

POW-WOW ETIQUETTE

For Visitors and Guests

Please accept our invitation to join us at our Annual Pow Wows and Events. To help you enjoy your experience, we ask that you please follow these guidelines:

- ◆ **Alcoholic Beverages and/or Drugs**-are NOT permitted at UAIDV events, under ANY circumstances! **Violators will be removed WITHOUT refund!**

- ◆ **Picture Taking and/or Recording**-cameras, video equipment, and/or other recording devices should NOT be used without permission from the Event Coordinator. There are special ceremonies and dances that may NOT be filmed OR taped! Also some individual performers may NOT want to be photographed or videotaped. **Please ask BEFORE you start recording!**

- ◆ **Pets**-please do NOT bring any pets to UAIDV events.

- ◆ **Respecting Cultural Customs**-whether you are a visitor, guest OR performer, please listen to and follow the instructions of the Event Coordinator or Announcer.

"You Are Welcome as Our Guests, Please Leave as Our Friends"



The Pow-Wow

Origin

To many people, the modern Pow-Wow connects the past and present, providing a foundation for maintaining Native American heritage. The underlying basis for this event is very spiritual, therefore the Pow-Wow should be treated with respect and honor.

The modern term ‘Pow-Wow’, comes from the Algonquin Language word “Pau-Wau”. It originally referred to the medicine men and spiritual leaders of the tribe. But through cultural misunderstanding, Europeans mistakenly thought it referred to the entire activity of worship and celebration-singing, dancing and drumming. Over time, this misnomer became a part of the English language.

The first known tribal groups to perform the original dances were the members of the elite, mystical warrior societies. These dances were often referred to as “Grass Dances”, and were private affairs held solely for the benefit of the tribes members.

Each tribal nation named these dances differently, e.g.- The Lakota (Sioux) called it the “Omaha Dance”; the Crow Called it the “Hot Dance”; the Cree called it the “Dakota Dance”; and the Shoshone (Sacajawea’s tribe) and the Arapaho called it the “Wolf Dance”, etc.

Cultural Conflict

After the federal policy of Indian Removal, most Native Peoples were either displaced, relocated to reservations or killed while resisting the loss of their rights and their lands. As they lost the freedom to travel and hunt, Native Peoples developed more time to devote to non-survival activities. As a result, dancing become even more important for spiritual reasons.

However, because of cultural ignorance, and fears that spiritual ceremonies and dancing would eventually lead to rioting and rebellion, the federal government banned many Native religious practices, such as the Ghost Dance and the Sun Dance.

Despite government bans, many dances survived to modern times, and have evolved into important cultural social events.

The Pow-Wow Dance Circle

The dance area is called the 'Arbor', and it may be located in or outdoors. The area (usually a circle-to represent the circle of life), is blessed before the Pow-Wow begins, and is thereafter considered sacred ground for the duration of the event. This area is to be treated exactly like the inside of a church, synagogue, temple, mosque or any other holy place!

The front seating area is usually reserved for performers and their families. While elderly and disabled persons are also given special seating.

Dance Protocol

Head Dancers are selected for each Pow Wow-1 Adult Male and 1 Adult Female. On some occasions, a Head Boy and Girl Dancer will be selected.

Each Pow Wow has a Host Drum-one chosen for their artistic reputation. A Host Drum must be ready at any time to fill in if another drum cannot perform.

Dance sessions commence with a Grand Entry procession of dancers who are led into the circle by Tribal Flag Bearers usually carrying the following-Eagle Staff, American Flag, Canadian Flag, Indian Nation Flags and sometimes a MIA-POW Flag. Indian royalty, if present follow next. Then the Head Dancers lead a procession of dancers separated by dance style category.

The Announcer will ask the audience to stand in honor of this procession, and men should remove hats unless their head covering contains an Eagle feather. When all the dancers have entered the Arbor, the Flag Song is sung to honor all Flags present and the Eagle Staff. This activity is followed by a prayer, then a victory song. After the colors are posted, the dancing begins.

Dance Styles

The number and variety of dancers will vary from Pow-Wow to Pow-Wow. But the following dance style are usually represented:

- **Men's Fancy Dance**-also known as the Feather Dance, is one of the most competitive dances at Pow-Wows. Very colorful, high energy dance form.

- **Grass Dance**-one of the oldest dance styles. Term comes from the original practice of male dancers trampling down the tall grasses to clear a circle for the Arbor.

- **Men's Traditional Dance**-this original style of dance represents the bravery of Native American warriors during hunting or battle. Two styles-Northern and Southern.

- **Women's Traditional**-a very stately and dignified dance form, where steps are synchronized to drum beats. Two styles-Buckskin and Cloth.

- **Womens's Jingle Dance**-originally a healing dance created by the Ojibway Nation. Very rhythmic and precise footwork. Almost musical sound generated by metal decorations attached to dresses.

- **Women's Fancy Dance**-also know as the Shawl Dance. The most expressive of the women's dances. Dancers try to duplicate movements of birds or butterflies in flight.

- **Hoop Dance**-a rare specialty dance usually performed by men or boys. The performer dances in rhythm to the drum while creating complex patterns with hoops.

By-John Spirit Wolf Lemon (2003)
Cherokee/Powhatan