprenticeships

Blackfeet Quill Work and Hide Tanning: Robert Berdad, Barbara Mitchell, Elsie Ground, Tina Norman

Blackfeet Traditional Sweat Lodge Songs: Mike Swims Under, Curly Bear Wagner

Blackfeet Thunder Bundle Keeping Teaching: George Kicking Woman, Darrel Norman and the Thunder Pipe Society

Blackfoot Tipi Painting: Geoge Kicking Woman, Darrell Norman

Northern Cheyenne Singing and Drumming: William Runsabove, Walter Eli Runsabove

Cheyenne Sun Dance Song Cycle: George Elkshoulder Sr., Bill Tallbull

Chippewa Cree Hand Drum: Merle U.Tendoy, Brian St. Pierre

Cree Language Writing Project/Cree Syllabic Characters: Ed Rock, Merle Tendoy Sr.

Crow Beading and Doll Making: Felistis Yellowmule and the women of Mothershare

Crow Elk Teeth Dress Making and Design: Winona Yellowtail Plenty Hoops, the women of Mothershare and Apsaalooke Committee for the Arts

Gros Ventre Drum Making: Al Chandler Goodstrike, Hays/Hays-Lodge Pole Junior and Senior High School

Gros Ventre Tipi Design: Al Chandler Goodstrike, Sean Chandler

Plains Ojibwe Stories and Songs: A. Richard La Fromboise, John Morning Star

Jingle Dress: Danna Clark Runsabove, Patricia McGeshick

Salish Dressmaking: Linda King, Debbie Demarais

Salish Songs and Dances: Johnny Arlee, John T. BigCrane

**Montana Ethnic, Regional, and Occupational Arts
Apprenticeships**

(Don't call it Cowboy) Poetry: Paul Zarzyski, Sarah Bauer

French Canadian Fiddle: Aime Gagnon, Chip Jasmin

Irish Style Hammered Dulcimer: Clifford Moses, Kim
McKee

Scottish Highland Pipes: James Morrison, Tom Winters

Hmong Qeej Music: Tou Yang, Mai K. Moua

Mexican Dance: Gregory Contreras, Los Guadalupanos

Hardanger Embroidery: Sylvia Johnson, Peggy Wold

Old Style Painting on Glass: Dan Hillen, Troy Barry

Traditional Quilting: Shelly Van Haur and Friends

Saddletree Making 1: George Fraker, J.D. Benner

Saddletree Making 2: John Michaud, Jan Stutes

Custom Western Boot Making: Mike Ryan, Jerry Reinier

Montana Indian Traditional Art Apprenticeships



Blackfeet tribal judge and Montana Arts Council member Jackie Parsons is fond of saying "Indian people had no word for art." Despite this, the lives of America's Indian peoples were filled with art, art making was an everyday occurrence because there was an understanding that beauty is a part of every activity. The making of clothing, tools, utensils, weapons, tipis, adornment—all were occasions for the use

of design, color, decoration. The construction of these items themselves is certainly an art. Ask anyone who has tried to brain tan a hide how much precise information and hard work is needed just to obtain the raw materials for making a buckskin dress or war shirt.

There are now 12 federally recognized tribes in the state of Montana, including the Little Shell Band of Metis, who achieved federal status as a tribe in 2000. The tribes live on seven reservations, legally sovereign nations within the state, through treaties signed with the United States government. Montana's Indian peoples are citizens of this country, but also citizens of their own countries. Though their lands have been much reduced since they inhabited all of

what is now the United States, they work to maintain their tribal identities through preserving these traditions and art forms.

Most of the 16 apprenticeships described here occurred as a result of a grant written in 1992 by then MAC folklorist Nicholas Vrooman to the Folk and Traditional Arts division of the National Endowment for the Arts, especially for Montana Indian Apprenticeships. The reasoning behind the proposal was that for decades, the ancient arts and knowledge of the peoples of the northern plains had been in grave danger of being forgotten under the stresses suffered by Indian peoples for the last 200 years. Their numbers had been drastically reduced through disease, dislocation and starvation when the buffalo were all killed. Falling victim to major campaigns of enforced acculturation and religious conversion that sought to "civilize" them, Indian people were forced to send their children to boarding schools, where they were educated in the Euro-American way and not allowed to speak their languages, often under pain of severe physical punishment. Government policies resulted in confining the tribes to smaller and smaller areas of land, attempting to convert them into farmers and ranchers—a way of life quite foreign to the kind of communal life they had led for so long in a land with no boundaries. Many traditional religious ceremonies were banned outright. The American Indian Religious Freedom Act was not passed by Congress until 1978. Until that time, it would have been illegal to perform many ceremonies that today are being revived, including some of those described here.

When young Indian people were educated away from their families and tribes, often the result was disinterest in learning the traditions of their people. Understandably, sometimes they even equated their elders with

backwardness. A chain came very close to being broken. Yet still, some in each generation held the desire to retain these traditions close to their hearts. Elders were anxious to find people to whom they could pass on the knowledge that had been passed to them through countless years. There were also some younger people who were eager to learn from those elders. The tradition survived, though weakened by losses.

For these apprenticeships, tribal leaders were asked to suggest their most valued elders as masters to teach those things that should not be lost to the next generation. In most cases the masters chose their own apprentices. What transpired in some of the resulting apprenticeships cannot be discussed in detail because by its nature the information is a sacred trust held for those who make themselves spiritually fit to receive it. The Montana Arts Council is proud to have played a small part in helping to preserve what rightfully belongs to the Indian peoples of Montana.

Photo by Alex Swaney

Blackfeet Quill Work and Hide Tanning:

**Robert Berdad, Barbara Mitchell, Elsie Ground,
Tina Norman, Browning**

Bob also made us promise we would teach one other person as he has taught us so that the continuance of tradition becomes a part of everyday life in our tribe again. - Elsie Mad Plume Ground



Wooden frame for hide scraping

Blackfeet country is one of the most beautiful places in the world, as anyone knows who has driven up the Rocky Mountain front from Augusta through Choteau to Browning. Often called the "Backbone of the World" by the Blackfeet, the western skyline formed by the mountain peaks to the west resembles ocean waves tossed by the wind. This is the country that was home

to the Pikuni, or Piegan, long before Glacier Park was created by government edict. Here, ranging freely north, south, east and west across the plains, the Blackfeet lived with the buffalo, the great bear, elk, eagles and tundra swans, mountain goats and bighorn sheep—until white settlement and the U. S. cavalry began to confine their movements.

Robert Berdad grew up on the East Coast in a household with both his grandparents and great-grandparents. His grandmother, Mary Silva, taught him both quill work and hide tanning. Quillwork is a painstaking process that involves skinning the porcupine, scraping the skin, and then sorting quills, claws, teeth and guard hairs.

My grandmother taught me to dye quills with both alkaline

and natural dyes. She taught me how to identify and choose plants and their roots, steep them for various lengths of time and soak the quills in the brew to achieve the soft colors found on all quill work, as well as the various quill designs and the different techniques for working with quills.



Tina Norman and doll

Among the Pikuni, or Blackfeet, being given the right to do quill work is an honor. For the quill working project, Robert arranged for his two apprentices, Tina Norman and Elsie Mad Plume Ground, to have their hands blessed by elder Molly Kicking Woman so that they would receive those rights from an elder and be doing things in the traditional way. Then he felt ready to go ahead with teaching them the things he had learned from his grandmother. Both apprentices were eager to learn this tradition. Elsie was raised in a traditional household that included her grandfather, Chewing Black Bones, who instilled in her a strong sense of traditions,

history and culture. She had worked with Bob on several occasions and felt a kinship with his desire to preserve and maintain the culture. Tina had no prior training in quillwork but had become acquainted with Bob in several traditional settings. She was interested in learning quillwork because it is an art form "I had hardly ever seen when I was young."

Bob had learned another skill from his grandmother. As a little boy, he watched her tan hides in the kitchen. He tanned his first hide when he was seven, and countless numbers since.



Bob Berdad scraping a hide

Tanning is a long and involved process that begins with butchering and skinning the animal and only ends after the

proper wood has been chosen and the hide has been smoked for the desired length of time to achieve the desired color. You can't really learn it by reading a book because much of it involves physically working the hide and recognizing when it has been worked enough or what to do if it isn't responding the way you'd like.



Tina Norman with quill project

Barbara Mitchell, Blackfeet rancher and oil painter from Roundup, showed her commitment to the hide tanning process by joining Bob for two one-week tanning sessions even before he received the apprenticeship award. Barbara had already learned something about brain tanning hides by reading and practicing on a few hides. When she met Bob she knew learning from him would be a great opportunity. She felt that this form

would strengthen her ability to use traditional materials in her art and was determined to pass it on to children when she had mastered the process. She says, "Learning this art has been difficult—but I was persistent." Since the apprenticeship, Barbara has tanned more than 500 hides, and has given workshops and demonstrations on hide tanning in several Montana schools and communities.

Photos courtesy of Bob Berdad

Blackfeet Traditional Sweat Lodge Songs: Mike Swims Under, Heart Butte/ Curly Bear Wagner, Browning

I have been a traditional leader amongst my people for the past 50 years. I was raised in the traditional manner. I am humbled that my tribe recognizes me as being that last holder of these traditional songs in Montana and Canada. As tribal knowledge was passed to me, I desire to pass it on. - Mike Swims Under

The sweat lodge is an integral part of religious practice and belief among many North American Indian peoples. Some people take sweat baths often in order to give thanks to the Creator and Mother Earth and to ask them and the spirits of the ancestors and all good spirits for health and good fortune for themselves and the People. It is especially important to sweat as preparation for other events such as a vision quest or the Sun Dance.

Physically, the sweat is often a structure of willows bent to form a rounded framework which can then be covered with canvas, blankets or other insulating materials. Rocks are then heated by fire outside, are carried into the lodge with a shovel or pitchfork, and placed in a pit. During the sweat, water is sprinkled on the rocks and steam is produced. The sweat lodge cleanses and purifies the bodies of the participants but it is much more than a kind of hot bath when done in the traditional way. In the darkness of the lodge a spiritual leader conducts the ceremony using a very specific set of prayers and songs in order to honor and attract good

and friendly spirit-helpers, to ask them for assistance with various problems and situations that the People might have. The prayers and the spirits can heal people of physical and mental ailments, and also promote harmony and well being in individuals and community relationships. Each tribe had its own way of doing this ceremony, handed down from generation to generation. The spiritual songs sung in the sweat lodge are a vital part of the healing power of the tradition. Mike Swims Under was the last elder on the Montana Blackfeet Reservation recognized as knowing all the traditional songs needed to conduct the sweat lodge ceremony in the proper way.

Curly Bear Wagner has become known for his efforts on behalf of the repatriation of Blackfeet tribal remains and artifacts. In describing his desire to be Mike's apprentice, he wrote:

We are the middle generation of Blackfeet and have lived long enough to value our elders and the traditional knowledge they hold. It is our obligation to work with people such as Mike to perpetuate their knowledge for our people. The identity of our people is tied directly to these songs. It is both an honor and an obligation to be involved in this work. As we gain the knowledge that Mike passes to us, it becomes ours to pass to succeeding generations.

Mike passed away in 2000. Curly Bear is carrying on his activities to preserve and strengthen Blackfeet culture.

Blackfeet Thunder Bundle Keeping Teaching:

George Kicking Woman/Darrell Norman and the Thunder Pipe Society, Browning

**I'm the only one who knows the entire Thunder Pipe ceremony and at my age, I know the importance of having this ceremony...for the generations to come.
- George Kicking Woman**



Four Directions Powwow, Browning

One form of religious expression among the Southern Pikuni, or Montana Blackfeet, is the bundle and the ceremony that goes with opening it, including prayers, dances and songs. A bundle is a collection of objects, including bird and animal skins, that is held by a person who is the designated owner/keeper of the bundle. He or she has received this bundle from a previous keeper, in a line

stretching back to the original holder of the bundle, who often received instructions for creating the bundle through a dream or vision from the spirit world. The bundle is opened for healing purposes, and the ceremony must take place at certain times of the year. When the bundle is opened, its keeper or holder must carry out the proper sequence of songs, dances and prayers with the pipe that belongs to the bundle, as well as preparing a feast in the traditional manner. Other people help in keeping and opening the bundle; they are referred to as a society. The occasion for opening of a bundle can be for a specific healing purpose or to mark or celebrate a new season of the year bringing good fortune for the People. It is a way of passing on spiritual traditions from one generation of people to the next. Several different bundles can exist in a community and bundles are often transferred from one person to another through a ceremony and payment of some kind.

George Kicking Woman is the spiritual leader of the Thunder Pipe Society in the Blackfeet Nation and holder of the "Long Time Pipe," or Thunder Bundle. He was taught the ceremony by his elders and in 1993 was the only person who knew the entire ceremony. According to Darrell Norman, the ceremony for opening of the Long Time Pipe is called *Ninamska puska*, Blackfeet for Thunder Pipe Dance. George Kicking Woman passed on his knowledge of *Ninamska puska* to members of the society, including Darrell Norman. George transferred to Darrell the rights to one of several songs and dances that had been given to George by one of his teachers from long ago.

photo by Alex Swaney

Blackfeet Tipi Painting:

George Kicking Woman/Darrell Norman, Browning

I was taught traditional tipi painting by grandparents and elders of our tribe. The sight to paint tipis was given to me in ceremony by my grandparents. - George Kicking Woman



Tipis at Lodgepole Gallery near Browning

It is estimated that there are at least 90 traditional painted lodge designs left on the Blackfeet Reservation, perhaps more than any other tribe. Driving close to the windswept Rocky Mountain front near Browning, you may see an occasion tipi, and at powwows; painted tipis are common. Geometric motifs are shorthand for mountains, stars, the sun and moon. Birds and animals such as the otter, bear, badger

and buffalo may be part of a design.

Painted tipis were commonplace among Plains Indian tribes, but painting a tipi is not simply a matter of creating your own design, or copying someone else's on your tipi. In the traditional Blackfeet way of doing things, tipi designs are owned by individuals and families, and are passed on through family lines or through transfer of the rights to the design to another person. A person usually received the original design through having a dream or a spiritual vision, in which the dreamer is given certain instructions in order to carry out the design in the proper manner. According to Darrell Norman, a person today could still have a dream or a vision in which a tipi design is given, but if this occurs, certain etiquette must be followed. The dream must be authenticated in the traditional way.



Darrell Norman in his studio

Darrell has been very active in continuing and reviving Blackfeet traditional arts at his Lodgepole Gallery in Browning as well as supporting and participating in all kinds of traditional gatherings and activities. He makes beautiful traditional objects and is also a fine contemporary artist. He is a longtime associate of George Kicking Woman, who transferred the rights to the Crow Lodge or maystokokan, to Darrell. The lodge is named for the black birds that are seen walking around the top of the tipi in two opposite directions.

photos by Alex Swaney

Northern Cheyenne Singing and Drumming:

William Runsabove/ Walter Eli Runsabove, Frazer

Songs come through you out to the people. - Bill Runsabove

Bill Runsabove was born at Crow Agency, lives in Frazer on the Fort Peck Reservation, and is an enrolled member of the Northern Cheyenne tribe at Lame Deer. Known throughout the United States as a top composer and singer of traditional songs, Bill sings with the Eagle Whistle Singers and Bad Land Singers. The group performed at Carnegie Hall in 1991. He chose his son Walter as his apprentice to make sure the family tradition of singing continues. Bill discussed the role of the drum and song in an interview in 1997.

They say when an unborn child is developing, the first thing they hear is the heartbeat of the mother so when babies go

to powwows and hear the music, it is just natural. The drumbeat symbolizes the heartbeat of Mother Earth. I started singing in the arbor when I was eight years old...When we first started singing we would steal our mother's wash tubs and then we'd beat a hole in the tub in a day or two, so it would be somebody else's turn to go steal their mother's tub. Anyway they caught up to us after about five tubs, and we caught hell. Then we found this big car hood right by my place. There was a grassy hill and we used to drag that hood up the hill and sit on top and pound on this hood and sing. That way we were away from everybody's ears and not making a racket. When it was time to go home and have supper, we'd ride the hood down the hill. When I was growing up I was really lucky to have singers around that still had all this knowledge.... in Lame Deer there was Phillip Whiteman, Burton Fisher's drum group from Birney, and Tom Wooden Legs, Gilbert White Deer, Harvey Whiteman. Each one composed their own songs and it was like a competition because back then no one would even think of singing somebody else's material, they had their own different styles so I was real lucky in that way to always be around new songs and some of the best singers in Montana.

Many American Indian songs have no words, but are made of sounds that carry the melody, called vocables by music scholars. Bill says he has written only one song with words because when a song has words that carry meaning you are telling people what to feel. "But straight singing, you sing a pretty melody and there's no words in it, so each individual at that powwow will get their own feeling from the songs... I think that's the way it was meant to be." A constant stream of songs comes to him; he is often not able to record or remember all the songs he hears in his head.

Over the years Bill has sung with many people and says he

has learned from everyone he has ever sung with. When he sits around the drum to sing with people, he tries to treat everybody equal, young and old. He says, "Maybe one of these days he (a young person) is going to be a lead singer, and I'm going to be an old man, and maybe he'll let me sing with him." He has been taught that the gift of singing isn't really yours, it belongs to the People, and the songs you make should be shared. Other singers are always giving each other songs they have made, but it's not right to sing someone else's song if you haven't received permission to use it. It is good to let people know the history of the song, who made it, where it came from. That way other singers will keep giving you new songs to sing. Bill hopes his son Walter will continue the family tradition of singing. Walter says, "I hope I can be as good as my Dad."

Cheyenne Sun Dance Song Cycle:

George Elkshoulder Sr./Bill Tallbull, Lame Deer

The passers are not here, but the songs are here. We know these songs in a sacred way. You can't just forget about them. You think these songs anywhere. - George Elkshoulder Sr.

In the end, all apprenticeships are for future generations, but this one was especially so.

When folklorist Nicholas Vrooman consulted with Cheyenne tribal elders about what traditional arts might be most endangered, distinguished tribal historian Bill Tallbull urged

him to come to the reservation to record another elder, George Elkshoulder Sr., the last Cheyenne to hold the original Sun Dance songs of the People.

The Sun Dance was given to the Cheyenne people long ago to carry out each year in early summer to renew themselves as a people. Twelve sacred songs are a crucial part of the ritual; the songs are themselves prayers. They must be sung in a particular order, to accompany the various stages of the Sun Dance, and they must be sung in the traditional way, the way they have been sung for perhaps thousands of years. At the time this recording was made, there was some concern among Cheyenne elders that the younger generation of people were not singing these songs in the old way, but were adding their own interpretations. In addition, no one had come to George offering tobacco, in the traditional act of spiritual respect, to ask him to pass the songs on to them. Bill Tallbull and Nicholas, with his tape recorder, were to serve as bridges to the future. Nicholas would record the songs that George would sing, and they would be stored in the tribal archives for future ears to hear when needed. The apprentice was to be a future young man who would receive the songs of the Sun Dance, perhaps in a dream, and could then check them against the recorded songs in the tribal archives.

Loaded with recorders and microphones, Nicholas drove to Billings and picked up photographer Michael Crummett, then drove on to Chief Dull Knife College in Lama Deer to meet Bill Tallbull and George Elkshoulder Sr. After talking things over in Cheyenne and English, the four agreed to drive to George Elkshoulder's allotment to the south, through the ponderosa pine-covered hills, where it would be quiet and they would be undisturbed. Once inside the house, Nicholas offered the sacred tobacco to George Elkshoulder Sr. in the

traditional way one does when asking an elder for a spiritual gift. Then he set up the recording equipment. George prayed, and then sang the songs. It was agreed that Michael could photograph the event so that future people could know who did this and where they were. To document further the context of the occasion, Nicholas recorded some conversation about what had transpired, what songs go with what part of the ceremonies, and who Bill Tallbull and George Elkshoulder Sr. were to their tribe at the time. Bill Tallbull has since passed away, but the songs will live.

Chippewa Cree Hand Drum:

Merle U.Tendoy/Brian St.Pierre, Rocky Boy

I learned to make hand drums from my grandfathers and uncles...As they did each step in the process they'd tell me a story about the drum...They told of ancient times and the meaning of the drum. - Merle Tendoy

Stories go with almost every activity in traditional cultures. The oral tradition is the stream that flows from the past to the future carrying knowledge about how to find food, how to live as a good human being, how to celebrate, how to make the objects that help the people live—clothing, shelter, tools, musical instruments. The stories animate the objects with meaning and in turn, the objects remind us of the stories. They are inseparable; to teach only the making of things without their stories is an impoverishment.

Merle Tendoy is one of the most respected singers on the

northern plains powwow circuit, and in 1992 was living on the Rocky Boy Reservation southeast of Havre in the beautiful Bear Paw Mountains. Merle learned to make hand drums from his grandfather and uncles when he was 17 years old. When he learned, each step in the process—soaking the hides, scraping the hair—it was accompanied by a story about the drum, legends from his Chippewa Cree ancestors illuminating the significance of the drum's central place in ceremonial life.

Apprentice Brian St. Pierre wanted to work with Merle because of his "knowledge of respect for our culture...he's known for his expertise on traditional customs and art." Brian grew up knowing Merle and learning informally from him in various situations. He had also learned some things about drum making through cultural classes at school and seen the uses of the drum in ceremonies and dances held on the reservation. For the apprenticeship, he wanted to learn the entire process of drum making from beginning to end. He had seen the various components, but never had instruction about each technique in the proper sequence.

Master and apprentice met eight times at Merle's house to complete the construction of the drum. They started with a trip to the mountains to gather some traditional tools, then began the drum making with soaking and scraping the hide, continued the process by making the frame, stretching and lacing the hide over it with sinew. Merle completed his teaching with the stories handed down from his ancestors, and also taught Brian the traditional drumbeat of the round dance—anchoring for him the experience of making the drum with its meaning in the life of his people.

Cree Language Writing Project/Cree Syllabic Characters:

KEY TO THE CREE SYLLABIC CHARACTERS

AH SOUNDS AS IN FATHER	E SOUNDS AS IN GET OR ATE	I SOUNDS AS IN EAT OR INDIAN	O SOUNDS AS IN OPEN OR MOON	ENDINGS
◁ ah	▽ e	△ i	▷ o	◌ wa ◌ w
< pah	∇ pe	∧ pi	> po	◌ i p
⊂ tah	∪ te	∩ ti	⊃ to	◌ t
ᑲ kah	ᑭ ke	ᑭ ki	ᑲ ko	◌ k
ᑭchah	ᑭ che	ᑭ chi	ᑭ cho	◌ ch
ᑭmah	ᑭ me	ᑭ mi	ᑭ mo	◌ m
ᑭnah	ᑭ ne	ᑭ ni	ᑭ no	◌ n
ᑭsah	ᑭ se	ᑭ si	ᑭ so	◌ s
ᑭyah	ᑭ ye	ᑭ yi	ᑭ yo	◌ y

Ed Rock/Merle Tendoy Sr.

I plan to teach my children Cree syllabic so they will also preserve it and be better speakers. - Merle Tendoy

Many of the Cree who live at Rocky Boy are descendants of people originally located further north and east who came west with the fur trade. These people were pushed out of Canada after the Riel Rebellion, when Metis people, the descendants of Indian and white people who intermarried during early European exploration and colonization, tried to assert their rights to sovereignty in Canada. These refugees, led by Chief Little Bear, wandered the state for years until finally, in 1916, together with Rocky Boy's homeless band of Chippewa from the region of what is now North Dakota, they were granted a reserve by Congress in north central

Montana.

After Indian peoples surrendered to the superior numbers of the expanding American frontier, they were further subjected to (sometimes) well-intentioned efforts to change their whole way of life. The speaking of native languages was actively suppressed, particularly through the boarding schools, often run by religious orders. Children were separated from their parents and other relatives, sent to these schools to learn English—as well as the customs of the people who had conquered them. Often they were severely punished for speaking their own languages.

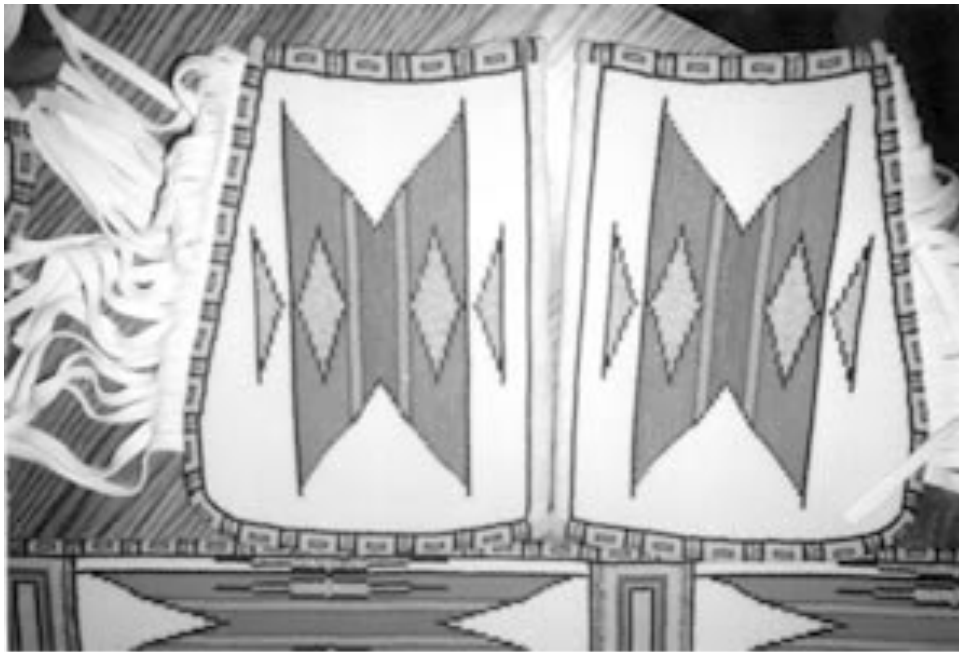
Preserving the language of a people is vital to the continuation of their knowledge, traditions, arts and religious customs. Without the specific framework that the original language provides, it is difficult to express precisely—and with richness of detail and imagery—the information that has been handed down from generation to generation. Despite the wanderings and hardships the Plains Cree have endured, they have managed to hold onto their language, and they also possess a system for writing it down. Accounts differ as to who invented this system. Some say it was developed by an English missionary who was intent on converting the Cree in the Hudson Bay territories. However, according to Cree sources on the Rocky Boy's Reservation, these symbols were given to a very good man by the spirits, who instructed him to write them on white birch bark. As with many other languages, however, Cree is being spoken by fewer and fewer people as English continues to displace all native languages. Whatever its origin, the Cree are fortunate to have this tool to preserve their language.

Ed Rock was a respected elder and native speaker of Cree who lived on the Montana's Rocky Boy's Reservation. Merle

Tendoy is a younger Cree speaker who is a well-respected powwow announcer and singer. Both men worked in reservation schools as cultural teachers. For 10 weeks in 1993 and 1994, Ed and Merle met so Merle could learn the syllabic system developed for writing Cree and solidify and strengthen his knowledge of the language.

Crow Beading and Doll Making:

**Felistis Yellowmule/The Women of MotherShare,
Hardin**



Beaded gauntlet tops

When I was very small I learned to bead from my grandmother. I don't remember my exact age. I have been beading and working with Crow traditional arts

ever since I can remember. - Felistis Yellowmule

Doll making is one of the most ancient and universal art forms. Dolls provide deeply satisfying entertainment for young children everywhere, giving them props with which to act out both the stories they are told and the ones they imagine. They also help children learn about their culture's attire and, by association, proper etiquette and behavior.

On the wide and beautiful expanse of the Crow Reservation, Felistis Yellowmule is well known for her dolls and beadwork. In early May, when the interviewer caught up with her on the campus of Little Big Horn College at Crow Agency, Felistis was busy getting ready for the senior hand game championships that were being held nearby. Teams of seniors dressed in matching costumes would compete for the championship, Wyola versus Reno, at the Roundhouse. Her husband, a flute maker and singer, was with her as she spoke about her life, beading, doll making and the apprenticeship.



Crow bead work

I learned the traditional patterns of the Crow, both geometric and floral. I use these traditional patterns and I also combine old and new styles and designs creating my own unique designs. I do the same thing with the colors. I use traditional and new popular colors together and separately.

For the apprenticeship, Felistis taught girls who were going to high school in a five-day workshop in beading and doll making. She bought enough materials for everyone to participate in all the activities, and took them over to Lodge Grass—buckskin, thread, needles, wax, beads, felt, horse hair stuffing and cloth. Her young apprentices didn't have it easy. According to Felistis, the dolls are "hard when you do it right. They had a hard time but they made them."

You use muslin, and shape it up with polyester, stuff it with deer hair. You make the dress from buckskin. It is good to use antelope, and you get the natural color. My grandma used to make dolls for my mom. So my mom learned it from her mother. I make dresses, I make little bloomers, leggings, moccasins and a bone dress (the elk tooth dress) or buckskin. I use Indian-tanned hides. When I was a kid I used to make clothes for Barbie dolls and paper dolls. My dolls are shaped like real human beings. I just make woman dolls. I use horsehair for the hair and then bead the faces. They have eyes and eyebrows. I use cut beads for the faces. I also make baby dolls and cradle boards, and the praying Indian mother.



Doll by Felistis Yellowmule

Felistis also makes a doll that wears a bone dress and wedding blanket, and an Indian "cabbage patch doll," which she paints like her own face. "It's a fine art to make a dress," she says. "It takes a lot of work, takes a couple of weeks."

Photos courtesy of Felistis Yellowmule

Crow Elk Teeth Dress Making and Design:

Winona Yellowtail Plenty Hoops/Women of MotherShare and Apsaalooke Committee for the Arts, Hardin

**There's only seventeen of us left on the reservation who know the traditional ways of making outfits and dresses. I don't know what they're going to do when we're gone.
- Winona Yellowtail Plenty Hoops**

Winona Yellowtail Plenty Hoops lives south of Lodge Grass

in a small blue house. Nearby is the house that belonged to her late father, highly respected Crow chief Robert Yellowtail, where her son and his family now live. He and Winona's other children and grandchildren often stop by to check on her. Off the kitchen is her workroom with a sewing machine on the tabletop, surrounded by all kinds of tools and materials for her continuing work. Winona is now a very respected elder in her own right; one of the diminishing number of women who dress in the traditional way, and still know how to make outfits and accessories the way they were made in the old days. Winona lost her mother when she was quite young, and like many others who lose parents at an early age, she attributes her good knowledge of tradition to being raised by her grandparents. She has been a teacher of her people's culture in many settings, teaching storytelling, the use of herbs, as well as the history of the Crow people.

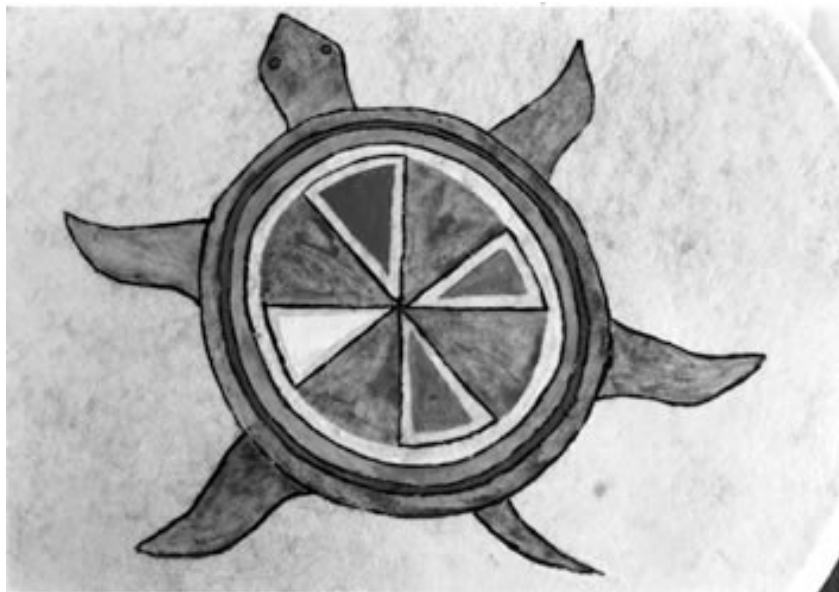
In 1994, when she was 77 years old, Winona received a Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship and was chosen as a master artist by the Apsaalooke Committee for the Arts to teach traditional Crow women's handiwork to the women of MotherShare, the Healthy Mothers/Healthy Babies organization on the Crow Reservation. The women wanted to learn how to make hightop moccasins and baby moccasins, and how to assemble an elk teeth dress. These women were active beaders, craft persons and seamstresses and wanted to continue developing their knowledge of traditional arts, ensuring that these ancient techniques would not be lost.

Winona says that according to Crow tradition, the elk teeth dress is a wedding dress that is prepared for the bride by the groom's family. The bride's family in turn furnishes horses and buckskin clothing for her husband-to-be. Although it is a

wedding dress, the elk teeth dress is reused for special and ceremonial occasions. It is made from a special kind of blue trade wool and elk teeth, or nowadays, manufactured plastic pieces in the shape of elk teeth. They are tied on using buckskin looped through the teeth and passed on through the back of the dress. Throughout a series of sessions in 1994, the MotherShare women learned to make this dress and other traditional Crow objects, carrying Crow arts forward into the next millennium.

Gros Ventre Drum Making:

Al Chandler Goodstrike, Hays/Hays-Lodge Pole Junior and Senior High School



Detail of rawhide drum with turtle painted with earth pigment

They built the drum and they built self-esteem, getting

**them involved with something good instead of drugs.
- Al Chandler Goodstrike**

The Fort Belknap reservation in north central Montana is ancestral ground of the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine peoples. Atsina is the name the Gros Ventre have for themselves. Although he is an enrolled member of the Gros Ventre tribe, Al Chandler Goodstrike spent many years away from the beautiful prairie and Little Rocky Mountains of his home before being able to return. As a boy, he was sent to an Indian boarding school in South Dakota, where he learned Lakota arts and skills, including hide tanning. Following his eight-year stint in the Air Force, he worked for the Xerox Corporation as a technical representative for 28 years. Now, in his "retirement," he has returned to Fort Belknap and is dedicating himself to studying and practicing the traditional arts of his people. He is becoming well known for his fine hide and tipi painting, which he does with natural earth pigments. He also makes rawhide shields, rattles, parfleche bags and other traditional objects. He sees that this kind of work will be more and more noticed for its unique values; people are impressed that it can still be done. "Even our language is fading away, but they are trying to revive it. There is going to be a time that this kind of work I do is going to be revived."

Before Europeans arrived on the continent, the peoples of the northern plains depended almost entirely on animal hides to furnish clothing, shelter and most of the other objects of day-to-day living. These are the kinds of objects Al creates. He has to begin by being a master hide worker. After soaking the hides for 24 hours or more, he stretches them flat on a framework. For the next step, removing the hair, he uses a hide scraper with an elkhorn handle and a metal blade made from the seat of a covered wagon or

buggy. (Immigrants would sometimes be forced to leave their covered wagons alongside of the road, and Indians soon discovered that metal beat stone for scraping). He works almost exclusively with elk and buffalo hides. After removing the hair from the hide, he goes on to cut the shape of whatever he is making. When he has shaped it, he lets it dry, and meticulously paints it with natural earth paints and a bone brush. He uses a traditional design, or a design of his own creation in the traditional spirit. He makes the paint by adding water to the different colors of the ground-up earth powders he keeps in small tanned-hide pouches. If he is painting a whole hide, he tans it before painting, so it will be soft and smooth to work with.



Beaded drum stick made of chokecherry wood

Very aware of the need to pass on these traditional tribal skills and knowledge to others, Al conducted a Gros Ventre drum making and music apprenticeship as a master class over several weeks in the Hays/Lodge Pole Junior/Senior High School. With Al's guidance, 15 fifth through ninth graders built a powwow drum and hand drums. The students also learned some songs, which they performed and recorded at a powwow. Al feels very fortunate to have the skills and success he does today, but everything has a beginning, and he is keenly aware of the importance of good role models for children: "When I was a small boy living on

the Fort Belknap Reservation, I had my grandfather, and when I attended Indian schools in South Dakota, I had a boys' adviser who inspired me to get what I want through hard work."

Photos courtesy of Al Chandler Goodstrike

Gros Ventre Tipi Design:

Al Chandler Goodstrike/Sean Chandler, Fort Belknap



Buffalo hide by Al Chandler Goodstrike

Two hundred years ago it was a way of communicating. Today we have computers. In those days ledger (hide) painting was the way to express what was here, how it was. - Al Chandler Goodstrike

Al chose his son Sean to work with him in the tipi painting apprenticeship. Sean is an artist who paints in the contemporary style, but who also feels the importance of learning the traditional ways from his father. Father and son together were the subject of a PBS production, "I'd Rather Be Pow Wowing." For this apprenticeship together, they researched traditional tipi designs and painted them. Though Plains Indian people did not have a patent office or copyright forms, it was definitely against traditional law to copy someone else's designs without permission; but sometimes rights to use a certain design could be given away, or sold in exchange for an agreed-upon price or trade. Designs were often created in response to a dream the owner had, or to a memorable event or brave deed in battle. Horses, very dear to the Atsina people, were often represented in these paintings, and the color and design had significance that helped in telling the story. Al describes his inspiration for painting:

Two hundred years ago it was a way of communicating. Today we have computers; in those days ledger (hide) painting was the way to express what was here, how it was. The people didn't have running water, electricity. It brings people back down to realize how good we have it today. In those days, the tribes had their own way of life, religion, had their own work to do. People didn't have to go to the drugstore, we had our own medicines, and there was nothing else to fall back on. Life was harder, but people were physically and mentally in great condition. Today we have to

depend more on other people. Even our animals have an easier life now. At the same time, I feel sorry for those people in the late 1800s because all of a sudden there's no more buffalo. What could they do? I can feel how depressed they were and I am communicating that in my artwork too.

Despite cause for bitterness that any Indian person could rightly feel, Al says, "You've got to forget about hate and go on." He maintains a positive attitude no matter what and says his life these days is very exciting. "There is going to be a time that this kind of work I do is going to be revived-rawhide, parfleche, rattles, hide painting. It makes me feel good to see that people recognize my work."

Sean is putting to good use the skills he learned from his father. He has now painted tipis for museums in Wolf Point, Montana; South Dakota, and Paris. He graduated with a BA from Montana State University. His father likes to think that the work they did together in the traditional arts inspires some of Sean's contemporary, abstract painting.



*Al Chandler Goodstrike demonstrating hide painting
at Indian Art Northwest, Portland, Oregon*

Photos courtesy of Oregon Folklife Program

Plains Ojibwe Stories and Songs:

A. Richard LaFromboise/John Morning Star, Missoula

Songs, sacred songs from long ago. Taught by the owners, passed to me in ceremony, now passed on to another. - Miskwamin (Richard La Fromboise)

Storytelling and singing are art forms that have probably existed as long as humans have been human. Before the advent of writing, storytelling and singing were valued not only for their entertainment, but even more as the primary ways that people passed on their history, values and knowledge, as well as their sense of humor and aesthetics. Richard La Fromboise learned the "stories, legends, and myths of our people from the elders, around the fire, in the day and nights, at ceremonies, over and over again...I was instructed in the art of mental, visual, verbal oratory." In 1992, Miskwamin (Richard's Ojibwe name) received an apprenticeship award to teach Ojibwe storytelling and songs to his son, John Morning Star. On several camping trips through the summer and spring, Richard and John spent time together as teacher and apprentice to learn the ancient Ojibwe oral traditions.

The Ojibwe people, or Anishnabe, are among the most widespread native peoples on the North American continent. Through trading with other tribes, and with the early European explorers, they expanded west and south. Present day Ojibwe now reside on more than one hundred small

homelands throughout Canada and the United States, including sites in Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, and in Montana on the Rocky Boy Reservation.

The Ojibwe were one of the few tribes to use a writing system before the coming of Europeans. They created birch-bark scrolls from the plentiful trees around them to pass on the sacred stories, rituals, information and songs of the Midewiwin, or Grand Medicine Society.

In going camping, Richard's intention was to have uninterrupted time with John, during which the spirits of the natural world could work on him, and father could instruct son in the art of learning, remembering and telling stories with style, singing the songs. They wrote traditional symbols for the stories on cedar wood boards to help in recalling the details. They made a Big Dog Warrior Society rattle used in the Pembina Ojibwe Sun Dance in North Dakota. In this way, Richard was able to instruct his son in a style similar to what he might have experienced in the days before contact with European culture. He will carry forward the strength of that experience in his identity as he lives in the modern world.

Jingle Dress:

**Danna Clark Runsabove, Frazer/Patricia
McGeshick, Wolf Point**



I try to tell the little girls they need to respect the dress because it is a sacred dress. When I put it on and I go dance I am dancing for myself, my family and the people. I tell that to my kids, "feel good when you dance!"

**- Danna Clark
Runsabove**

You can see these beautiful garments in motion during powwow season on the northern plains when Indian people all travel long distances to celebrate their culture's rich communal traditions, while renewing ties with old friends and going for that dance contest prize money! On a dancer in motion, the jingle dress gives off multiple waves of shimmering silver light and tinkling sounds. If the dancer is at rest, you see rows of shiny metal cones (often made from the lids of chewing tobacco or other cans) dangling from bands of different colored ribbons sewn around her dress. It is sometimes said that jingle dress dancing is something new, but according to champion jingle dress dancer and maker Danna Clark Runsabove, "It really is a ceremonial dress. It's not a new thing."

Danna received a Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship to pass along her knowledge of the jingle dress to Patricia McGeshick. Although she grew up on the Fort Peck reservation, Patricia really wanted to learn this tradition, because her father is Chippewa (Chippewa is basically another way of pronouncing Objiwe or Ojibwa) and many people believe the jingle dress originated with the Chippewa/Ojibwe people at Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin. According to Danna, the jingle dress was so popular it traveled west quite rapidly, and the Assiniboine and Nakoda women of the Fort Peck Reservation were the first ones to adopt this dress in Montana.

I'm not Chippewa—I'm a Fort Peck Assiniboine, but in the 1940s and early 1950s they started dancing with those dresses here. People kept asking me "Can you make me an outfit, can you make me a jingle dress?" A lot of times they couldn't really afford it. So some of us got together and started talking. We said, 'Lets talk about how to teach people so they learn to bead, to tan, to make roaches, make food, whatever they want to do.' We called ourselves the Traditional Women's Society. Someone brought an old jingle dress. We just looked at it. It was really old, we were almost afraid to touch it. I just decided I was going to make one. I sewed the dress and then proceeded to learn how to do jingles. I tried to find a way to make them perfectly round. You could cut your fingers easily. One year at the Red Bottom Celebration (a powwow founded by Danna's great-grandfather in 1903), a couple of the ladies were jingle dancing. I went home determined to finish my dress that night. I did, and next day I began to dance and everything was cool. That gave me more spirit to get out and try new colors and different kinds of fabric. Then I started getting into contests and winning.



Jingle dress, Danna Clark Runsabove

Danna taught Patricia how to cut out and sew the dress, and roll the metal cones from the Copenhagen can lids. Now those cones are often sold pre-rolled; in the old days the jingles were made of oil or coffee cans. They also talked about the different stories that Danna had been told about the origin of the dress. One story goes like this. Once a medicine man had a dream. In his dream the spirits showed him the jingle dress and told him its meaning, how it was to be made, and taught him the songs that go with it. Then his wife made the dress and together they showed everyone how to do the dance. Later on, the style started coming west into the Dakotas. "Doing this apprenticeship together brought me and Patty a lot closer," Danna said. "We got to share different ideas, and it made her more aware of her dad's family."

Photos by Alex Swaney

Salish Dressmaking:

Linda King, Ronan / Debbie Demarais, Pablo

**Growing up I always went to powwows but I never had the knowledge or had someone there to help me... it's a wonderful way to keep young people on the right path.
- Linda King**



Red velvet wing dress, Linda King

As young woman on the Flathead Reservation, home of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Linda King went to dances and really wanted to learn how to make dance outfits, but didn't have a family member to teach her how. But she attended powwows and watched people and got some ideas of her own about how to construct regalia. She did start beading in her early teens, learning everything she could from family members and elders in her community.

Her father was an expert

beader. In 1972, she started a beading company in her home, taking orders for small items. Linda has continued to make all kinds of apparel, including ceremonial dresses and dance outfits and has won recognition for her beautiful

ceremonial attire and star quilts.

In 1994, she was selected to design the dance costumes for the Sacred Common Ground collaboration performance with the Garth Fagan Dance Company, jazz pianist Don Pullen and the African Brazilian Connection of New York; and the Chief Cliff Singers of Elmo. Linda now teaches the making of traditional clothing and other items at Salish Kootenai Community College and the Kicking Horse Job Corps. She has been an Indian Club advisor, and taught Outward Bound students as well as classes for adults. In 1992, when Debbie Demarais asked her to teach her how to make a woman's buckskin dancing dress, she was happy to take her on as an apprentice through the Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship program.

Linda is Salish, and Debbie's tradition is Ojibwe so they researched traditional designs for the Ojibwe people, at the library at Salish Kootenai College. Debbie's mother and father also gave her information about how things were done in the Ojibwe tradition such as how the hair is worn, as well as how to wear feathers and blankets. Then too there are some design similarities among the traditional arts of many North American tribes. Blackfeet, Ojibwe and Salish peoples all have designs using wonderful floral patterns, influenced by the colorful flowers in their natural environments. Thistles and wild roses were used a lot.



*Linda King in women's
traditional dress, Oshanee
Kenmille Birthday Powwow
2001*

Debbie was really interested in dancing. I asked her, "Do you want to make buckskin dress?" We started out by sitting down and making a list of the things we needed. Then we went out looking for materials at all the local places looking for the hides and other things we needed. We got the hides from my nephew. Debbie used six for the dress. One each for the front and back bottom and one each for the top front and back, two for the fringe. We did it all in a traditional way. We laced the dress rather than sewing it; it makes it hang so much better. Then we fringed the

sides and bottom. Then the beading. I said to her, "Research traditional design for your people." She found designs she liked and graphed them out. She made the belt on a loom. Then high top white moccasins with the same design on the toes. She needed otter hides for the braid wrapping. You cut them with a razor—the otter wraps need to be 70-80 inches long, criss-crossed. She also made a breastplate and necklace and is still adding pieces. Her father gave her a feather to wear in her hair.

They also spent some time with Salish elder Agnes Oshanee Kenmille, famous for her hide tanning and beadwork and winner of the 2001 Governor's Arts Award for Lifetime Achievement. Debbie is still going to powwows and dancing,

and has passed on her skills to her daughter, who is just graduating from high school.



Linda King and school children, Holter Museum of Art, Helena, 1997

Salish Songs and Dances:

Johnny Arlee, Arlee/John T.BigCrane, Pablo

Our culture is a living experience far beyond what we can record in a book. May Creator help me to pass this knowledge on to today's young people. - Johnny Arlee, from the dedication of *Over a Century of Moving to the Drum*

Johnny Arlee is a member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes of northwestern Montana and a recognized cultural and spiritual leader of his people. Reared in Arlee by his grandparents, Eneas and Isabelle Granjo, he grew up with Salish as his first language. He attended the Chemawa



Johnny Arlee, Arlee Fourth of July Celebration, 1998

Indian School in Oregon and, after the death of his grandparents, he moved to California and enlisted in the U. S. Army, settling in Los Angeles for a time. He's been a consultant to schools, universities and organizations—including Warner Brothers for the movie "Jeremiah Johnson," in which he also played a part. Johnny began his life as a teacher by working with his own children and other young people, teaching them to drum and sing. In 1974,

the tribes charged him with establishing the Flathead Culture Committee, which he directed for four years. During this time, he gathered and transcribed tapes of important tribal legends, stories and medicines. In 1998 he authored *Over a Century of Moving to the Drum: Salish Indian Celebrations on the Flathead Indian Reservation*, featuring interviews with Salish elders and young people about their memories of the Arlee Fourth of July Celebration and its importance to contemporary Salish people.



BigCrane Singers

John BigCrane, of the BigCrane Singers, was Johnny's apprentice in learning the traditional songs and dances of the Salish celebrations. John is an award-winning young dancer who also sings with his family drum group, the BigCrane Drummers and Singers. John has known Johnny all his life and wanted to learn from him because "it would provide me with a rare opportunity to learn and understand more fully the traditional values and culture through the drumming, singing and dances of my people. There are few who are as knowledgeable as Johnny Arlee."

Over a six-month period, Johnny worked with John to teach him some of the dances and the songs that go with them, recording the songs so John would have them for future reference. The dances he taught are described in *Over a Century of Moving to the Drum*. The War Dance was performed before leaving camp to hunt buffalo or mount a

raid into enemy territory, and then again when they returned home. War dances usually began with a Snake Dance. The dancers were led in a line from camp to the dance pavilion, weaving around and back the way a snake moves while drummers and singers followed them singing the Snake Dance Song. The Canvas Dance was literally done to "drum up" a hunting or raiding partner by going around from camp to camp to enlist help for the journey. Drummers would carry around a piece of canvas or hide held taut to project the sound made by the drumsticks. These songs also served as a farewell to those who stayed behind. The Round Dance is a social dance that gets everyone up on their feet, dancing in a circle, single file. It is often performed on occasions of gift giving.

Johnny Arlee continues to work in service to his people and culture through teaching these songs and dances and the stories and traditions they represent.



Tipis at Arlee Fourth of July Celebration

Photos by Alex Swaney

Montana Ethnic, Regional and Occupational Arts Apprenticeships



Over the last 200 years, thousands of European and Asian immigrants have come to Montana and the West seeking a better way of life. At first, there were fur trappers and traders, then came individual miners looking for gold and the cattlemen, cowboys and sheepmen, all looking to make a living in their own ways. Scandinavian immigrants arrived in the late nineteenth century, lured by news of good farmland and pressed by hard economic times at

home. By the early 20th century, there were Irish, Cornishmen, Germans, Italians, Norwegians, Finns, Serbs and many other European nationalities working in the underground copper, gold and silver mines. Chinese men were allowed into the United States to work, building the infrastructure and commerce of the new frontier and its bustling towns.

All these people brought the customs, languages, crafts, songs, jokes and stories of their homelands. They found ways to celebrate and remember who they were by continuing these traditions. At the same time, the new land

demanded new ways of doing things and people responded as they always do, by creating new cultural forms and improving on old ones: cowboy poetry, saddles and boots and gear made to withstand days on the trail; the quilting bee to bring women together and recycle old materials to create new beauty and usefulness. These traditions continue today and are still evolving. There are oldtime fiddle contests and get-togethers, cowboy poetry gatherings, quilting bees and quilting by computer classes, haybale and chainsaw sculpture competitions, as well as a yearly accordion festival. These apprenticeships celebrate the continuation of these traditions into the future.

Photos courtesy of John Michaud and Tou Yang



(Don't call it Cowboy) Poetry:

Paul Zarzyski, Augusta/ Sarah Bauer, Miles City

Rodeo and Poetry were, for me, a perfectly matched pair of passions... - Paul Zarzyski



Paul Zarzyski

Paul Zarzyski is a native Montanan of a special breed; he wasn't actually born in the state. He has been known to attribute his instinctive love of Montana to a misguided stork that plunked him down in Hurley, Wisconsin, as a newborn. The stork dropped him off too far to the east. Paul remedied the stork's geographic miscalculation by coming west to Montana as a young man in the early 1970s where he began

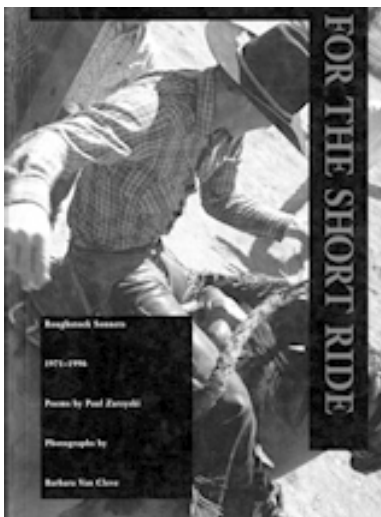
riding bucking horses on the Montana Rodeo Circuit and working on his M.F.A. in poetry from The University of Montana. Of his love of the western genre, cowboy poetry, Paul writes,

I took an immediate interest in the early/traditional cowboy poems and songs, which I surprisingly found among the dustiest stacks at the University of Montana library. I learned three chords on a cheap guitar and began singing those verses (Strawberry Roan, The Border Affair, Red River

Valley) to the walls from which the cowboy lingo bounced lovingly back to my ear and heart. Soon after, I began writing about my own rodeo emotions and experiences . . .

Paul began participating in both the Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering and the now much-heralded Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nevada, in the mid-1980s. It was at the Montana gathering in 1988 that he met Sarah Bauer.

Sarah Bauer is a native Montanan of the customary kind, born in Miles City. Miles City is one of Montana's most easterly towns, with a reputation for wild-westerly cultural behavior. In 1986 Sarah was shoeing horses, breaking colts and running an outfitting business in Choteau, Montana, when her work as a poet began. "About the only thing that I knew about cowboy poetry was that it rhymed. I had something to say and verse was the way that I wanted to say it. I knew when something didn't sound right, but it would be a couple of years before I would hear the term meter," wrote Sarah.



All This Way for the Short Ride: Roughstock Sonnets, 1971-1996. Poems by Paul Zarzyski, photographs by Barbara Van Cleve

She continued, "Paul has been a great encourager to me since 1988. At past Montana gatherings Paul has taken the time to come to the open sessions and listen to my poems. In 1990 I sent Paul a tape and two poems. He wrote back telling me honestly what he thought about the tape, and he also scribbled generously on my poems." With this experience in hand, Paul and Sarah applied to work together in 1993 and 1994. Over the formal nine-month period of the

apprenticeship, Paul worked with Sarah, encouraging and cultivating her work in one-on-one sessions and with detailed written critiques.

Cowboy poetry is most often thought of in its oral form, yet the rewriting and revision period are crucial to good poetry. This became an important part of the apprenticeship process for Paul and Sarah. In addressing this issue Paul wrote, "...it is my hard-nosed belief that the building of a strong poem takes not only the same pure-focused quality time that a master saddlemaker puts into his/her craft, but also the same emotional and philosophical and, yes physical/physiological investment." Sarah echoed his feelings. She noted, "I need to write. I realized this summer when I was working on the ballad *His Ways* that I felt a certain contentment even though it was a struggle to write. I even forgot about eating something; that seldom happens! Hours would disappear and I'd be really surprised to look at the clock and see how much time had slipped away." Together, Paul and Sarah keep alive the written word and the spoken voice of the cowboy poet, where they remain as solid and beautifully crafted as the saddles that are also so much a part of the traditional culture of the West.

Photos courtesy Paul Zarzyski

French Canadian Fiddle:

Aime Gagnon, Lotbiniere/Chip Jasmin, Hamilton
We actually became a part of the family. Aime was a very gentle, patient man. He loved the music, and was

glad and honored that someone else would come to play with him and play the music that he knew. He was a fourth generation fiddler and he left a strong impression on me. He had real roots. I was looking for roots in my own life. It wasn't a big outward thing but we all felt it. We still feel like we're family. - Chip Jasmin



Chip Jasmin

As he was growing up in a French Canadian milling city in Rhode Island, folk musician Chip Jasmin did not learn the native language and customs of his two French Canadian grandmothers, who had been born in Quebec. But in 1996, Chip, who has lived and performed in Montana for the past 14 years, was the recipient of a MAC Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Award to work and learn with master fiddler Aime Gagnon, of Lotbiniere, Quebec, Canada. Aime was born in Lotbiniere, located 50 miles south of Quebec City, on the St. Lawrence River. Aime wanted Chip and his whole family to get to know the local culture as much as possible, so he invited the Jasmins to stay with them during Easter week, 1996. At home, on the street, playing

music, and even attending the church where Aime was baptized, they were constantly surrounded by the French language. Aime's daughter Danielle, a schoolteacher, was home on vacation, and translated for everyone so they could communicate freely. The Gagnon home looked right out on the river, where they constantly saw ships passing by. Chip's son would yell, "bateau, bateau," each time he sighted a ship. This was in contrast to Chip's own upbringing in the United States, when speaking French was discouraged because immigrants were looked down on.

This Québécois style music originally came from France; it is French "country style" music, played mostly in rural communities for dances and other celebrations.

To our ears, it is similar to Cajun music; fiddle and accordion were primary instruments, but in the original French style, the meters were a little more sedate. Chip wanted to learn from an authentic French-Québécois music master and he was not disappointed. Chip describes his time with Aime:

We stayed with him for a week. We would play music every day and often other musicians came to the house to play with us. I recorded all the things we did together. Aime was a self-taught musician; he didn't read music. We played his repertoire—mostly reels, waltzes, marches. That style of music is called French Québécois. But some tunes are very old and came from France. An ethnomusicologist who specialized in the music of that region of Quebec came to visit and said that he had never heard one particular tune played anywhere else, except in France. Aime knew some very old tunes. Aime's father kept his fiddle on the mantle. The children would wait for him to leave and then each child would try to grab the fiddle first to play the tune their father had just finished playing.

Chip also plays the accordion, guitar, dulcimer, banjo, and mandolin. He performs often, and shares Aime's stories and music with others in his school residencies and concerts. He tries to make people aware of the great variety of musical styles from different regions of this country and Canada. He says he "got the spark" from Aime.



Aime Gagnon and Chip Jasmin at Aime's home in Quebec

Photos courtesy of Chip Jasmin

Irish Style Hammered Dulcimer:

Clifford Moses, Texas /Kim McKee, Polson

There are things you simply can't learn except from

another musician. - Kim McKee



Kim McKee and Cliff Moses at work

After singer, songwriter and hammered dulcimer player Kim McKee began playing the piano at age five, classical piano music became her passion in life until she heard the mountain dulcimer at a wedding. She immediately fell in love, acquired one, and began to play it. Later she encountered the hammered dulcimer, and the same thing happened. She has been learning and playing folk music, mostly Irish, ever since. Together

with her husband, Ken Willson, Kim has built a successful a career of learning, performing, and recording traditional music, as well as writing songs of her own.

The hammered dulcimer is a member of the zither family, an instrument found in several variations in Europe. The family includes any instrument that can be plucked or struck—pianos and harpsichords are members of the zither family. Until recently, most Irish music was played on the bagpipe or fiddle. The hammered dulcimer was usually not a part of the traditional Irish sound. It consists of a fairly large hollow wooden box with strings stretched across the top, resting on bridges. Its sound is almost like a harpsichord, or like piano strings when children put tacks on the hammers for loud special effects. Played with two hollow-headed wooden hammers, the instrument is usually placed at a slightly

slanted horizontal angle on a waist-high stand, so that the player can rapidly maneuver the hammers back and forth across the strings. Kim thinks use of the instrument has been hindered by its size and fragility; it simply isn't as portable as the bagpipe or fiddle.



Hammered Dulcimer

Kim struggled some to learn the hammered dulcimer; the scales are not neatly laid out as on the piano; it took her two years to figure them out when she first started playing. When she heard about the Montana Art Council's apprenticeship program, she thought immediately of Clifford Moses, a master of the hammered dulcimer she had met in Texas. In Montana, Kim was somewhat isolated musically; "there are things that you simply can't learn except from another musician," she says. She really needed to develop a more technical approach to her instrument, and gain a better understanding of Irish traditional music. In Clifford Moses, she found the perfect teacher. Well known, nationally and internationally, for integrating the hammered dulcimer into

the traditional sounds of Irish music, Clifford was a member of the first American band to win first prize and second prizes in the All Ireland Championships.

When Kim discussed the apprenticeship with him, Clifford agreed to come to Montana to teach her so she wouldn't have to leave her Polson home. He also wanted her to be as familiar as possible with principles of the music and ordered some books for her from Ireland, using some of his master's award money. In the spring of 1993, Clifford flew up to Montana from Texas for a week-long residency. During their time together, Kim learned an amazing five songs a day. Determined to keep her learning the music after he left, Clifford challenged her to keep growing by using part of his own master's honorarium to pay her tuition for a summer session master class he was teaching at the Heritage Center, Davis and Elkins College in Augusta, West Virginia, that year.

Clifford's generosity, teaching ability and encouragement have fostered new confidence and skills in Kim. As she travels and performs with Willson McKee, she and Ken make new friends with their traditional music everywhere they go.

Photos courtesy of Kim McKee, and by Alex Swaney

Scottish Highland Pipes:

James Morrison, Billings/Tom Winters, Big Timber

The old-time pipers served apprenticeships of seven

years and were not considered pipers until they had mastered the entire piobaireuchd repertoire.

- Jim Morrison



Master James Morrison

It is often said that the sound of the bagpipes was developed for making men brave in battle; pipers were sent with the troops into combat to strike terror into the hearts of the enemy. They produce a piercing yet guttural sound; as if the earth herself were trying to sing. Combined with the marching drum, the pipes produce as stirring a sound as can be found in any music. People of Scots descent were some of the earliest European settlers in Montana, and they brought their pride in heritage with them.

At the age of 12, Jim Morrison began learning the highland pipes under the tutelage of master piper Bill Flockhart. Flockhart had

emigrated from Scotland in 1904 as a young man of 20. Jim recalls,

Even in his 80s he was a master piper, though his fingers had started to slow down. I was part of a group of boys who

he taught who later formed the nucleus of the Caledonian Pipe Band in Billings. Since the 1960s there have been a number of Montana Scots who have learned piping, but always by leaving the state to attend piping schools. As far as I know, the group of pipers in Billings (which now numbers only three who were taught by Bill Flockhart) are the only pipers who can trace their teaching that far back.

While Jim was learning from Bill Flockhart, Tom Winters was growing up in Iowa with a maternal grandmother who treasured her own Scottish heritage. "I became very interested in my Scots heritage when I was a kid. My grandmother was pretty seriously proud about being a Scot. She's of the Clan Gordon...and she said, 'Never forget you're a Scot, never forget it.' And I never have." Years later, this pride was translated into action after a trip Tom's wife made to Europe. She journeyed to Scotland, and through serendipity found herself staying with a family who turned out to be relatives of her husband. "So I became fired up about learning about my Scots heritage,... and the pipes was just part of it," Tom relates. Friends recommended he seek out Jim Morrison, then the pipemaster in Billings. Tom's enthusiasm was obvious to Jim, who at the time remarked, "Anyone that feels the music as much as you do needs to play."

Tom articulates those deep feelings he related to Jim upon their first meeting:

Everything about the pipes I love, the history, the entire culture of it. It's steeped so deeply in everything that's important to me from my heritage, they're inseparable. The whole Scots pride, the whole Celtic aura is wrapped up in the music of the pipes. And the pipe music hasn't changed for a thousand years. There are tunes that we play that are a



Apprentice Tom Winter at the Red Lodge Festival of Nations

thousand years old and they've come down absolutely true, without a single note changed... holding that original pride through the music is so important, it's one of the driving forces behind modern piping.

But the importance of tradition in pipe tunes does not keep people from creating new compositions. Strathphys, reels, jigs, piobaireuchds, a Celtic word designating a classic genre of pipe tunes, are all traditional forms of pipe music. New music is written

in all these genres and enters the repertoire of modern players. A hallmark of a good piece is often that it is indistinguishable from a piece that's centuries old. But in order to compose, you must be able to play and play well. The resources provided by the apprenticeship made a tangible difference in Tom's ability to pursue the musical expression of his cultural heritage. Tom said, "What the Arts Council grant enabled me to do, was literally, put gas in my car" to get to his weekly lessons with Jim. It also provided funds for supplies such as reeds and bag seasoning without, as Tom says, "having to worry about taking money out of the cookie jar. I was really thankful for that."

The Scottish musical traditions Jim and Tom so devotedly preserve are already extending to the next generation. Tom's

son is the regimental snare drummer for the pipe band, and according to Tom, his little daughter Molly will begin her pipe lessons, "as soon as her fingers can reach through the chanter holes! The whole family enjoys the pipes."

Photos courtesy of James Morrison, and by Alex Swaney

Hmong Qeej Music:

Tou Yang / Mai K. Moua, Missoula

It is important to encourage the young people to think about their culture and get it back. Now is a good time to do that, to bring our culture back to our young people here, and keep our culture alive. - Tou Yang

For more than twenty years the Missoula area has been home to a community of Hmong people from Laos. Among our allies they were the most successful fighters against the Communists in the Vietnam War and many lost their lives. When the United States withdrew from Laos and the when the Communists took over, to avoid brutal reprisals, Hmong people by the thousands crossed the Mekong River into Thai refugee camps. In their Laotian homeland, the Hmong inhabited jungle and highlands, making a living as agriculturists, hunters and traders. In partial recompense for their losses during the war, the United States government helped some of the refugee Hmong to relocate in parts of this country, including Montana.



Tou Yang with school children in Missoula

The Missoula Hmong, who currently number over three hundred, have experienced many of the trials of assimilation that many immigrants to this country have faced. They have suffered discrimination for their "different" race and ethnicity. Elderly refugees have had an especially difficult time understanding modern American life. Finding a new way to make a living has not come easy. Many older people suffer from depression as they see the traditional culture being lost and the meaning of their lives changing. Younger Hmong people do not always show respect for the culture and the elders. They experience the same temptations from drugs, violence and gang life as so many other American teens. Recently, studies have begun to show that when youth violence and dysfunction become a problem in traditional cultures, an effective remedy is to reinforce or reintroduce the teaching of traditional culture, including language and the arts.



Tou Yang plays the Hmong flute for Missoula school children

Tou Yang had both an instinctive and personal grasp of this connection when he applied for an apprenticeship grant to teach Mai K. Moua to play the Hmong *qeej* or *kheng* (pronounced kaing). The *kheng*, a six-pipe flute or "mouth organ," plays an essential role in a Hmong funeral, the most important ritual of a person's life. Without this instrument, and the songs and dances that go with it, a Hmong person cannot have a spiritually effective ceremony upon dying. The instrument is constructed from multiple bamboo stalks laced together and fitted to one mouthpiece. When played, the *kheng* produces a kind of ethereal drone from the multiple pipes being sounded at once. The player must also do special dances to accompany the songs; the solemn sounds of this music guide the deceased on their journey to the spirit world. Hmong who follow the traditional ways believe that at death, the soul survives the body. In fact, a human has at least three main souls. At death, one of the souls guards the

tomb of the deceased, another makes the long journey to the spirit world and yet another is reincarnated in some future generation of the same family. At a funeral, there must be two or four kheng players and they must play, sing and drum continuously for two to four days without stopping so that the person's soul is sure to travel to the right place and they can come back to the family again.

Tou, who had studied this instrument as a young boy with a teacher in Laos "listening, remembering word by word and song by song," realized this complex knowledge could easily be lost in one generation and that teaching another community member was a necessity. In two apprenticeships over a two-year period, Tou instructed Mai Moua in kheng playing and singing the songs for the funeral ritual. Now, instead of having to go to the Spokane community to find a kheng player, Missoula's own Hmong community can draw upon its traditional musicians.



Hmong Kheng (musical instrument)

Photos courtesy of Tou Yang and by Alex Swaney

Mexican Dance:

Gregory Contreras/Los Guadalupanos, Billings

Throughout these 23 years our major goal has been to keep the Mexican culture alive. - Contreras family flyer



Greg Contreras and Los Guadalupanos

It is a beautiful summer afternoon in the park in Billings, Montana. The weather is perfect and families sit or stroll together enjoying the sights, sounds and pleasures of the city's annual fiesta. Follow the sparkling notes of trumpet and resonant guitar melodies, and you will find a group of young dancers whirling, stomping, swaying and twirling to traditional tunes. These are "Los Guadalupanos," the young men and women of the Contreras family. They take their name from the Billings's southside neighborhood Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, "the heart of our family," says dance master Greg Contreras. These dancers bring to colorful life the traditions of their families and ancestral Mexican homeland.

Music and dance have always been a big part of this family's life. Twenty-three years ago, Ines and Ruth Contreras

decided to do something they loved to preserve these cultural traditions. Since family ties are an essential part those traditions, the sisters enlisted members of the family for their dance group. At 31, Ines's son Gregory Contreraz now falls into the category of a young master artist who has been performing for almost 25 years. Greg is a first-generation Montanan, and a second-generation Mexican American. He and his wife share a home with their growing family of youngsters on a tree-lined street in east Billings, not far from his parents, brothers and sisters. Brother Bill Contreraz is a fine guitar player, and his wife Peggy is a consummate singer of *corridos*, Mexican songs and ballads that tell a story. Greg and his sister Angelica are the premier dancers of the group. Together they form a nucleus that cultivates, encourages and organizes the younger family members they teach. "Our group has been a family affair, and one member even started at the age of three. As of now the youngest member of our group is 11 years old. We are currently in the process of teaching a new group of family members who are seven and eight years old."



Costumes and props are as vital to the integrity of the dances as learning the intricate sequences of movements. The young women wear white cotton peasant-style blouses and full, three-tiered skirts in bright solid colors. The young men's black trousers contrast with the bright sashes that encircle their waists and coordinate with the young women's skirts. Props and elements of the costumes often

signify or name movements found in a particular dance. Sombreros become centerpieces for the Mexican Hat Dance. La Botella (The Bottle) is a dance that children do in Mexico where the goal is to dance around the bottles without knocking them over. Las Chiapanecas, originating in the Chiapas region of Mexico, incorporates colorful fans into the dance movements. In Los Machetes two young men do mock battle with hefty, flat broadswords.

The parents of the group also participate. Mothers and older girls of the dance group make all the costumes. Angelica elegantly summed up her desires to participate in the apprenticeship this way: "I want to continue our Mexican dancing culture of which I am so proud to be a member, and to start the second generation of dancers so that I can be sure that our culture does not come to an end."

Photos by Alex Swaney

Hardanger Embroidery:

Sylvia Johnson / Peggy Wold, Plentywood

We'll sit, maybe ten or twelve ladies in a room, and you'd think there would be quite a bit of talking, but it is quiet as a pin, everybody is sewing for dear life, concentrating on their work! Everybody seems to enjoy it.... Some of the books now say you become addicted to doing hardanger. It's very relaxing work. - Sylvia Johnson Overby



The farming country of northeastern Montana is oceans away from the small communities in Norway where Sylvia Johnson's parents were born. Yet Sheridan, Daniels and Roosevelt counties are home to many Norwegian Americans like Sylvia, who compensate for the huge physical distance from their ancestors' homeland by keeping alive some of their most beautiful traditions. The Hardanger region of

Norway gives its name to the exquisite embroidery that Sylvia has mastered.

Sylvia recounts just how her family came to live in the corner of Montana that borders Canada and North Dakota:

I was born right here in Sheridan country, in Plentywood. My parents were farmers and both had come directly from Norway. They were grown when they came to the U.S., but they met and were married here. We grew up in the farming area of Sheridan County and moved into Plentywood itself in 1947. I worked at the school as a secretary for 33 years before retiring..... I've traveled a bit, and been to Norway three times since I've retired, and hope to go again soon. My whole family is in Norway except for my immediate family.

My mother had sewed hardanger as a young person in

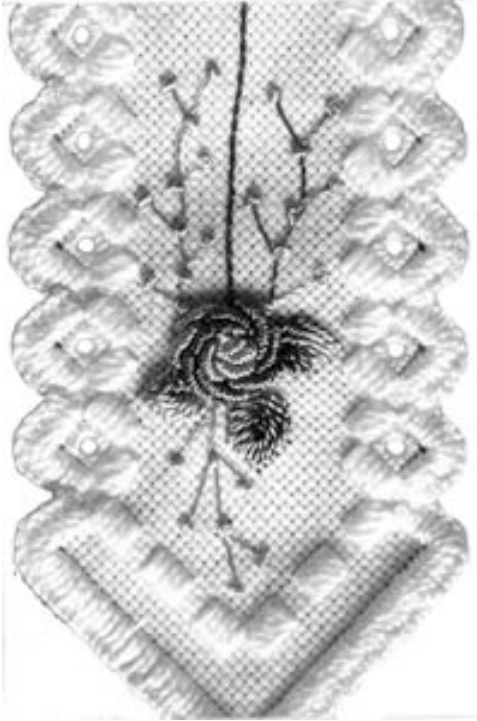
Norway. But when she came to this country she didn't plan to stay here, so she left all her handwork home in Norway. We got talking about it and she became interested in sewing again. So we borrowed some patterns, some pieces from some of the Norwegian neighbors, and got ahold of some fabric and she taught me perhaps 30 years ago. She and I sewed together then for many, many years... I just sew for the fun of it; I love to sew hardanger. I do a lot of fancywork, but hardanger is my favorite.



Hardanger by Sylvia Johnson

By definition, hardanger has to have some open work and drawn threads. Classic hardanger is white linen thread on white linen fabric. There can be up to seven different kinds of stitches on a given piece. All have Scandinavian names; the English names are basic satin,

eyelet, wrap bar, running stitch, spider web and picot. It is easy to spend 100 hours on one piece. Sylvia's finished pieces average between 60 and 80 hours of sewing. Except for the wrap bar-stitch, when she uses a hoop, everything else she does on her lap. She keeps three or four hardanger projects going at once to keep herself interested. Occasionally she sells her work but mostly she gives pieces as gifts.



When she retired, the school asked her if she would like to teach an adult education class in hardanger. So many people signed up they had to break classes in half and many came back two and three times because they enjoyed it so much. Peggy Wold, one of Sylvia's best students, became her apprentice in the Folk and Traditional Arts Program in the summer and fall of 1992. When interviewed in 1996, Sylvia said with satisfaction, "She's still doing it."

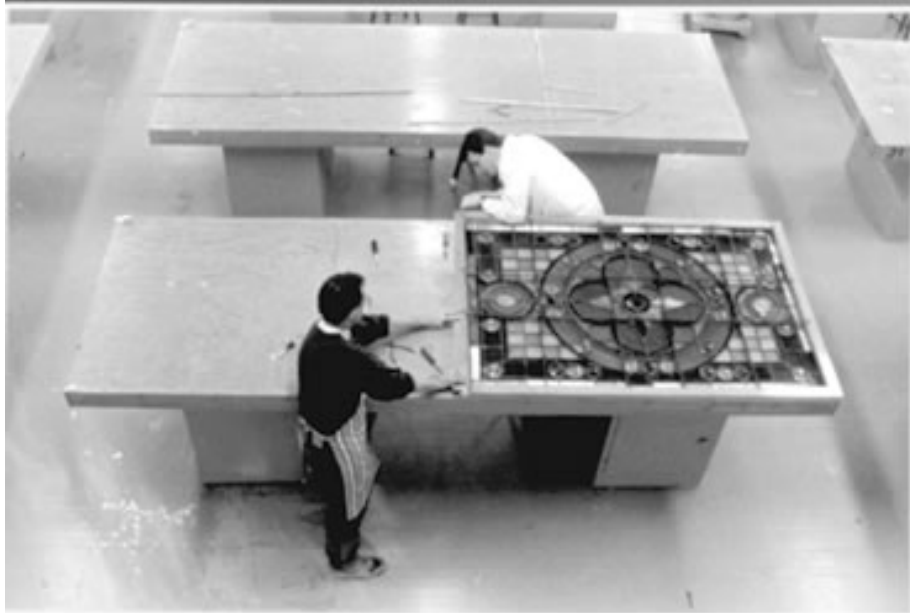
Photos by Blanton Owen

Old Style Painting on Glass:

Dan Hillen, Helena/Troy Barry, Bozeman

It has been my deepest wish to see that all of these treasures would survive for future generations. There are relatively few stained glass artists who are capable of doing restoration work here in Montana. So it has been my desire to train young people who show an interest in the traditional techniques involved in restoration work.

- Father Dan Hillen



Father Dan and Troy Barry restoring a window

Father Dan Hillen is Professor of Art at Carroll College, in Helena. A native of nearby Butte, he is well known in the region for his painstaking restoration of stained (painted) glass windows of all kinds; mostly in churches, but sometimes in private homes or other locations, as well for his original contemporary window pieces and glass sculptures. Father Dan sees stained glass as a Montana treasure with a history stretching back to the early missions to Montana's Indian tribes. Many have suffered damage through earthquake, fire, flood and neglect and are in dire need of attention. He himself is on a mission to see that they are valued for their true worth, and cared for properly.

Father Dan studied traditional techniques of painting on glass at the Pilchuk School of Glass Design with European master Albinus Elskus as preparation for Hillen's restoration of the stained glass in the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Saint Helena, completed in 1980-81. Though it is not often thought of as a folk art, the making of stained glass is an art and skill that has been kept alive in Europe for the last eight

hundred years or so through, primarily through a system of guilds headed by master artists.



Restored window, St Helena Cathedral

Apprentice Troy Barry took two classes in stained-glass art with Father Dan and had worked as his assistant on some glass projects. He also completed some commissions on his own. At the time of the apprenticeship, Troy was in school in Bozeman, and he drove 90 miles to Helena once a week for nearly a year to learn advanced techniques of glass painting. Together, as an apprenticeship Father Dan and Troy restored an old window in the First Presbyterian Church in Philipsburg, hidden by a plywood covering for 50 years. To facilitate the apprenticeship, Father Dan made two identical sets of equipment for himself and his student, constructing two painting boxes and stocking them with the

limited palette of designer glass paints (metal oxides) which have been essentially the same since the twelfth century: dark brown, black, red (for flesh) and grey-green. To complete the painting kit, he added the various vehicles or substrates for the paint, which include clove oil, lavender oil, water and vinegar.

Stained glass techniques date back to twelfth century Europe. The glass is painted with several kinds of oxides that, when fired, transform into the wonderful transparent colors we are used to seeing in traditional stained-glass church windows. Sometimes multiple firings are required to achieve the desired colors. The major time-tested techniques of this art are stenciling or tracing the linear dimension of the glass; matting (or tonal dimension); staining, enameling and etching the media, and firing the painted glass. There are some very complex techniques which can lend startling results in painted glass. Staining with silver produces a brilliant gold. As Father Dan describes it, "You take raw silver and break it down with nitric acid, and mix it with brick dust and brush it on, then fire the glass. After firing, wipe it with steel wool and you have a beautiful transparent gold."



In 2000, Father Dan was the head of a team that restored "The Apparition of the Cross to Saint Constantine," the beautiful and complex stained-glass window in the south transept of St. Helena Cathedral. Troy Barry had moved out of state, but was able to return to be the main apprentice on this daunting project, which involved an additional team of 11 assistants and took three months to complete.

Photos courtesy of Fr. Dan Hillen

Traditional Quilting:

Shelly Van Haur and friends, Hilger



A quilt by Shelly Van Haur

You work your life through a quilt. - Shelly Van Haur

On the map of Montana, Lewistown lies almost dead center. Fourteen miles north on state Highway 191 lies the tiny farming community of Hilger. Shelly Van Haur and her family have lived in the area for almost 25 years. "I started sewing when I was five or six. By the time I was 10 years old I was helping my maternal grandmother piece quilt tops. When I first started sewing in the 4-H in the early 1960s, I was doing machine quilting on my own. In 1973 I joined a local Hilger women's group that did hand quilting at every monthly meeting and I have done hand quilting for the past 20 years."

Shelly's basic history of her quilting career points out some of the most important aspects of traditional quilting, aspects that Shelly preserves each and every time she begins working on a quilt. Quilting is a multi-step process with many traditions involved in each step. These traditions begin before the first piece of fabric is cut and the first stitch is put in place. As a good teacher should, Shelly makes sure each of her students is a full participant in this process. In describing the skills and techniques she teaches, Shelly noted, "My apprentices learn large quiltmaking in the traditional way by choosing their pattern, colors, fabrics, batting, backing, tools and equipment. They use a traditional full-size quilt frame, or make their own. They learn proper assembly techniques for the quilt top and group quilting techniques including finishing, identifying, labeling and exhibiting."



Quilting at Cynthia Simon's house

Shelly continues, "The traditional quilting bee was not only an experience in construction of a family heirloom-quality quilt, but it was also a social gathering at a time when quilting bees were the only community gathering during long cold winters." True to form, the women Shelly quilts with are her friends first and her apprentices second. Their love of learning and quilting and socializing served them well that first winter as they met in the old Hilger School House. Shelly recounts,

Almost every day at Hilger involved me getting there at 7:30 a.m. to shovel snow off the dreaded 75 feet of sidewalk, opening the outhouse door and getting the building heated up before anyone else got there. The community group in charge of the upkeep for the school could not afford to heat the building through the winter, so the plumbing had to be drained each fall before the first cold spell. We were using so much electricity for five sewing machines, irons, two floor dairy heaters and the lights that we constantly popped the

breakers! You can't imagine trying to find a breaker box in a black basement using only farmer matches.

In the winter of 1994, even with appliances such as sewing machines and irons, Shelly and her friends were shoveling snow, hauling water and using an outhouse, traditions necessitated by the frigid and bone-chilling Montana winter.



Shelly Van Haur (kneeling at left) and apprentices (l to r) Cynthia Simon, Sandy Thompson, Diana Robinson and Alice Green

Alice Green, Sandy Thompson, Diana Robinson and Cynthia Simon all completed quilts in time for the Central Montana Fair during the last week of July, 1994. In 1995, Sandy, Jakilee Leap, Sally McBurney, Linda Kjorstad and Agnes Berkhus braved the rigors of quilting at the school house in winter to begin or continue their own quilting. Shelly's desire to continue her tradition is well known in her community. Her love for quilting is already stretching across more than one generation. In her application to participate in the second year of the apprenticeship, Sandy wrote, "My eight year old daughter did quilt a little with me on my previous quilt and I

believed by her seeing her mother's pride and love of quilting, she also would want learn the art."

Photos courtesy of Shelly Van Haur

Saddletree Making 1:

George Fraker, Buffalo/J. D. Benner, Arlee

Tree makers are rare. Most saddletrees are made by people who don't know which end of the horse the tree goes on. It's pert' near a lost art. - George Fraker



Apprentice J.D. Benner

Joe Benner, of J. D.'s Saddlery in Arlee, wanted to learn to make his own saddletrees "in order to make my own saddles completely, and also because the saddletrees available on the market today are so inferior and ill-fitting that I don't want to use them on a saddle I have put several weeks work into, just to find out that the tree, or foundation of the saddle, doesn't fit the horse." Joe

had known saddle and saddletree maker George Fraker since 1970, when they both worked at The Tack Shop in Spokane. He chose Fraker as the master artist for his

apprenticeship in saddletree making, travelling to Buffalo, Wyoming, where he stayed for two weeks to learn tree making at Fraker Saddlery with George.



Roughcut pieces of a saddletree

George Fraker was born in Buffalo Wyoming, where his family has been since the 1800s. He went to school in northern Idaho, and when he was through school he apprenticed himself to Jessie Smith of Spokane, from 1969 to 1973, to learn the leather work part of saddle making. After marrying, he returned to Wyoming with his wife where he worked construction and on ranches, always making a few saddles on the side, until he got his own saddle shop going in 1977. He started making saddletrees "in a fit of temper." He'd been working with a tree maker, and was perfectly happy with the saddletrees he was delivering. But when that particular tree maker quit the business, George was very disappointed with the saddletrees from the new outfit. He called up his old supplier and asked him to teach him how to make saddletrees. He's been building saddletrees for his own saddles ever since.

To teach Joe tree making, George started him copying silhouette patterns so he would have them to use later on. These are the patterns that you use to mark on blank pieces of wood before cutting. "After that was done, I made a tree and explained what I was doing as I was doing it," so Joe got to watch the complete process of constructing it. Then George had Joe shape bar blanks and he started making the tree.



Finished pieces of the tree assembled

"I pretty much made him do it by himself," George says, "He had made rawhide stuff before. If they don't know how to do rawhide, I have them flesh the hide and scrape the hair. Joe made two saddletrees while here that he kept."

George wanted Joe to have ample time to become more familiar with his materials and develop his own style. George traveled to Oregon to spend the third week with Joe, who had sold his shop in Arlee and opened a new one in Pendleton. Since then, George has taught four other people and continues to make saddletrees.

Photos courtesy George Fraker and J.D. Benner

Saddletree Making 2:

John Michaud/Jan Stutes, Billings

I've made well over 500 saddletrees and I never had one come back broke. - John Michaud



John Michaud at Basin Crick Saddletree

Many people who ride horseback have never even seen a saddletree, the rawhide-covered wooden frame that sits on the horse's back, supporting the upper leather parts that the rider sits on. Manufacturing saddletrees by hand used to be commonplace, but now, most saddletrees are factory made mass-produced, and tree makers are few and far between.

John Michaud and his wife live south of Billings in a beautiful log and earth home he designed and built with his son and son-in-law. There is spacious concrete-block shop, just a little distance from the house, where he works and keeps his tools. Inside, the shop is dominated by a giant band saw, patented in 1900, that he uses to cut precision shapes out of woods he uses in the saddletrees. One sunny afternoon he discussed saddles and saddletree making.



Saddletrees can be fit to the individual horse

It's an old trade, "one of the oldest." People had horses and had to have saddles to ride them. Some of those saddletrees hanging up there are a hundred years old and I'm doing the same thing those guys were you know.....You can buy plastic saddletrees that cost \$29.95. There's one over there that's broke right in two. Mine are \$375. But I make saddletrees for guys that ride for a living and their saddle is a tool like a hammer for a carpenter and people who make a living that way. They need something that will work for them.

After doing ranch work throughout the west and Canada, John decided to learn tree making and went to visit tree maker Chuck Storms up in Calgary, spending 10 days with him to learn the basics.

You can use any wood, the stronger the better. I use eastern poplar and eastern maple and then I laminate everything. There are three pieces of wood in each bar [the part that rests on the horse] and then the fork is all laminated has hard maple for strength. The cantle [seat] has four pieces of wood in it. A good hide is the strength of the tree.

John scrapes and soaks his own bull hides, which are then stretched over the tree to hold it together and give it strength.



Stacked saddletrees

Jan Stutes of Billings was John's apprentice for his Folk and Traditional Arts apprenticeship. Jan started riding when she was seven years old, and learned to appreciate a well-made saddle that fits a horse properly. She had made cowboy gear—rope, halters, chaps and belts—and was interested in saddle making. She knew there were quite a few women saddle makers, but no "lady tree makers," so she approached John about an apprenticeship. He warned her that there

would be a lot of hard work but praised her for her strength and determination.

It's a pretty tough thing for anybody. There is a lot of hides and certain amount of lifting. Some of the woodwork is done with a rasp and you have to flesh hides. She did a three-week school with me and made a couple of saddletrees while she was here. She went out of here with a lot of knowledge.

Photos courtesy of John Michaud

Custom Western Boot Making:

Mike Ryan/Jerry Reinier, Helena

You make boots for people who have to work hard everyday to earn their money. Most of my customers are firefighters, ranchers and construction workers. That's the class of people I do a lot of business with, the working class....What makes my boot superior to any boot on the market is a lack of nails. Nails rot leather. A pair of these boots will outlast store-bought boots if you take care of 'em by six or seven times. - Mike Ryan

Ryan's Boot and Shoe Repair is on Last Chance Gulch, Helena's oldest street, where the Four Georgians discovered gold. The days are gone when Mike could have made a living panning gold on the Gulch, but he is becoming increasingly well-known for carrying on a tradition that dates



Mike Ryan boots

from those frontier days. Mike is the master of a lost art: he makes and sells custom hand-made boots the same way they did it 100 years ago. Walking into his shop, your eyes are drawn to the rows and rows of boots and shoes he's in the process of repairing, the stacks of plastic lasts, and all kinds of elderly but industrial strength tools and machines Mike has acquired to pursue his craft to his satisfaction.

Over the years, he figures he has made an investment of about \$90,000 in the necessary gear to make and repair boots and shoes.

In 1984 Mike began to learn bootmaking the old-fashioned way from master bootmaker Mike Ives in Billings. Eventually Ryan, his wife and family moved to Helena after spending a number of years working in Bozeman. Even though his custom built boots start at \$450, he says most of his customers are not wealthy people, but people who have to work hard everyday and need footgear that will be comfortable and last a long time. When you make a pair of western boots everything is done by hand, with custom measurements.

Jerry Reinier was working in Mike's shop repairing shoes, but since childhood had wanted to learn boot making. Mike applied for the apprenticeship award with Jerry as his

apprentice. He taught him the basic steps involved in making a pair of boots.



Mike Ryan's work bench

First, a pair of lasts are needed. Lasts are the plastic forms upon which the boots or shoes will be formed. Lasts are made by measuring the foot of the customer and ordering them from a company in Arkansas. Using the last, a paper pattern is constructed for cutting out the components of the boot. Finally, the leather pieces are formed over the last shape. This is called lasting. The leather is then thoroughly soaked and left to dry.

The welt is a strip of leather that goes around the foot between the sole and the upper part of the boot or shoe. The welt is what the sole is sewed to. The welt is then sewed to the upper pieces. After the welt is sewed, the insole is sewed on; then the shank (steel for boots) is placed between the insole and the sole and the whole thing is sewed together. Next the sole is pegged (rather than nailed) with beeswax-covered wooden pegs. According to Mike, what makes his boots the best is the lack of nails. "A pair of boots made this way will outlast store-bought boots, if you take care of them,

by six or seven times," he says.



Mike Ryan and son D.J.

Photos by Alex Swaney
