

SOUTHERN DRUM PROTOCOL

One of the most important things in the life of the Native American is the drum and the songs which go with each action he/she performs. Without the drum, and the singers around it, the Indian could not have a dance. Being a Head Singer is a great honor. The man who receives this honor is chosen for his knowledge and experience at the drum. It is no wonder he is treated with great respect. The head singer determines all the songs that will be sung, and when they will be sung, and has complete control of activities around the drum.

A "Closed Drum" means the Head Singer has chosen the singers he wants to sing with him and he has "closed the drum" to other singers. The dance arena could be filled with good singers, but they do not sit at the drum unless they are asked or get the OK from the head Singer.

The Head singer has the right to lead all the songs, or he may choose other men to lead and help carry the load. The Head Singer may "Open" the drum at his discretion. This means that anyone qualified may lead songs, when their turn comes, as the lead is passed clockwise around the drum. Once a singer takes his or her seat at the drum, he should stay there until there is a break. If they leave the drum they should inform the head singer of his intentions. While at the drum, singers should concentrate on the songs and the beat of the drum. Since Indian songs are generally sung "off the beat" the additional concentration required is to assure the song is sung correctly. Singers do not leave the drum to dance, unless there is a special or another drum is singing. All singers must give their best effort at the drum to help enhance the dance experience for all.

Some additional things to know:

1. Food should not be eaten at the drum.
2. Liquor is never permitted at the drum.
3. Drinks (coffee, cokes, lemonade) and smoking is permitted at the drum.
4. Nothing is ever passed over the drum, but rather, around it in a clockwise rotation.
5. Women never sit at, beat on, or carry the drum. The women singers sit in a row behind the men, usually around the head singer.
6. If a "Special" is requested, the person making the request should ask the head singer and make a monetary donation to the drum.
7. All money given to the drum is divided by the head singer to all singers. Usually, it is equally divided, but occasionally the Head Singer will reward his most reliable help with a greater share of the donations.
8. People dressed in Indian clothes should not sit at the drum.
9. The placing of an Eagle feather on the drum stops (ends) the Pow Wow. This is only done in extreme cases, like a severe break in protocol.
10. Taping of songs should be done only with the permission of the head singer.