

# 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:

*Tunkasileyapi 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

**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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160 WOMEN FANCY-SHAWL DANCERS PARTICIPATING IN THE KEEPERS OF THE WESTERN DOOR POWWOW, ST. BONAVENTURE UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK, JULY 1992

**M**any intertribal powwow songs have no words and use only vocables. Songs for more specific dances or uses, such as flag songs and honoring songs, have texts that relate brave deeds or that encourage the people.<sup>18</sup> Most songs sung for the types of dances done at powwows follow a common song structure. This form is used for intertribal, Round, Rabbit, Two-step, and Omaha or War Dance songs:

*the lead singer starts the song (melodies start high);*  
*the lead phrase is "seconded" (repeated) by the group;*  
*the main body of the song (the chorus) is sung through and repeated;*  
*the lead singer then "picks up" (starts) the song over again.*

If the song has words, it is usually sung through first, using only vocables, with the words sung the second time through the chorus.<sup>19</sup>

In contrast with the ascending contour of many European melodies, Plains Indian songs start high and generally descend phrase by phrase to the end of the song or chorus. Each type of song has a stock vocable and rhythmic ending formula, such as *weyaheyeyeyeyo* for War Dance songs. Powwow songs are generally short; certain songs are traditionally sung four times through, with the chorus or song repeated as a "tail" during soldier-related songs, while intertribal dance songs may be sung any number of times through.



**T**helonius Monk is credited with observing that "talking about music is like dancing about architecture." An attempt to convey or experience dance through writing is no doubt equally elliptic. Nevertheless, four characteristics of Northern Plains dance that indicate both performance and social aspects of the dancing and dances, and of the tribal societies, should be noted. First, the dance is historically male dominated. Male participants have a more prominent role and use more vigorous leg and body movements. In warrior society dances and in earlier traditional powwow forms, women were restricted to dancing in a reserved manner around the edge of the dance area. This reflects the male leadership found traditionally among the Northern Plains tribes in matters of government and religion.

Exceptions, such as the virgins' roles in the Sun Dance or women's performance of the Victory Scalp Dance have their explanation in the stories and in the high respect accorded women, particularly sisters, in Lakota values and ideals.<sup>20</sup> Today, the active style of women shawl dancers and jingle-dress dancers in the center of the arena must also reflect the changing roles and relationships of men and women in non-dance settings (fig. 160).

Second, the central male dance forms are quite individualistic. Although this is often sublimated in the Sun Dance, powwow dancers dress and dance, within the parameters of each identified genre, in individual and individually decided and designed styles. This is an expression of the free mobility of the individual and of the extended family and larger combined family groups or bands in Plains life. Dances such as the Round (circle) Dance are prescriptive only for the basic formation and step; this flexibility can be thought of as reflecting the unity and egalitarianism of the camp circle and social unit.

A third characteristic is that the dance posture and steps are essentially earth-bound and earth-oriented. Traditional steps are flat-footed, and accented movements are generally in an earthward or downward direction. This contrasts directly with the vertical, upward orientation of the epitome of classical European dance, the ballet, and expresses the mother-earth aspect of Lakota and Indian belief.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, the level of difficulty or complexity of the dances allows and provides for general participation. The dance is not professionalized to the exclusion of the people. The best elaborate and subtle details of dress and dance style are recognized and appreciated, but people dance not as dance specialists, but as members of the family and tribe. The few specialized dances, such as the Hoop Dance, that require years of practice remain the exceptions and are usually used as special program entertainment dances (fig. 161).



161 BENITO CONCHA PERFORMS THE HOOP DANCE AT THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION'S FOLKLIFE FESTIVAL ON THE NATIONAL MALL, WASHINGTON, D.C., JULY 1992



**M**usic and dance are central in and to the cultural life of Indian peoples. More than options or accessories, they remain at the heart of cultural matrices and provide an understanding of Indian beliefs and social life. Further, they are among the elements and domains that remain most overtly Indian in Indian peoples' individual and collective lives. Northern Plains song and dance activity continues within both rural reservation and urban Indian communities with visible and vigorous strength.

Moreover, in recent years intertribal powwows of the Plains type have become a vehicle for pantribal expression of Indian identity in all reaches of the United States, from New York State to Los Angeles to the Southwest, even among many members of tribes such as the Navajo and Hopi, for whom the powwow is a totally imported form. The predominant influence in much of this current practice, both in dance and singing styles, is that of the Northern Plains (Southern Plains practices, including the Gourd Dance, war dances, and drumming and singing styles are also spreading, but northern styles seem to be dominant, especially among the young).

Among a widening circle of Indian people, performing and understanding Northern Plains Indian dance and song continue to be a means of guarding and sustaining either specific Northern Plains cultural ways or a more generalized Indian identity within a Western society that usually has little appreciation or understanding of the content and richness of these dance and song traditions. Nevertheless, the creativity and cultural continuity that mark these activities today give clear evidence that Northern Plains dance and song will continue to provide a strong center and outlet for cultural energy in Indian life for generations to come.

- 1 John Collier, *Indians of the Americas* (New York: Mentor Books, 1947; slightly abridged, 1964), p. 137.
- 2 Dance complex refers to the interrelated elements of dance performance, the dance event, and related activities and beliefs associated with sponsoring, performing, and conducting the total event.
- 3 Elizabeth S. Grobsmith, *Lakota of Rosebud: A Contemporary Ethnography* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981), p. 52.
- 4 See William Powers, "Comment," *The Singing Wire* 5, no. 3 (1969): 9–10. Also see Lynn F. Huenemann, *Songs and Dances of Native America: A Resource Text for Teachers and Students* (book and tapes), (Tsailé, Ariz.: Education House, 1978), p. 94.
- 5 William Powers, in a paper given at the Society for Ethnomusicology Annual Conference, discusses the courtship function of grass dancing. Strutting prairie chicken was described by Asa Primeaux (Yankton Dakota) in a lecture to one of my classes at Navajo Community College, ca. 1979.
- 6 Frances Densmore, *Teton Sioux Music*, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 61 (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1918; reprint, 1972), pp. 101–109.
- 7 James H. Howard, "Notes on the Dakota Grass Dance," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1951): 82–85.
- 8 See Densmore, *Teton Sioux Music*; also see a series of articles on American Indian music by William K. Powers, in *American Indian Tradition* 7–8, nos. 3–4 (1961–62).
- 9 Ben Black Bear, Sr., and R.D. Theisz, *Songs and Dances of the Lakota* (Rosebud, So. Dak.: Sinte Gleska College, 1976), p. 27.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- 11 Huenemann, *Songs and Dances*, p. 97.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 94.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 128.
- 14 Parts of these descriptions are based on the author's previous writings. For other similar descriptions of dance styles and categories, see George P. Horse Capture, *Powwow* (Cody: Buffalo Bill Historical Center, 1989); and Black Bear and Theisz, *Songs and Dances*, pp. 15–20.
- 15 See Powers, "Comment," p. 10, and Huenemann, *Songs and Dances*, p. 94.
- 16 See James H. Howard, "Northern Style Grass Dance Costume," *American Indian Hobbyist* 7, no. 1 (1960): 20. The outfits using the V-shaped fringed shirts have been attributed to the influence and use of cowboy shirts and styles, but they may have also come directly from earlier Indian shirt and leggings styles. Men's nineteenth-century Ghost Dance shirts often used a fringed V-shaped yoke, similar to that of the Grass Dance shirts.
- 17 See Horse Capture, *Powwow*, p. 27.
- 18 The best source for ordering recordings of Indian songs of the Northern Plains and other tribal areas is Canyon Records in Phoenix, Arizona, since they sell both their own excellent recordings and those of several of the other significant recent and current recording companies that have produced good Indian recordings (including Indian House Records, Library of Congress, Folkways, Soundchief, and others).
- 19 See Huenemann, *Songs and Dances*, p. 82, and Powers, *American Indian Music* 7: 28–29.
- 20 For an excellent description of, and for insight into, these and other traditional Lakota and Dakota values and ideals, see Ella C. Deloria, *Speaking of Indians* (New York: Friendship Press, 1944; reprint, 1983).
- 21 See Huenemann, *Songs and Dances*, p. 202.