



WOMEN'S TRADITIONAL

The Women's Traditional Dance is a very dignified, graceful and modest dance that shows the strength, pride, respect and honor the women carry for their family, relatives and friends. The women would adorn themselves with their most elaborate quilled, beaded and decorated dresses and accessories. The outfit was personal and was created through dreams or traditional family designs. These dresses symbolized the industry, patience and steadfastness a woman must possess to complete such an enormous project.

The traditional style is represented by either cloth or buckskin regalia. The dancer carries a shawl draped over one arm and carries a beaded purse and feather fan. The dancer will wear her chosen colors and will have elaborate beadwork or quillwork on her collar and moccasins. The dancer will wear either a feather and plume or beaded crown on her head. Most women dancers today carry a fan usually made of eagle feathers. On the down beats or honor beats of the song, the women may raise their fan gracefully to show respect and honor as they dance.

On the East coast of the United States there is a traditional dance known as the Eastern Blanket Dance. This dance consists of the woman cloaked in a blanket and as she dances she moves the blanket all around with grace and style. This dance is said to have originated as a calling dance to attract warrior suitors for potential marriage. This dance has now become a major dance across the country but its roots are from the New England area.

There are three basic dance steps that accompany the traditional dance.

The first style is the stationary dance. This style originated with the Dakota/Nakota people in their small gatherings of long ago. The women would stand and bounce gently to the drum in honor of their family or relatives for whom the song was sung.

Secondly, in the Grass Dance Society, the women danced in what is known as the circle dance, round dance or side step dance. This dance is still performed as part of competitions of today.

In the third style, the women gracefully dance in a zigzag pattern around the edge of the arena. Their dance is in time with the drum-beat.