

The Grass Dance Outfit

ORDER OF THE ARROW - WWW

MAIN PARTS

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This guide to the grass dance outfit is not by any means the “bible” as there are a lot of different ways and opinions on how to do things. Outfit styles are forever changing and evolving. The latest in Powwow Fashions can be seen at www.powwows.com. Check out our Lodge website at www.lodge104.com

Grass dance outfits today have either yarn or ribbon in the length of 12 -14 inches long. Some dancers choose to use cut cloth which gives the appearance of ribbon. Shabby cut cloth is not acceptable on the dance floor. The preferred beadwork on a grass dance outfit today is lazy/lane stitch.

Shirts:

Shirts are made out of satin/silk material to have a shiny appearance. Some dancers choose to wear a button-up shirt with a contrasting color, and some dancers choose to add elaborate cloth appliqué designs that are sewn on to the shirt. A common fabric used in the appliqué cloth designs is confetti dot fabric which will add a shiny appearance. Most shirts have a collar. The length of the sleeves can vary. Ribbon shirts are not worn by Grass Dancers today.

Cape:

Capes are made out of the same satin/silk material that the pants and apron are. The cape is worn over the shirt. Ribbon or yarn is attached on the edge of the cape. Some dancers choose to add beadwork to the cape. Some dancers choose to add elaborate cloth appliqué designs on the front and back of the cape.

Pants:

The same satin/silk material that was purchased for your shirt is also used for the pants. At the bottom of the pant legs are the elaborate cloth designs. Ribbon or yarn is also attached at the pants. Some use Angora anklets that are worn below the bells.

Apron:

The material used in the shirt and pants also needs to be used on the apron. Ribbon or yarn is attached to the edges of the apron. A general rule has been that the back of the apron is more decorated than the front. Usually the apron is connected with a belt threaded through the two apron pieces. The design of the shirt and pants needs to be consistent with the apron. The back usually has ribbon work and beadwork.

Side Tabs:

Side tabs are usually added in on the sides of either apron to add more detail. The material used is the same material used for the apron. Some side tabs are fully beaded with ribbon covering the edge of the material. Side tabs are generally attached to the apron belt around the waist.

ACCESSORIES:**Harness:**

The "H" Harness, or just often called a harness, is an item that both grass dancers and fancy dancers wear around the neck. It is usually worn outside the belt and extends to just below the knees. The "H" harness is often lazy stitched and applied to fabric. Other harness can have ribbon work or elaborate fabric designs. The prized position is the fully beaded harness.

Cuffs:

Incorporate the design of the shirt and apron into the cuffs, which are worn on the wrists. Most cuffs have ribbon work or ribbon hanging off at the ends, and the best ones are fully beaded with lazy stitch.

Armbands/Wings:

Armbands or wings, which are worn on the upper arms and match the cuffs and incorporate their design. The better ones will be beaded. A very popular style is to have the ends notched. These are rarely seen on the dance floor due to the fact that most dancers like to showcase the shirt with it's designs.

Belts:

Belts are generally lazy stitched or loom beaded, 4 to 6 inches wide, mounted on leather or a cloth material, and worn on the hips. Attachment is made in the back by tying or a buckle is used. Some dancers incorporate the side tabs and belt into one unit.

Scarf or Necktie:

Some prefer to wear a scarf of flashy satin/silk material. The scarf is held in with a silver slide or a gourd stitched slide. Neckties are usually lazy stitched and match the beadwork on the harness. Chokers are not worn by grass dancers today.

Bells:

Large sleigh bells or sheep bells (four-five) are worn on each ankle attached and securely with a leather piece.

Moccasins:

A fully-beaded set of moccasins are preferred on the dance floor. Some dancers choose to make a set with no beadwork when getting started. Several handouts can show you how to make a set of moccasins.

Hand Articles:

Some dancers choose to carry any hand articles and some do not. Those that do choose to carry these:

1. A dance hoop that is approximately seven inches in diameter, usually wrapped with ribbon, and has ribbon hanging from it.
2. Fans of all types are seen. Swan fans are the most popular. Turkey fans are not welcomed with the grass outfit. Loose feather fans can also be used.
3. Mirror boards have been popular with grass dancers.

HEADGEAR:**Roach**

This is one of the most important parts of the outfit. Usually, dancers will wear the longest and most colorful roach they can get. The roach is worn flat. Some dancers learn how to make their own.

Head Harness

The roach is attached to the head harness. The head harness can be made out of 1 inch Velcro to allow total adjustment in the back. On top of the Velcro is attached lazy stitched beadwork. A large rosette is a must in the front. Eye drops come down in the front and dip as far as the cheek. Small curtain rings are wrapped with the incorporated colors and hung from the harness. Small beaded strips are sometimes hung from the harness.

Roach Spreader

A leather piece is placed on top to spread the roach out flat. Some dancers have gotten creative and substituted the leather piece for a shiny compact disc (CD). The roach spreader can be made of either of the following items:

1. A sprocket type made out of metal where two feathers attach in the sprockets very squarely. It is often said that the dancer that keeps his feathers moving is a good dancer.

2. The antennae type with a wire piece, usually a strong guitar string, with a plume or fluff is attached. These graceful antennae make the dance flow and look like clouds floating across the sky.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

The beadwork needs to match usually in a geometric design or a floral design. Generally all the beadwork matches the outfit.

Websites for discount ribbon are:

<http://www.jkmribbon.com/>

<http://www.laceforless.com/index.html>

Website for all colors of confetti dot fabric and other discount fabric:

<http://www.syfabrics.com>

Be as creative as possible! Go to the Powwows in your area and look at the grass outfits. Then make one that will stand out on the dance floor and be "yours." For excellent photos, you can visit www.powwows.com.

Whispering Wind Magazine (www.whisperingwind.com or 985-796-5433) is an excellent magazine resource for you. Its photos and article keep you up with the changing trends of the times.

What **NOT** to do:

- 1.) Do not create outfits with just two colors. These are the candy-cane and bumble bee outfits.
- 2.) Do not wear sweatpants.
- 3.) Do not wear bandannas on the head when you do not have a roach.
- 4.) Do not try to change or introduce something to a culture that has not been done.

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