

Horses are ridden in Nez Perce ceremonial gatherings and parades, where participants dress in traditional regalia and their horses do too.

In Lapwai, Nez Perce artist Lynnette Pinkham is passing on her knowledge of the traditional art to her niece Jackie McArthur [mic-Arthur].

On this episode of Expressive Idaho, Arlie Sommer visits with Pinkham and McArthur about their efforts.

Lynne Pinkham: It's not like you can just go out and throw an outfit on a horse. Not all horses will accept it. So you kind of have to. I guess the term is sacking out or desensitization to get them used to wearing those types of things, feathers flying by their ears are the bells that we use.

Jackie McCarther: My name is Jackie McArthur. My Indian name is Sus-hih. I currently live near Lenore, Idaho, above the Clearwater River. Lynne is pivotal in having both the knowledge on how to make it, and then the significance of the different pieces, because she's a rider. For funerals the family can say, 'if you have a buckskin, you need to wear it. And if you don't have a buckskin, you wear a shell dress. And if you don't have a shell dress, you wear your wing dress. And then of course, your that dress needs to fit you and you know, not have your legs showing or not have your arm showing'. There's very pointed and structured dressing protocol. So that's the same for the horse trappings or horse regalia.

Lynne Pinkham: I was lucky to have a lot of grandmothers, and I saw this work being done every day. I watched it from the time I was little, and I'm still learning. We give this culture to our children.

Jackie McCarther: That's why I had to start beading is because I used to dance in powwows and you want to add to your outfit. As we were having our children, like they all had beaded moccasins for me. I made some of their baby boards. It just depends on what the family needs is what my art form is.

Jackie McCarther: I never envisioned myself making horse trappings. I'm not a horse person. We don't have horses, but our daughter rides wants to have, you know, use these things. Because I can read and because I can sew I'm able to do it, but I'm really learning about the significance of the trappings.

Lynne Pinkham: That's what I've been trying to help Jackie with, is get this in line so that she has her own horse regalia.

Jackie McCarther: Each different piece has a name for it. There's also pieces that a male rider will use and a female rider will use.

Lynne Pinkham: The men were the ones that carried the horse mask. And for the female rider, that's where you have more of the the long fringe.

Jackie McCarther: One of the things that we know we have to do and Aunt it expresses the importance of it, is having elk tied for the fringe for the saddle drops. She said you don't want them just flapping in the wind like they sway with the horse.

Lynne Pinkham: If you have a lot of this long fringe that shows that you have a prominent hunter because usually it's buffalo hide. Now we use elk hide because we don't have that access to buffalo like we used to. The buffalo fringe was heavier, and it had that more of a sway feel to when the horse would walk.

Jackie McCarther: There's a saddle blanket under your saddle. There is a Nez Perce saddle for women, and those are quite rare and very treasured. There is the head stall, which you're beading basically your bridle. This is the centerpiece to the martingale. And the martingale is worn on the front of the horse.

Lynne Pinkham: Just like a horse necklace. It's just tied at the the back of the neck of the horse.

Jackie McCarther: And so I'm almost done with this piece. These are chevrons which are like the flighty part of the arrow. The sáplis. It's like a whirlwind. You have to know how to tie knots. You have to prepare your thread. You have to have the correct needle. You have to pay attention to your placement of your thread. These are called tri cut beads, so they're sharp. You have to have a particular thread, otherwise your piece can just fall apart.

Jackie McCarther: Putting it together. Oh my gosh. It's seriously like for me it's harder than beading.

Lynne Pinkham: When I see an old piece, especially if it comes out on the dance floor somewhere. I'll ask the person wearing it, "Can I look at your stuff?" And if they allow me, then I look at it in detail. When I see something, it talks to me and I just say, okay, I want to make that.

Jackie McCarther: And the end result is, you know, a beautiful thing to have, you know, this available to and within the family. And I hope that too. It inspires others to want to make regalia for their horses or their young writers.

You can see photos of the horse regalia at [Boise State Public Radio dot org](http://BoiseStatePublicRadio.org).

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