

The Learning Circle

By Loren Woerpel, Noc Bay Publishing, Inc.

AWARD FEATHER

THE FEATHER GIFT

The eagle feather has a great deal of meaning for Native Americans. Each of the tribes have their own stories about the power and role of the eagle in understanding the relationships within creation. Where the eagle is known in this way, it is understandable then that receiving a gift of a feather is a very important and responsible event.

Eagle feathers are given for many reasons, but always to encourage and recognize people for their deeds on behalf of others, whether it is given within the family or the community. In this way, an award of a feather is not something earned like a merit badge, but a powerful gift of encouragement and recognition of a person's responsibility to the people.

Once receiving the feather, the new keeper displays and uses it to remind everyone of the presence of the eagle among the people. Care is taken so that it never falls to the ground. Some day it may be given to another person as the occasion arises.

MAKING A FEATHER GIFT

The feather we make here is a dyed imitation eagle feather, but your gift can still give honor to someone you think deserves it. Maybe you will keep the feather a long time before giving it to someone special.

SHOPPING LIST

- 1 - Imitation eagle wing feather
 - 3 - Fluff feathers, 2 for the base and 1 for the tip
 - 1 - Small 3/4 inch square piece of colored felt
 - 1 - 8 to 10 inch piece of soft leather thong
 - 24 - Inches of heavy cotton thread
 - 24 - Inches of colored craft yarn
- You will need some tacky glue and a sharp scissors.

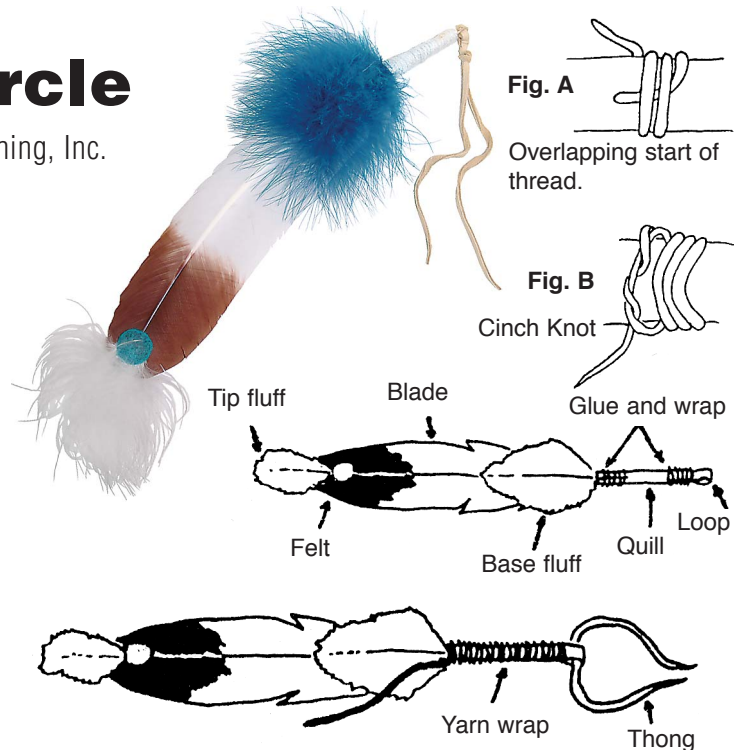
Your feather is a turkey feather so has quite a curve in it. You can make it look more like an eagle feather by ironing out some of that curve. There are a number of methods used by crafters over the years and all of them involve a heat source. So this is a project that requires your personal safety and supervision of young folks trying it. One of the safest ways is to use an iron, keeping your hands away from the heat. The work is done on a table or ironing board with an old terry cloth towel as the ironing surface.

You do not have to straighten the feather but if you do, the first step (Photo 1) is to heat the quill on the underside of the feather. Stroke the tip of your iron along the quill until it is quite warm.



Then turn the feather so it is facing up (Photo 2) and now stroke the quill, giving the most heat to the thicker part of the quill. Slightly pull up on the quill base of the feather, leveraging the middle to top against the towel surface. With experience you will know when enough heat has built up. If the blade edges have curled slightly with the heat, turn the feather over and stroke the edge of the blade flat. (Photo 3)

Quickly move the hot feather to a cool surface to bring down the tem-



perature. For very curved feathers, before it cools, flex the quill backwards against the curve and it will straighten better. You may then have to re-iron the blade edge one last time. Leave them flat overnight between two boards with weights on them.

Sometimes the tips of the feathers are a little ragged or do not have the shape of an eagle feather. Trim the feather, using the sharp scissors. Start at the tip and angle cut to the edge of the feather, first one side then the other.

Take two of the fluffs that match best and trim the bottoms off so they are about 3 inches in length. These are the base fluffs. Put a drop of glue on the quill of the wing feather at the point where the blade of the feather begins. While the glue is still wet, place the bottoms of the base fluffs in the glue with the tops of the fluffs pointing to the tip of the wing feather. Using the heavy cotton thread, wrap about 6 to 8 windings around the base of the fluffs to hold them to the quill and then tie a knot.

Trim the bottom off the third fluff leaving it about 2 inches in length. This is the tip fluff. Place a small bit of glue at the tip of the wing feather, about 3/4 inch from the tip and centered on the quill. Press the base of the tip fluff into the glue and let dry to tacky.

Cut the small square of felt in a circle or other special shape. Put some glue on the back of the felt. Press it in place over the base of the tip fluff, covering up the messy looking spot caused by the glue and fluff.

Cut a 2 inch piece of leather thong from the longer soft thong. This is your quill loop. Put some glue on the bottom of the quill up about 3/4 inch. Position the loop over the quill and tightly wrap with the rest of your heavy cotton thread and tie a knot. This loop should end up being parallel with the feather's blade.

Now cover all of this glue and thread "mess" by wrapping with the craft yarn. First lightly coat the whole area to be wrapped with glue and let dry to tacky. Then start wrapping from the very bottom, leaving the loop open. Overlap the starting end of the yarn with windings to hold the starting point as shown in Figure A. Continue to wrap neatly up the base until you are up to the base fluffs. Tie a cinch knot as in Figure B. Cut the yarn flush to the knot or leave a 3 inch fringe end hanging. String the remaining piece of soft leather thong through the loop for a tie.