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**AN ACQUISITIONS & PRESENTATION PROJECT**

# DALLAS CHIEF EAGLE AND JASMINE PICKNER

**HOOP DANCES FROM THE  
ROSEBUD AND CROW  
CREEK SIOUX TRIBES OF  
SOUTH DAKOTA**

IN CELEBRATION  
NATIVE AMERICAN  
HERITAGE MONTH



**Thursday  
November 15, 2007  
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# DALLAS CHIEF EAGLE AND JASMINE PICKNER

The circle is the ultimate symbol of Native American culture, representing the endless cycles of life, the interconnectedness of all beings, and the continuity of past, present and future. In the hoop dance, the form of the circle intertwines with a human body and these beliefs come alive with motion and grace.

Dallas Chief Eagle is a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe from south central South Dakota, and currently lives on the neighboring Pine Ridge Reservation. He says he knew of several hoop dancers when he was growing up in the 1950s and 60s, but it was one particular dancer he saw at age 13 who sparked his lifelong interest in the dance. His grandfather helped him make his first hoops, and his grandmother told him to find a pine tree and climb it so he could be held in its embrace, as she held him. Ever since, he has danced in regalia that represents the tree of life, although it was only later he realized that the Lakota words for “tree” and “hoop” were one and the same.

Several of Dallas' children also hoop dance, but the one who is most dedicated as a performer is his stepdaughter Jasmine Pickner, a member of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe. Jasmine is also his hunka daughter, a form of Lakota ritual adoptive kinship that he says makes them spiritual relatives. She has been doing fancy shawl dancing, jingle dress dancing and hoop dancing since she was able to walk. Jasmine has had two apprenticeships with Dallas through the South Dakota Arts Council, which have helped advance Jasmine's dancing, allowed them to develop a joint presentation, and given her guidance in managing her career as a performer.

Dallas has degrees in art education and guidance counseling from the University of South Dakota, and Jasmine is working toward a degree in elementary education at Black Hills State University, so working with youth is one of their main priorities. They have longstanding relationships with several reservation schools around the state, one of which has a hoop dance team that they have trained. They also do performances and residencies in many other schools in South Dakota and also in neighboring states, and are regular performers at community festivals and tribal gatherings.

Early hoop dancers used just a few hoops—the man who inspired Dallas used five—but present-day dancers often incorporate several dozen hoops in their routines. Dancers create new moves for themselves, and also use moves created by others, although it is respectful to ask before using someone else's creation. Most dancers base their style on another traditional form of dance such as the grass dance or

fancy dance for males, or the jingle dress dance for females. There are also regional variations in style, with dancers from the Southwest known for very fast steps using fewer hoops, in contrast to dancers from the northern US and Canada who move more slowly but incorporate more hoops in their dances.

Jasmine was one of the first women to take up hoop dancing, which was traditionally a male form. She says at first people were skeptical, but when she became the first girl to win the teen division of the World Hoop Dance Championships in Phoenix in 2001, competing against the boys, she and other female hoop dancers gained a lot of respect. What made her accomplishment most meaningful, though, was that she had set her sights on winning in honor of Dallas' son, her half-brother, who had passed away before he could achieve his goal of winning a world championship himself. Dallas too has been a World Champion in the senior division.

Dallas and Jasmine talk a lot in their presentations about the balance of male and female knowledge and power in Lakota culture. Both Mother Earth and Father Sky are necessary for the survival of all beings, neither one is more important, and neither can exist without the other. “The tree of life can't live without the Mother Earth or the Father Sky,” Dallas says. And if you look, sky and earth are joined together by a hoop that encircles everyone wherever they go—the line of the horizon. This message is clearly conveyed as Dallas and Jasmine each dance their own dance, together yet separate and unique, hoops spinning, wrapping around arms and legs, and linking to form designs of the natural world such as flowers, butterflies and trees. Their regalia also incorporates representations of all living beings in the form of fur, feathers, shells, and images of animals, insects and plants. In all its elements, the hoop dance is a dance of life.

Andrea Graham  
South Dakota Arts Council

*The American Folklife Center was created by Congress in 1976 and placed at the Library of Congress to “preserve and present American Folklife” through programs of research, documentation, archival preservation, reference service, live performance, exhibition, public programs, and training. The Center includes the American Folklife Center Archive of folk culture, which was established in 1928 and is now one of the largest collections of ethnographic material from the United States and around the world. Please Visit our web site <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/>.*

