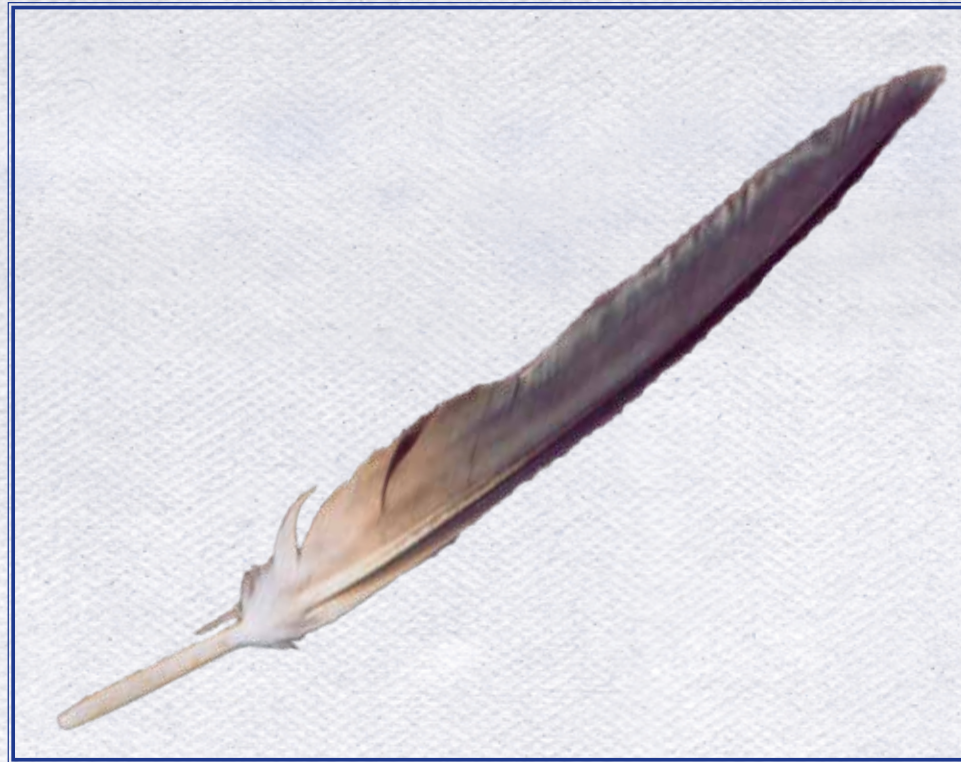


In Flight: *Creative Movement and Dance*



Activity, Time and Materials

ACTIVITY:

Discuss the watching of birds and their movements. Introduce the concept that traditional music, folk beliefs, and traditional dances often are inspired by birds. Listen to such music, a traditional story, and teach a dance based on the movements of birds in flight, accompanied by an American Indian flute tune.

TIME:

Ninety minutes over one session (for discussion, the playing of music and stories, fifty minutes; for learning and performing the dance, forty minutes). If time is an issue, this activity could be broken into two separate sessions.

MATERIALS:

- Large, color photocopies of American Indian flute players and a traditional dancer (if possible, mounted on 25" x 30" display boards set on easels)
- Feathers
- A good sound system to play a CD or digital recording
- A CD or digital recording of European-American accordion music for "The Chicken Dance," which is often played at weddings
- The CD *My Relatives Say: Traditional Dakota Stories as Told by Mary Louise Defender Wilson* (also available on iTunes)
- The CD *Morning Star Whispered* by Keith Bear (also available on iTunes)
- The book *Sundogs and Sunflowers: Folklore and Folk Art of the Northern Great Plains*

Note: *My Relatives Say: Traditional Dakota Stories as Told by Mary Louise Defender Wilson* and *Morning Star Whispered* can be purchased online or by contacting either the North Dakota Council on the Arts or Makoché Recording Company, Bismarck, ND.

“THREE PLAGUES” (LONELINESS, BOREDOM, HELPLESSNESS):

This activity is designed to alleviate loneliness by bringing people together to interact and to share observations and memories. A humorous aspect of the plan, such as playing the music for “The Chicken Dance,” which is commonly featured at weddings, may recall happy memories, thus addressing boredom. Even the sheer act of movement can elicit emotions and memories, whether these be happy or soothing. The dance associated with American Indian flute music will tilt the participants toward a sense of inner calm and personal freedom. Creative movement or dance is a social form of exercise that improves physical function and reduces disability in older adults, thus, in a very practical way, addressing the sense of helplessness.

ASSOCIATED MEDICAL STUDY:

“Recent studies have looked at the effects of dance on functional outcomes for persons with balance, gait, and cognitive impairments. The purpose of this report is to quantify the effects of Salsa dance therapy on function, balance, and fall risk in a sedentary older patient with multiple comorbidities. The patient was an 84-year-old woman with functional decline due to Alzheimer’s dementia, late effects of a cerebral hemorrhagic aneurysm with right hemiparesis in the lower extremity, arthritis, and recurrent falls. Intervention consisted largely of Salsa dancing activities for 24 sessions over 12 weeks. The patient showed improvements in range of motion, strength, balance, functional mobility, gait distance, and speed. During the course of therapy, 1 fall was reported with no significant injuries and 6 months post-intervention the patient/caregiver reported no falls. This case describes the clinically meaningful effects of Salsa dance therapy as a primary intervention and its impact on functional recovery in a geriatric patient with multiple impairments.” [Abstract]

*--Abreu, M., and G. Hartley. “The Effects of Salsa Dance on Balance, Gait, and Fall Risk in a Sedentary Patient with Alzheimer’s Dementia, Multiple Comorbidities, and Recurrent Falls.” *Journal of Geriatric Physical Therapy* 36, no. 2 (April-June 2013): 100-109.*

Cover photo: Eagle “breath feather” found at the front of the wing and used to steer the bird in flight. Eagles, which are considered sacred to American Indians, are said to bring messages and to help people.

Activity Plan

SESSION 1 (90 MINUTES OVER 1 SESSION):

(If time is an issue, this activity could be broken into two separate sessions. The first session would proceed from steps 1 through 6, and then end with step 10. The second session should briefly recap the first session to jog memories and then begin with step 7 and proceed through step 10.)

1. Start this activity with a group of folks gathered in a space where they can talk comfortably with one another. Explain that the participants will explore how birds are a part of various traditions and arts. Explain that they will listen to music, hear a traditional story, and participate in movement (dance) inspired by birds. (If the person directing the plan anticipates that the people attending will be reticent to participate in a dance, explain, instead, that they will participate in exercise using creative movement.)

2. Begin by asking the following questions:

- How many of you watch birds or in the past have watched birds?
- What do you like about watching birds? What do you think about when you see birds in flight?
- Did you know that birds figure prominently in omens, premonitions, and signs? Then provide examples by reading aloud to the group the following folklore items from the book *Sundogs and Sunflowers*: “55. A Bird at the Window,”

“56. Rooster Crowing (Version 1),” “57. Rooster Crowing (Version 2),” all on page 146, and folklore item “58. Eagles and Hawks” on page 147. Try to engage the participants in discussion by asking them if they have heard of other similar beliefs.

3. Explain that birds figure prominently not only in folk beliefs like those cited above, but also in dance, music, and stories. Ask if anyone has heard of the ballet “Swan Lake.” (Swan Lake is a famous ballet inspired by Russian folk tales. It tells of a princess who was turned into a swan by an evil sorcerer.)

Then ask if anyone can think of another example of a dance that involves birds. After waiting for a reply or just receiving silence, the person directing this activity should play the music for “The Chicken Dance.” “Spontaneously” lead the participants in “The Chicken Dance” for a few minutes, even if the participants remain seated. Turn the music off, and then ask the following questions:

- What is the name of that dance? (“The Chicken Dance”)
- When is it usually played? (at weddings)
- When you heard it and danced, how did it make you feel?
- Was it danced at your wedding? (Encourage each participant to share the first time they met their husband or wife.)

4. The person directing this activity should explain to the group that some Great Plains American Indian dances are inspired by birds, as well. Ask participants if they have seen an American Indian powwow. What do the dancers wear? What are some of the items used or do you imagine the dancers using to decorate their outfits?

Draw the participants' attention to the color photos of the Dakotah/Lakota champion dancer Wade Keeps Eagle of Bismarck, ND, and of the prairie chickens featured on page 147 of *Sundogs and Sunflowers*. (If possible, mount the color photocopies of the images on 25" x 30" display boards set on easels in different parts of the room to make it easier for participants to see. Or, make large color photocopies that can be distributed to the participants. Or, simply show the images in the book itself.) To the group, read aloud the blue text above and below the pictures on page 147. Point out how Wade's stance is similar to the picture of the prairie chickens dancing on their "courtship ground."

During this part of the activity, the person directing the activity or an assistant should distribute at least one feather, preferably two, to each person in attendance. Ask each participant to keep or hold onto the feathers for the duration of the activity. (The feathers will be used later.)

Note: In activity plans, it is important to try to stimulate as many of the five senses as possible to better connect the participants with the subject or activity at hand, hence the feathers. Additionally, while reminiscing works well for people in the early stages of

dementia who are trying to hang onto memories, it may be frustrating for those in the middle to late stages of the disease. It is in this way that stimulating the use of other senses, such as touch, may help to better invoke the residents' memories.

5. The person directing this activity should explain further that Great Plains American Indian flute music and stories also prominently involve birds. To the group, read aloud the text on page 252 of *Sundogs and Sunflowers*, "The Sacred Branch That Sings."

Draw the participants' attention to the color photos of the flute players Dan Jerome of Belcourt, ND, and Keith Bear and Brendan Gourneau of New Town, ND, as featured on page 252 of *Sundogs and Sunflowers*. (If possible, mount the color photocopies of the images on 25" x 30" display boards set on easels in different parts of the room to make it easier for participants to see. Or, make large color photocopies that can be distributed to the participants. Or, simply show the images in the book itself.) Point out how feathers adorn the flute and how the ends are carved to resemble the heads of birds.

Introduce and play track 8, "The First Flute Was Used for Courting," from the CD *My Relatives Say: Traditional Dakotah Stories as Told by Mary Louise Defender Wilson*. Encourage participants to close their eyes, relax, and hold their feathers as they imagine the story. A few seconds after the story's end, ask the participants to open their eyes. Ask them if they noticed at the very end of the story how the flute music imitated the call of a bird.

6. The person leading this activity should tell the group they now will listen to a Mandan/Hidatsa flute tune by traditional storyteller and flute player Keith Bear from the Fort Berthold Reservation of North Dakota. Explain that the tune they will hear is based on a story about a young couple, Turtle and Pretty Crane, who are in love.

Play the flute tune “All Through the Night” (track 6 on the CD *Morning Star Whispered*). As the tune plays, ask participants to close their eyes, relax, hold a feather in each hand, and imagine themselves as birds flying to someone they love.

A few seconds after the tune’s end, ask the participants to open their eyes. Encourage them to share how the music made them feel and what they imagined. (Expressing what one imagines takes the pressure off those people who have difficulty recalling memories. Thus, more people are able to interact.)

Note: Keith Bear started playing the flute when he worked as an orderly at the Flagstaff Medical Center in Arizona. As he recalls, “Some of the patients were immobile, bandaged, and ill. They were physically hurting, but I could see they were emotionally hurting, too. I had traded with a traditional man for a flute, so I took that flute and played for them. It was powerful. The flute brought tears and healing. It was then, I knew the power of the flute to heal and transform.”

7. The person leading this activity should explain that they now are going to learn a dance or creative movement exercise based on the

movement of birds in flight, the theme of love or courtship, and the melody of the flute tune “All Through the Night.” First try a couple practice runs at the dance without the accompaniment of the flute music. Once the group has learned the dance, it should be performed while the tune actually plays.

8. The activity director will lead the group through a five-minute warm-up, as outlined below:

Chair exercises:

Wrist circles – 8 each way

Touch shoulder, then reach to the ceiling – 8 times

Helicopter torso turns – 8 times

Toe touches – 8 times

Ankle circles – 8 times

9. Depending on the number of participants, dance in groups of 3 or 4 people. Have the groups form a circle. Teach the entire dance before the music is played.

“In Flight”

Choreography by Pattie Carr

Music by Keith Bear

Each person takes one feather in each hand

Both arms come up (hold the arms at waist height as long as

possible, let the arms rest, and then raise them again as if taking flight like a bird)

Turn to the right
Rock forward
Rock backward
Rock forward
Rock backward
Turn to the front
Turn to the left
Rock forward
Rock backward
Rock forward
Rock backward

Turn to the right
Rock forward – lift the back foot*
Rock backward – lift the front foot
Rock forward – lift the back foot
Rock backward – lift the front foot
Turn to the front
Turn to the left
Rock forward – lift the back foot
Rock backward – lift the front foot
Rock forward – lift the back foot
Rock backward – lift the front foot
Turn to the front

*Each foot is lifted just an inch or so off the floor.

Group Circle Weave

Have all the participants stand in a circle.

Number each person in the group: even numbers (EN) and odd numbers (ON)

EN walk clockwise, passing first on the right shoulder of the ON person, and then on the left shoulder of the ON person.

ON walk counterclockwise, passing first on the right shoulder of the EN person, and then on left shoulder of the EN person.

IO. This activity plan could elicit a wide range of emotions, from a sense of freedom, especially for those people with mobility issues but who lack such physical restrictions in their imaginations, to happiness and tearful sadness. Exhibiting a full range of emotions can be cathartic. In any case, it is recommended to end the session with an uplifting, bouncy, surprise replaying of “The Chicken Dance.”

OPTIONAL SUGGESTIONS:

Other opportunities could be utilized to enhance this activity. A traditional American Indian flute player could show his or her flute and perform. A European-American accordion player could also perform.

The above lesson plan could be repeated in a second session,

starting with section five. In this instance, instead of listening to the story “The First Flute Was Used for Courting,” listen to the story “Turtle and Pretty Crane,” on track 5 of the CD *Morning Star Whispered*. Then follow the rest of the sections as is. This would allow the same activity to be utilized, while keeping the participants’ interest with a story they have not heard before. However, the activities director should preview the entire story (22:20 minutes) before utilizing it to determine if it would be appropriate for the audience.

AUTHOR • PATTIE CARR, MA, LRD:

Pattie is a member of the faculty of the Department of Fine and Performing Arts at Dickinson State University, Dickinson, North Dakota, as well as the university’s Wellness Program Director. Her faculty duties for the Department of Fine and Performing Arts include directing both the Dance and Costume Programs. Ms. Carr graduated from Washington University School of Medicine and Ball State University with a Master’s degree in Human Bioenergetics, from Montana State University with a Bachelor’s degree in Clinical Nutrition, and from the University of Montana with a minor in Modern Dance. She has been a Registered Dietitian since 1985. Prior to returning to graduate school, Ms. Carr danced professionally in Montana, California, and New York City. (Activity Plan and Choreography)

**AUTHOR • KEITH BEAR (O’MASHI/ RYU TA,
“BRIGHT LIGHTS THAT WAVE IN THE NORTH
SKY” OR “NORTHERN LIGHTS”):**

Keith is a renowned, award-winning traditional Mandan/Hidatsa flute player, storyteller, and traditionalist from the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation of northwestern North Dakota. He started playing the flute when he worked as an orderly at the Flagstaff Medical Center in Arizona. Keith’s music is featured in numerous recordings. He has performed nationally at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, the Library of Congress/American Folklife Center, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and the National Museum of the American Indian, as well as internationally in Switzerland, Ireland, Wales, Germany, Austria, and Canada. Keith is a recipient of the prestigious Bush Foundation Artist Fellowship. (Consultant)

AUTHOR • MARY LOUISE DEFENDER WILSON

(WAGMUHAWIN, “GOURD WOMAN”):

Mary Louise is a Dakotah storyteller from the Standing Rock Indian Reservation of North Dakota. She is one of the nation’s most highly recognized traditional storytellers. She started telling stories as a pre-teen, after she had first heard them from her mother and grandmother, both of whom were traditional midwives. While working as the director of the Native American Culture Center at the North Dakota State Hospital, she utilized traditional American Indian culture and art to better the health of the hospital’s patients. As a board member of the Mental Health Association of North Dakota, she encouraged the use of arts for therapy. Her storytelling recordings have received four Native American Music Awards (Best Spoken Word). She has performed at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts, the Library of Congress/American Folklife Center, and the National Museum of the American Indian. Mary Louise is a recipient of the North Dakota Governor’s Award for the Arts, the H. Councill Trenholm Memorial Award for Human and Civil Rights, the Bush Foundation Artist Fellowship and Enduring Vision Award, and the National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment of the Arts, the nation’s highest honor for a traditional artist. (Consultant)

AUTHOR • TROYD GEIST:

Troyd is the state folklorist with the North Dakota Council on the Arts who is charged with encouraging the preservation and continuation of folk and traditional arts, heritage, and culture. He holds a Master of Arts degree in Sociology/Anthropology from North Dakota State University, and has participated in and conducted projects involving the impact of folk art and folk traditions on personal health and well-being. Those efforts include traditional storytellers working with fetal alcohol research and prevention programs, Bell’s palsy as viewed and treated in traditional cultures, familial Alzheimer’s disease tracking using anthropological methods, and the use of culturally infused narrative and traditional music for guided imagery. He directed the original *Art for Life* pilot project in 2001-2003, which measured the effects of long-term folk arts and artist interaction on combating the negative impact of the “Three Plagues” (loneliness, boredom, and helplessness) that many residents in elder care facilities experience. Subsequently, he developed the *Art for Life Program*. With Dr. Timothy J. Kloberdanz, Troyd co-edited, co-compiled, and co-authored the book *Sundogs and Sunflowers: Folklore and Folk Art of the Northern Great Plains*.