

NATIVE COWBOY



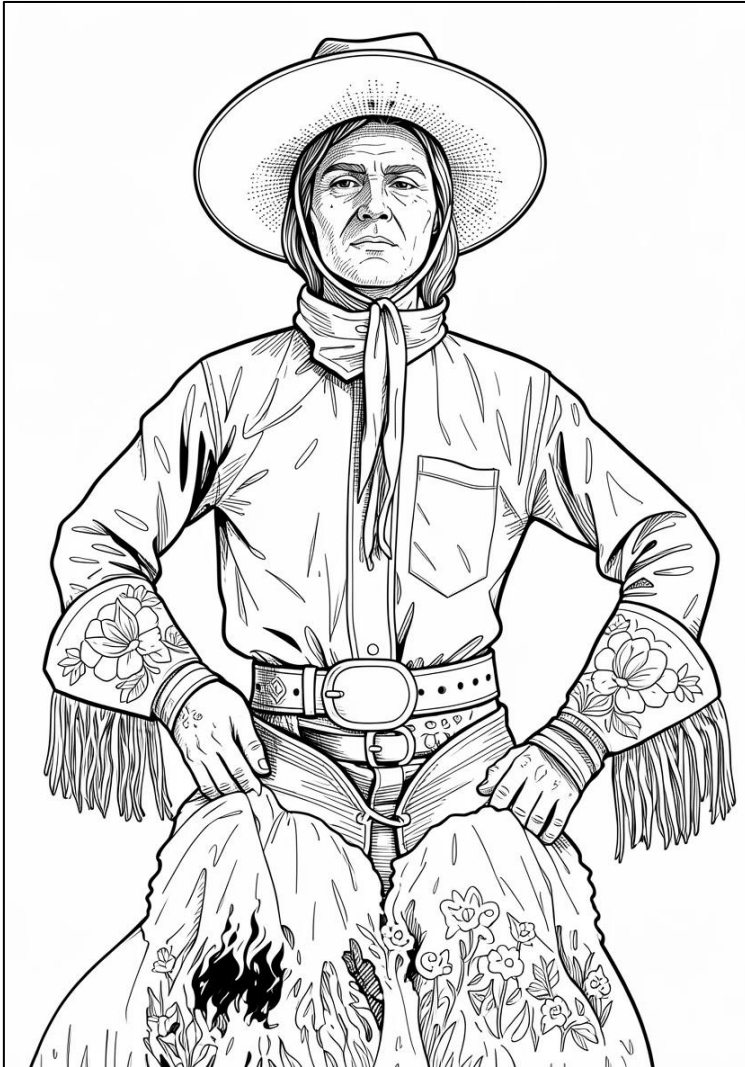
CHAMPIONS



NATIONAL
COWBOY
& WESTERN HERITAGE
MUSEUM



JACKSON SUNDOWN



People called him cowboy, Native American, bronco buster, and rodeo champion. He was all of these things, and more. Jackson Sundown was a legend who proved that you're never too old to chase a dream.

Jackson was from the Nez Perce Tribe of the Pacific Northwest region. He was given the name Waaya-Tonah-Toesits-Kahn (Blanket of the Sun) when he was born. The Nez Perce were known as great horse riders. Jackson grew up taking care of livestock and built his skills as a tamer of wild horses. He soon proved he could ride wild horses that other cowboys couldn't.

Jackson competed in many rodeos, but he longed to win the famous Pendleton Round- Up. He was already over 50 years old. Some people thought he should just go home and retire from bronc riding.

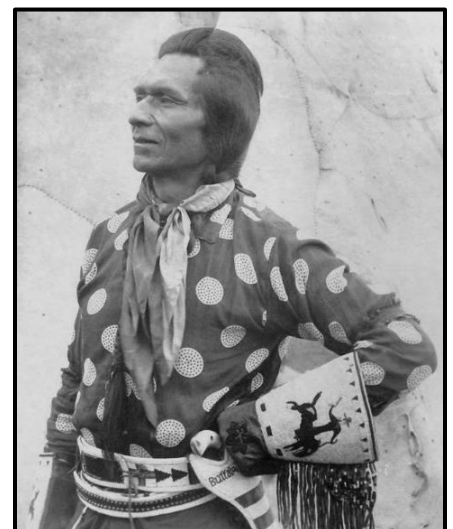
But Jackson decided to give it one more try. The horse he drew was named Angel; but that horse was no angel. He kicked so

hard that the ground shook! Unlike rules in today's rodeo, like the eight-second buzzer, early rodeo was very different. Riders stayed on until the horse stopped bucking, often using no stirrups at all. It was a true test of survival.

Jackson was an unforgettable sight! He wore bright orange Angora chaps. His long braids whipped in the wind as the horse bucked. Angel kept jumping and twisting. Instead of just holding on, Jackson spurred the horse to make it buck even harder!

He stayed on until Angel came to a standstill in the arena.

The judges crowned Jackson Sundown the World Champion Saddle Bronc Rider. He the first Native American to win that title. Jackson showed that it doesn't matter where you come from or how old you are, if you have courage and grit, you can be a champion.



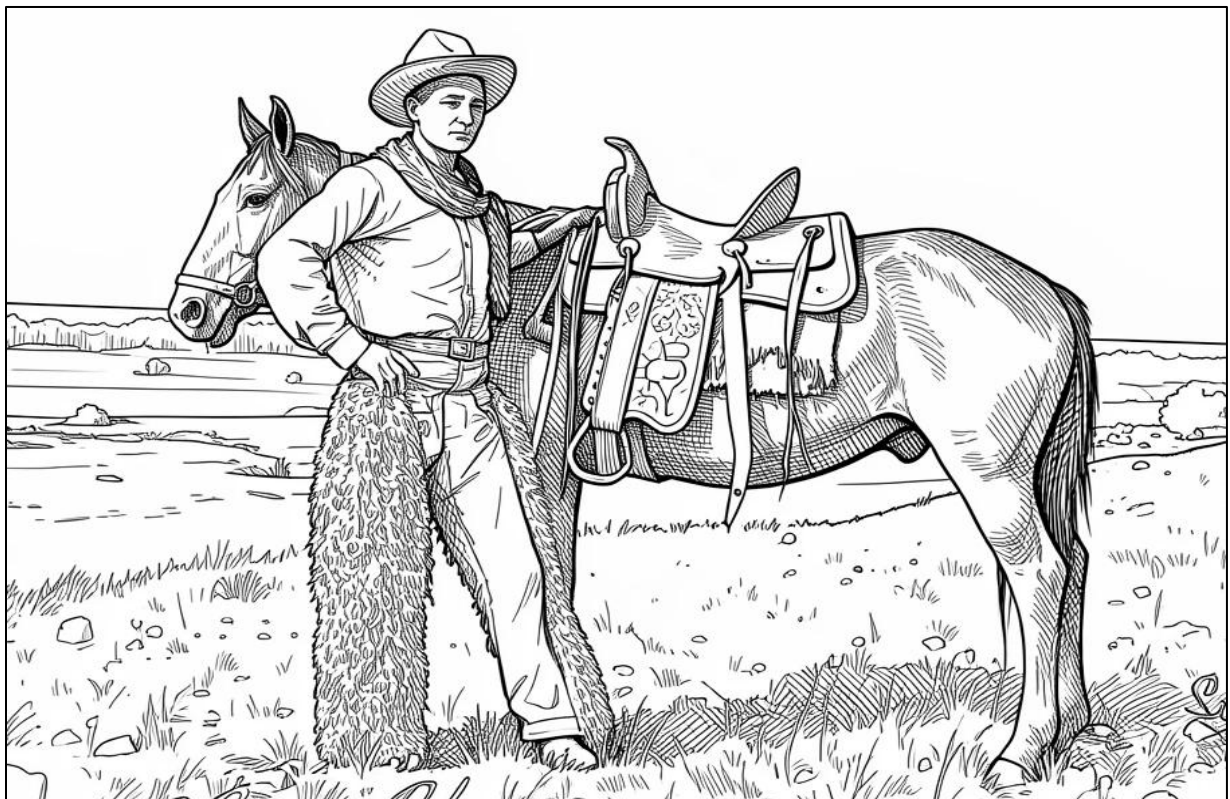
TOM THREE PERSONS

Long ago, a young boy named Tom Three Persons looked over the open plains of Alberta, Canada. Tom was born on the Blood Reserve- a citizen of the Kainai Nation. From the time he was small, Tom practiced riding and roping on his family's ranch.

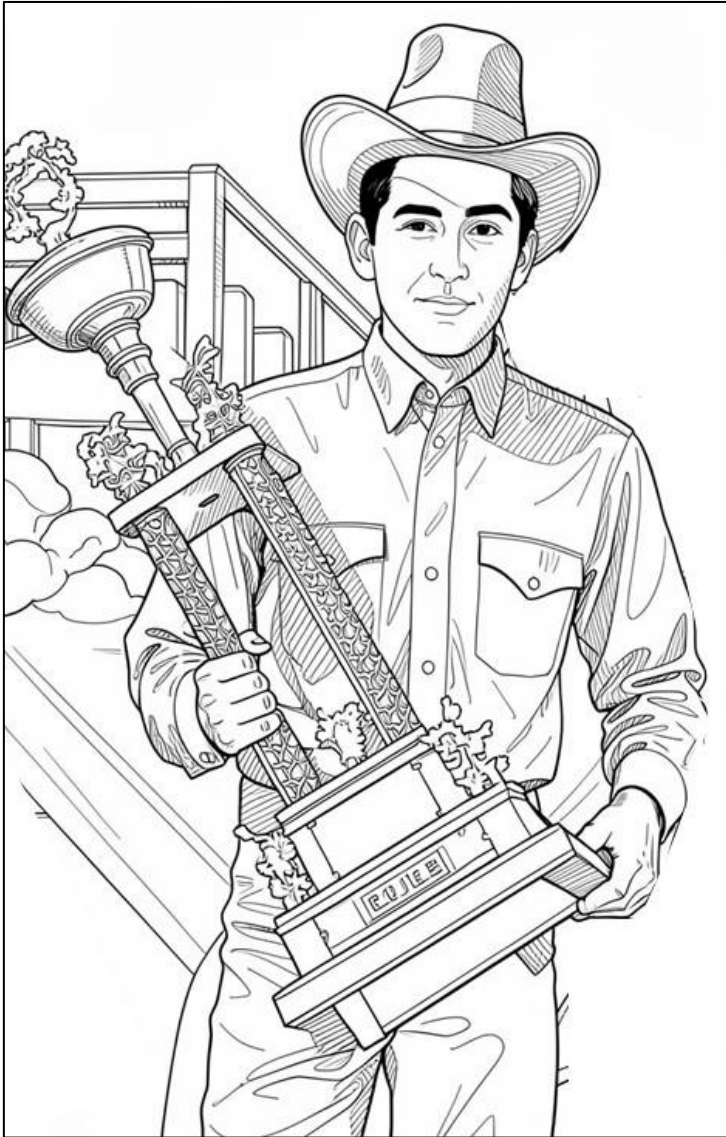
In 1912, a huge rodeo called the Calgary Stampede started. Tom joined cowboys from all over North America who came to try their luck. One of the most exciting events was the saddle bronc competition, where cowboys rode wild, bucking horses. There was one horse named Cyclone that no one could ride. Cyclone was famous for throwing 129 cowboys right into the dirt!

When it was Tom's turn, he climbed onto Cyclone. The horse leaped, twisted, and spun high into the air. But Tom rode Cyclone until the horse finally gave up. Tom won the grand prize- a shiny buckle, a handmade saddle, and \$1,000! He became the first Canadian to win a championship at the Calgary Stampede.

Tom used his prize money to buy cattle and build a ranch, hiring many fellow Native cowboys. Tom also brought modern agricultural ideas to the reserve. He showed that Native American ranchers were great businessmen. Tom also started local rodeos for Native athletes. He kept both his Native American culture and the cowboy way of life alive.



HOWARD HUNTER, SR.



Imagine growing up and seeing rodeos right in your own backyard! That was life for Howard Hunter who grew up on his family's ranch on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. Howard, an Oglala Lakota cowboy, spent his childhood surrounded by horses. His family even hosted local rodeos right on their land. By the time he was just eleven years old and won his first rodeo belt buckle!

Howard loved saddle bronc riding. In high school, he proved his "grit" as the only student from his school at the state finals. Through hard work, he single-handedly won the team championship for his school.

As he grew older, Howard was given the Lakota name Sunka Watogla Akan Yanka Wicasa, which means "Wild Horse Rider." He competed against top athletes across the country. Working on his talent, he won four World Championships in saddle bronc riding at the Indian National Finals Rodeo.

Howard Hunter, Sr. became one of the most successful Native American rodeo athletes in history! He became a champion in all three rough stock events- saddle

bronc, bareback, and bull riding. At the Cheyenne Frontier Days Rodeo, Howard won the "Daddy of 'Em All" title at the age of 26. Later in life, he was inducted into both the South Dakota Rodeo Hall of Fame and the Indian National Finals Rodeo Hall of Fame.

Beyond his championship titles, Howard showed children that with courage and grit, someone from a small hometown can dream big. He brought together the Native American love for the horse and the cowboy traditions of rodeo.

Howard was a quiet man with a deep pride in his Oglala Lakota heritage, a true champion inside and outside the arena.

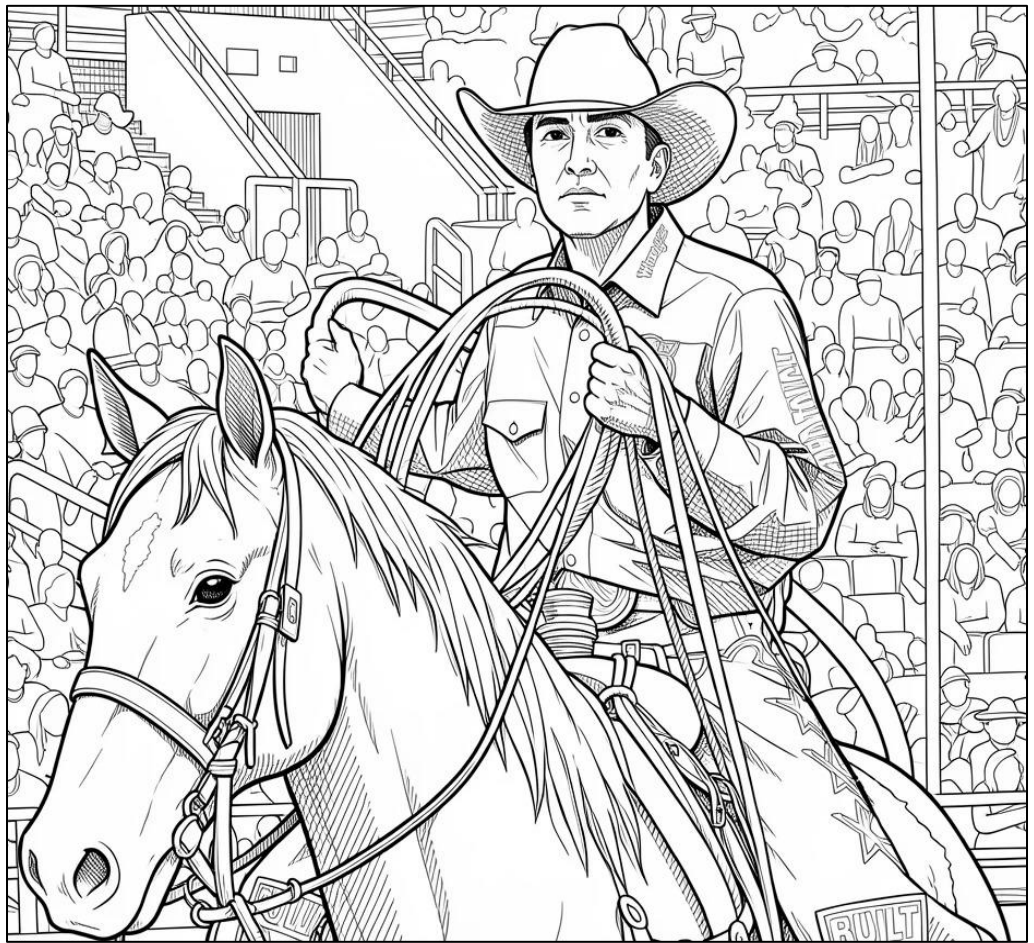


DEREK BEGAY

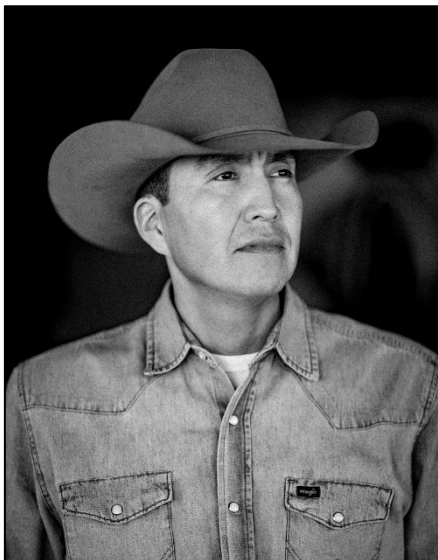


Derrick Begay grew up on the Navajo (Diné) Nation in Arizona, surrounded by wide-open skies and desert lands. Derrick learned the importance of family, hard work, and respecting the land at a very young age. His father was a roper, and Derrick wanted to be like him.

When he was only a little boy, Derrick picked up a rope and started practicing every single day. He roped fence posts, toys, and anything that moved. By the time he was in school, Derrick was already competing in rodeos.



As Derrick grew older, his hard work paid off. He became a professional team roping athlete in rodeo. In team roping, two cowboys must work perfectly together to catch a steer. Derrick became one of the best "headers"—the person who ropes the steer's horns—in the entire world!



He qualified for the National Finals Rodeo more than eight times! Across the country, he became famous for his lightning-fast throws and amazing horsemanship. Derek is a 12-Time Wrangler National Finals Rodeo (NFR) Qualifier. He also won his first prestigious National Finals Rodeo average title by roping all 10 steers in an aggregate time of 69.0 seconds!

Even when he became a superstar, Derrick never forgot where he came from. He spends a lot of his free time giving back to his community. Derrick talks to students about the importance of staying in school and working hard to reach their dreams. He also hosts special rodeo clinics for kids on the reservation. At these clinics, he teaches young boys and girls how to rope, how to care for horses, and how to believe in themselves.

CAROLE JACKSON-HOLYAN



Have you ever visited the wide-open skies of the Navajo Nation? That's where Carole Jackson-Holyan grew up. Carole is a citizen of the Navajo (Diné) with relatives in the Ponca Tribe, too. She learned to respect the land, her culture, and animals- especially horses! Before she could even walk, Carole could ride. Her backyard was an arena where she learned the sport of rodeo.

When she was a little girl, Carole began competing in junior rodeos. Her favorite event was barrel racing. In barrel racing, a rider and their horse must sprint around three large barrels in a cloverleaf pattern as fast as they can. It takes a special bond between the rider and the horse.



Carole practiced every day. She learned how to whisper to her horses and stay calm when the crowd roared. At just eleven years old, she became the youngest world champion in Indian National Finals Rodeo history.



As Carole grew older, she became a star in the All Indian Rodeo Cowboys Association. She won three INFR barrel racing titles, two Women's All-Around Championships, and Ladies Breakaway Championship. In honor of her talents, she was inducted into the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame.

Every time she competed, she carried the pride of her Diné heritage with her. Carole knew that being a true champion meant more than just winning shiny buckles. She wanted to use her success to help others. Carole started rodeo clinics and camps for children. She didn't just teach kids how to ride horses; she taught them about honor and sportsmanship.

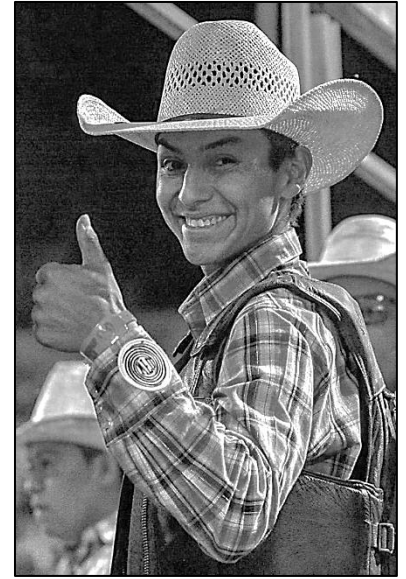
Today, Carole Jackson-Holyan is known as a rodeo legend who rode with a big heart. She proved that the best trophies in life are the smiles you put on other people's faces.

CODY JESUS



As a young boy, Cody's home did not have running water or electricity. He worked hard to help his family, picking small nuts from pine trees and recycling cans to pay for his rodeo fees. But his strong connection to his homeland, the Navajo Nation in Window Rock, Arizona, gave him the courage to ride big bulls.

Growing up with deep Native American roots, he learned to be tough and not afraid of hard work. He even practiced what riding a wild bull might be like by tying an old barrel to two trees. When he grew up, he became a champion in both the Indian National Finals Rodeo (INFR) and the Professional Bull Riders (PBR).



Cody started riding real bulls when

he was fourteen years old.

He became famous when he won the Navajo Nation Fair Champion and PBR World Finals Event Average Title. Recently, he helped his team, the Texas Rattlers, win the PBR Team Series Championship.

But it has not always been a smooth ride. Cody has faced setbacks after painful injuries from rodeo competitions.

Like all bull riders, he has gone through tough stretches where he struggled to stay on his bull for the required eight seconds. He remembers to be humble.

Native rodeo athletes, like Cody, come from a ranching and cowboy culture, with much knowledge of horsemanship and livestock. When he's not competing, Cody proudly shares his Navajo (Diné) heritage.

For example, he uses his fame to help children in his community by hosting rodeo clinics, teaching kids how to ride. He also started the Cody Jesus Invitational bull riding event to celebrate Native American cowboy culture.

INDIAN NATIONAL FINALS RODEO



Long before the modern lights and arenas of today's rodeos, the story of the Native cowboy began on the open plains. In the 1700s, Spanish explorers brought horses to North America. Native American people quickly became master riders. For many Tribes, the horse changed everything! They used horses to travel, hunt, and protect their homelands.

Big cattle ranches of 1800s needed excellent riders to herd cattle across many miles. Native cowboys were perfect for the job! They were famous for their special connection to their horses. They spent long days in the saddle, knowing how to rope and tame wild broncos.

When the cattle drives ended, cowboys started competing against each other to see who had the best skills. However, these early rodeos were not always welcoming to all people. So Native cowboys decided to create their own rodeos where everyone could compete proudly. This led to the start of the Indian National Finals Rodeo (INFR) in 1976. We celebrate its 50th anniversary!

Today, the INFR is one of the most exciting sporting events in the world. Every year, more than 500 Native athletes from the United States and Canada travel to Las Vegas, Nevada, to compete.



The Indian National Finals Rodeo is much more than just a competition. It is a giant celebration of history and culture. Many of today's Native cowboys and cowgirls are third- or fourth-generation riders. When a Native cowboy rides into the arena today, they carry the traditions of their ancestors. The INFR keeps Native American heritage alive and teaches young people the value of honor, hard work, courage, and respect for animals. The ways of the Native cowboy still ride strong.