

## 2014 Festival Choice

**Sponsored by San Dimas Community Hospital & Challenge Gifts**

*“Evening Song” A Lakota Wedding Dress Artist: Cheri Cappello*

The Lakota were the most important and the largest of the original seven tribes that made up the Sioux Nation. They were often referred to as the western or Teton Sioux. They however preferred to be called, and called themselves, the Lakota. They inhabited the rich river valleys that ran from the upper Missouri River west to the base of the great Rocky Mountains. They were a nomadic tribe who depended on the bison. They were outstanding hunters, horsemen, traders, warriors and craftsmen.

A wedding in the Lakota tribe was also considered a contract between families. It was often arranged to strengthen alliances and to expand territories. There were cases when a wedding was arranged to avoid war.

Both families would contribute to the wedding garments. The beadwork for the dress was a family affair and often included many family members such as mother, aunts and sisters. Many times beads from the grooms’ family would be mixed into the design. The design for the traditional wedding dress would incorporate symbols and colors important to both families.

*The Evening Song* dress was made using brain-tanned buckskin assembled with sinew and leather straps. The heavy fringe work was highly favored because of the movement and life it gave to the garment. The beading for this dress shows the Lakota symbol for sky as well as the mountain symbols. The metallic gold glass beads were very rare and very expensive; these were obtained in trade from French trappers. The numerous cowry shells that cover the dress demonstrate the wealth and importance of the two families. The shells were a highly sought-after trade item; they were traded with the Pacific tribes. The elk teeth that adorn the dress symbolized the skill this warrior husband possessed in hunting and providing for the tribe.

The Lakota gave reverence to the coyote and believed that by wearing the pelt, the coyote would provide spiritual and earthly guidance. The large pelt cape would have been a gift from the grooms’ family. This again was a demonstration of wealth and power.

This dress was created to honor the Lakota Nation.

**– Cheri Cappello**