

Men's Traditional Dance

The Men's Traditional style of dance is one of pride and confidence amongst men. Traditional dancers demonstrate a style of dance that has evolved from an old form of the war dance. The dance depicts the telling of a war story or hunting expedition.

Traditional dancers never dance backwards, as this would be perceived as a retreat from an enemy. Also, they never turn in a full circle while dancing as this would indicate turning his back on his enemy. There are a number of dances that the men have to perform. These dances are the straight dance, the crow hop and the sneak-up.

The crow hop is said to represent the movements of the crow. The sneak-up is a dance that represents the warrior during a battle as he engages his enemy or it is considered a dance that represents a hunter stalking his prey.

Most dancers wear a bustle made from eagle feathers. The dancer's regalia is adorned with his personal colors and certain items that are considered medicinal such as eagle feathers, bells, and certain patterns or colors of beadwork.

There are three kinds of traditional dancers: The northern, eastern and southern styles.

The northern style has its origins in the plains of the United States. These dancers wear eagle feather bustles on their waist. The dance is fast and powerful with each dancer as they showcase their original steps and movements to beat of the drum. These dancers usually carry a feather fan, war club and/or personal staff in their hands.

The eastern traditional dancers do not wear a feather bustle as the western dancers do. Instead these dancers will wear a beaded collar and wrist cuffs. The headdresses will vary from dancer to dancer but their regalia represents the eastern style. The dancers will have a cloth shirt with the beaded collar and cuffs over it. The breach cloth at the waist is adorned with floral beadwork and the leggings are usually leather. Eastern dancers will carry a feather fan, root club (war club) or a personal item such as a turtle rattle or small staff as they dance.

Eastern dancers do another dance called the Calumet Dance. In this dance the dancer represents the sacred pipe as it is being used to send prayers to the Creator. This dance requires strength and stamina that the dancer needs to demonstrate throughout the whole song.

Southern traditional dancers do not wear bustles either, but rather they have a tail extending from his head to his legs made from otter pelts adorned with small circles down the middle, usually mirrors. The dancer will carry a feather fan and small staff in their hands. The dance steps of the southern dancer are more graceful and show the pride of the dancer. A really good southern dancer will appear to glide across the ground as he dances. This style of dance is often called the "Gentlemen's Dance."

