

Order of the Arrow Nawakwa Lodge

Native American Indian Dance Team

Aho !

Welcome.....to begin with the Dance Team:

You will learn dance steps and craft your regalia in the traditional ways of the Native American Indians. *In all thing and at all times, you will show respect for the culture.* You will learn first, and then you will follow.

Begin by studying tribes from this area or other regions of the United States. Select a tribe that you want to research. Select a time period for copying regalia. The late 1800's to early 1900's will give you the most information. Gather pictures of regalia and/or descriptions of what they wore at the time for ceremonies and celebrations.

Research the Dance Styles currently recognized at PowWows and by the Order of the Arrow. These are **Old Style, Traditional, Grass, Fancy, and Straight**. Begin with Old Style for ease of creating basic regalia, but plan on growing into the other styles if they interest you. Each has a different dance step and regalia.

Regalia

This is your personal outfit. Note that this is called an "outfit" or "regalia" and never a costume. We do not dress-up and pretend. We are serious hobbyists, if not proven Native American Indians by bloodline. When we put on our regalia, we become one with the traditions of the Native American Indian culture and represent our knowledge with respect.

Create your regalia in its many pieces and keep it all together in one container. Keep it clean and in good repair. Work hard to create pieces that make you proud to show your fine crafting. Treat all regalia, both yours and your teammates, with great respect. Only pick up your own, unless invited to handle others regalia by its owner.

Basic Regalia (can be created for under \$100)

Choker

Worn around the neck. Construct with a kit or make your own by following an authentic pattern. Make three or four rows at most. Two rows is best to begin. Higher row counts are reserved for high ranking members of a tribe. Do not be presumptuous.

Shirt

Make from a pattern or purchase from a NAI source. 4 yards of one color calico print. Simple, tiny print pattern on basic color background preferred. 100% cotton. The shirt is full cut and flowing and hangs over the top of Breech Cloth and Leggings.

Breech Cloth

A continuous piece of fabric running between the legs and hanging in front and back, held up by a belt. The length (front and back) and style is reflective of your tribe. 1 yard of heavy fleece cloth, dark in color. This was traditionally made from a military wool blanket – dark blue from the North, dark gray from the South. Can be lined with cotton (shirt material) and decorated with ribbons and beadwork.

Leggings

Hang from the belt securing the breech cloth; the leggings vary greatly in style and material. The primary difference is cloth or deerskin. 2 yards of the same or similar cloth material as breech cloth recommended for first pair of leggings.

Outer Belt or sash

A decorative wrap that ties or buckles around your waist on top of your shirt. The belt can be made from fabric or leather. Beading, quill work, ribbon work and decorations admired. Should be sturdy enough to hold small bags or sheath knife.

Moccasins

No bare feet allowed in the dance circle. Use a kit for first pair (the one in the Scout Shop is okay). These can be custom made from leather and decorated after more experience in crafting. Several styles to investigate based on tribe you represent.

Miscellaneous materials required for all items above:

- 1 inch wide double fold bias tape – four packages, same color
- 3/8 inch wide single fold bias tape – two/three packages, different complementary colors
- 1 spool of durable polyester thread for sewing up shirt and breech cloth
- 2 packages of 72 inch leather lacings – for leggings and miscellaneous attachments
- Material for belts. Belt for breech cloth and leggings can be a scout belt or typical store bought belt, but outer belt should be traditional material
- A sewing machine if you know how to use it.
- Premade beaded strips or rosettes for decoration (*just* to get you started, you will learn to bead on the loom or by stitches)
- Small bells (good quality with rich sound)
- Feathers – natural or painted to look “real”
- Avoid plastic and cheap fluorescent “Indian kits”.

Hand Items (you can borrow, but plan on making one soon)

When you dance, you carry items of importance, honor, and pride. These are very personal. Study the pictures of those you emulate. Items should be lightweight and easy to handle. Have at least two – one for each hand. A wing fan is a typical beginning item made from a piece of goose or turkey wing or constructed from individual feathers. The wing fan is a welcome item when the dance ring gets hot.

Blanket (not required at first, but you will soon want one)

Wool is preferred. Use it to mark your place in the dance arbor, or to sit on while crafting. Use it to hold off the chill of night or the early morning dew. A blanket is very valuable. Collect and trade many and be a warrior of great wealth.

Sources for supplies and ideas:

1. Crazy Crow Trading Post (catalogue) www.crazycrow.com
2. The Wandering Bull (catalogue) www.wanderingbull.com
3. Grey Owl Indian Crafts (catalogue) www.greyowlcrafts.com
4. Buffalo Chips Indian Arts and Crafts (catalogue) www.buffalochipsindianart.com
5. Whispering Wind (magazine) www.whisperingwind.com

Beyond the Basics

Headgear – The team will supply head roaches. The more experienced dancers have first choice. You can make or purchase your own headgear as you wish and to suit your regalia.

Bustles – Plan on making a bustle. This is worn on the waist at the rear of the dancer. This takes time, effort and research, but any self-respecting dancer wears one in most dance styles. These are prized possessions and difficult to borrow.

As you grow and learn, there are more materials to use and skills to learn. Very detailed and intricate crafting can be learned. Special traditional dance steps that bring joy to you and admiration from others can be repeated. You can perform with the team at Lodge functions. With experience, you can compete at regional and national levels as a dancer and crafter. The team is here to support and encourage you. How far you go is up to you. How much you invest in time and money varies greatly between each team member. All find their own way and all will be commended for their effort. If you seek respect, first you must give respect. All are welcome in the circle. Learn its ways.

Checklist

The attached checklist will help you organize your long range planning for developing regalia. The team and advisors are available for direction and encouragement.