

# NORTHERN PLAINS DANCE

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In 1884, as part of its efforts to prohibit certain Indian ritual practices, the United States Government banned participation in a number of Indian ceremonies. For the tribes of the Northern Plains, this prohibition applied directly to the Sun Dance, a central religious rite, but it also impinged upon dances of the warrior and dream societies. Although some of these activities continued away from government scrutiny, it was not until 1933 that the government lifted its ban and dance activities resumed in the changing contexts of reservation and "Americanized" life.<sup>1</sup>

Today, dance and dance events — including the songs, dance dress, and gatherings of the people — are among the strongest overt expressions and measures of the perpetuation of Indian life and culture among the people of the Northern Plains tribes. Although the powwow is the most visible public dance complex shared by Northern Plains peoples, participation in the ceremonial Sun Dance has increased in some areas and winter social dances are still held in community halls and some homes (fig. 139).<sup>2</sup>

In earlier times, male warrior society members were the primary participants in the warrior-related dance complex. Today, however, powwows are more open — men, women, and even young boys and girls dance to express, explore, and celebrate their "Indianness" (fig. 140).<sup>3</sup> This participation by young and old dancers, along with the large cash prizes at contest powwows, indicates that Indian dance and music are alive and well and that they will remain a significant element of Indian culture and group life in coming years and generations.





**140** A YOUNG SHAWL DANCER AT THE GALLUP CEREMONIAL, NEW MEXICO, 1990



**139** WAR DANCERS AT THE GALLUP CEREMONIAL, NEW MEXICO, 1990. THE PHOTOGRAPHS ACCOMPANYING THIS ESSAY INCLUDE PICTURES OF POWWOWS AND DANCERS OUTSIDE THE NORTHERN PLAINS AREA AND STYLE PROPER, ILLUSTRATING HOW NORTHERN PLAINS POWWOW PRACTICES HAVE DIFFUSED THROUGHOUT OTHER TRIBAL AREAS OF THE UNITED STATES.

**141** THE STRUTTING POSTURE IS SEEN IN THIS DAKOTA WAR DANCE OF 1929. NATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARCHIVES, NEG. NO. 3675-C1





**T**he Northern Plains culture and dance area is generally considered to be between the Rocky Mountains and the wooded lakes country of Minnesota and Ontario, covering the Dakotas, Wyoming, Montana, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. The corresponding tribes are: the Lakota/Dakota, Northern Cheyenne, Shoshone, Arapaho, Crow, Flathead, Gros Ventre, Assiniboine, Blood, Blackfeet, Plains Cree, and Plains Ojibwa, among others. Certain other tribes to the west—including the Ute, Taos, and various tribes in Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia—also share certain dance elements of the Plains tribes. These tribes speak languages primarily from the Siouan and Algonquian linguistic families, which are unrelated. While each has its own traditions and styles of dress and dance, these tribes also share many related and analogous practices in terms of dance and dress styles, types of dances, and types of dance complexes and events.

Northern Plains dance, dress, and song styles have been distinguished from Southern Plains styles by secondary details such as feather bustle construction, song tessitura (northern songs are usually higher than southern), drumming patterns, and etiquette. The overall aesthetic of northern styles tends to be looser or freer, while southern styles tend, comparatively speaking, to be more controlled or more formal and reserved.



**T**he dance practices of the Lakota or Dakota Sioux people are representative of the Northern Plains area. These people, popularly referred to in English as the Sioux, comprise seven major divisions and refer to themselves variously in the three respective dialects of their language as the Lakota, Dakota, or Nakota people. The Lakota people have home reservations west of the Missouri River in North and South Dakota. Dakota groups live in the Dakotas and Minnesota and in Canada, while Nakota speakers live in Montana, near the Dakota speakers. Eastern and northern groups also share some cultural characteristics with Algonquian and other Siouan tribes, including the Ojibwa and Winnebago.

The earliest origins of Plains Indian dances remain obscure, but origin stories and explanations exist for the Sun Dance, for some warrior societies, and for some social dances and modern dance styles. It is clear that earlier male grass dancers imitated animals as well as hunting or warrior actions.<sup>4</sup> Such imitative, pantomimic actions are seen today in the Sneak-up Dance, in which dancers crouch to sneak-up and scout the enemy, and in some versions of the Pick-up Dance, in which a dancer (or set of four dancers) dances to pick up an eagle feather that has dropped from a dancer's outfit. They circle and approach the fallen feather as they would surround and attack an enemy. Each then extends his hand or fan over the feather as if counting coup on it—i.e., each imitates touching an enemy to gain war honors. Veterans are normally chosen to perform the Pick-up Dance because only a veteran has the right to wear, or pass on the right to wear, eagle feathers as part of dance dress.

Lakota and Dakota people have also attributed the traditional male grass dancer style to the imitation of the strutting of the male prairie chicken, and at least one commentator has indicated a courting as well as warrior function for the dance (fig. 141).<sup>5</sup>

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Lakota/Dakota tribes had numerous soldier organizations or warrior societies. Each society, such as the Cante Tinza (Strong Hearts) and the Tokala (Foxes), had its own songs, dances, and dance regulations, as well as specific dress items and paraphernalia worn or carried only by particular officers and members.<sup>6</sup> These warrior society dances, dance styles, dress items, and paraphernalia are the origin of, and basis for, many of today's powwow outfits and for particular dances and dance procedures.



142 A HAIR "ROACH"  
HEADDRESS WITH AN  
EAGLE FEATHER IS WORN  
BY THIS DANCER AT THE  
NAVAJO NATION FAIR,  
WINDOW ROCK, ARIZONA,  
1989







One society, the Omaha — and the Omaha Dance, which came to the Lakota from the Omaha tribe — became the basis of traditional powwow practices, including use of the eagle-feather bustle and the porcupine-hair “roach” headdress (fig. 142).<sup>7</sup>

During the latter nineteenth century, the warrior societies declined. At the same time, intertribal contact was spreading the Omaha Dance. A general powwow type of dance became common. It also became more social in nature, and even women and children, who had had only limited participation in the warrior dances and societies, now took a more active part.

The reasons for performing the Sun Dance, the Ghost Dance of the 1880s, and even the warrior society dances obviously go beyond performance. Dances portraying a warrior’s exploits served directly to recount and reward such deeds. The early Sun Dance also contained warrior-related elements, and dancers frequently were warriors dancing their fulfillment of vows.<sup>8</sup> Further, all dances involved the individual’s and the people’s relationship with mystic power or powers in the universe, both spiritual and material. Dancers dance to fulfill religious vows, to acquire or celebrate power or protection, or to bring blessings upon themselves or relatives or the people. Dance dress outfits use sacred eagle feathers (fig. 143), cosmic designs, and elements such as red paint in the hair part that come from other ceremonies. Even a drum may be named and blessed.

Thus, there were and are many specific prescriptions and proscriptions about proper procedure and participation. Even in today’s more secularized and social powwow settings, specific etiquette governs dancers’ and others’ behavior or movements around the dance arena or at the drums, or when handling certain dress items and paraphernalia. At the same time, as indicated below, there are also social dances today that are done purely for the enjoyment of dancers and spectators.

In his book, respected traditional Lakota singer and dancer Ben Black Bear, Sr., provided this marvelous explanation of the Omaha Dance — i.e., general contemporary powwow dance and dancing:

*I will now tell of dancing and how many men and women among you have no interest in it. Many of you who dance (and will dance) know the beauty of it...and know that it is the highest form of enjoyment. What evil things you had planned to do, you will not do. You will keep your mind on only the dancing and your body will be well; it will not be fat. Your body will be very well. And your arms and body will be well. Whoever dances is never sick as long as he dances. Going to dances is good fun, and also, dancing can make your disposition good. If someone does not do this, I do not know why he is on this earth. People use the dance to lecture those who like to strike their families. While you are alive, you give homage to the Great Spirit, and you will do favors for others, and then you will enjoy yourself. If one does not do those things, he will explode within himself. These three things are the highest in law... Realize this. These are truths. So be it.<sup>9</sup>*





144 DANCERS,  
FAMILIES, AND  
OUTSIDE VISITORS  
ENJOY THE  
ACTIVITIES AND  
SOCIALIZING AT THE  
MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY  
POWWOW, AUGUST  
1992



146 A FANCY  
DANCER AT THE  
GALLUP  
CEREMONIAL,  
NEW MEXICO,  
1990



Today a powwow is a get-together by the people to dance, look on, and visit (figs. 144, 145). The main purpose may be social, but civil and even religious ceremonial elements remain important, such as honoring a veteran or other person with honor songs, or receiving a family back into public life after a period of mourning. Through these practices, powwows help to sustain traditional values and tribal and kinship ties.

Dance is by nature visual movement (fig. 146). And full-dress Northern Plains powwow dancing is self-consciously visual in movement and dress. Newcomers visiting and watching a major powwow are invariably struck by the bright colors and elaborate detail of the feathered, quilled, beaded, appliquéd, fringed, and otherwise decorated dance outfits and the varied individual movements and styles of the dancers (fig. 147). In recent years, there has been a renaissance in both traditional and modern-style dance clothing. Indian people enjoy and appreciate the effects of this creativity; many do so with the practiced eye of the connoisseur, noting smaller details of style and correctness. And even in non-costume social dances, such as the Rabbit Dance, subtleties of movement and style are noted by discriminating viewers as well as dancers.

Nevertheless, traditional Lakota and Northern Plains Indian dancing are never conducted in a Western "art for art's sake" fashion. Lakota dances, while complete, legitimate artistic performances, are also always social and

cultural events. The dancers and singers, even while enjoying and displaying dancing and singing as such, do not dance as separate from the people (as audience) or the social setting. Rather, the dances and songs are vital parts of the gathering of the people. Singers are absolutely necessary, and dancers essential, to powwows and related events.

Although the Lakota people call a local dance or larger intertribal powwow a *wacipi* (dance), dancers are most often thanked by those putting on the event, not for their fine performance, but for "helping out." The dancers dance neither for themselves nor just to present a perfor-



145 NATIVE VENDORS SELLING THEIR CRAFTS AND ART, A COMMON SIGHT AT POWWOWS. EIGHT NORTHERN INDIAN ARTS AND CRAFT FAIR, SAN ILDEFONSO, NEW MEXICO, 1989

mance to the audience, but to help make the gathering of the people and the continuation of tribal culture possible and effective. One dances with, for, on behalf of, and in relationship to the people and the social, cultural purposes of the event. Active, prominent dancers are recognized and appreciated not only for dance prowess, but for their leadership and consistent contribution to the life of the people by making events possible and successful. Similarly, good singers are those not merely with good voices, but with the knowledge and memory of the various specific songs needed or requested. Such memory is important to the people.

The social importance does not exclude personal enjoyment. Again, Black Bear says:

*In the dances the reason why the men, young men, boys, women, young women and girls dance the Omaha is that they are enjoying themselves. The fine looking outfits they are wearing, they are showing off and whatever the dancers want you people to see is how they use their arms, their legs, their neck and their whole body. How good they look is something to enjoy. When you dance, you will like it. You will like only it. After you finish praying and helping others, you will always remember the dance next. You will enjoy yourself and you will think of nothing bad. If you would notice, those dancers treat each other well. So be it.<sup>10</sup>*



147 THIS ROUND DANCE SHOWS THE VARIETY, COLOR, AND ELABORATE DETAIL OF POWWOW CLOTHING. NAVAJO NATION FAIR, WINDOW ROCK, ARIZONA, 1989



148 AROUND A SOUTHERN DRUM, A MOMENT OF SOLEMN REMEMBRANCE OF A DECEASED LEADER. THE GALLUP CEREMONIAL, NEW MEXICO, 1990

149 GRAND ENTRY PARADE, SHOWING NAVAJO TRIBAL MEMBERS IN TRADITIONAL NAVAJO DRESS PRECEDING THE POWWOW DANCERS IN THE ENTRANCE, AT THE NAVAJO NATION FAIR, WINDOW ROCK, ARIZONA, 1990





Powwows are thus a major performing arts form in contemporary Indian culture that offers an important performing experience for participants. But, more than this, they bring the people together specifically as members of a tribe or as Indian people. Powwows help sustain particular social or kinship positions, relationships, and values — through the honoring songs; the giving of gifts to selected people; through the choices of head singers and dancers and other positions; and through the procedures, etiquette, and explanatory speeches incorporated as part of the proceedings (fig. 148).

These events provide one arena, one setting in which traditional and neotraditional ways can be acted out and verbalized, and in which Indian identity can be openly and directly expressed, practiced, and promoted — in contrast to many other settings, in which Indian people must survive in the dominant society.



**A** powwow consists of many different program items and elements. The event or program normally begins with the Grand Entry, a flag song, and an invocation. The Grand Entry is the parade entrance of all costumed dancers (fig. 149). Spectators generally stand in honor of the dancers, and of the flag — traditional staff and/or U.S. flags — carried by the lead dancers. The song used may be a general intertribal Omaha or specific parade or grass-flattening song.

The flag song or national anthem is a specially composed song with a text honoring flag and country. Many tribes have their own flag song. The text of the Lakota National Anthem states the words of a soldier:

*Tunkasilayapi tawapaha kin oihanke sni najin ktelo*

*lyohlate oyate kin wicicagin;*

*htaca, lecamon.*

*(The flag of the United States will fly forever.*

*Under it the people will grow and prosper;*

*Therefore have I done this [fought for my country]).<sup>11</sup>*

Everyone stands without dancing for this. This song, like “The Star Spangled Banner,” is also used on other formal occasions. In Indian schools serving Lakota and Dakota students and communities, for example, it is sometimes sung at the start of school graduation ceremonies and before basketball games.

Following the flag song, the person who is asked to pray the invocation then offers a prayer, either in a traditional Indian or Christian manner, depending on his personal belief and practice. This may be followed by a welcome from the head of the committee or organization sponsoring the powwow.

Various kinds of dances are usually performed during the course of a powwow. The Sneak-up Dance, also called the Scouting or Wounded Warrior Dance, is often done first. The dance is traditionally performed by male dancers who imitate the sneaking up on, and battle with, the enemy; today children and women often join in.

One version of the song tells of a brave warrior who has been wounded in battle and is being carried back by his comrades:

*Le yuha manipe;*

*eca blotahunka ca wisoseyape.*

*(They are carrying him;*

*he was a very brave man, so they wounded him).<sup>12</sup>*



The main kind of general dancing that makes up the core of the Dakota and Lakota people's powwows is called the Grass Dance — referring to the earlier Grass Dance society dance style and the braided sweet-grass worn in dancers' belts — or Omaha Dance (so-called because they received this dance from the Omaha people). At today's powwows around the country this general dancing is also termed intertribal dancing, since members of various tribes are often present. The songs may have words, but often use only vocables (singing syllables). Among the Winnebago, Omaha, Eastern Dakota, and several other Siouian-speaking people, the traditional songs, forms of dancing, and dance event are called *Helushka* (War Dance), referring to the respected male warrior dancers.

Several additional dances are often included in the powwow event. The Round Dance is a circle dance that derives in different tribal areas from earlier victory or friendship dance forms. Today it is done as an open dance in which everyone, including visitors, may participate, whether in powwow dance dress or not.

The Rabbit Dance and Two-step are social partner dances done for fun; the texts to the dances are often love songs. They are "ladies' choice" dances and participants need not wear any special dance or traditional dress. A typical Rabbit Dance song (with English words) says, "Dearie, why don't you look at me? I know you will come back to me, so I don't worry."<sup>13</sup>

Several other special kinds of dances may be inserted into the powwow sequence between intertribal dances. These can be older dances from a particular tribe's traditional practices that are not part of the powwow customs directly, such as the Winnebago Snake or Bean dances. They can be social dances, such as the Northern Plains Owl Dance (Oklahoma Two-step; fig. 150). Or they can be newer fun dances, such as the Dollar Pick-up Dance or Men's Fancy-Shawl Dance.

During intertribal dancing, a number of specific dance and dress styles can be clearly distinguished for both men and women. During contest powwows, these styles are used as dance contest divisions or categories. Specific details of costume style, such as the type of beadwork design or feather-bustle construction, may identify and distinguish the specific tribal identity of individual dancers, but the following styles and categories are generally recognized and used in the Northern Plains region today.<sup>14</sup>



150 A TWO-STEP (ALSO KNOWN AS THE OWL-DANCE) AT THE MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY POWWOW, AUGUST, 1992



From the latter years of the eighteenth century, until it reached its apex in the 1880s, one ceremony loomed above all the rest as typical of the transformative process and worldview of those who had left behind their woodland traditions and re-created themselves into the peoples we know today as the Plains tribes. That ceremony is known by many names by different tribes—the Sun Dance, They Dance Staring at the Sun, the Thirst Dance, the Medicine Lodge, and the Dance for the World (fig. 151).

The whole ceremony is not technically a dance. While dancing in place or bobbing to the sound of the drum and sacred songs over an extended period of time does take place, this aspect is only part of a series of other complex and profound rituals that make up the Sun Dance.

At the appointed time of year, in the summer, sometimes near the summer solstice, the tribe (or, in some cases, several allied tribes) would gather in great camps on the Plains. After selecting sacred leaders and associates, the participants would enter into a four- or eight-day period of fasting from food and water. Practicing ritualized behavior and restraint, the people would demonstrate awesome respect for the sacred drama of re-creating the world and all that is in it in a miniature version of the cosmos. This miniature version took the form of a sacred lodge, circular in shape, walled in and roofed over by some tribes, but always made of natural materials (posts and beams of newly cut trees, foliage, vines, and reeds).

A sacred tree, or *axis mundi*, is placed at the center and the lodge is demarcated into the four quarters of the universe, which are marked by smaller decorated trees or sacred altars. Offerings of precious animal skins—and, in modern times, brightly colored yard goods, a once-precious trade item—adorn the sacred tree and those of the four quarters. Other esoteric offerings (almost always including tobacco) are placed on the crotch at the top of the sacred tree.

In solemn procession, the accoutered participants, sacred leaders, singers and drummers, and audience enter these sacred worlds and proceed to offer themselves up as sacrifice to the ancient gods, in thanksgiving for life itself and all that sustains life. In due time, each individual's vow to undergo this sacrifice becomes part of a great collective prayer for the life of all things and all peoples of this world.

The elements of the Sun Dance are simple—dancing in place, the sound of an eagle-wing bone-whistle blowing in rhythm to the great drum (or drums), and the ancient voice-prayer-music of the singers as they address the Sun and other powers of the universe: *"Oh, holy powers, we honor you this day that we may live. Have pity on me. Accept my suffering this day in reciprocation for all you have given us."*

The essence of the prayer rises out of the teachings of the shamanic tradition of communion with the gods via sacred acts: music, dance, visual-arts compositions, and projection of one's will into the heart of the experience of relationship. First and foremost in this relationship is the recognition that humans are but one of many beings among all the plants, insects, reptiles, birds, other animals, minerals, and hidden mysteries of the earth itself. Tribal teachings emphasize that all are children of an infinite and ongoing process that transcends our most basic understanding of time itself.

At the heart of the Sun Dance prayer is a cyclical view of time and process, this great circle of life that various tribes call "That Which Moves," "The Great Holy," "The Great Spirit," or "The Great Mystery."

It is this concept, or its perceived parts, that the tribes in their sacred lodges have demarcated and manifested as symbol in their visual arts, music, oratory, poetry, dance, drama, and vernacular architecture.



Through the use of these forms in ritual, tribal people interact; they express, celebrate, and reaffirm their relationship to the originating powers of their very being and their particular roles in the great cyclical potency that governs all dimensions of the environment that sustains them — as long as they behave as stewards and respect it and reciprocate in a benevolent manner.

Arthur Amiotte

Editor's note: Some of this material has also appeared in Arthur R. Hulseboe and Arthur Amiotte, *An Illustrated History of the Arts in South Dakota* (Sioux Falls, So. Dak.: Center for Western Studies, Augustana College, 1989), pp. 123–24.

151 PROBABLY LITTLE CHIEF (1854–1923), SUN DANCE ENCAMPMENT (SOUTHERN CHEYENNE), INK, GRAPHITE, AND WATERCOLOR ON PAPER, 59.5 X 65.8 CM. NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, NO. 11.1706

LITTLE CHIEF (KOWEONARRE), A SOUTHERN CHEYENNE PRISONER OF WAR INCARCERATED AT FORT MARION, FLORIDA, WAS LISTED AS A "RINGLEADER" AT THE TIME OF HIS 1875 ARREST ON UNSPECIFIED CHARGES. EAGLE HEAD (MINIMIC) AND GREY BEARD, ARRESTED AT THE SAME TIME, ARE REMEMBERED IN THIS WORK THROUGH THE DEPICTION OF THEIR PAINTED LODGES. THE DRAWING CAPTURES THE GREAT SOCIAL AND SACRED ACTIVITY ASSOCIATED WITH THE SUN DANCE. TWO BOYS ENGAGE IN A HORSE RACE IN THE LOWER RIGHT CORNER. SOLDIER SOCIETIES STAGE THEIR DANCES AT EACH CORNER WITHIN THE CAMP CIRCLE. THE FAMED CHEYENNE DOG SOLDIERS, CLEARLY IDENTIFIABLE BY THEIR DISTINCTIVE HEADDRESSES, ARE SEEN IN FRONT OF THE MEDICINE LODGES IN THE LOWER LEFT QUADRANT OF THE CIRCLE. THE MEN IN THE HILLS ARE SEEN ENGAGED IN SACRIFICE, PURIFYING THEMSELVES THROUGH THE SWEAT LODGE, OR MAKING THEIR WAY TO THE SUN DANCE LODGE, WHICH IS FESTOONED WITH NUMEROUS OFFERING CLOTHS.







Gray Beard

Wopome

dance

dance

Whistling  
Big Chief

Little Black  
Chief



**Men's Traditional.** The traditional men's dance style and dress come from earlier, nineteenth-century warrior society dance styles and dress items. Men usually wear one eagle-feather bustle at their waists, and a porcupine-hair roach headdress with one or two eagle-tail feathers standing upright in the roach. The dance style is flat-footed and earth-bound, but may include active head and upper body movements portraying hunting, tracking, or fighting actions.<sup>15</sup> In traditional men's and women's dances, specific tribal dance styles and dress — including specific kinds of feather bustles, beadwork designs, and bandoliers — are generally observed in some detail; there is less pantribal blending than in the modern Fancy and Shawl dance styles. Young people and children also may dance in any of the styles being described here.

**Women's Traditional.** Women's traditional dance dresses are usually full-length and made of either buckskin or tradecloth (fig. 152). The dance style is modest, consisting of either a single or double step going forward around the dance circle, or a vertical movement sometimes called a "washboard" motion done in place with only very subtle foot movements.

**Men's Northern-Style Grass.** This dance and costume style originated in North Dakota in the early 1900s and has again become popular. These costumes commonly use fringed V-shaped shirt yokes and fringed shirt and pants seams.<sup>16</sup> Dancers do not wear a bustle and may use a side-to-side swaying motion (fig. 153).

**Men's Fancy.** After World War II, the men's traditional dance and dress styles saw increasingly fancy and colorful innovations, especially in the beadwork and larger bustles worn. Today's fancy dancers usually wear two bustles, one at the back waist and one at the back of the neck; they dance with more elevated foot and leg movements, and use many visual elements in both costume, face paint, and movements to attract the judges' attention during dance contests (see fig. 146).

**Women's Fancy-Shawl.** Women traditionally wear a shawl as a sign of proper etiquette when dancing or otherwise called into a dance arena. For younger women, however, the traditionally restricted dance style has been replaced with a more vigorous style not unlike the men's Fancy Dance. Younger shawl dancers may wear only a shawl over day-to-day street clothes, but fully outfitted fancy-shawl dancers wear beautiful cloth dresses, beaded moccasins and leggings, and a shawl, or beaded or decorated cape (fig. 154).



152 A HEAVILY BEADED TRADITIONAL BUCKSKIN DRESS WITH MATCHING LEGGINGS. NAVAJO NATION FAIR, WINDOW ROCK, ARIZONA, 1989



154 FANCY-SHAWL  
DANCER. NAVAJO  
NATION FAIR,  
WINDOW ROCK,  
ARIZONA, 1989



153 GRASS DANCER.  
MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY POWWOW,  
AUGUST, 1992



155 JINGLE-DRESS  
DANCER, NAVAJO  
NATION FAIR,  
WINDOW ROCK,  
ARIZONA, 1989



**Women's Jingle-Dress.** This dance and dress style is named from the tin, cone-shaped jingles that are sewn in rows around the dress to move and jingle against one another (fig. 155). The dress style, which has some parallels with that of the northern style grass dancers, also began in the early 1900s. One story attributes its origin to a dream by an Ojibwa holy man in Minnesota, in which four women appeared in jingle dresses. From there the dance spread to North Dakota and Montana. Today it has regained popularity among women of all ages.<sup>17</sup>

Two important ingredients of most powwows — honor songs and give-aways — are more significant as social activities than as dance performance. An honor song is sung in honor or in memory of a specific person or group, usually with the person or group's Indian name inserted into a text recognizing their bravery or generosity. When the song is sung, the person being honored is accompanied around the dance floor by those requesting the song or by other relatives and friends who dance to honor the person.

A person may request an honor song for another person (or themselves) and may request also a



155 JINGLE-DRESS  
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