

Men's Straight Dance

Photo Essay Illustrating Typical Contemporary Dance Outfits

Photographs by Chris Roberts

Text by C. Scott Evans

While attending a powwow celebration, one will observe that dancers wear different types or styles of outfits or costumes. On closer scrutiny, one will notice each style of outfit has a particular dance style unique to that style of outfit. This is not to say that each style is limited to specific dance movements — each individual is free to dance his or her particular style as they (and their relatives) see fit.

All of the dancing is typically divided into eight distinct styles — four for women and four for men. All of the styles have their roots in the warrior dance societies of the mid to late 1800s (called by many names by many tribes).

Men's Straight Dance

In Oklahoma today, the warrior society dances of old still exist among the Osage, Ponca, Pawnee, and other tribes. After moving to Indian Territory, tribes held onto the old ways, preserving many traditions. Economically this was very hard, but the Osage people never stopped dancing. The outfit worn today at the warrior society dances is the same one worn at the powwow. This outfit is strikingly refined as to give it a tailored look.

The common elements are the porcupine headdress (just as the



traditional dancers—the northern equivalent), ribbonwork, leggings, and a trailer extending down the back of the dancer. (Some dancers do wear turbans; some dancers do not wear trailers; some dancers do not have any ribbonwork; but among all tribes this outfit is easily

recognized by the common elements.)

The Straight Dance is graceful and very dignified. Rhythm, as with all powwow dancing, is extremely important. The warrior society songs typically sung for these men, often speak of warrior deeds.



Man's Dance

at National Powwow 11

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National Powwow has as its goals the promotion of education, an interest in Native American culture in our youth, honoring our veterans and the recognition of the accomplishments of our elders and youth. The Hethuska Ceremonial held at NPW11 met all those objectives. The Hethuska Ceremonial must have a purpose and serve a need in order to be held. All organizations and individuals who follow this way are dedicated to taking care of the elderly and those in need. The dance had that purpose.

The Wednesday dance had 92 dancers and 18 at the drum. Friday was the traditional meal which served 175 people. On Saturday the dancing resumed with 110 dancers and 18 singers with four hours of dancing.

These photos capture only a small number of the men that danced those two days in July. Photos by Weird Wayne.



Headman:

- Damon Roughface (the Ponca Nudahunga)

Whipmen:

- Kerby Feathers (Ponca Hethuska)
- Sandy Rhoades (Ponca Hethuska)

Ponca Water Carriers:

- Schyler Blueback
- Montana Feathers
- Jeffrey Roughface
- Damon Roughface

Head Singer:

- Eli Warrior

Cooks:

- Pawnee and Chuck Duncan and staff

Headman, Damon Roughface, Ponca Nudahunga in red vest. To his right is Kirby Feathers; on his left is Smitty Smith (Ponca Hethuska), Ed LaFave (AIS Hethuska) Event Coordinator, and Byron Loehman, (White Bear Hethuska).



