

TJ Casey  
[www.tjcasey.net](http://www.tjcasey.net)  
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TJ is passionate about preserving our heritage, and sees young people as a crucial link. His special skills as an educator and communicator spark students to discover innate talents and ignite their imaginations. He then teaches them to link into the age-old chain of cowboy poetry as a form of artistic and historic expression.

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**Professional Statement:**

This multi-faceted artist has played guitar since he was five. He continued to develop his musical talent and at age fourteen discovered another avenue of expression through writing cowboy poetry. Naturally, the two things combined into successful songwriting, and in 2002 his Trickling Water was published by International Water Education for Teachers (WET), Discover a Watershed Series. Also in 2002 TJ was selected to the elite group of 140 cowboy poets honored through publication in the anthology THE BIG ROUNDUP. His latest release, the decidedly traditional CD Pure "D" Cowboy, is the 2009 Country/Western CD of the Year through the Rural Roots Music Commission and the National Traditional Country Music Association. It also rose to #6 on the Western Music Charts, with the song "Cowboy Don't Change Your Ways" topping out at #1 and another song, "It's In My Blood" nominated for a Native American Music Award.

**Biography:**

T.J .CASEY has spent two thirds of his life to date in the saddle, growing up on a ranch and later working on ranches all over the west. That makes him first and foremost a COWBOY – which in turn equips him to be a writer of cowboy poetry and composer of cowboy songs.

Tying that to his musical, vocal and performance talents opened many doors in the entertainment world, where TJ has accumulated more than three decades of experience, and countless fans across America who clamor for his unique stage presence and performing skills.

Happiest when he's in "cowboy country", TJ has centered his Artist in Residence work through Arts Councils in Montana, North and South Dakota, Nevada and Alaska along with Arts Northwest and Wyoming Arts Alliance; but his heart for young people and devotion to Western and Cowboy Culture and Cowboy Poetry will take him wherever the opportunity calls to convey his love of all things cowboy.

In December of 2004 TJ's song "In America" was released nationally as a music video on RFD-TV. Since then – thanks to Best of America By Horseback – he's logged several appearances on

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national television, including a Christmas Special for Troops at Ft Riley, Kansas, before their deployment to Iraq.

TJ's CD, Blue Montana Skies features many of his most popular compositions including "Trickling Water", chosen for the national publication Discover a Watershed - Rio Grande/Rio Bravo. That song then rose to #5 on the Sunset Music Charts of the Top 10 Western Swing Songs of the World for 2003 and 2004.

His most recent CD release, Pure "D" Cowboy is a more traditional acoustic album, combining TJ's talent as a cowboy poet and composer in authentic songs about true cowboy life. In two short months this album hit the Western Music Charts at #6. One of the songs, "Cowboy, Don't Change Your Ways" was sitting at #1. The excellence of this album was further underlined when the song "It's in My Blood" hit the Power Source Music Charts and was nominated for a Native American Music Award. Most recently the CD was awarded 2009 Country/Western CD of the Year through the National Traditional Country Music Association and the Rural Roots Music Commission.

Perhaps the epitome of TJ's cowboy poetry career is inclusion in THE BIG ROUNDUP, a select anthology of the finest classic and contemporary cowboy poetry in America. His latest book, A Cowboy's Thoughts in Rhyme, captures his depth of feeling about life as a cowboy, and his regret for the relentless changing of the West he perceives.

In addition to his dozens of national awards for singing, songwriting and western poetry, T.J. Casey's performances on the Louisiana Hayride are still remembered by thousands who especially loved his rendition of "Cowboy's Paradise". TJ has shared the stage with countless high profile performers, including Ian Tyson, Merle Haggard, Waddie Mitchell, Ty Herndon, Dirks Bentley, and the Everly Brothers.

Recent years have brought TJ repeated nominations and honors, including being a Top 5 Finalists for Rising Star and Western Swing Album of the Year, and a Top 10 Finalist for Western Song and Western Music Male of the Year.

T.J. is a member of Christian Country Music Association, Country Music Association, Arts Northwest, Montana Arts Council's Artist Registry, North Dakota Council on the Arts Artist Roster, South Dakota Arts Council, Alaska State Council on the Arts, and the Reunion of Professional Entertainers (ROPE).

### **Sample Residency Projects:**

TJ Casey is a singer/songwriter and cowboy poet with a passionate love for, and dedication to the preservation of, America's Western and cowboy culture. Oral tradition is venerated in varied cultures worldwide for generational survival and perpetuation of tradition and heritage. TJ Casey sees the art of cowboy poetry as the perfect vehicle for portraying and passing on the enduring morals and values he was fortunate to be reared with, which are part of the Code of the West. In addition to helping students develop their individual talents for composing and performing cowboy

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poetry, he imbues them with the importance of their participation in this ancient chain, in which they are significant links.

"I believe in our roots and heritage," says TJ, "I've got a story to tell. We all need to stand up and protect the traditions and legacies we've inherited. I want to be an image for kids to look up to; and hope to instill in them this same love of country and customs I know and respect. Without our heritage, our children lose focus. Without our children's focus, we lose our world."

To accomplish this purpose, TJ's main objective is to utilize cowboy poetry to inspire the natural talent and imagination kids possess, while building their self-confidence and belief in themselves through self-expression.

In a one-day residency, TJ describes the history of the American Cowboy, Western Heritage and Culture; and Cowboy Poetry's role in preserving this part of American History. Examples of TJ's own work and familiar examples of Cowboy Culture from various media sources help develop this precept and offer ideas to students for beginning a poem of their own. TJ's final goal for the day is teaching of the class how they can turn their personal poetry into song.

A one-week residency allows TJ to expand upon this foundation, teaching a more in depth process of writing Cowboy Poetry. Examples of his own work will introduce students to what he'll be teaching. TJ divides the rest of the days with the history of the American Cowboy, culture and heritage, teaching rhyme and meter, and actually composing Poetry. Throughout the week, TJ may use cowboy gear (saddles, bridles, etc.) for ideas on individual poems. He will assist with revising and editing processes, and help students develop the equally important skills of oral delivery of their poems. The week can culminate with an all-school assembly or community concert, including parents, where the students can recite their poems to an audience of their peers.

**Planning Process:**

TJ wants to develop rapport and agreement with teachers regarding their standards for his lessons. This would include the Montana Standards for the Arts and possibly other Montana State Standards in curriculums such as English, History and Music.

TJ will provide promotional material and press releases for varied media to any school interested in involving the community through a closing assembly. Recognizing the importance of communication in the success of an arts project, he maintains contact with the school representative via phone and email.

**Preparation Ideas:**

The progress of students in an arts unit such as this can be valuably enhanced by preparatory work by various teachers. English students can be instructed on poetic patterns such as

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repeated rhyme, couplet, traditional, alternating and framed. In cross-curricular units, history students can be familiarized with the contributions and importance of the American cowboy in the 1800's and beyond; and their continuing involvement in our culture. Music students can be introduced to Western music and its history. TJ can provide sources for such instruction upon request.

**Suggested Activities:**

The previously suggested school assembly on the final afternoon offers a proven and rewarding window for the community – teachers, peers and parents – to experience and enjoy what student's have learned; while allowing students to showcase their newly acquired skills.

Another option with a one-week residency could be a family concert by TJ and his "Rough Rider Band". This involves additional cost, which local businesses or organizations are sometimes willing to finance because it offers the community an outstanding opportunity to gather for social enjoyment and entertainment. Having some students showcase their poems during the concert makes it a school function as well, thus addressing yet another facet of culture and heritage through perpetuating the time-tested cowboy tradition of multi-generational social interaction, often revolving around the schoolhouse.

**Teacher Training:**

TJ always invites all teachers to sit in and/or participate in his arts residencies.

**Follow-up:**

Further inspire students to write poems by having them discuss their heritage and the historic culture of their area with parents, grandparents and other elders. Encourage them to write poems about the things they learn in these discussions.

TJ is also willing to critique student poems and encourage them to submit their work for possible inclusion in various publications and other media. He works with an organization that will publish selected student poems on the Internet site [www.cowboypoetry.com](http://www.cowboypoetry.com) as well as TJ's site [www.tjcasey.net](http://www.tjcasey.net). Such acceptance and reward inspires students to continue and expand their skills in their new field of interest – undoubtedly the highest mark of success for an arts program.