

NIIMI'IDIWAG (THEY DANCE):

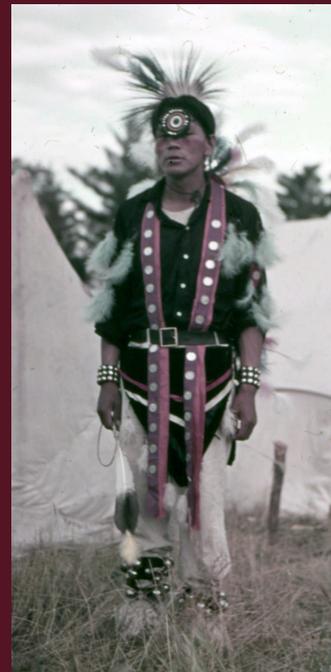
Exploring the History of Powwow



Fannie Pulliam Colhoff (1878-1926), who moved from Pine Ridge (Oglala Lakota) to Red Lake



Leech Lake Dancer, Onigum Powwow



Regalia with ankle and wrist bells; Red Lake Nation Powwow, ca. 1950s

Boozhoo! Welcome!

We appreciate your interest in the Niimi'idiwag (They Dance) exhibit and programs! Beltrami County Historical Society is excited to offer this exhibit and program series in partnership with Bemidji Public Library. We hope that this exhibit, program series, and guide inspire you to learn more about powwow culture and attend local powwows! Chi Miigwech (Big Thanks!) to our exhibit and program consultants Cecelia McKeig and Leah Monroe, special guests, program educators, and volunteers who supported the development of this exhibit. Thanks also to our in-kind sponsor Kraus-Anderson for our exhibit banners. We encourage you to check out our mini-exhibit at Visit Bemidji and our social media and website (beltramihistory.org) for more photos and exhibit information!

Beltrami County Historical Society and Bemidji Public Library invite you to each of the programs in this series focused on different aspects of the powwow. No admission fee is required for program attendance. These programs, and many others, are made possible through the Minnesota Legacy Amendment that supports the arts, culture, and heritage of Minnesota. Recordings of past programs in this series are available through the Historical Society's and Bemidji Public Library's websites/Facebook.

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CLEAN WATER
LAND &
LEGACY
AMENDMENT

Beltrami County Historical Society and the Bemidji Public Library present

NIIMI'IDIWAG: THEY DANCE

an exhibit and program series

Battle of Sugar Point
with Cecelia McKeig
March 12, 2022 2 PM
Bemidji Public Library

Opening Ceremony
March 16, 2022 6 PM
Beltrami History Center

Powwow Music: The Drum Circle
March 19, 2022 6 PM
Beltrami History Center

Exploring Powwow
Regalia & Dance
March 26, 2022 6 PM
Beltrami History Center

All About Fry Bread
with Tana Morgan-Robinson
April 23, 2022 10 AM
Harmony Foods Co-op

Powwow Etiquette

by the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

- Bring a chair with you, as there is often not enough seating for everyone. Chairs under the dance arbor (where dances take place) are reserved for dancers only. Chairs with a shawl or blanket draped over them are also reserved.
 - Arrive on time to keep the event running as smoothly as possible.
 - Do not enter the dance arbor after it has been blessed. The only time guests may enter the arbor is to participate in inter-tribal dances, round dances, blanket dances, or honoring dances announced by the master of ceremonies. Many powwows have a veteran dance, and everyone in attendance is asked to rise and remove their hats as a sign of honor and respect.
 - Remain standing and remove any hats during the entire grand entry — the master of ceremonies will announce when it begins.
 - Do not refer to dancers' regalia (clothing) as costumes. These handcrafted outfits are given much thought, time, and expense.
 - Do not touch a dancer's regalia without asking his or her permission.
 - Feathers are sacred. If one falls, do not pick it up. Leave it where it is.
 - If you want a particular dancer or group of dancers to pose for a photograph, please get their permission. If you are a professional photographer who may use the image in the future for a commercial project, please get permission from the dancer(s) and have them sign a release form.
 - Photographing dancers during competitions is usually acceptable. The master of ceremonies generally announces when it is unacceptable to take photographs.
 - Alcohol and drugs are prohibited at powwows.
 - Pay attention to the master of ceremonies, who often explains powwow protocol to help visitors learn and feel more comfortable. After all, visitors are supposed to relax and have fun!
 - Elders first! Native Americans highly value and respect the wisdom that comes with age. When eating, children and young adults serve the Elders, who always eat first. Never step ahead of someone in line who might be older than you, as this is considered very rude behavior.
 - Do not use Native American clichés or make "Indian jokes," even if intended to be fun. Calling Native American men "Chief" would be considered very disrespectful, for instance.
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Origin Story of the Jingle Dress

The dance itself began just over a century ago when the granddaughter of an Ojibwe medicine man fell sick. As the man slept he dreamt, over and over, of four women as his spirit guides wearing Jingle Dresses and dancing. The women taught the man how to make the dress, what songs to play, and how to perform the dance. The spirits told him that making the dress and performing the dance would make his granddaughter well.

When the man awoke he set out and made the dress, and once completed the tribe gathered to watch the ill girl dance. At first, she was too weak and had to be supported and carried by the tribe. Slowly she gained her strength and performed the dance on her own, cured of her sickness (National Congress of American Indians, 2020).

The origin story of the Jingle Dress is attributed to the Red Lake Nation, the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, and the Whitefish Bay Ojibwe. The story dates from the early 1900s at the height of the flu pandemic.



Jingle Dress Dancers, Red Lake Nation Powwow, ca. 1950s

Give Away Ceremonies (miinidiwag), either by people being honored or in honor of someone else, are often a time for event hosts to distribute goods, food (see right), or gifts to honor an individual, someone's memory, an event, or activity. The person may first be honored by an honor song (McCluskey, 2009).



Origin Story of the Grass Dance

The dominant legend is that a Northern Plains boy, born handicapped yet yearning to dance, was told by his medicine man to seek inspiration in the prairie. Upon doing so, the boy had a vision of himself dancing in the style of the swaying grasses; he returned to his village, shared his vision, and eventually was given back the use of his legs through the first-ever grass dance.

A practical origin is more generally cited, however: To settle a new area, create an appropriate venue for a tribal meeting, or secure an arena for a ceremony, high grasses had to be trampled down to ensure visibility. Scouts would stomp on the grasses to flatten them, and the grass dance grew from there.



Nathaniel McDonald in Grass Dance regalia at the 2018 Healing Powwow at Sanford Bemidji Medical Center.
Photo by Jordan Shearer.

Yet another strain of the dance's genesis points toward the importance of dried grass in the warrior's life: It could be used as tinder, or even as makeshift stockings, for warmth. The regalia honors the role of grass in the warrior's life—and indeed, grass dance societies often grew from warrior societies. In fact, a grisly theory states that once upon a time, warriors would do victory dances with scalps attached to their garments. Dried grass came to stand in for scalps, then yarn for grass. (Indian Country Today, 2011).

The Grass Dance likely originated with a tribe of the Great Plains (Omaha-Ponca or the Dakota or Lakota Sioux). The dance was almost certainly passed from the Dakota to the Anishinaabe communities of this region.

Significance of the Eagle Feather



Dancer, Leech Lake Days at Cass Lake, 2016

The eagle (*migizi*) is the prayer carrier and messenger of the Anishinabe people. As the eagle soars across the skies, one knows he is carrying the prayers to the Creator. The eagle has great significance for the Anishinabe and all Native American people when it comes to healing ceremonies and ceremonies honoring and respecting other people. Although people of different cultures may have different beliefs, respecting others' beliefs is part of the growing process in the Anishinabe way of life (AAANativeArts.com).

Eagle feathers are important in a variety of Native American ceremonies, including Ojibwe naming ceremonies, as well as powwows. Eagle feathers or simulated eagle feathers are frequently used in regalia.

If a dancer loses a feather and it drops to the ground during the dance, the drumming is halted and an elder or senior dancer retrieves the feather and asks the great spirit to excuse the transgression. The seriousness of the eagle feather touching the ground depends upon the traditional values of the group but it is a serious happening and should never occur. A non-native person is not allowed to own an eagle feather except under special circumstances (Cecelia McKeig, 2022).

The Moccasin game (Makizinataadiwin in Ojibwe) is a gambling game that is thought to originate between the Ojibwe and Dakota tribes to settle a dispute over an elk. Moccasin is a hunting and hiding game, and drums and songs are an integral part of the game. Moccasin is one of many games or competitions that may occur during a Powwow.



Upcoming Local Powwows

Memorial Pow Wow Traditional Pow Wow

May 27-29, 2022

Veterans Memorial Pow Wow Grounds, Cass Lake, MN 56633

Waa Wiye Gaa Maag (Round Lake) Traditional Pow Wow

June 17-19, 2022

S. Lake, MN 56681

Leech Lake Days Contest Pow Wow

June 24-26, 2022

Veterans Memorial Pow Wow Grounds, Cass Lake, MN 56633

Red Lake Independence Days Celebration

July, 2022

Red Lake, MN 56671

Mii Gwitch Mahnomen Days Traditional Pow Wow

July 15-17, 2022

Ball Club, MN 56636

Onigum Traditional Pow Wow

July 22-24, 2022

Onigum, MN 56484

Cha Cha Bah Ning Traditional Pow Wow

Aug. 26-28, 2022

Inger, MN 56636

Penomah Labor Day Pow Wow

September 3-5, 2022

Penomah, MN 56666

Sagasweive Traditional Pow Wow

Sept. 9-11, 2022

Veterans Memorial Pow Wow Grounds, Cass Lake, MN 56633

Battle Point Traditional Pow Wow

Sept. 16-18, 2022

Battle – Sugar Point, MN 56641



Dancer, Leech Lake Days at Cass Lake, 2016

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