

TRADITIONAL DANCE BUSTLES

Written & Photographed
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The "Traditional" dance and dress style has now spread from the north to all areas of the country. The pan-Indian "Traditional" or "Northern Traditional" outfit is readily recognized by the basic element of the dance bustle. The "U" shape or "Swing" bustle has become the standard traditional bustle at Pow Wows all across America.

The materials used in the traditional bustle construction vary a great deal from dancer to dancer. Some dancers have renewed the bustle symbolism of their forefathers. However, many dancers construct their bustles with readily available materials to enable them to dance traditional. Regardless, the bustle gives the dancer a sense of traditional ways and ideals, yet allows him to express individuality.

Typically, the "U" shaped bustle consists of two spikes or uprights, a primary row of feathers (the "U"), and a bustle trailer or trailers. All three principal parts are attached to a rawhide, fiberglass or wood base.

The feathers for the "U" are mostly wing and tail feathers, and excellent examples of brown or black turkey spike traditional bustles can be seen. Typically, the "U" feathers are left in their natural state and decorations added. Feather tips can be left undecorated, or leather spots (nickle or dime size), horsehair, and/or small white fluffs can be attached. The two spikes are typically spike feathers or they can be fur wrapped shafts. The spikes are decorated with feather clusters, plumes, ribbon, bells, horsehair, and/or sweetgrass braids.

PHOTOS - Opposite page

(top left) Double bustle. Large wing feathers with tail feather center bustle. Worn by Tony Shawnee, ABC Powwow 1986. (top right) Cricket Shields (left) and Pete Moore at Crow Fair 1985. Note the variations in trailer decorations as well as the variety of rosette or center decorations. (middle left) C. Scott Evans (left) and John Butler at 1986 Houston Inter-tribal. (bottom left) Double "U" tail feather bustle; Crow Fair 1985. (lower center) Single "U" bustle with double trailers. (lower right) Terry Larvie wears a bustle whose construction is the same but without the noticeable "U". Trailers are of selvedge trade cloth.

