

# Powwow songs started by Plains

The word "powwow" comes from the Algonquin word for a curing ceremony, pauau.

Non-natives who witnessed this religious event mistakenly used "powwow" to describe any large gathering of Indian people.

Most of the songs originated with the Plains people, in their own tongue. The lyrics often told of heroic deeds and of battles won or lost.

When other Indian nations adopted the songs, they had little knowledge of the original language and they often invented meaningless syllables to replace the words.

These 'vocables' now dominate the songs at powwows, though they are sometimes mixed in with passages in the original language, or in the language spoken by drummers.

The costumes are different for each of the main dancing styles in competitive powwows.

The costumes and main styles of dance will be demonstrated this weekend during the annual Grand River Champion of Champions Powwow at Chiefswood Park on Highway 54.

The 12th annual event opens at 11:30 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday with dancing, entry parade and displays of arts and crafts.

## Traditional

Traditional dancers tap-step along the ground in a slow, stately rhythm, and the men often depict an old legend or the hunt.

The feet of female traditional dancers never fully leave the ground,

to symbolize their ties with the earth.

The outfits incorporate items such as furs, feathers and the heads of small animals.

## Fancy dancing

A relatively new form of dancing, where dancers twist and spin in rapid beats, blend more traditional moves with such contemporary styles as break dancing.

Women usually wear a bright colored satin-like dress or a more traditional-styled buckskin outfit, topped by a colorful shawl.

Men's outfits are an extravagant mix of the brightest feathers and bead work.

## Grass dance

The grass dance is one of the oldest performed at the powwow. Traditionally, it was a warrior's dance in which only members of the grass dance society were allowed to perform.

It is believed to have originated from the Pawnee, in the mid-western United States, when dancers gathered to beat down the grass for events.

It is performed only by men, who wear brightly colored headgear and outfits made of colorful bits of yarn and leather.

## Jingle dance

This style, performed only by women, originated with the Ojibwa people. The outfits are made of shiny cones which jingle when they move. The dance involves sliding, shuffling and a fast sidestep.