

The Grass Dance Outfit ORDER OF THE ARROW - WWW

MAIN PARTS

Jeff D. Brewer

This guide to the grass dance outfit is not by any means the “bible” as there are a lot of different ways and opinions on how to do things. Outfit styles are forever changing and evolving. The latest in Powwow Fashions can be seen at www.powwows.com. Check out our Lodge website at www.lodge104.com

Grass dance outfits today have either yarn or ribbon in the length of 12 -14 inches long. Some dancers choose to use cut cloth which gives the appearance of ribbon. Shabby cut cloth is not acceptable on the dance floor. The preferred beadwork on a grass dance outfit today is lazy/lane stitch.

Shirts:

Shirts are made out of satin/silk material to have a shiny appearance. Some dancers choose to wear a button-up shirt with a contrasting color, and some dancers choose to add elaborate cloth appliqué designs that are sewn on to the shirt. A common fabric used in the appliqué cloth designs is confetti dot fabric which will add a shiny appearance. Most shirts have a collar. The length of the sleeves can vary. Ribbon shirts are not worn by Grass Dancers today.

Cape:

Capes are made out of the same satin/silk material that the pants and apron are. The cape is worn over the shirt. Ribbon or yarn is attached on the edge of the cape. Some dancers choose to add beadwork to the cape. Some dancers choose to add elaborate cloth appliqué designs on the front and back of the cape.

Pants:

The same satin/silk material that was purchased for your shirt is also used for the pants. At the bottom of the pant legs are the elaborate cloth designs. Ribbon or yarn is also attached at the pants. Some use Angora anklets that are worn below the bells.

Apron:

The material used in the shirt and pants also needs to be used on the apron. Ribbon or yarn is attached to the edges of the apron. A general rule has been that the back of the apron is more decorated than the front. Usually the apron is connected with a belt threaded through the two apron pieces. The design of the shirt and pants needs to be consistent with the apron. The back usually has ribbon work and beadwork.

Side Tabs:

Side tabs are usually added in on the sides of either apron to add more detail. The material used is the same material used for the apron. Some side tabs are fully beaded with ribbon covering the edge of the material. Side tabs are generally attached to the apron belt around the waist.

ACCESSORIES:**Harness:**

The "H" Harness, or just often called a harness, is an item that both grass dancers and fancy dancers wear around the neck. It is usually worn outside the belt and extends to just below the knees. The "H" harness is often lazy stitched and applied to fabric. Other harness can have ribbon work or elaborate fabric designs. The prized position is the fully beaded harness.

Cuffs:

Incorporate the design of the shirt and apron into the cuffs, which are worn on the wrists. Most cuffs have ribbon work or ribbon hanging off at the ends, and the best ones are fully beaded with lazy stitch.

Armbands/Wings:

Armbands or wings, which are worn on the upper arms and match the cuffs and incorporate their design. The better ones will be beaded. A very popular style is to have the ends notched. These are rarely seen on the dance floor due to the fact that most dancers like to showcase the shirt with it's designs.

Belts:

Belts are generally lazy stitched or loom beaded, 4 to 6 inches wide, mounted on leather or a cloth material, and worn on the hips. Attachment is made in the back by tying or a buckle is used. Some dancers incorporate the side tabs and belt into one unit.

Scarf or Necktie:

Some prefer to wear a scarf of flashy satin/silk material. The scarf is held in with a silver slide or a gourd stitched slide. Neckties are usually lazy stitched and match the beadwork on the harness. Chokers are not worn by grass dancers today.

Bells:

Large sleigh bells or sheep bells (four-five) are worn on each ankle attached and securely with a leather piece.

Moccasins:

A fully-beaded set of moccasins are preferred on the dance floor. Some dancers choose to make a set with no beadwork when getting started. Several handouts can show you how to make a set of moccasins.

Hand Articles:

Some dancers choose to carry any hand articles and some do not. Those that do choose to carry these:

1. A dance hoop that is approximately seven inches in diameter, usually wrapped with ribbon, and has ribbon hanging from it.
2. Fans of all types are seen. Swan fans are the most popular. Turkey fans are not welcomed with the grass outfit. Loose feather fans can also be used.
3. Mirror boards have been popular with grass dancers.

HEADGEAR:**Roach**

This is one of the most important parts of the outfit. Usually, dancers will wear the longest and most colorful roach they can get. The roach is worn flat. Some dancers learn how to make their own.

Head Harness

The roach is attached to the head harness. The head harness can be made out of 1 inch Velcro to allow total adjustment in the back. On top of the Velcro is attached lazy stitched beadwork. A large rosette is a must in the front. Eye drops come down in the front and dip as far as the cheek. Small curtain rings are wrapped with the incorporated colors and hung from the harness. Small beaded strips are sometimes hung from the harness.

Roach Spreader

A leather piece is placed on top to spread the roach out flat. Some dancers have gotten creative and substituted the leather piece for a shiny compact disc (CD). The roach spreader can be made of either of the following items:

1. A sprocket type made out of metal where two feathers attach in the sprockets very squarely. It is often said that the dancer that keeps his feathers moving is a good dancer.

2. The antennae type with a wire piece, usually a strong guitar string, with a plume or fluff is attached. These graceful antennae make the dance flow and look like clouds floating across the sky.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

The beadwork needs to match usually in a geometric design or a floral design. Generally all the beadwork matches the outfit.

Websites for discount ribbon are:

<http://www.jkmribbon.com/>

<http://www.laceforless.com/index.html>

Website for all colors of confetti dot fabric and other discount fabric:

<http://www.syfabrics.com>

Be as creative as possible! Go to the Powwows in your area and look at the grass outfits. Then make one that will stand out on the dance floor and be "yours." For excellent photos, you can visit www.powwows.com.

Whispering Wind Magazine (www.whisperingwind.com or 985-796-5433) is an excellent magazine resource for you. Its photos and article keep you up with the changing trends of the times.

What **NOT** to do:

- 1.) Do not create outfits with just two colors. These are the candy-cane and bumble bee outfits.
- 2.) Do not wear sweatpants.
- 3.) Do not wear bandannas on the head when you do not have a roach.
- 4.) Do not try to change or introduce something to a culture that has not been done.

Contact Information:

Jeff D. Brewer
8512 Bluebill Court
Raleigh, NC 27615
(919) 841-0088 - home
(919) 868-6274 - cell
jdbrewer@bellsouth.net



Senior Men's Grass Dance Competition (above): L-R

Ed Black Jr., Stan White, Wayne Pushetonequa, and Mike One Star

This competition was host to grass dance champions. The grass dance regalia consists of a beaded headband, collar, and harness. Yarn and shredded cloth hang from the regalia to replicate the motion of the wind blowing grass. The shredded cloth is an old style tradition before the use of yarn. The neon lime green is 2004 competition style. One dancer has yellow feather fluffs to accentuate his movements.

Men's Northern Fancy (below): L-R

Courtney Yarholar, Michael Hudson, John "Poncho" Brady, DJ Yarholar



This fascinating style of Northern fancy dance captures audiences with their fast, fancy footwork and their flashy, spinning movements. Two back bustles are worn that could be made out of eagle feathers or hackle feathers. Smaller matching versions of hackle feathers are worn on each arm as arm bustles. Bright ribbons and sometimes flagging tape is used to catch the eye of the judges. The Northern style dancers use loose eagle feathers in their roach headdress known as "spinners" whereas the Southern Fancy dancers use "rockers" for their roach feathers.

Sewing Fabric Fringe

by Loren Woerpel

© Loren Woerpel, 2005
Noc Bay Trading Company
PO Box 295
Escanaba, MI 49829



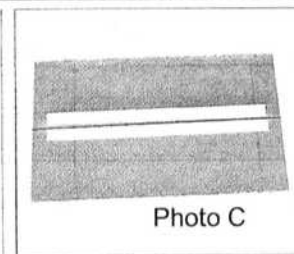
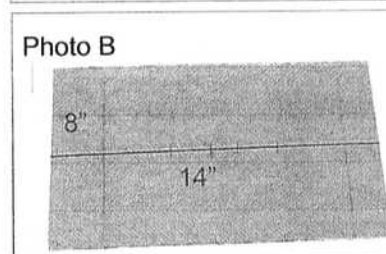
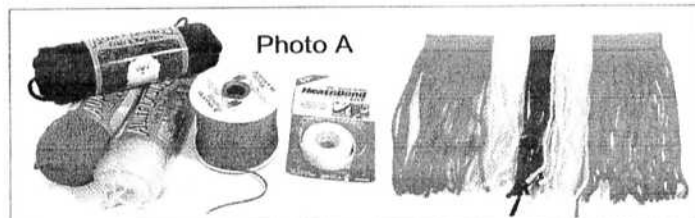
Dancer photos by Brian Fraker

We are often asked how to sew ribbon, flat fringe, or yarn into dance outfits or shawls. The trend is to use these materials in very colorful designs.

There are probably a number of ways to do this depending on your sewing experience, but Tracia Walksnice Nelson of our staff has had great success developing the method we describe here.

This method uses an iron-on adhesive called HeatnBond Lite, manufactured by Therm O Web. This demonstration uses the 5/8" wide roll. We will show you how to prepare the fringe for sewing into seams for shawl edges or aprons and along trim lines for capes, yokes, shirts, or dresses.

• For your project, you need to plan ahead to conceal the taped fringe inside the seam or cover with ribbon on a trim line. Based on the length of the fringe desired, select a flat piece of sturdy cardboard. Our example is for two sections of fringe, 8 inches long by 12 inches wide. For these dimensions, make the width of the cardboard 14 inches and the height 8 inches (**Photo B**). This 14 inch width will allow you to make two 12 inch wide fringe sections as shown in **Photo A**.



- Using a ruler, mark a horizontal line in the center of the cardboard on both sides, as shown in **Photo B**. Draw vertical lines one inch in from the edges, giving you the 12 inch width to follow as you wrap the fringe around the cardboard.
- Now tape the top edge of the 14 inch width of the cardboard, and also along the bottom of the



Photo D

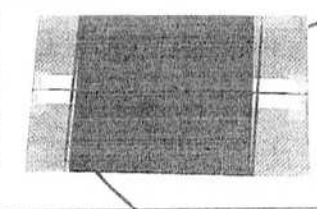


Photo E

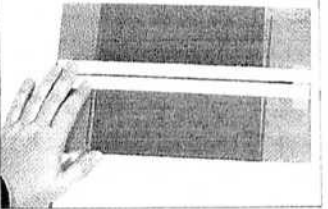


Photo F

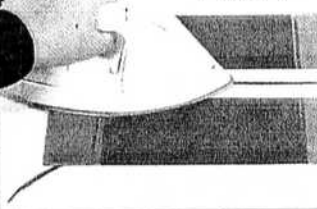


Photo G

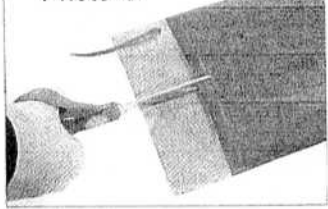
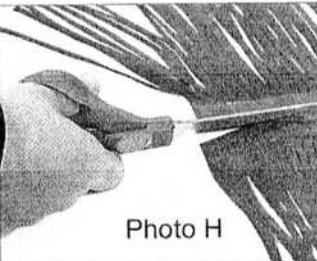


Photo I



Photo H



cardboard, with wide scotch tape. This will allow you to slide the fringe together easier as you wrap it on the cardboard. If you are doing color patterns, you can mark where the colors change along the center line on both sides of the form.

- Cut a starting slit on the top right edge of the cardboard and again on the bottom left edge for the ending of the fringe wrapping. Cut two 13 inch lengths of iron-on adhesive tape. Tack into position along each side of your center line with the peel off paper backing facing the cardboard form. Tack them down with a piece of Scotch tape at each end. Do this on only one side of the form as shown in **Photo C**.
- To begin wrapping, tuck one end of the fringe into the top right slit and wrap the fringe around the cardboard. (If you have color changes in the pattern, make more starting slits for each color along one edge.) When you have finished wrapping the 12 inch width, cut off the strand and tuck the end into the left slit (**Photo D**). As needed, slide the wrapped fringe strands so they are neatly together along the form.
- Cut two more 13 inch lengths of iron-on adhesive tape and using scotch tape on the ends, tack in place over the other two but on top of the fringe, this time with the paper backing facing you (**Photo E**).
- Then use the instructions on the HeatnBond package for ironing until the adhesive turns milky in color. (**Photo F**).
- Turn the form over and cut the fringe along the marked center line (**Photo G**). Remove the paper

tape covering from both sides of the adhesive covered block of fringe.

- Cut the two pieces apart between the tape lines as shown in **Photo H**.
- You are now ready to insert these two fringe sections into a planned seam or along a trim line. If you cannot sandwich the fringe into a seam, plan to cover it with a ribbon as shown in **Photo I**.



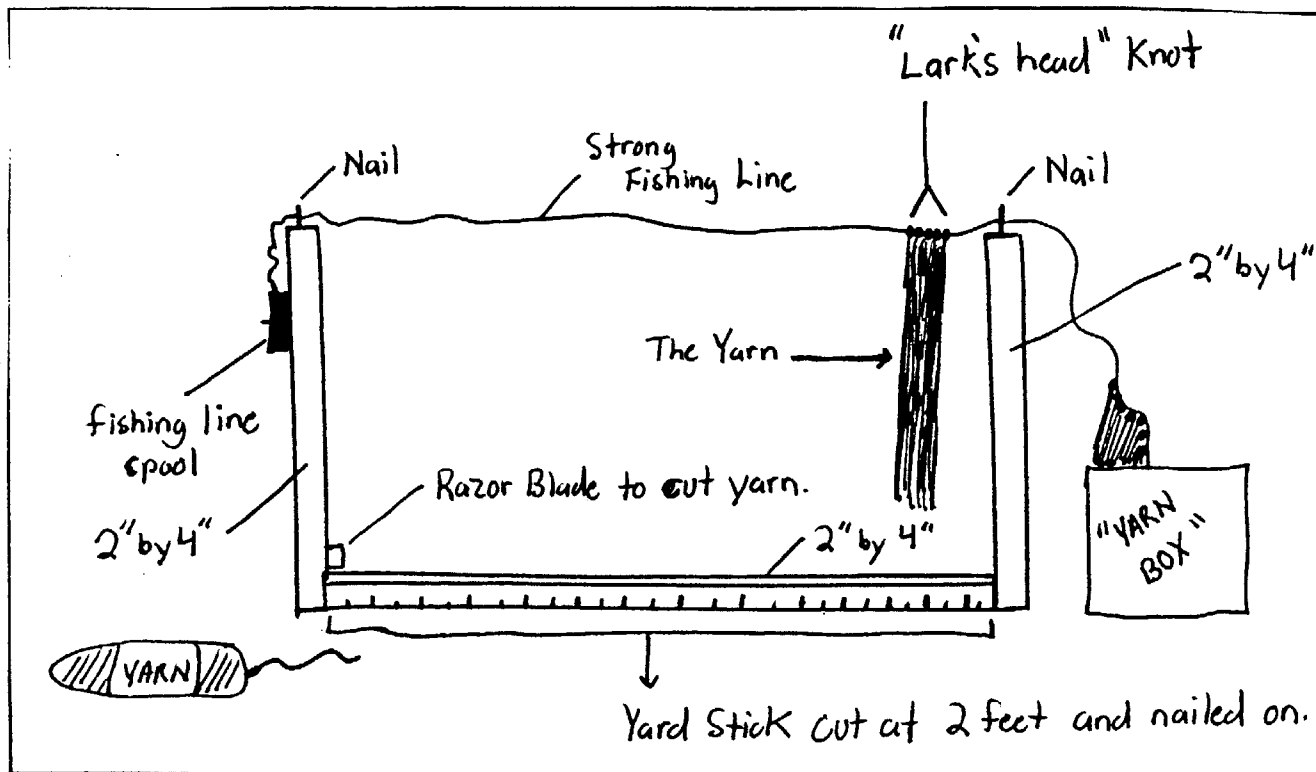
GRASS DANCE - THE YARN

How to do the Yarn on the Outfit.

By Jeff D. Brewer

Those who start a grass dance outfit have numerous questions on how to do the yarn. With this part being the most time consuming part of the basic outfit other than beadwork and the roach tying; it has to be done. The basic outfit will need around 15-20 scans of yarn. Buy all of your yarn at one time and at the same place; over time colors start changing and who wants a two-tone outfit clashing?

The easiest way to do the yarn is to construct a "yarn machine" as I call it. See diagram below.



The yarn is first cut into two foot sections and then three at one time are tied on the fishing line with a "lark's head" knot. The fishing line needs to be the strongest that one can find. After you think you have enough yarn for your outfit then leave lots of slack in the fishing line so it can be pieced onto the actual outfit. The yarn on the fishing line is placed on the back of the cloth and a "stitch" on the sewing machine is sew through the yarn to produce a neat appearance.

This "yarn machine" is the fastest and easiest way to do the yarn for the Grass Dance Outfit. After cutting a pile of yarn you can stick your feet under the fishing line and lean against the couch for a good TV show.

The Grass Dance Outfit ORDER OF THE ARROW - WWW

MAIN PARTS

Jeff D. Brewer

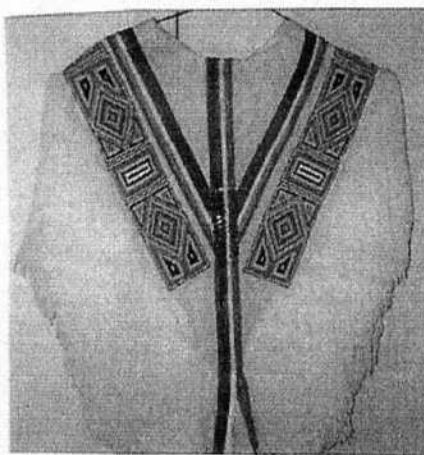
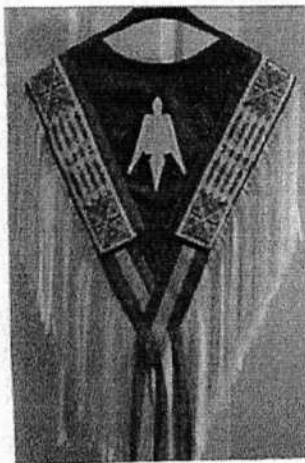
Shirt/Cape/Yoke:

The Yoke or Cape of today are made out of a cotton/polyester, satin/silk, and "flag material" found at your local Wal-Mart or craft store. At the edges of the outfit ribbon drape off to make that grass dance look. The back is decorated more elaborate than the front. Some typical shapes are "V", "W", or "U" being the most common. Usually the dancer will attach strips of beadwork around the edges or with sequin work. A combination of both can also be used. See diagram below.

Front:



Back:



Pants:

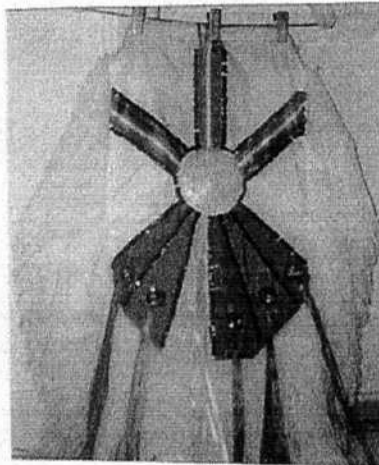
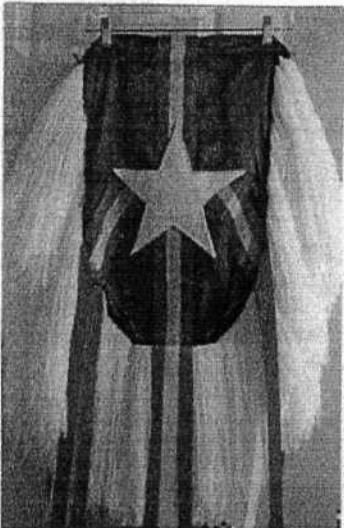
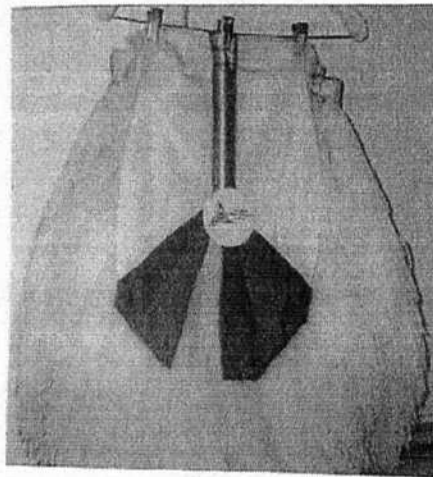
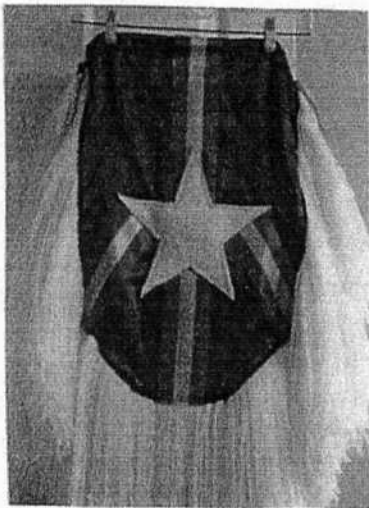
The pants can be made from any material but many prefer men's slacks, which can be the same color as the shirt or a contrasting color. Many seem to prefer "hospital pants" which are usually white but can be dyed to any desired color by purchasing "Rit dye" at your local Wal-Mart or craft store. Ribbon is sewn on both front and back in a "V" shape. Some dancers add many layers to make it stand out better. Inserts are often put in the side of the pants to make them have that bell bottom effect. Some use Angora anklets above the bells.



Apron:

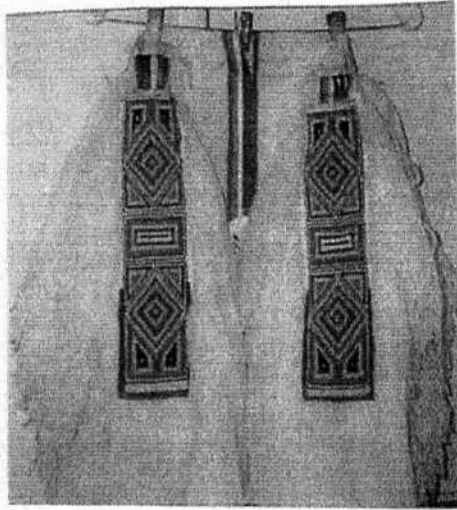
The material used in the shirt also needs to be used on the apron. Ribbon is attached to the edges of the apron. The same rules apply that the back has to be more decorated than the front. Usually the apron is connected with a belt threaded through the two apron pieces. The design of the shirt needs to be consistent with the apron. The back usually has ribbon work, sequins, jewels, or lazy stitch work.

When making the bottom of this outfit the idea of "heavy appearance" needs to be taken into high consideration.



Side Tabs:

Side tabs are usually added in on the sides of either apron to add more detail. They material used is the same material used for the apron and shirt. Some side tabs are fully beaded with ribbon covering the edge of the material. These can also be attached to the apron belt around the waist.

**Ribbon Shirt:**

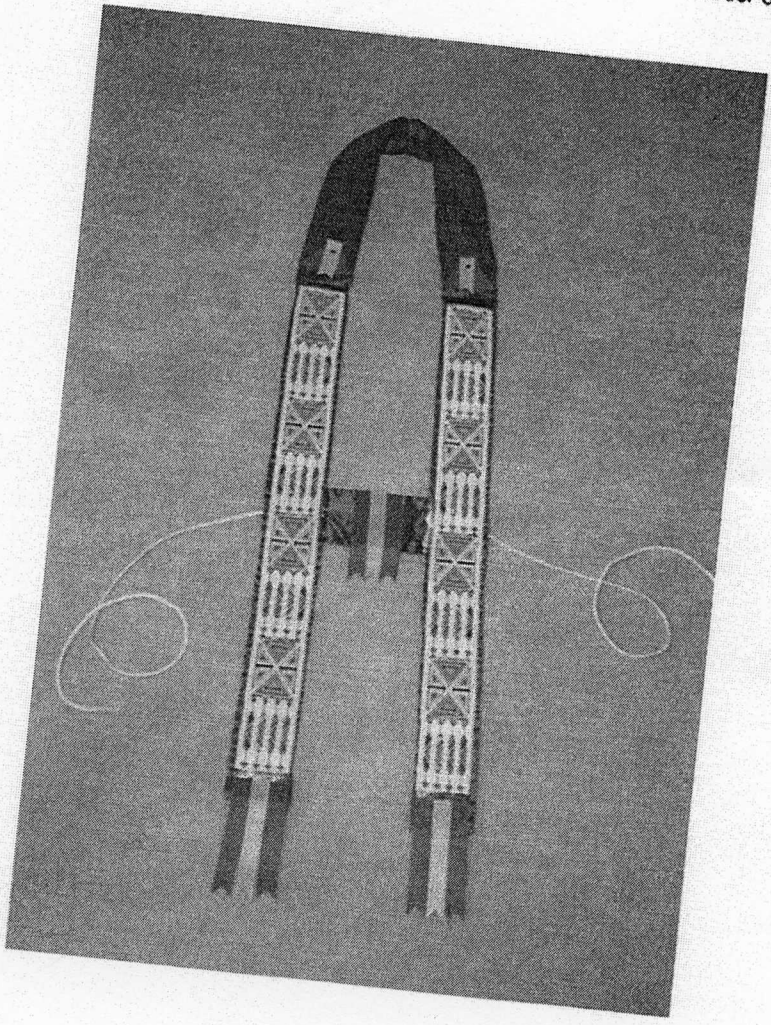
The ribbon shirt is sometimes worn by the grass dancer. In colder conditions, this shirt is necessary to keep him warm. The shirt matches the colors used or can be of one color of the outfit design. A dancer might have two or three ribbon shirts to his collection due to a high amount of sweating during the dance. Please see the direction included in this packet of information for how to make a ribbon shirt.

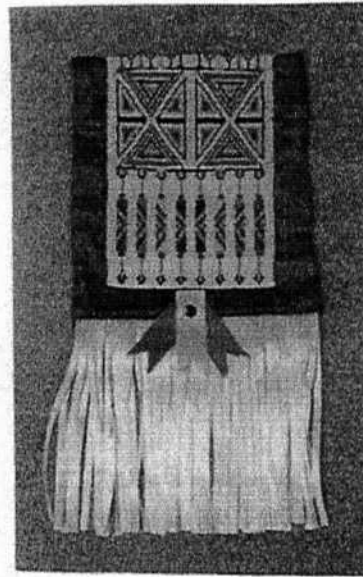
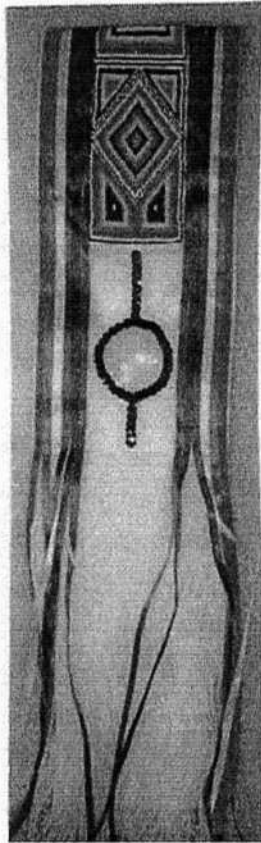


ACCESSORIES:

"H" Harness:

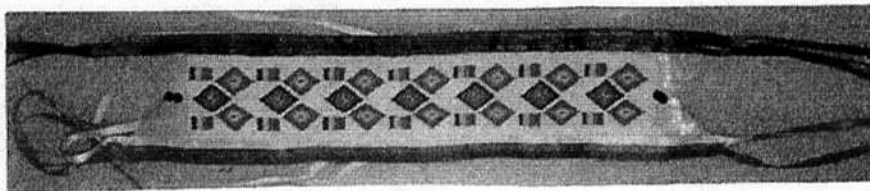
The "H" Harness or just often called a harness is an item that grass dancers were as well as the fancy dancers. It is usually worn outside the belt and extend to just below the knees. The "H" harness is often two loom beaded strips applied to fabric and goes around the neck. Others can be ribbon work along with sequins. See the photo below.





Armbands/Wings:

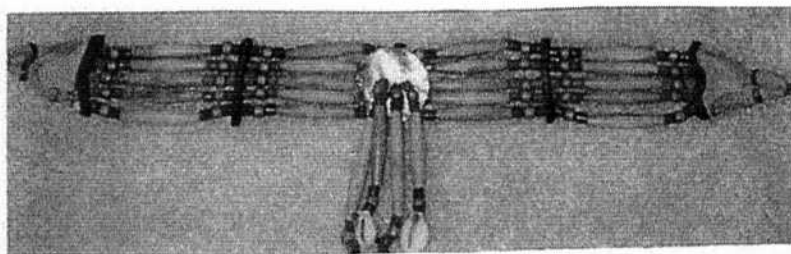
Most of the time, armbands or wings match the cuffs and incorporate their design. They can be loom beaded, lazy stitched or detailed sequin work. A very popular style is to have the ends notched.

**Belts:**

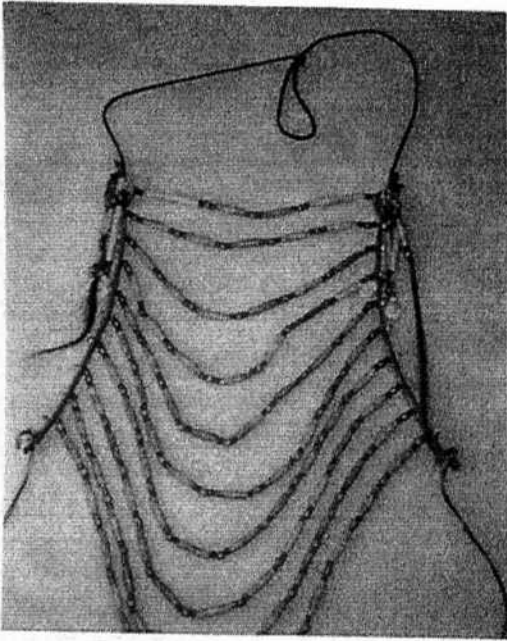
Belts are usually loom beaded, 4 to 6 inches wide, mounted on leather or a cloth material and worn on the hips. Attachment is done in the back by tying on or a buckle is used. Some dancers incorporate the side tabs and belt into one unit. Some dancers choose to make a finger woven belt.

Choker or Scarf:

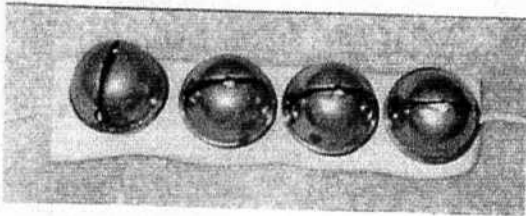
A hair pipe choker with pony beads or tile beads is often made and worn. Some prefer to wear a scarf of flashy material. The scarf is held in with a silver or carved wooden slide.

**Crow Loop Necklace:**

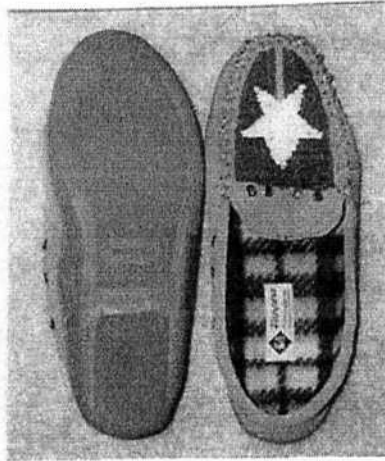
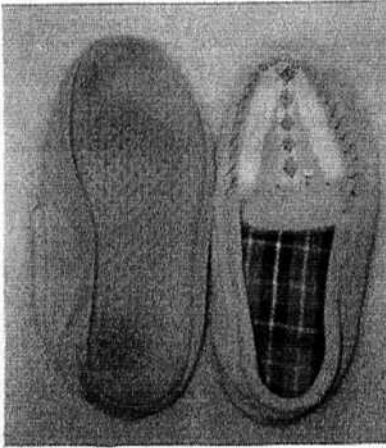
Some prefer to wear the crow loop necklace made out of hairpipe or bone disks on top of the shirt. See diagram below.

**Bells:**

Large sleigh bells are the most common. Four to five are worn on each ankle attached securely with a leather piece.

**Moccasins/Tennis shoes:**

With the dance full of energetic movement moccasins can be worn. The moccasins can have lazy stitch beadwork or sequin work on top of them. Tennis shoes are often seen. They are more comfortable and can easily be replaced.

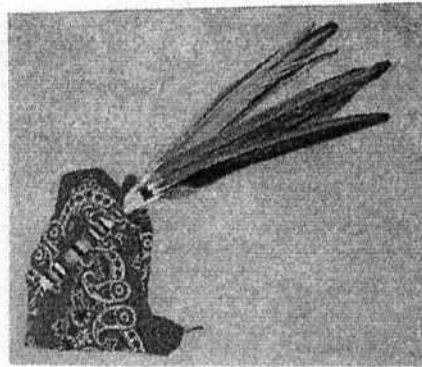
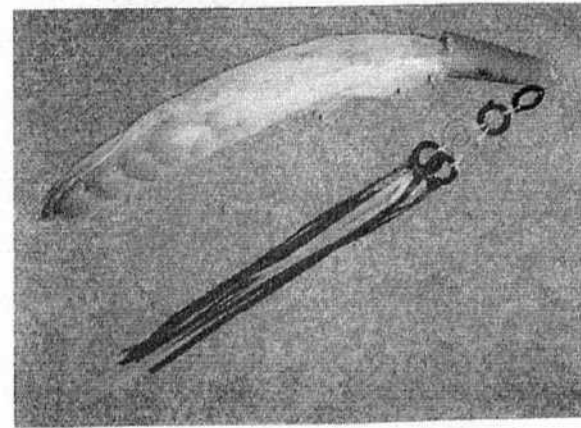


Hand Ornaments:

The dancer usually carries one or two of the following items:

1. A dance hoop, approximately seven inches in diameter, usually warped with ribbon and has ribbon hanging from it.
2. Fans of all types are seen, swan are the most popular because with "Rit dye" they can be dyed any color desired. Loose feather fans can also be used.
3. Mirror boards have been popular with ribbon or feathers hanging from them.
4. Some just carry color incorporated bandannas to add more flow to the dance.

Photo's of Hand Ornaments:



HEADGEAR:

Roach

This is one of the most important parts of the outfit. Usually, dancers will wear the longest and most colorful roach they can get. The roach is worn flat. A good supplier of roaches is Greasy Grass. Some dancers learn how to make their own.

Head Harness

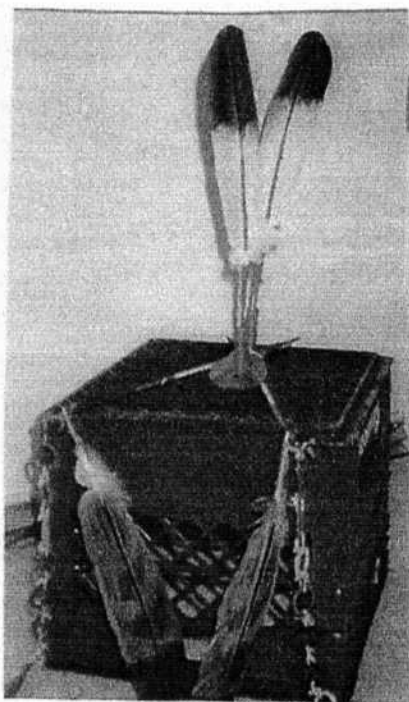
The roach is attached to the head harness. The head harness can be made out of 1 inch Velcro to allow total adjustment in the back. On top of the Velcro is attached loom beadwork. A large rosette is usually attached in the front. Eye drops come down in the front and dip as far as the cheek. Small curtain rings

are warped with the incorporated colors and hung from the harness. Small beaded strips are sometimes hung from the harness.

Roach Spreader

A leather piece is placed on top to spread the roach out flat. Some dancer's have gotten creative and substituted the leather piece for a shiny compact disk (CD). The roach spreader can be made of either of the following items:

1. A sprocket type made out of metal where two feathers attach in the sprockets very squarely. It is often said that the dancer that keeps his feathers moving is a good dancer.
2. The antennae type with a wire piece, usually a strong guitar string, with a plume or fluff is attached. These graceful antennae make the dance flow and look like clouds floating across the sky.



GENERAL COMMENTS:

The loom beadwork needs to be a matching design of either Oklahoma style with a geometric design or a floral design. Of course both can be incorporated with careful planning. Generally all the beadwork used matches the outfit.

Ribbon Outfits

In the late 1960s when grass dancing reemerged, the yarn fringe was very short. In the mid 1970s the outfit disappeared and made a new entrance in the early 1990s with the longer fringe (some dancers look like dancing mops).

A few reasons why you are seeing ribbons instead of yarn:

- 1) Less expensive depending on the type of ribbon
- 2) Easier to sewn on
- 3) Much lighter to wear
- 4) Easier to clean and wash
- 5) Flows much prettier than yarn, thus catching the judge's eye in competition.
- 6) Easier to add different color combinations.

Outfits evolve for many reasons; the main reason being economics. Keep in the mind because the powwow is a living thing, it must continually evolve to survive ... and that it has.

Be as creative as possible. Go to the PowWows in your area and look at the grass outfits and make one that will stand out on the dance floor and be "yours."

This guide to the grass dance outfit is **not** by any means the "bible" as there are a lot of different ways and opinions on how to do things.

Contact Information:

Jeff D. Brewer
7018 Epping Forest Dr.
Raleigh, NC 27613
(919) 789-0501
jdbrewer@bellsouth.net



GRASSDANCE

Most Northern Plains singers and dancers agree that "Rockie-Boy" dancing had its beginning in Canada among the Crees and Canadian-Indians. The term "Rockie-Boy" refers not to the Rocky Mountains of the United States, but rather to the Canadian Rockies.

Originally done as a victory dance, it has evolved over the years into a serious form of veteran's dance in Canada itself. It has further evolved into the most highly-competitive form of Northern dancing to be found today. Women may be found in competition, although of course, there are few, mostly below the age of twenty.

"Rockie-Boy" dancing was little known among Indians of the United States living below the Montana-Dakota area, until after World War II. Since then, it has grown in popularity, filtering south.

The "Rockie-Boy" always stands out by vir-

due of two things: his dancing style and his outfit. His dancing has been described often by these words: "gutsy, swinging, slick, old-time," etc. His outfit stands out by virtue of the almost complete absence of feathers, for aside from the roach feather or leader, there are no bustles of any kind to be seen. The outfit consists of shirt and pants, with beaded or otherwise decorated belt and side tabs, armbands, cuffs, and front and back apron, with matched headband and moccasins, if available. Ribbons and fringe are the only mobile parts of his outfit, other than the roach feather. In other words, the outfit is made to conform to the style of dancing. Bustles cannot stand up to the rigorous dancing that a good "Rockie-Boy" can do: The feathers are broken almost immediately and the bustle only gets in his way.

For more information PLEASE make it a

point to attend the workshop on this. For now, it may be said the "Rockie-Boy" dancing is the only form of dancing I know that is not native to the Indians of the Contentional United States and the only Indian style of dance that was ever actually imported into this country from outside.

The "swaying" style of northern dancing is probably the most unique aspect of the northern area. Upon seeing this kind of dancing for the first time, it hardly looks like Indian dancing. In some cases it more rightly resembles some types of popular Latin-American dancing, especially since there is much emphasis placed on the shaking of the shoulders. Yet once the techniques of northern dancing are mastered, one becomes easily addicted to its loose and flowing style.

The name "Grass Dance" comes from the custom of some tribes wearing braided grass in their belts to symbolize the scalps of enemies. Among the Sioux, the older form the dance was called "peji ipiyaka ogra wicipi" (they dance with grass in their belts). The Sioux of North Dakota nowadays call the dance simply "Peji Waci" (pay ZHFF wah CHEE) or "Grass Dance."

THE COSTUME

Following are a variety of ideas to help you make your own Grass Dance outfit. Chances are you already have many accessories which can be worn with it. there are unlimited materials, colors, and designs which can be used, so try to make your costume different. Start by collecting raw materials. With the exception of beadwork and the hair roach



most of the materials can be found in dry goods stores (K-mart, etc.) Check out fabric and craft stores that sell large assortments of cloth, sequins, fringe, and other kinds of trimmings.

The unique parts of the northern costume are the shirt, trousers, and aprons, to which chainette fringe (silk or nylon), sequins, and beaded rosettes or other designs are attached. The costume makers are fond of using playing card designs- hearts, clubs, spades, and diamonds. Hearts and rosettes are the most common. White fringe is preferred, however, gold, silver, and other light color fringe is also used. Poorer costumes have commercially made "junk" jewelry instead of beadwork, and coarse cotton fringe, or fringed cloth.

The ideal fringe is four to six inches long and is sewn on the trousers to form V shapes. The V extends from the outer seam to below the knee, and up to the inner seam. The distance from the point of the V to the outer seam is longer than the inner seam. A row of beadwork, sequins, or binding is sometimes sewn down next to the fringe. Beaded rosettes, hearts, etc., are sewn in the center of the V and from these hang drops

tipped with fluffs, ribbons, and tassels. The tassels are the same found on window shades, or old fashioned shawls and "throws". Sometimes they are attached to plastic cafe curtain rings which are sewn to various sections of the shirts and trousers. They come in a variety of sizes, but an inch to half-inch in diameter are best.

Likewise, V-shapes of fringe are also sewn to the shirts, and sequins and beadwork

sewn next to the fringe. The shirt is generally long-sleeved, but some prefer short. It may be western style, or a sport shirt. Both the shirt and trousers may be made from any material on hand, and old sport shirt and pair of chinos may be dyed black which is the most popular color. Other colors are permissible and occasionally one sees contrasting shirts and trousers.

The bottoms of the trousers are either left plain and angora anklets tied over them, or the cuffs are scalloped or "saw-toothed". A triangle is cut out at the outside seam near the bottom of each cuff and replaced with a triangle of contrasting cloth--sometimes calico or other colorful print. The triangle gives the pant leg a bellbottom appearance. Binding of ribbon, sequins, or beadwork may be sewn around the triangular shape. Anklets and bells are tied over the plain cuff, and under the bellbottom. Bells are worn around the ankle only. Plains hard-sole, or woodland soft-sole moccasins, and sneakers are worn.

The apron is probably the most striking part of the costume. The front apron (or breechcloth) is decorated with beadwork, sequins, ribbon-work, or a combination. The back apron has several colors of ribbons sewn in V-shapes. The ends hang loose for two to three feet. Ribbons also hang from the center. The number of colors are unlimited: as many as seven or eight may be used. The poorer versions have only two or three ribbons sewn across. Fringe, beadwork, and rosettes, hearts, etc., may also be added.

Belts are four to five inches wide and fully beaded. It is buckled in the back and worn very low around the hips. A "holster" or drop is worn on each side of the belt and reaches to shin level.

They are fully or partially beaded and sometimes bear the name of the dancer's reservation or home town. They are probably related to the triangular pennant which is worn with some classic costumes. Occasionally Assumption Sashes replace the beaded belt and drops.

Ideally, all of the beadwork matches. It may be floral, geometric, a combination of both, and in many cases, realistic--such as Indian heads, horses, flags, etc. In some of the poorer costumes solid beadwork is replaced with solid sequin work. Characteristic of the costume are the large, full beaded cuffs or gauntlets, arm

bands, chokers, occasional loop necklaces or breast plates, beaded collars and ties, and colorful scarves. The real prize is the beaded harness which reaches from the shoulders to below the knees. The two strips are usually connected by a large piece of beadwork which forms an H--hence the name "H-harness." Tassels or ribbons hang from the end of the harness.

The perfect headdress is the porcupine hair roach which is attached to a head harness. It is decorated with rosettes, hearts, etc., and long drops

tipped with fluffs, or drops made from chains or cafe curtain rings. A length of glass beaded chain is also used. The crest is made from stretched automobile choke springs mounted side by side. The springs may be wrapped with yarn and tipped with fluffs. The spreader is sometimes beaded and ribbons hang from it.

Dancers carry fans, eagle-bone or carved "crane" whistles (some are made from metal tubes), mirror boards, and dance hoops of various sizes.



GRASS DANCE

Photo Essay Illustrating Typical Contemporary Dance Outfits

Photographs by Chris Roberts

Text by C. Scott Evans

Each summer, Indian people across the U.S. and Canada gather to celebrate their cultural tradition. The celebration has come to be commonly referred to as powwow. The celebration is based on the grass dance of old. One form of the "old grass dance" is the "modern grass dance."

The modern grass dance is associated with the far northern plains of the U.S. and particularly Canada. In the excellent book *Dances of the Northern Plains*, Pat Deiter McArthur explains that the Dakota Sioux who fled to Canada after the Little Big Horn battle brought the dance to the Cree. The Cree called the dance *Pwatisimowin* or the Dakota Dance, just as the Sioux people refer to the dance as the Omaha Dance for the people who introduced the dance to them. The Sioux also refer to the dance as Dance Where Grass is Tucked in Their Belts (Grass Dance). Tribes associated with the modern grass dance in Canada have been the Plains Cree, Saulteaux, Assiniboine, and the Dakota Sioux.

In 1964 an article appeared in *American Indian Hobbyist* by James Howard entitled "Modern Grass Dance". This article is wonderful and still after more than thirty years is very helpful to anyone wanting to dance "grass". The article picks up the grass dance time line in the 1900s in the United States:

"The exact origins of the costume in its present form (1964) are somewhat obscure, but the general facts of its derivation are known, it almost certainly originated in North Dakota, (in the United States) and on the Standing Rock - Fort Berthold - Turtle Mountain - Fort Totten axis. The date of its introduction is harder to pin down (to the United States). Perhaps the bracket dates 1910-1925 would be a good guess?"

Dr. Howard further explains the distribution on the Northern Plains of the United States: "This particular style is worn by Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara dancers of the Fort Berthold Reservation in North Dakota; the Santee and the Yanktonai Dakota; the Plains Ojibwa of the Turtle Mountain Reservation; the Sisseton and Wahpeton Dakota of the Sisseton Reservation, South Dakota; the Ojibwa of Minnesota; the Yanktonai Dakota and Assiniboin of Montana; the Plains Ojibwa, Plains Cree, and Santee Dakota of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Canada. It is also the most common man's costume among the Upper Yanktonai and Teton Dakota of the Standing Rock Reservation, part of which lies in North Dakota and part of South Dakota.



"The style is a favorite among the Teton Dakota on the Cheyenne River Reservation, South Dakota; the Lower Yanktonai Dakota on the Crow Creek Reservation, South Dakota. On these last named reservations, however, it shares the popularity with an older costume style utilizing the Crow belt. In the past few years the Northern costume (grass dance) has diffused to the Northern Cheyenne of Montana, and to some of the Teton Dakota of the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Reservations in South Dakota. It will probably spread even further in the next few years."

Could Dr. Howard have been any more right? In the 1960s the "old grass dance" ran into itself in South Dakota as it came back down from Canada in a little different form. By the 1960s it had spread to South Dakota and Nebraska. In the 1970s it was occasionally seen down to Oklahoma. The 1980s took the modern grass dance to Arizona among the Navajo people as well to Florida to the Seminole. The modern grass dance is now in every corner of the United States even among the tribes which never had the "old grass dance".

Grass Dance Today

The grass dance outfits are not all the same. They are, however, easily identified as grass dance outfits. Howard wrote about the outfits similar features in 1964. His observations are still relevant: "Generally speaking, we may say that the costume is derived from the same basic assemblage of roach headdress, shirt, breechcloth, leggings, and moccasins which gave rise, in the south, to the Oklahoma straight dance costume. Here in the north, however, it was this bustle-less costume which became the dress of the young, active, dancers rather than the one utilizing the Crow belt. Indeed, in the north, the dancer who wears a feather bustle is termed 'straight' dancer, while his more active counterpart wearing the northern costume (grass) is more or less the equivalent of the Oklahoma fancydancer."

"Associated with the costume is a particular relaxed, loose-limbed style of dancing which somehow seems perfectly suited to it and to no other costume. Quite unlike the staccato, angular and explosive 'fancy dance' style of the southern plains, the northern style (grass) dancing can be fast and furious, but is probably displayed to best advantage in songs of slow or medium tempo. Further characteristics are the bending forward, head shaking, and hand on the hips stance of the Northern (Grass) Dancers."

The 1996 modern grass dance outfits and dance is very similar to the 1964 modern grass dance outfit. One recent change is the return of the roach feathers in the roach instead of the antennae of plumes. The antennae were derived from stripped eagle tail feather quills tipped with plumes from olden times.



Whispering Wind

American Indian: Past and Present

Established 1967

BEADED SACHELS

Vol. 31 No. 6

\$4.00

Canada \$5.50

PLAINS' SHIRTS

EARLY GRASS DANCERS

CRAFTS FOR KIDS

INDIAN TIME

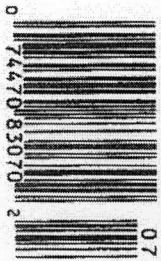
POWOW FASHIONS 2000

SOUTHERN CHEYENNE

MOCCASINS

CHEYENNE TOBACCO BAG

NEW ORLEANS JAZZ FEST



The Grass Dance Outfit

Grass Dance History

The Grass Dance outfit came from the early Ponca and Omaha "Hethushka", or War Dance. Its name was derived from bunches or braids of grass that were either carried or tucked into the belts of the dancers to represent scalps.

According to Wissler, this ceremonial use of grass was largely forgotten by the early 1900's and is no longer observed today. If the leader of the Hethushka or War Dance was of sufficient rank, he was allowed to wear a belt or a special dance bustle. This bustle was highly significant in the early grass dance societies. The exchanging of these dance bustles often signified the acceptance of the dance by a new tribe. The Omaha gave bustles to the Sioux. Among the Sioux the dance is still occasionally referred to as the Omaha Dance.

Yankton Sioux observed the grass dance as early as 1867. And by the early 1900's, it had spread to most tribes of the Northern Plains, being observed among the Omaha, Winnebago, Mandan, Hidatsa, Blackfoot, Piegan, Crow, Gros Ventre, Assiniboine, Sarsi, Plains-Cree, Plains-Ojibwa, Kutenai, and various branches of the Sioux of North and South Dakota and Canada. Today it is observed as far south as Oklahoma and as far west as California.

Over the year, the structure of the dance as well as the outfit has undergone many changes. The clothing has evolved into the modern day grass dance outfit which is unlike its early day counterpart. In fact, the outfits of today only remotely resembles the early originals, with their modern, long heavy yarn and ribbon fringe on the shirt or cape, pants and apron, beaded harness, beaded belts, and plumed "antennae" or roach feathers.

The original outfit of the grass dancer was limited to a breechcloth, roach, moccasins, and bells. As this dance spread to other tribes, other clothing and accessories were added or modified. According to Clark Wissler, in Societies of the Blackfoot Indians, 1913, states that among the Blackfoot, Crow, Assiniboine Indians, a bustle was used. Sioux grass dancers of this period wore shirts, war bonnets, leggings, long johns, and cloth shirts. They also carried whistles, fans, shields, lances, etc.

During the mid 1900's the grass dance outfit consisted of a black shirt and pants, with a large beaded shape on the back of the shirt like a diamond, spade, heart, or club or a group of small rosettes or appliqués. Between 1950 and 1970 dancers wore pennants with the name of their reservation, town, or state for side tabs. Also several items would come into style, and then disappear later. Anklets, beaded armbands, and inserts into bell bottom pants, popular in 1960 and 1970, are no longer seen anymore.

The modern version of the grass dance outfit is worn throughout the Northern and Southern Plains. It consists of a porcupine hair roach headdress, moccasins, breechcloth or apron, pants with yarn fringe, shirt with yarn fringe, cape with fringe, neck scarf or beaded necklace, and beaded necklace or scarf. Ribbon is also added. Fringe is usually sewn on over the shoulder seam down to

Greg Garrison, 2845 Saluda Rd., Rock Hill, SC 29730, Home 803-327-7478,
josephgarrison@hotmail.com, garrisonj2@winthrop.edu

The Grass Dance Outfit

the armpit of the back. Decorations on the front and back can match, but they don't have to. Fringe is often added to the sleeves, but they are often left plain with some ribbon, rosettes, or beaded drops added for decoration.

A cape can be worn in the place of a shirt, but is often worn over a colorful shirt that matches the color of the pants, cape, and aprons. Yarn fringe is placed around the bottom of the cape and matches the fringe on the pants, aprons, and holsters. The front usually has a V shape or design. The pants appear bottom heavy from the fringe and generally match the cape or shirt. Aprons also carry fringe and ribbon binding. Side tabs vary from apron length to ankle length.

The porky roach is one of the most important items of the grass dancer's outfit. It is usually of the Northern style and consists of a roach that is somewhat flat in appearance rather than standing straight up. A long colorful roach is preferred. Also a head harness consisting of a beaded headband with side drops, ribbon strips, strings, or larger beads or combination is used. A beaded medallion is often worn on the front of the headband and sometimes matching ones on the side. Another addition to the headband gear is rows of beads strung to form loops under the eyes.

Scarves or chokers are the preferred type of neckwear used today. If scarves are worn they are usually worn backwards with the point in the front. Occasionally dancers will wear the scarf with the point in the back but with a beaded slide. Another popular item worn is the bone breastplate or loop necklace. Also beaded medallion necklaces are seen quite often.

Another important item on the outfit is bells. Grass Dancers wear sheep bells or large sleigh bells. Angora or yarn anklets are common and often placed under the bells when worn of the ankles.

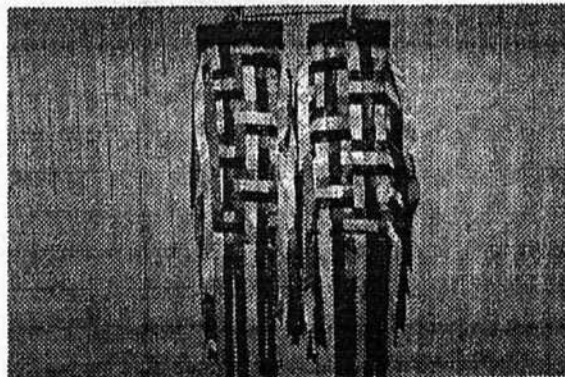
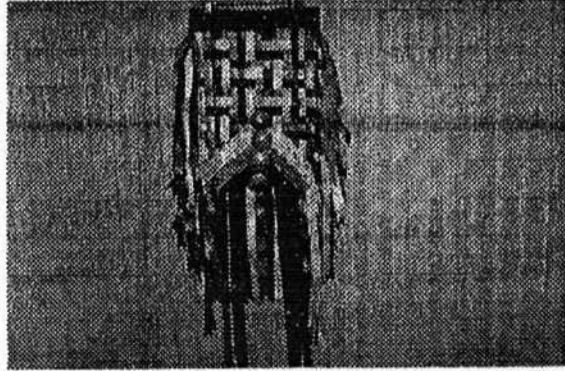
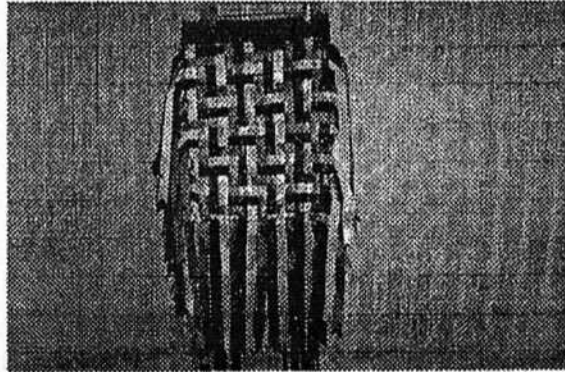
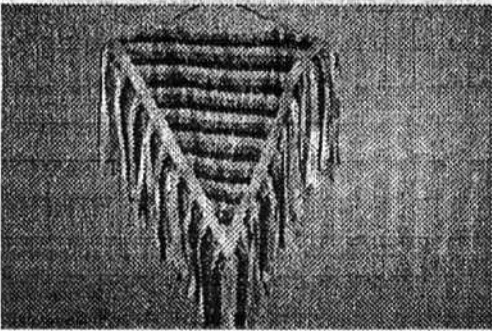
Items carried by the grass dancer are hoops tied with yarn fringe and decorated with ribbons, feathers, beaded drops, etc. Fans are often carried, but an eagle wing fan is most often used. Cranes' head whistles are sometimes carried. But this is usually left to the whistle men who have a right to carry them. Dowels wrapped with beads and feathers or mirror boards decorated with brass tacks, ribbon, feathers, etc. can also be used. Many dancers today carry nothing at all in their hands.

The grass dance outfit is quite elaborate and time consuming to make. The dance is rigorous. It is a very important dance that has a long history. It is a beautiful dance with swirling motions and a great deal of action.

The Grass Dance Outfit

Cape

The cape of the modern Grass Dancer is usually decorated with long ribbon fringe. The cape usually has a "V" design to it. It is either beaded or decorated with ribbon. In order to get the best cape possible, look at videos and watch natives at powwows. You do not need to change the culture of the Native Americans; therefore, do only what you have seen them do!



Aprons and Side Tabs

The aprons of the modern Grass Dance outfit are, like the cape, more decorative in the back than in the front. The aprons are decorated with long ribbon fringe or the edges. White is a common color, but not the only option. The surface of the aprons are sometimes beaded, but usually they are decorated with ribbon that matches the cape. The apron will extend down to the knees of the dancer or a little past. The side tabs match the aprons and cape in design. The side tabs vary in length, from apron length to calf length. Once again, a dancer should look to true natives at powwows and videos to prepare their outfits

Greg Garrison, 2845 Saluda Rd., Rock Hill, SC 29730, Home 803-327-7478,
josephgarrison@hotmail.com, garrisonj2@winthrop.edu

The Grass Dance Outfit

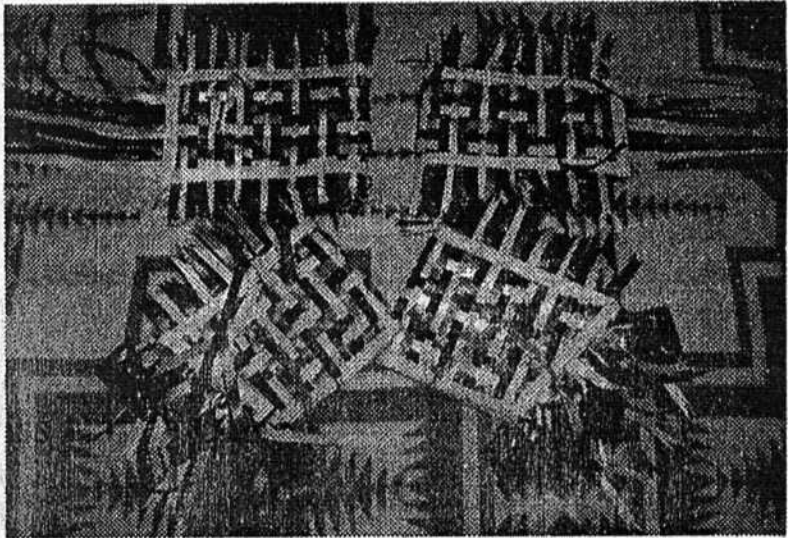
Pants

The pants of the Grass Dancer are either made of hospital pants, or made from the same fabric as the cape, aprons, and side tabs. They are decorated with rows of yarn (sometimes ribbon), sewn up the outside of the leg in upside down "V" patterns. The pants give the dancer a "bottom heavy" look. Sometimes, the pants have bell bottom inserts sewn into the cuff. This allows for the bells and ankles to have room, as well as give the outfit a bottom heavy look.



Cuffs and Armbands

The cuffs of the Grass dancer are very often beaded. The fit on the wrist of the dancer. The decoration of the cuffs and armbands should match the cape, aprons, side tabs, and pants in design. The armbands are very often made with a "V" notch in the outside wing part of the armband. Armbands are becoming less popular with modern dancers. When the dancer wears a yarn fringed cape, sometimes they can not easily be seen.



Greg Garrison, 2845 Saluda Rd., Rock Hill, SC 29730, Home 803-327-7478,
josephgarrison@hotmail.com, garrisonj2@winthrop.edu

The Grass Dance Outfit

Ribbon Shirt

The ribbon shirt is sometimes worn, but not always. During cold conditions, the dancer usually wears the shirt to keep warm. It is worn under the cape, and matches the rest of the outfit in color and usually design. It is usually made from Satin; however, it can also be made from Calico or other light weight fabrics with small print on them. It is decorated with ribbon at the chest, neck and wrist. The easiest way to make a ribbon shirt is to buy the pattern from a trader.

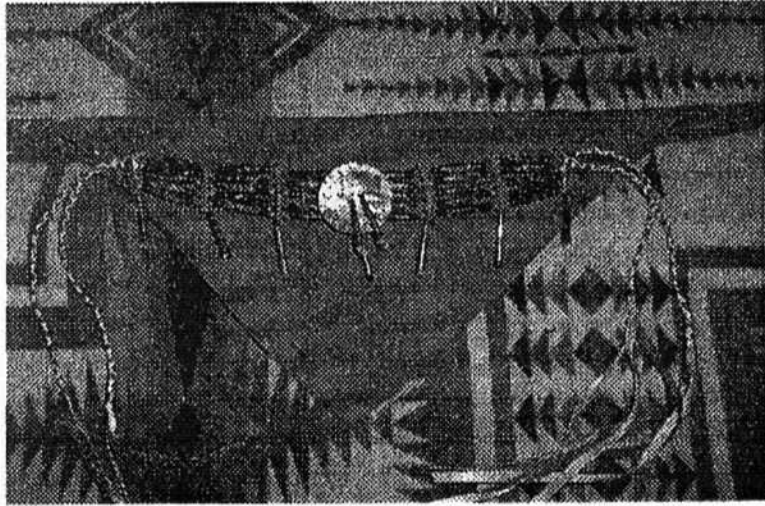
Crow Loop Necklace

The Crow Loop Necklace is worn over the cape and is optional to any dancer. Sometimes dancers also wear a breastplate over the cape. The colors or either the loop necklace or the breastplate, should match the colors of the outfit. Most loop necklaces are made with Hishi (a shell made into cylindrical beads). The Breastplate is made with bone hairpipe and glass beads. Both use strip leather in order to attach the rows of beads.

Greg Garrison, 2845 Saluda Rd., Rock Hill, SC 29730, Home 803-327-7478,
josephgarrison@hotmail.com, garrisonj2@winthrop.edu

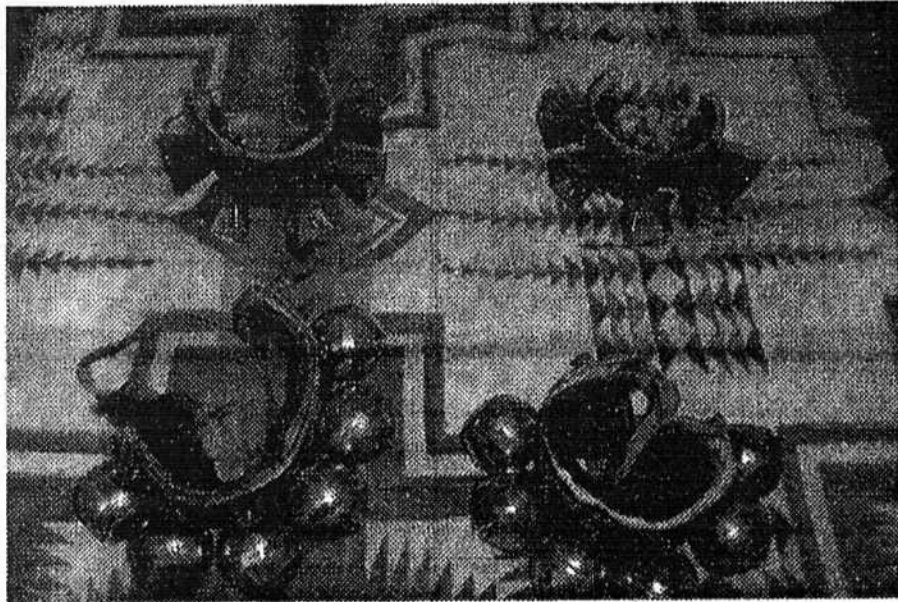
Choker and Scarf

For neckwear, the dancer may choose a choker, scarf, or both. The choker is made with mine materials including bone hairpipe, horn hairpipe, glass beads, stone beads, tin cones, abalone shell, cowrie shell, conch shell, leather, chevrons, etc. It is usually 3-5 rows. The dancer may choose to wear a scarf that is worn backwards (point in front), the dancer can wear the scarf with the point in the back also, but it is usually worn with a beaded slide.



Bells

The Grass Dancer, wear either sheep bells or large sleigh bells. There are usually 5-6 bells per leg. The bells are mounted on strip leather, using leather thong. The leather thong must be changed very often, so the thong will not break during a dance or competition. For comfort, sometimes the bells have a layer of felt on the inside of the strip leather so the bells will not hurt the legs. If you have not changes the leather thong in your bells in while, be cautious of wearing them in a contest, there are other dancers there, you don't have to wear yours too.



Greg Garrison, 2845 Saluda Rd., Rock Hill, SC 29730, Home 803-327-7478,
josephgarrison@hotmail.com, garrisonj2@winthrop.edu

Grass Dance Outfit Construction

By Andy Bess

I. Planning:

1. Study tapes, photos, calendars, magazines, etc. Then make a decision on colors, design and accessories:
 - A. Long sleeved shirt, three-quarter sleeved shirt or cape?
 - B. Buy or make pants?
 - C. Type and color of fringe, one color or several?
 - D. Type and color of material?
 - E. Type and color of decorations?
2. Make a drawing of the entire outfit (see example #1) include:
 - A. Main parts; shirt/cape, pants, aprons, belt and side tabs.
 - B. Armbands and cuffs, if not beading.
 - C. Location of fringe, ribbon, beadwork, drops, etc.

II. Collecting Materials:

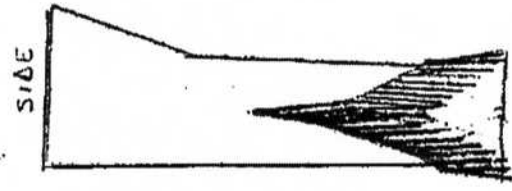
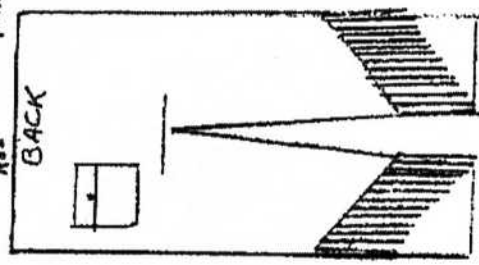
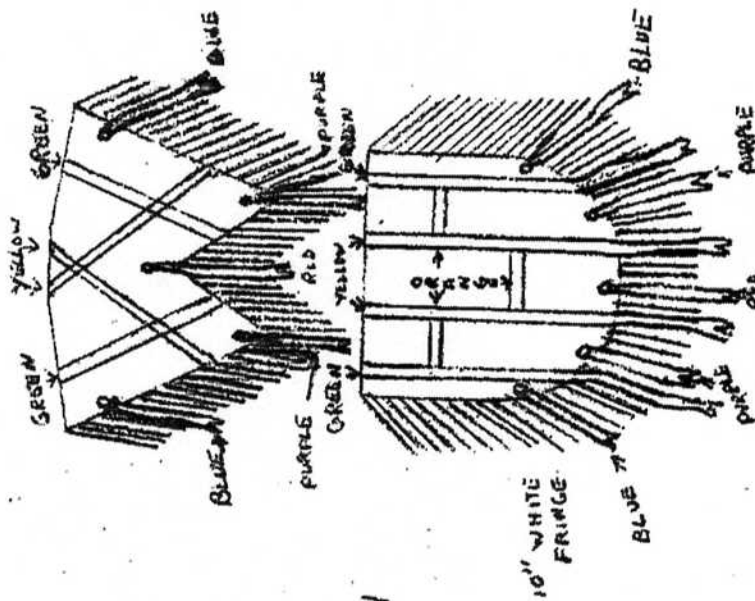
1. Look in fabric stores, catalogs, Wal-mart and other retail stores.
 - A. Cotton broadcloth or other heavy weight material 45" or 60" wide.
 - a. If making cape, you will need about $2 \frac{2}{3}$ yards of material, buy tee shirt to match.
 - b. If buying pants, you will to match material for cape or shirt.
 - c. If making pants, you will need about $2 \frac{1}{3}$ yards of same material as cape or shirt.
 - d. If making shirt, look at pattern material requirement.
 - B. Buy patterns
 - a. A western shirt pattern.
 - b. A sport pant pattern.
 - c. Or Missouri River Grass Dance pattern.
 - C. Buy fringe materials
 - a. Yarn, red heart brand is good.
 - b. White shoe strings, the longer the better.
 - D. Buy ribbon for drops and/or decorations.
 - a. Conchos or curtain rings for ribbon drops.
 - b. Ribbon work strips for decorations.

III. Construction:

1. If using Missouri River Grass Dance pattern skip part 2.
2. Make patterns for cape, aprons, side tabs, etc. out of newspaper.
 - A. When making cape use western shirt yoke pattern.
 - a. Lay pattern on newspaper and mark around yoke shoulders.
 - b. Then shape from shoulders seams to desired shape of cape.
 - c. Make the front chest length and extend the back to mid center.
 - B. If making shirt use western shirt pattern.
 - C. If making pants use sport pant pattern.
3. Cut material
 - A. Everything but the pants should be lined to help support the fringe.
 - B. So cut two of every shape, front apron, back apron, cape parts, etc.
4. Sew parts
 - A. Put right sides together and sew sides and bottom.
 - B. Turn inside out and iron.
 - C. Finish open ends appropriately, belt casings on aprons, turn edges in and sew for cape, side tabs, etc.
5. Decorate parts with ribbon work, beadwork, etc.
6. Cut fringe double the length and tie on shoe strings
 - A. Fringe Lengths
 - a. Cape or Shirt: 12" to 14"
 - b. Pants: 10" to 12"
 - c. Aprons: 10" to 12"
 - d. Cuffs: 8" to 10"
 - B. Use a lark head knot.
 - C. Sew fringe to shoe strings to give a flatter look.
 - D. Sew on outfit according to drawing.
7. Add multicolor ribbon drops for extra color.

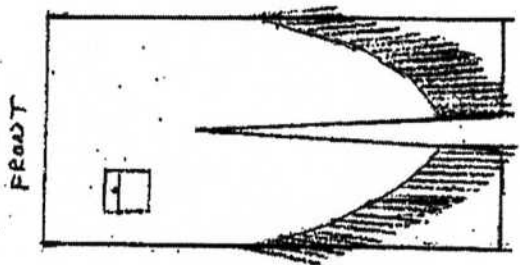
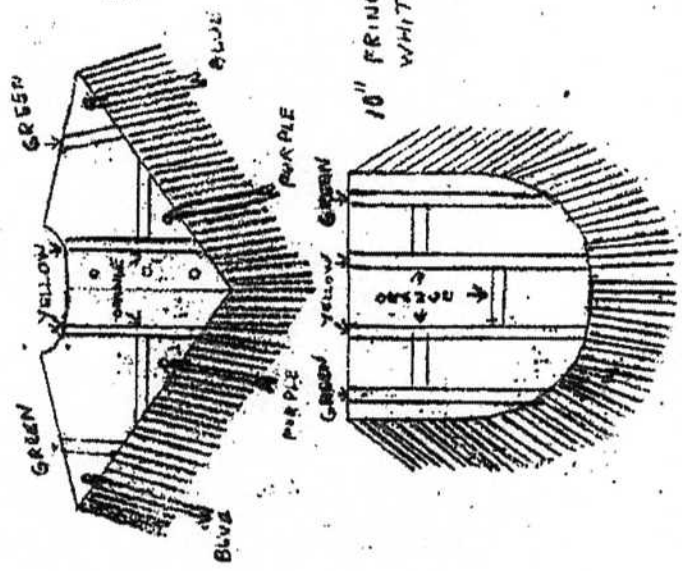
IV. Finish

1. Practice dancing with completed outfit on.
2. Make adjustments.



WHITE
14" FRINGE

EXAMPLE #1



10" WHITE
FRINGE