

## **What is a Pow Wow**

A Pow Wow is the Native American's way of celebrating together, to join in dancing, singing, visiting, renewing old friendships and making new ones. This is a time to honor the old ways and to preserve their heritage.

There are several different stories of how the Pow Wow was started. Some believe that the war dance societies of the Ponca and other Southern Plains tribes were the origin of the Pow Wow.

Another belief is that when the Native Americans were forced onto reservations the government forced them to hold dances for the public to come and see. Before each dance they were lead through the town in a parade, this is thought to be the origin of the Grand Entry.

Pow Wow singers are very important figures in the Native American culture. Without them there would be no dancing. The songs are of many varieties, religious war and social.

As various tribes gathered together, they would share their songs, often changing the songs so singers of different tribes could join. With these changes came the use of "vocables" to replace the words of the old songs. Thus, some songs today are sung in vocables with no words. Yet these songs still hold special meaning to those who know them. Many songs are still sung in native tongue they can be newly composed or old songs that have been handed down for generations. These songs are reminders to the Indian people of their old ways and rich heritage.

Dances have always been a very important part of the American Indian life. The dances seen at Pow Wows today are social dances. Some dance styles have developed from the modern Pow Wow while others can trace their origin back hundreds of years and had different meanings in those earlier days. Although dance styles and content have changed, their importance has not. The outfits worn by the dancers, like the styles of clothing today evolve over time, it is not a stagnant culture, but a vibrant and changing way of life.

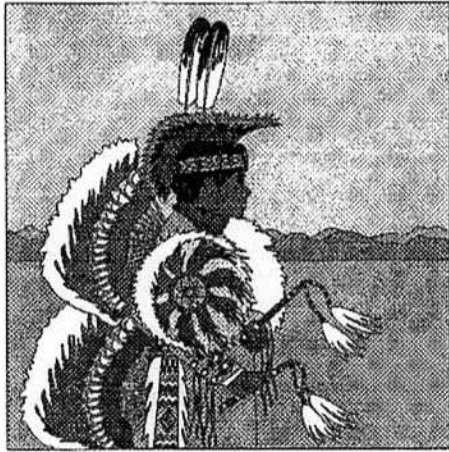
Pow Wows are organized by committees that work for weeks before the event. At the Pow Wow, the MC runs the event and works with the Arena Director to keep the Pow Wow organized and running smoothly. These two individuals along with the committee work hard to bring the people together to dance and enjoy the fellowship of the circle.

The Pow Wow begins with the Grand Entry. This origin of the Grand Entry is thought to be the parade through the town where the Pow Wow was being held. The Grand Entry is led by the flags which generally include the US Flag, tribal flags, POW Flag, and eagle staffs of various tribes present. The flags and staffs are usually carried by veterans. Native Americans hold the United States flag in an honored position despite the horrible treatment received from this country. The flag has several meanings. First it is a reminder of all the ancestors that fought against this country. It is the symbol of the United States which Native Americans are now a part. The flag also reminds people of those who have fought for this country. During the Grand Entry everyone is asked to stand and remove any non-Indian head gear.

Following the veterans are other important guests of the Pow Wow including tribal chiefs, Princesses, elders, and Pow Wow organizers. Next in line are the men dancers. The men are followed by the women dancers. Once everyone is in the arena the song ends and a song is sung to honor the flag and the veterans. After a prayer, the dancing resumes usually with a few Round Dances. After the Round Dances, intertribal dancing songs are sung and everyone dances to the beat of the drum.

## Pow Wow Etiquette

1. Be on time. The Committee is doing everything possible to ensure that activities begin and run smoothly. Please cooperate in this regard.
2. Appropriate dress and behavior are required in the Arena. Anyone unwilling to abide by this rule will be asked to leave by the Arena Director. (If you are going to dance, try to wear dance clothes.)



3. Arena benches are reserved for dancers in dance clothes. Dancers wishing to reserve a space on the bench should place a blanket in that space before the dance begins. Please do not sit on someone else's blanket unless invited. Uncovered benches are considered unreserved.

4. Listen to the Master of Ceremonies. He will announce who is to dance, and when.

5. Respect the position of the Head Man and Head Woman Dancers. Their role entitles them to start each song or set of songs. Please wait until they have started to dance before you join in.

6. Dance as long and as hard as you can. When not dancing, be quiet and respect the Arena

7. Be aware that someone standing behind you may not be able to see over you. Make room, step aside, sit, or kneel if someone is behind you.

8. Show respect to the flag and honor songs by standing during "Special" songs, stand in place until the sponsors of the song have danced a complete circle and have come around you, then join in. If you are not dancing, continue to stand quietly until the song is completed.

9. While dancing at any powwow, honor the protocol of the sponsoring group.

10. Some songs require that you dance only if you are familiar with the routine or are eligible to participate. Trot dances, snake, buffalo, etc. require particular steps or routines. If you are not familiar with these dances, observe and learn. Watch the Head Dancers to learn the procedures. Only Veterans are permitted to dance some Veteran's songs; listen to the MC for instructions.

11. The Flag Song, or Indian National Anthem, is sung when the American Flag is raised or lowered. Please stand and remove hats during the singing of this song. It is not a song for dancing.



12. Powwows are non-profit. It depends upon donations, raffles, blanket dances, etc. for support. Donations are encouraged as a way to honor someone. Any participant can drop money onto the blanket to aid in the powwow expenses. Support the Committee and buy raffle tickets.

13. Certain items of religious significance should be worn only by those qualified to do so. Respect the traditions.

14. Giveaways, attributes of Indian generosity, are held at many dances. They are acknowledgments of appreciation to recipients for honor given. When receiving a gift, the recipient thanks everyone involved in the giving. NOTE: All specials and giveaways must be coordinated with the Master of Ceremonies. During the Saturday night dance, only the specials of the Principals should be scheduled. If you wish to ask for a song from the drum in honor of someone, they will be glad to announce the song with the understanding that it will be danced by all who wish in a general powwow manner, rather than as a "walking" special. Please remember that is traditional to make a monetary contribution to the Drum for this request—clear this through the MC. They will try to maintain the dancing for ALL participants as much as possible.

15. The Drums will be closed unless permission to be seated is given by the Head singer. Any drums present are invited to set-up and sing. Please check with the Arena director first.



16. If at any time you are uncertain of procedure, etc., please check with the MC, Arena Director, or Head Singer. They will be glad to help you with your questions.

17. Take a chair. Most Pow Wows are in open fields and will not have seating for the public or enough seating for everyone. Also remember that the benches in the arena are for dancers only.

18. No Alcohol or drugs are allowed at Pow Wows.

19. If taking pictures, asked the dancer first. Remember common courtesy and ask permission. Group photographs are usually alright to take, but you might want to ask the committee first.

Remember that in each area you travel to and visit, things can and will be slightly different than your area. Different groups and have different customs and methods of doing things. Different is not wrong, just different. Be respectful of the uniqueness of each area.

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# SOUTHERN POWWOW

**D**o you remember your first time at a powwow? Think back. Did you do something that you thought was nothing, yet, everyone looked at you? Perhaps you walked across the dance floor while the M.C. was speaking?

Powwow etiquette is something that must be learned by all who expect to become a part of a powwow. Without powwow etiquette any powwow would be disorganized and unruly.

Powwow etiquette is rules that common sense should tell you to follow. These rules show courtesy to others attending the dance. They allow everyone to enjoy themselves and brings about a successful dance.

To the old-timer this article is not criticizing but just reminding. To the beginners-welcome to the powwow world. We would like to tell you something about your first dance that we hope will make you feel much more comfortable.

. Don't be afraid to make new friends. The same holds true for us "old-timers." Everyone at the powwow has at least one thing in common. If you are a newcomer to a powwow make yourself known to the others. Shake hands with the people on the bench with you.

. If you plan to make any Indian dances, find out if you may attend and if you may dance. Some dances may be a society or clan dance. Find out as much as you can about the dance you plan to attend.

. If it is your first time at a powwow, be dressed in your dance

clothes well in advance of the scheduled time for the dance. Although the dance may start on "Indian Time" it is better to be dressed then to come walking in during the opening prayer or flag song like you had "bells on your toes."

. If you want a reserved seat at the dance, place a blanket on the bench before people start gathering. This will reserve that place for you. If there is a blanket on a bench, someone is not airing it out, it is reserving their place. Do not move anyone's blanket, nor sit on anyone's blanket unless you are asked to do so.

. Stand for the opening prayer and flag song.

. Never begin dancing before the singing starts. Give the head singer time to start his song and for the rest of the singers to come in on the chorus.

. If a powwow has an appointed Head dancer, wait for him to begin dancing before you begin. Usually there is a Men's and Women's Head dancer. The men wait for the Head Men's dancer to start and the women wait for the Women's Head dancer to begin. You will find, though, at most southern powwows the Head Dancers start the opening song of each set of songs and lead all the social dances: two steps, snake and buffalo, etc. During the set of war dance songs the Head dancer will start the dancing on the first song. On the other songs in the set the other dancers may start on their own.

# ETIQUETTE

Never sit at a drum unless you are invited to do so. Most drums have a head singer. The head singer controls all the activity at the drum, selects the songs and may from time to time allow others at the drum to lead one or two songs or a set of songs. Wait until you are asked before you sit at a closed drum or lead a song.

If you wish to make a gift to the drum, whether it be for a special song or just to show your appreciation for some fine singing, give your gift to the Head singer. He will see that the other singers are rewarded.

Be courteous to the other dancers on the dance floor.

Between dances at a powwow, the M.C., will usually have somethings to say, things that other people may want to hear. Be courteous, you placed your blanket on a bench so you could sit on it. While the M.C. is talking, by all means sit on your blanket. It is very annoying to have dancers walking around with bells ringing, especially while someone is at the microphone. It is very discourteous to be out of your seat during a special dance or song. Remember-stay in your seat unless you get up to dance.

Special dances or songs can be held at any powwow, provided you speak to the M.C., or powwow coordinator. The special may be for someone going into the service

or returning home from the service, a first time dancing, anything where a family may want to honor one of its members. Never dance in these specials unless you know the person being honored and you know the person being honored and you wish to dance in his honor.

If you dance, when the dance is over go up to him and shake his hand and the hands of the family members. Sometimes a hand shake with a dollar in it to the honored person is always appreciated. It was an honor for you to be allowed to dance, so show your appreciation. If you choose to show your respect and not dance, stand when the family dances by your seat.

If you are honored during the give away which follows the special dance, shake hands with the person being honored and the family.

Some little things to remember while you are a guest at a powwow is to listen to the M.C., don't be talking and don't walk around the dance area; the M.C. may be telling you that you left your car lights on!

Here's to good dancing.

# Silhouettes of the Past

## The Shape of Traditions to Come

By William K. Powers

I am grateful for C. Scott Evans' recent comment on my earlier attempt to clarify the terms, "old-time" and "old-style" with particular reference to dance costumes that today are called *traditional*.<sup>[1]</sup> His article has encouraged me to reflect on what appears to be nearly a quarter-century of discussion and debate over terminology that we apply routinely to the evolution of American Indian dance costumes, a subject which has not yet received the definitive study it deserves. Yet the terminology still begs for clarification.

Important, I think, is the increased interest in powwow costumes since powwow virtually has impressed the world as the *sine qua non* of American Indian public performance, and it has done so at perhaps an alarming rate. Fads change so quickly that we are at a loss of words adequate to explain these changes. Yet we are somehow reluctant to apply the same term to American Indians even though it suffices to account for our own sometimes fickle manner of changing our own traditions.<sup>[2]</sup>

In viewing these changes we are faced with a paradox. At the same time that dance styles become more uniform with vague or no reference to tribal origin, individuals are free to improvise albeit within the parameters established by the conventions and rules of competitions governing the various dance styles. Thus all Fancy shawl costumes are required to look alike in their gross features, as are all jingle dress costumes, and so forth, and there is no question that Grass dance costumes are different from Feather dance, and all are perceived to be categorically and stylistically distanced from male and female Traditional costumes. But within each of these categories there is practically no limit to the way an individual can build an outfit using his or her wildest imagination and still conform to the codes of proper attire implicit in the costume category.<sup>[3]</sup>



Fancy dancer, Oglala Nation Fair and Powwow, August 1992. Bigger, brighter, bloder. Photo by Marla N. Powers

When I first attended Omaha dances, the historical predecessor of the modern powwow, things were easy. In 1948 at Pine Ridge and Rosebud, dancers may have worn different costumes, but all dancers (except for specialty dances) participated in every dance. There were no cultural references to their costumes



**Top Left**— Traditional dancer, 1992. Each component of the costume might not be classified as Traditional, but the entire costume taken as a whole certainly gives the illusion of antiquity. **Top Right**— Traditional dancer, 1994. Although it is difficult to find earlier photos of dancers wearing cavalry uniforms as part of their dance costumes, this dancer exemplifies what everyone would agree is "old-time." Photos taken at Oglala Nation Fair and Powwow by Marla N. Powers. **Lower Photo**— Omaha dance at Pine Ridge, 1892. Dancers are wearing minimal costumes "typical" of the historic period. Singers sat on ground tosing. There was no arbor. Photo by James Mooney, courtesy Smithsonian Office of Anthropology, neg. no. 3318A2.

(northern, southern, Grass, Jingle, etc) and obviously there was no need for historical references (old-time, traditional, etc). Things just were *ikcelakota* 'old-time Indian'. [4] This is not to say that people were not aware of the clothing and costumes of their grandfathers' generation. They were. But they felt no need to classify costumes or styles as they do today. Tradition was as tradition is.

But today, it does not take very long for even the casual observer to notice that what passes for *traditional* powwow costuming on the Northern Plains (and elsewhere) does not precisely resemble the costumes worn by dancers, say, in 1948 or in the 1890s. But this is true also for other kinds of traditional dress associated with public or private religious ceremonies. The same relationship between an "old" tradition and "new" tradition, if these are not contradictory terms, also holds for costumes such as those seen in the contemporary Sun dances. [5] While there are many similarities between contemporary religious paraphernalia and that of antiquity among the Lakota, certainly T-shirts, shawls, and tailored "prairie" dresses were not among them.

We also should be cognizant of the fact that technically Grass dance costumes, Jingle dresses, and even Feather costumes have a very long historic past, and for the tribes in which they originated, these forms also are traditional even though they are not classified as such by modern powwow standards. [6]

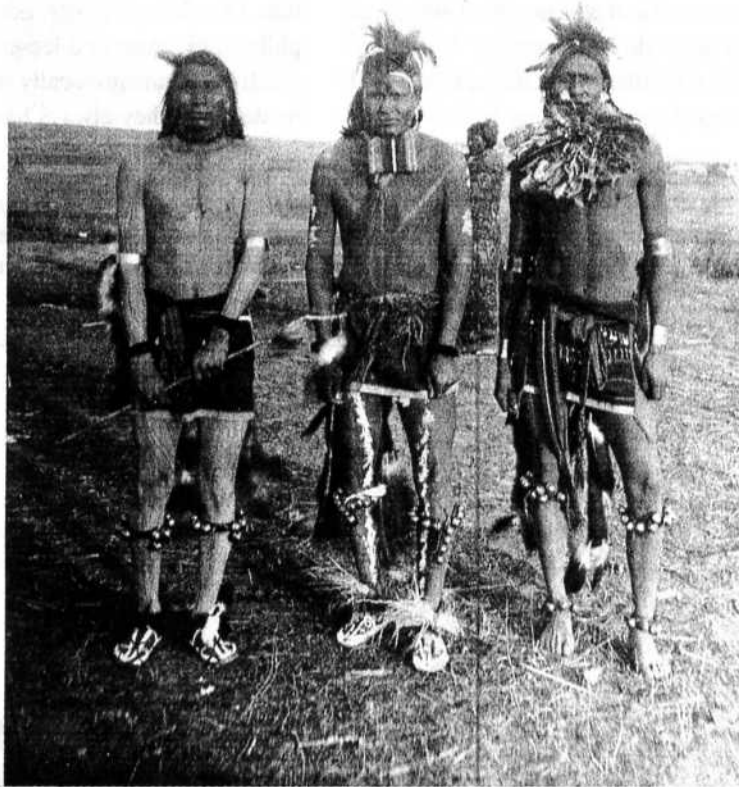
Some scholars refer to these kinds of innovations in which there is an indifference to what kinds of clothing or costumes were worn in the past as *postmodern*, trends in which rules once governing appropriate dress behavior have been forsaken or replaced by an almost-anything-goes attitude. [7] Articles of clothing and costumes now are combined in ways they never were in the past. There seems to be no predictable way in which the costume parts fit together anymore. Back bustles are so large

that they have to be strapped on like a parachute. Colors have gone electric. Designs are distorted and even caricatured. Face paint emerges as if it were created by a Hollywood makeup man with hopes of disguising the dancer's face behind a greasy mask. [8] Almost anything that can be assembled from bones,

claws, skulls, and rawhide are carried, sometimes in both hands. The dance arbor is bedecked and bedazzling with myriad dream catchers, nightmarish remnants of what some believe to be the "old" times. Everywhere there are feathered bills and epaulets. The clustered bonnets of the Mandan and Hidatsa now belong to everybody who is not wearing a wolf or coyote skin capped with full snout and beady eyes. The list goes on and on—all for the sake of tradition. In general, costumes tend to evolve rapidly today. They overwhelm us with visual hyperbole; everything is bigger, bolder, and brighter.

But perhaps I exaggerate. After all, some of the "new" tradition, even when it is concocted from vague memories or specious literatures, is respectful of the past in

purpose and intent and not everything from ancient times is totally forsaken. There still are those good ole' porky roaches, and enough eagle feathers to make some old-timers josh: What's the most frightened thing in the world? (An eagle flying over Pine Ridge!) And there are magnificent moccasins, and bone (or plastic) breastplates, bone (or plastic) chokers, bandoliers, and sometimes even a mess bustle. And the "new" traditional dance style frequently reveals an honest attempt to emulate dancers of long ago bobbing and strutting like prairie chickens at Omaha dances though an occasional young dancer will break into a fancy flurry more derivative of a recent style. There is a resurgence of top hats, cavalry jackets, and "granny" sun glasses. And as Evans has noted in his fine book, [9] we are once again witnessing long Johns, otterskin breastplates, and trade cloth leggings, among



*Three dancers at a Omaha dance at Pine Ridge, 1892. Note the dancer on the right who is barefoot and wears neck bustle in front rather than behind. Photo by James Mooney, courtesy Smithsonian Office of Anthropology, neg. no. 3318A1.*



other traditional things. The question then is not so much are *old-time* and *traditional* synonyms, as Evans justifiably asks in his article, but rather why do people find it at all necessary to speak of their *modern* costumes (among other things) with reference to the past? The answer is complicated, but not unfathomable. Let me try to explain what I mean.

Since 1970, when I first published the comment on "old-time" to which Evans alludes, I have been interested not so much in how costumes and other material and philosophical aspects of Lakota society change, but how do they persist? The more general answer is based on how scholars view the Lakota world as opposed to how the Lakota themselves view it. It is not so

much a matter of what is old and what is new, what is traditional and what is modern, but how do Lakota, and presumably other Indian people, explain their own culture to each other? What do they have to say about it? I have come up with an answer; I hope the reader will bear with me. I call the process *Lakotification*, a specific reference to a larger process I call *ethnification* in which foreign ideas from one culture or one period of time are adopted and valued as an integral part of another, present cultural tradition. Once adopted, the ideas—and this means material things, philosophy, even to a lesser degree, language of one culture—solidly and unequivocally are made a part of another and are treated as if they always have been no matter what their origin

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*Victory dance celebrating the end of World War II, September 1945. Again, another example of "old-time" costumes, but note the superfluosness of costuming compared with 1892. Singers are standing around drum in center of an arbor. In those days, until 1973, the arbor also was used for the Sun dance. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Smithsonian Office of Anthropology, neg. no. 55,449.*

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once was. They persist because they allow the culture to continue as the people perceive it always has been. In the process, specific time periods are abandoned and substituted with a perennial past.[10]

With respect to Lakota, *Lakotification* means that the people have selected from other tribal societies, or other non-Indian societies, certain cultural traditions that they can fit smoothly into their own in order to enhance it and thus guarantee cultural

has less to do with what is perceived as tribal identification, as it does with defining the overall structure of the powwow as a regional, national, or international competitive event in itself.

In the larger picture, it is no longer important that the dancer is a Lakota dancer as it is that he or she is a traditional dancer as opposed to Grass, Jingle, Fancy shawl, Fancy, northern and southern versions. And with little room for variation, all these costumes, traditional or not, collectively have become uniform

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continuity. In fact, Lakotas have a word for it—*yulakota*—' to make it Lakota'. Most Lakotas know that the "new" traditional costume is not the same as the old, but they do not analyze their culture the same way as outsiders do. They simply accept it. *Yulakota* is not a reference to the past or present. Like Lakota culture itself, it is eternal.

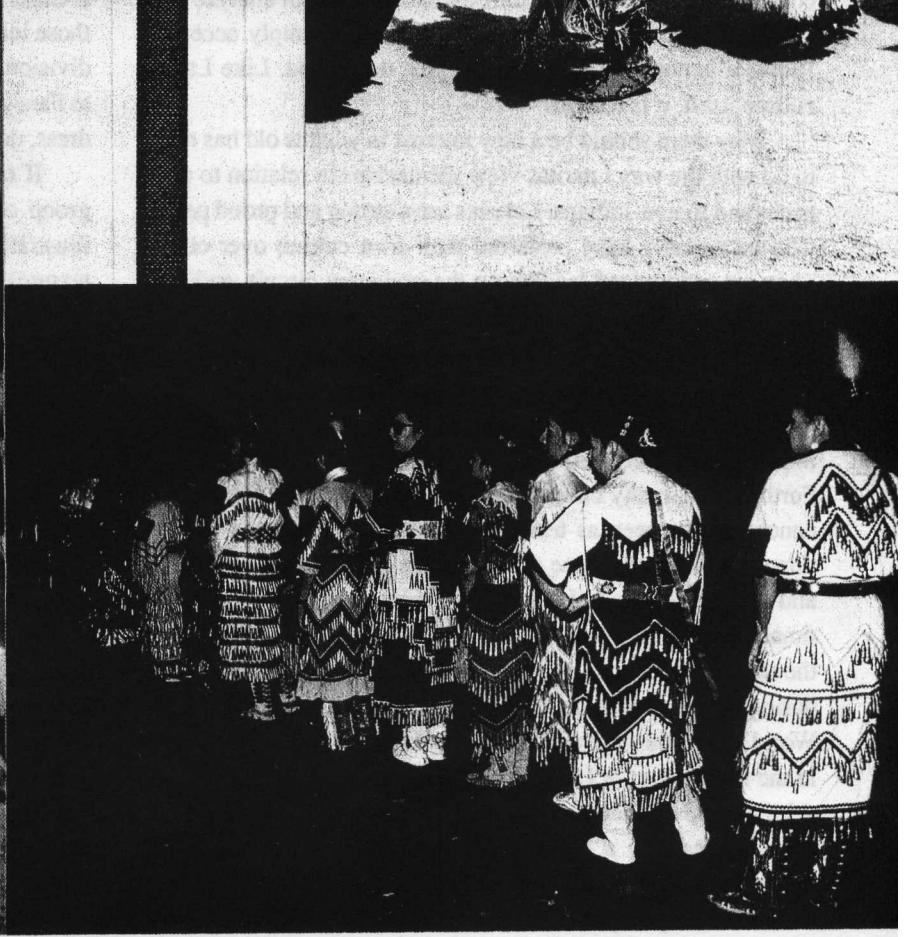
Why there should be a new interest in what is old has much to do with the way Lakotas view themselves in relation to other tribes and to non-Indians. Lakotas are a strong and proud people who historically have preferred their own culture over others. They are recognized leaders on the powwow circuit, and their influence permeates the world. However, they also have been very selective over just what exotic customs they are willing to adopt, and they certainly borrow more things from other Indians than from non-Indians even though the powwow is replete with implicit and explicit references to American western culture.[11] Furthermore, many cultural adaptations related to costume and dance may be seen as trials in which certain customs like the powwow, most of whose modern form originated in Oklahoma and inundated the Lakota reservations in the mid-1950s, ultimately turned out to be unsuitable in its southern variations to the aesthetic tastes of Lakota singers and dancers. After all, it was during the heyday of powwowing in Oklahoma after the end of World War II through the 1950s, that Lakotas became interested in the northern style Grass dance. They tried it out for less than a decade and decided to combine the best of Oklahoma and Grass dance styles into a collapsed version that R.D. Theisz calls "contemporary traditional style"[12] But soon they abandoned all these foreign styles for what is now traditional Lakota. And it hasn't ended there. The biggest change today of course is not a change at all strictly speaking, but a second go-around of slightly altered Fancy and Grass Dance costumes. Shawls for the ladies have been transformed from the simple to the splendid. Grass dance outfits have traded in the rippling and fluttering lines of chainette and ribbonwork for yarn, which some Lakotas facetiously call "rag-mop." So it seems that the idea of tradition

while at the same time emphasizing individual tastes within the category. But no one can confuse a traditional costume with, say, a Grass dance costume. Furthermore, "all-around champions," those individual males and females who compete in every dance division, changing their costumes each night from Traditional, to Fancy, to Grass dance, or Traditional, to Fancy shawl, to Jingle dress, do so irrespective of their tribal origins.

If one could photograph or otherwise visually illustrate a group of dancers dressed in the same style so that the final illustration would be absent of any costume detail (color, design, texture), it might be possible to predict just what changes are likely to occur in the future because even with all the perceived radical changes, some things remain the same: the structure of the costume, the relationship between the parts to the whole, best seen in a back-light profile. From this visual vantage point, even costumes associated with disparate styles take on the illusion of a single time-period. The details of the beadwork, ribbonwork, quillwork, sequins, yarn, chainette fringe, and mylar-tipped feathers, are visually muted; they are temporarily remanded to the past through the obscured form-line of a silhouette.

I remember attending a dance in 1993 at International Brotherhood near Porcupine, SD. Anyone who has been there cannot fail to be impressed by the many tipis raised on a ridge line. Their view is particularly spectacular at sunset when the details of painted canvas succumb to the approaching darkness and only the vaguest outline of the smoke flaps and tipi poles linger on. At that dusky moment, owl-light can jettison your imagination a hundred years back in time. The silhouettes are ageless, and so are the people their vision represents.

This leads me to wonder to what extent the term *traditional* really has anything more to do with the tribal past than it does with a segmental label for a division of a public activity known as powwow. If Blackfeet, Comanches, Cherokees, Omahas, Crows, and Lakotas all compete in the same traditional dance, then certainly the reference to traditional has nothing to do with



**Top Left** — Fancy shawl dancers at the Oglala Nation Fair and Powwow, August 1992. From the simple to the splendidous. Photo by Marla N. Powers. **Top Right** — Grass dancers, Oglala Nation Fair and Powwow, August 1992. From chainette fringe to rag-mop. Photo by Marla N. Powers. **Lower left** — Fancy dancer at Oglala Nation Fair and Powwow, August 1992. Note mylar tips on bustles. Photo by Marla N. Powers. **Lower Right** — Jingle dress dancers at an Oklahoma powwow, 1993. Photo by Joe Kazumura.

something perceived to be *authentic*. This is another term that perplexes us; one once synonymous with traditional, old-time. But today, authentic has been transformed into only a simulacrum of the past, a verisimilitude of reality without being real. Thus everything passed off as *traditional* today, by definition, is *unauthentic*. Paradox reigns because the terms have lost their meanings.

This conscious manipulation of tradition also means that

the heartfelt meaning of kinship, to the sacredness of religion, and to the memories of those who were born and sang and danced long before the all-powerful gods of competition washed desperate tribal traditions into a sea of undifferentiated Indianness.

But back to silhouettes. When I was a boy I used to travel to Oklahoma frequently, and although I spent most of my time on the Lakota reservations, mainly at Pine Ridge with relatives and

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powwowing in general, as popular as it is on the reservations and in cities all over the world, has little to do with individuals making a statement about their own identity, which after all is tribal not "pan"-tribal. At the time the late James H. Howard applied the term "pan-Indian" to the intertribal celebrations of the 1950s, many tribes were proudly resuscitating earlier tribal customs and ceremonies such as the O-ho-mo Lodge and Black Legging Society on the southern plains, and the Sun dance on the northern plains. What Howard called pan-Indianism then was premature, I think.[13] But today, rather than considering it a theory of acculturation, which it certainly was intended to be, it is more of a prophecy. Today the powwow, owing to its conscious uniformity, literally has become not only nationalized, but globalized. Similarities, even down to the sometimes mythical rationales for costumes and dances, are not so much reflective of tradition as they are mimetic. Powwows are not rooted in the past, they are rooted in themselves. Powwows are self-motivated, self-propelling, and self-fulfilling as if the tribal altruism of the past with an emphasis on the general welfare of the people, has been preempted by an ethnicified version of the *Miye* generation.[14] Even the new songs, whose melodies and tempos are drained down from the Canadian prairies and plains, now fitted with novel song texts, sing not of the exploits of famous chiefs or the honors bestowed upon the bravery and fortitude of men and women. Instead the words are reflexive, singers glorifying singing and dancing, in monotonous reprises shouted out in ungrammatical language (cipelo, cipelo, cici-cipelo) that make the traditional people recoil in choruses of desperation, "We are losing our culture!"[15]

Thus whatever we think or say about the significance of the terms traditional and old-style like the term authenticity they have become vestiges of the past. As simple categories of dance costumes and their attendant styles, the words cannot tell us very much about historic, cultural, or tribal identity. We must look elsewhere, focusing our vision away from the powwow grounds and into the tribally-discrete articulation of native language, to

friends, there still were many times that I attended Forty-nines and Stomp dances around Anadarko. I can remember going to a Forty-nine after the "Indian Fair" had ended for the night. It was pitch black out on the deserted dance grounds except for one puny light. As usual, there was much activity: young people milling about, girl-chasing and boy-chasing, drinking beer out of the trunks of cars, engaged in sudden outbursts of laughter, and respondent giggles. The friendly rivalry between Forty-nines and Stomp dances were separated only by the cacophonous clash of two traditions, song and shakers versus songs and drums, only 20 yards or so apart. When you tired of one, you ran to join the other and danced and danced until everyone, finally played out, evaporated into the stillness of the nearby camps where old folks slept to the rhythms of the night.

What I remember most about the Forty-nine is standing back watching the tight circles of dancers surrounding the singers, and everyone moving as a whole. I could not see anything but the outline of their heads and shoulders framed by the single light like dusty halos. The dancers collectively looked like a huge dark, dinner-plate shifting from left to right as if someone had dropped it on a wooden surface where it wobble never ever wanting to come to a full stop. What teases my memory is not the blithesome dancers holding arms, side-stepping, and singing out melismatic vocable occasionally punctuated by funny English words. What still haunts me is the silhouette.

Tradition almost always is contrasted with modern. But philosophically speaking, the two really are not opposites. Tradition is a state of mind; it is timeless, endless, and can refer only to a socially-constructed, shared belief in a time past in which no one ever actually lived. Tradition belongs to the generation of enduring memories.

On the other hand, modern is an historical concept. It can be seen, felt, and dated. It is unequivocal, unambiguous because people have direct knowledge of it. Paradoxically, every dancer who steps into the dance area for the first time is not only participating in the present, but shaping traditions for future



*Sioux dancers at Rosebud, 1900. Costumes are "typical old-style". Dancers are wearing roaches and war bonnets. Note the costume changes since the 1892 photo. John A. Anderson photo, courtesy of the Nebraska State Historical Society.*

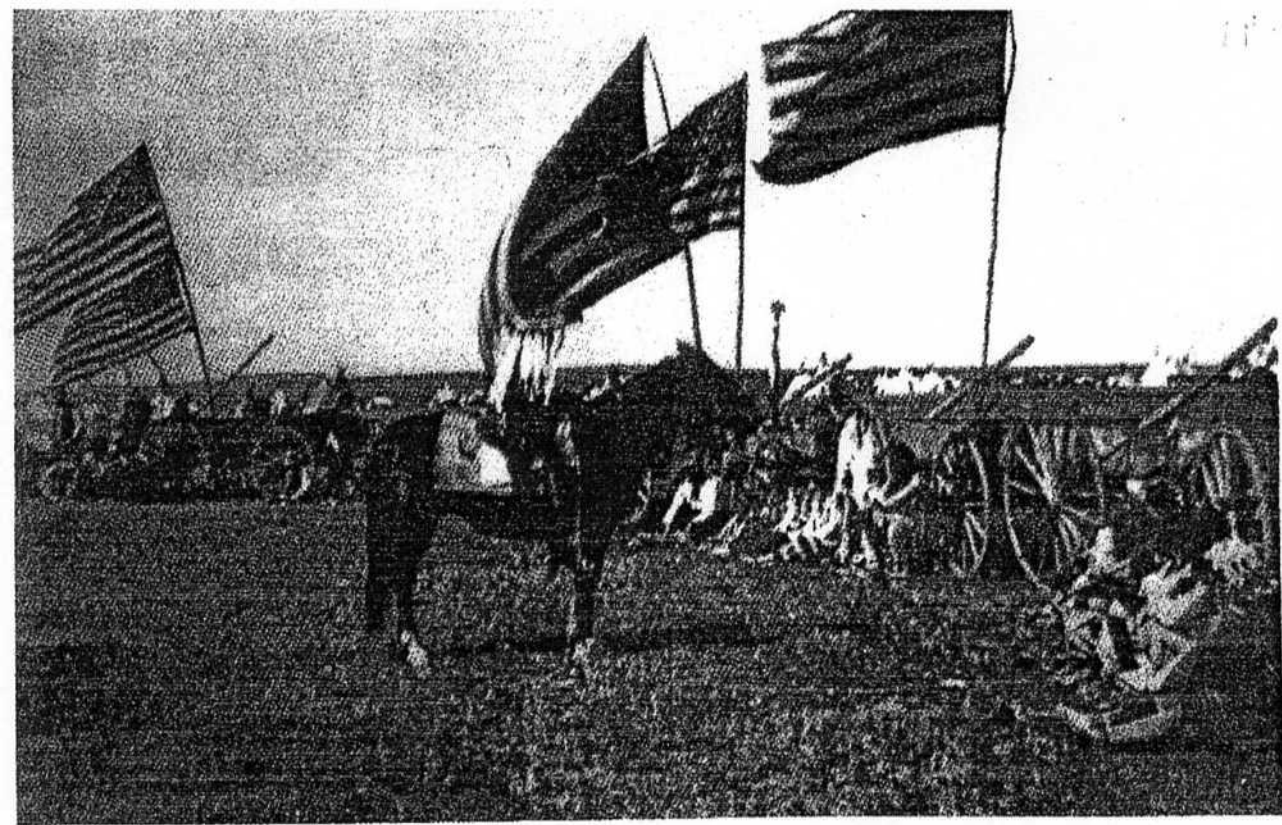
generations to come. If you look closely at her or his costume, you will see change. But then there still are the good ole' porky roaches and magnificent moccasins, and a host of beaded, and quilled, and feathered objects dangling from the dancer's body reminiscent of the past. And despite all the modern materials of the future that will be available to construct these costumes (and who can possibly predict what they might be?), once the light has faded, there still will remain silhouettes of the past.

## NOTES

1. C. Scott Evans (1994).
2. On the notion of fad see my recent article "Innovation in Lakota Powwow Costumes," *American Indian Art Magazine* 19(4):66-73,103, (Autumn) 1994. The point is that we are satisfied with viewing changes in our own clothing styles as possibly capricious, but we are unwilling to accept anything equally frivolous to account for historic changes in American Indian clothing and costuming. Also it should be noted that dance styles have changed much more rapidly for women than for men. For the symbolic importance of historic trends in women's dance patterns see M.N. Powers (1988).
3. There is a problem in trying to pair these costumes by gender. For example, if one discounts regional categories (northern, southern), or textural categories (buckskin, cloth), it is logi-

cal to pair Traditional men's with Traditional women's costume. However, when we look at the remaining four categories; Fancy men's is paired with Fancy shawl, and Grass dance with Jingle dress. But the Grass dance and Fancy shawl appeared on the Lakota reservations as the new men's and women's styles in the 1960s and thus long before the Jingle dress became popular in the 1980s.

4. My first series of articles on American Indian music appeared in *American Indian Tradition Magazine* between 1960 and 1962. They have been republished in a single volume, *American Indian Music* (1994b). In particular see "The Omaha Dance," as well as Powers (1990a; 1994c, 1994d).
5. Of course Sun dance and Ghost dance costumes also are regarded today as traditional. However, certainly Ghost dance costumes must have seemed modern when they came in vogue in 1888-1890.
6. For example see Garcia (1991) for a history of the Jingle dress; Howard (1960) for the Grass dance, and Powers (1994 [1966]) for the Feather costume.
7. Postmodern is one of those ambiguous, ill-defined terms that has received undue attention in the academic world. Here I use it to mean a definite break with older, "modern" rules governing appropriate dress. Characteristic of this trend is the sometimes random combination of old and new. Another term is syncretic, but it is too general to really have any meaning. Similarly, dialectic refers to the process by which



The American Indian | The American Flag

Text from Flint Institute of Arts

Photos by Dennis Stelz

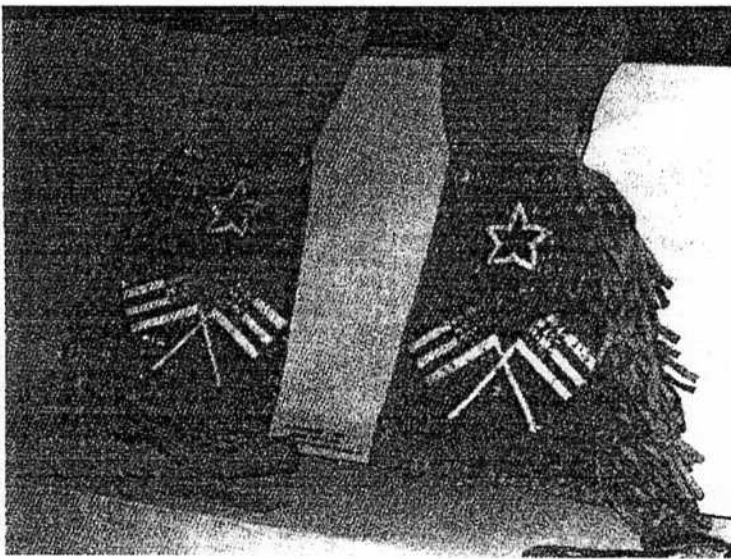
**A** heretofore undocumented area of American Indian art, based upon the use of the design of the American flag and other patriotic symbols, is explored in an exhibition of 200 items organized by the Flint Institute of Arts; Flint, Michigan.

Titled, THE AMERICAN INDIAN AND THE AMERICAN FLAG, this exhibition is scheduled for its last showing at The Heard Museum; Phoenix, Arizona; December 5 - January 16, 1977. The exhibition opened the Bicentennial year with a three-month showing at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in New York City and has traveled across the country.

Dr. G. Sturart Hodge, Director of the Flint Institute of Arts, and Richard A. Pohrt, a Native American scholar, have been locating examples of patriotic motifs in American Indian art for the past three years. During their research for the award-winning 1973 Flint Institute exhibition, ART OF THE GREAT LAKES INDIAN, the importance of this phase of Native American art became evident, and the idea of an exhibition to celebrate the nation's Bicentennial birthday was formed. Dr. Hodge and Mr. Pohrt made many trips across the country, to see items and to arrange for loans from the many major museums which are represented in the exhibition along with over three dozen private collectors.

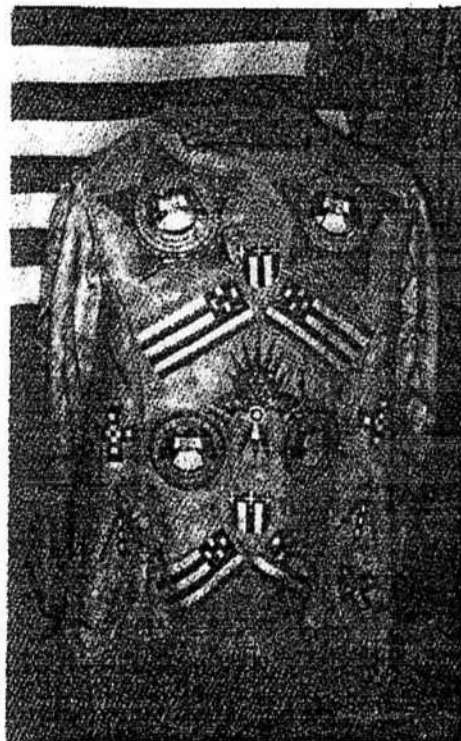
American Indian artifacts and household items have been embellished with designs inspired by the American flag and other patriotic symbols for the past 100 years. It is surprising to discover that the American Indian used such patriotic motifs at all, but historically, the American Indian was quite familiar with the banners of Europeans from the beginning of the American Revolution.

By 1775, all tribes in the Mississippi River Valley and eastward to the Atlantic had had at least contact with explorers, missionaries, traders and settlers. Spanish ex-

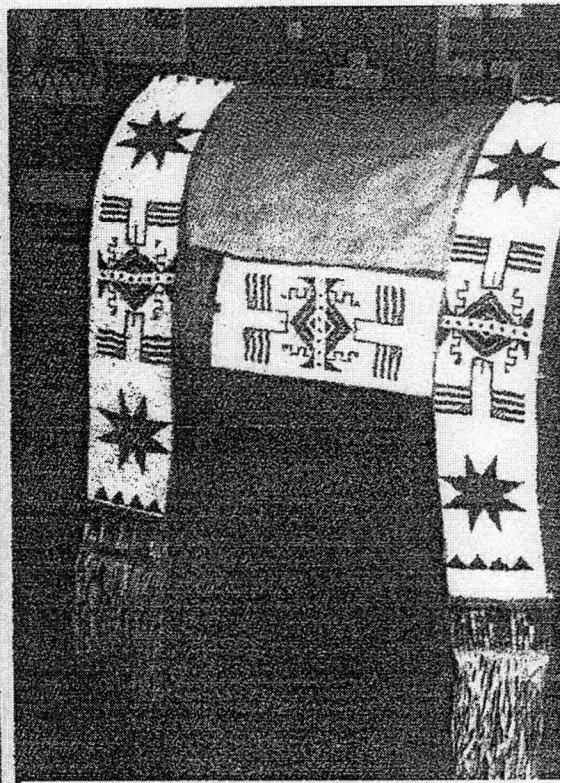
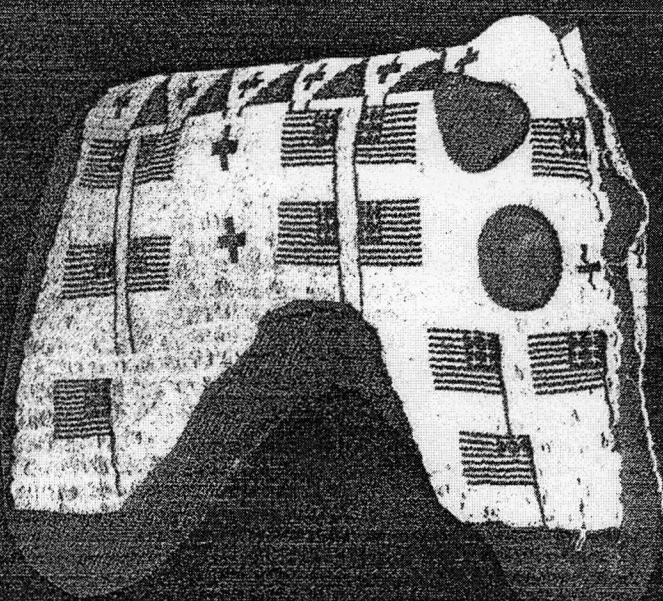


above: GAUNTLETS, Sioux, C.1900. Quillwork on cowhide attached to commercially tanned gloves. Red background quillwork. Exhibit # 76; lent by Richard Edwards, Jr., Toledo, Ohio.

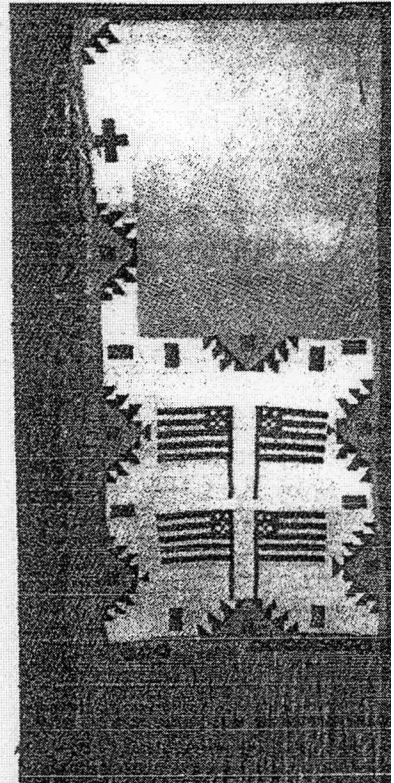
below: MAN'S JACKET, Sioux, C.1890. Porcupine quillwork on deerskin. Wings of eagles in purple quills. Military chevrons on sleeves in blue, white and orange quillwork. Exhibit # 5; lent by Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York, 10/4309.



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## THE HORSE

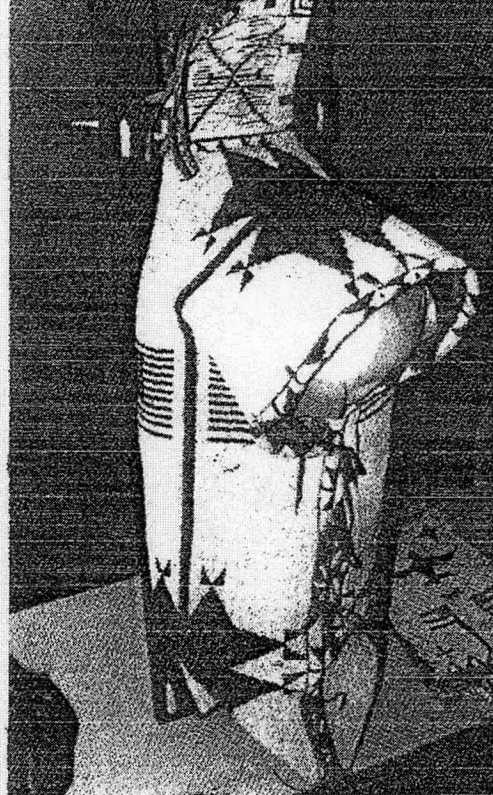


above: HORSE HEAD COVER, Sioux; C.1900. Note both sides are different. White background. Geometric designs are red, navy blue, medium blue and yellow. Exhibit # 193; lent by Joe Eason, Houston, Texas.

r-above: SADDLE BLANKET, Sioux; C.1910. Canvas center; beadwork on cowhide. Wrapped quillwork at bottom with hawk bells. Exhibit # 89; lent by Joe Eason.

right: SADDLE BAG, Sioux; C.1900. Note hawk bells at bottom. Some have probably been lost. Geometric designs in navy blue, medium blue and red. These decorative bags have no openings. Identical on both sides. Exhibit # 90; lent by Chandler-Pohrt, Flint, Michigan.





## THE CHILDREN

top, left: BABY CARRIER, Sioux, 1890.  
Geometric design in Navy blue, yellow, red;  
centers in green with navy blue cross.  
Exhibit # 46; lent by Philbrook Art Center.

top, center: BABY CARRIER, Kiowa, 1890.  
Partially beaded in yellow painted deerskin.  
Exhibit # 70; lent by Museum of the American  
Indian, Heye Foundation.

top, right: DOLL, Sioux, C.1910. Complete  
with strike-a-light pouch, awl case, knife  
sheaths and cowhide spoon. Exhibit # 24;  
lent by Rowena Martinez, Taos, New Mexico.

left: BABY CARRIER, Kiowa, 1890. Typical  
Kiowa curvilinear designs. Flags at top.  
Identical designs on both sides. Exhibit #  
81; lent by Robert Brewer, Alameda, Ca.  
NOTE: moccasins, Cheyenne, 1955. A tribute  
to a Korean War Air Force veteran. Exhibit  
#126; lent by Benson, Lanford Sierre Madre, Ca.

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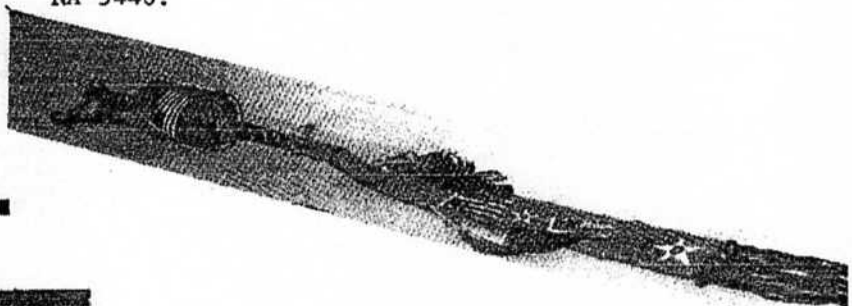
PAGE 4: "4th of July, 1905," Gros Venture & Assinboin. Photo by S.W. Matterson, exhibit # 137; courtesy of Milwaukee Public Museum, 112026.

left: "Two Oglala Men Dressed for a Dance." C.1900. Exhibit # 28, courtesy of Lowie Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley.

below, left: "Thaddeas Redwater or Mayom," Cheyenne, 1914. Exhibit # 102; lent by Smithsonian Institution, National Anthropological Archives, 226-A.

below, right: "Mrs. Eustace Bellcour," Chippewa, 1915. Exhibit # 72; lent by Minnesota Historical Society, 6785.

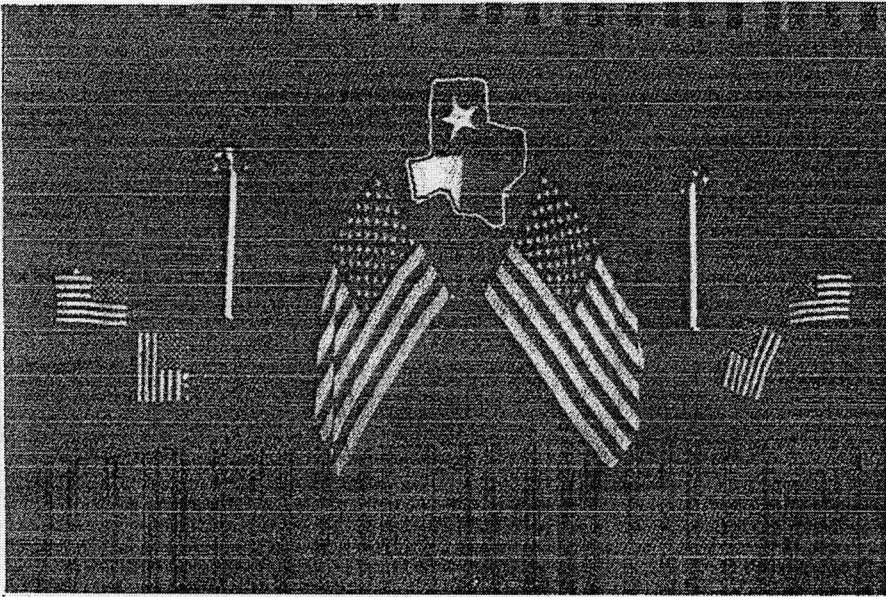
below: RATTLE, Sioux C.1890. Beaded tin can attached to long cowhide handle. Hawk bells at base. Medium blue bead background. Exhibit # 111; lent by The University Museum, Philadelphia, Pa. NA 5440.



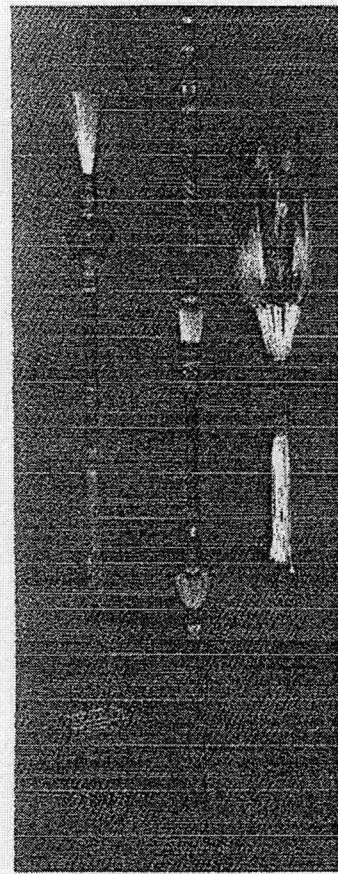
# THE PAST



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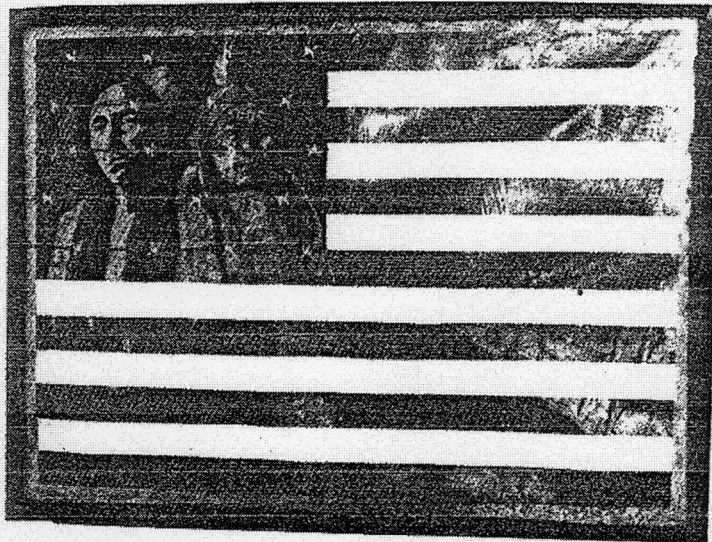
above: WOMANS SHAWL, Sioux, 1958. Printed flags in corners outlined in sequins. Two large crossed flags in center. Exhibit # 111; lent by Lessard Collection, Mission, South Dakota.



right: RATTLE, C.1965; STAFF, C.1973; FAN, C.1965. Gourd stitch beadwork in 13/0 "cut" beads. Exhibit # 56; lent by Lessard Collection, Mission, South Dakota.

below: "WE THE PEOPLE" by Wayne Eagle Boy, 1971. Acrylic on buffalo hide with two Native American figures in place of stars behind barbed wire. Exhibit # 171; lent by Art Wagon Gallery, Scottsdale, Arizona.

**THE  
PRESENT**



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# Indian || Flag

(continued from page 5)

plorers had penetrated into the Southwest and the Pacific Coast, and before that in 1541, Coronado had reached the buffalo plains of what is now Kansas. These experiences with European banners shaped the American Indian attitudes toward the American flag and later were reinforced by the pride they felt in things American: Buffalo Bill shows, rodeos, powwows, 4th of July celebrations, and trade with travelers across the country.

In his essay which appears in the exhibit catalog Pohrt details many of the military engagements and conflicts into which the American Indian was drawn during the settling of this nation. He states that the object (the flag) had great meaning for the American Indians, since they believed that the power of the owner was contained in his war symbols. Thus, the flag became a source of power, and was included in war bundles and sacred bundles, to insure success in battle and protection against injury. Fur traders took advantage of the high value which the tribes placed upon ownership of a flag, and very often traded flags for the buffalo robes and other items.

With this background, it is easy to understand why the tribes of the late 19th century began to design their own personal flags. For in addition to the attachment they had to the symbolic meaning of the military insignia, Pohrt points out that they were intrigued with the designs, since they had not encountered them nor the colors in which they were depicted until they became familiar with the military.

The exhibition includes examples of clothing, household items, horse regalia into which these patriotic symbols were incorporated. Examples

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of the many forms of Indian art are represented, from 35 tribes in the U.S., Mexico and Canada. Techniques and media are varied, and include weaving, quillwork, beadwork, basketry, moosehair embroidery, birchbark and painting.

The Indian artist often took artistic license in the use of these designs. Tremendous freedom was exercised in scale, colors and numbers of stars and stripes.

Contemporary Native American artists work in different media; acrylics and oils. Their works have a place in this exhibition and illustrate the changes in the attitudes of the Native American. Of particular interest is the painting by Wayne Eagleboy, "We The People," painted on buffalo hide, showing, in place of the stars, the faces of American Indians behind barbed wire.

Pohrt's essay in the catalog includes a quotation from an American Indian friend, which attests to the feeling they have for the United States of America; "This is our country. It makes no difference whose name is on the deed. We are the landlords." Certainly, the scope and beauty of the work shown in this important exhibition, work little known to the general public, is affirmation of this statement.

A fully illustrated, 160 page catalog is available from the institute for \$9.00. The Flint Institute of Arts, 1120 East Kearsley St., Flint, Michigan 48503, is open Tuesday-Saturday from 10am to 5pm.

All photographs, pages 4 - 9, are from the Flint Institute of Arts' exhibit "The American Indian and The American Flag;" photographed at the Houston Museum of Natural Science; Houston, Texas; October, 1976.

