

Hide tanning: importance of preserving traditional practices

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Even Williams is beginning to have difficulty working with hides due to arthritis.

For that reason, Kalama said, instructing the class was especially trying on his sister.

"On her it was a lot of strain—strenuous work for her body," he explained.

But Williams disagreed. "I didn't have to do anything, they did all the work," she said.

The class met in an area next to the museum in order to learn from Williams.

"After we scraped the hides, then we went to my mother's shed in upper dry creek," she explained. "I showed them how the shed was built. There's a lot of work into it."

First comes scraping the hide, Williams said, and then the hide is soaked and water is wrung out. The hide is then framed.

Participants had to "discover muscles they didn't know they had" Kalama said with a chuckle.

"My mom used to call it a good workout," Williams added.

Though Williams had taught people about hide tanning before, the way she learned was much different.

"When my mother taught me, it was more like she just took me out to the shed and told me what to do," Williams said.

If she had questions, her mother would give her additional instructions. "I was left in the shed just learning what she's telling me," Williams explained.

Because she learned in such an independent way, Williams



Christine Johnson, Evaline Patt, Dora Goudy-Smith and Rosalind Sampson (left to right) display their finished hides. Johnson is still working to frame a hide.

In Williams' opinion, one thing about hide tannings most important: just that it be carried on and not be lost.

said, teaching 15 people proved to be a highly challenging at first.

Williams has strived to pass on the skills, teaching her own children as well.

Even her husband learned about hide tanning, Williams said. At first he just went into the shed to start a fire, she explained. "Then my mom started

putting him to work too, so he learned."

"The history goes back a long way," Kalama added. "My grandma used to do hers outside and have it spread on the ground."

Williams and Kalama originally learned when they were in their early twenties.

However, Williams said, "She taught me once, but I didn't listen the first time and I had to go back and ask her again."

She has memories of her family as they tanned hides on a ranch by the Deschutes River.

"Just pieces of it, I remember," Williams said. "We had a clothesline and it would be just covered with hides."

The time it takes to prepare

Native radio station seeks Christian music

Native singers and songwriters are invited to submit their music to a new Christian Native radio station in Arizona.

The Jesus Broadcasting Network is the first terrestrial network to feature only Christian Native singers and songwriters.

Roger Martin founded Indian Christian Fellowship, Inc., along with his wife Christine. Now they've started a radio station as part of the Jesus Broadcasting Network.

Martin was raised on a reservation and has spent much of his time ministering on a reservation as well.

"I've seen a great need in our people," Martin said. "We have beautiful singers and songwriters and musi-

cians from so many different tribes and there was no media, no place to hear the music."

Their organization is also planning to work with television. "We're still in a very infant stage," Miller said. "We have a lot of plans for the station and we're upgrading."

They plan to do a live program where hosts interview Christian leaders, musicians and songwriters, Miller added.

Part of the reason for starting up the radio station, Miller said, is to try to change the image that many people still have of Native Americans.

"We want to break the stereotype," he said. "When they go on they're hearing Native American from reservations. A lot of those songs are written themselves. They're phenom-

enal musicians and songwriters."

In addition, Miller said, they want to provide an outlet for Christian Native Americans who would like to have their music heard.

"There are a lot of Christian Native Americans. That's a real part of our culture today is we have a lot of churches, a lot of people with wonderful testimonies," Miller said.

Ideally, Miller said, they'd like to feature singers and songwriters from every tribe across the country.

According to Miller, "We intend to increase the number of singers and songwriters from all tribes."

For more information, visit www.jbnlive.com.

a hide varies, Williams said.

"For me it takes two to three days," she explained. "For the students it took almost two weeks to three weeks."

"It can't be done just right away," Kalama added.

Learning about hide tanning is especially important for preserving traditional practices, Williams said.

The hides are often used for beadwork or moccasins, she said, and now people are starting to use factory tanned hides instead of the traditionally tanned hides.

But in Williams' opinion, that's not how it should be.

"The elders of our community are always asking for them," she said.

For Williams, that displays exactly how important traditionally tanned hides are.

"My elders come first," she said.

For anyone wishing to learn about hide tanning, Williams invites them to find her or stop by her home, as she's more than willing to teach more.

Eventually the museum may host another class, she added.

In Williams' opinion, one thing about hide tanning is most important: "Just that it be carried on and not be lost," she said.

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