



FANCY SHAWL

The fancy shawl dance is a relatively new dance. It started in the 1950's as a rebellious dance that was performed by women. The original dancers wanted to dance fast and powerfully like the men and were criticized by the traditional women dancers. The young ladies that started this dance wore their shawls across their shoulders flowing down their backs instead of draped over their arms like the old style traditional women dancers.

This dance is said to have originated in the northern part of the United States and spread throughout the country. The dance is recognized by the fast and fancy footwork of the dancers. This dance also consists of energetic spins and quick high steps as she dances around. There are two basic steps to the fancy shawl dance. The first is the straight steps where the dancer creates her own style of graceful footwork and moves to the beat of the drum. The second step is the crow hop that consists of staying in time with the slower beat of the drum. These dancers are constantly dancing on the balls and toes of their feet.

The regalia is made of flashy lightweight materials. The fabrics are very colorful and have intricate appliqué work in their patterns. The shawl has long fringe on the edges that flows outward when the women spin around and bounces when she moves her arms up and down as she dances. The fancy shawl dancer gives the illusion of floating in air across the ground as she dances around the dance area. This illusion of floating in air by the dancer is said to represent a butterfly.

The legend behind the dance is that of a young maiden who lost her mate during a battle. She wrapped herself into a cocoon (the shawl) and traveled the world by stepping on every stone she saw. Then one day she found pure beauty and happiness in one particular stone and she unwrapped herself from her cocoon as she started her life anew as a beautiful butterfly.