



Clothes Coaching Outline Northern Women's Traditional Dance

DANCER:_____

CONTEST# _____

LODGE #_____

COACH:_____

THE PURPOSE OF THE NOAC AIA COACHING SESSION:

Plains Powwow Culture is a 'popular' culture, evolving continuously in many areas; certainly, in the areas of the music, the dance and the dance clothes. Dance competitions continue to be increasingly popular not just at the summer tribal gatherings, but at big annual dance competitions happening throughout the year. Hundreds of dancers compete for thousands of dollars in prize money. Powwow-style dancing is a passion for many people and the most competitive among them actively keep their eyes on the latest fashions and their ears open to the latest songs. Smart dancers are always looking for ways to improve their dance moves and their dance clothes. Even the best-dressed dancers know their dance clothes can always be 'bumped up a notch'. While dance clothes are not 'judged' at these dance competitions, they do matter. Savvy dancers know they have to look their very best if they want to catch the judges' eye and make a positive impression. And when you look good, you feel good and then you're sure to dance your best.

In our many years of experience and involvement in dancing and powwows, we know that 'powwowing' is a family activity; rare are the dancers who go it alone. The construction of a set of dance clothes is far too complicated an endeavor to be accomplished by any one person. A set of dance clothes is a compilation of items made, received as gifts, purchased, and borrowed for the event. *It Takes a Family to Dress a Dancer*. From Tiny Tots to Golden Age, all dancers have help with their clothes. And guidance from experienced dancers is some of the best help you can get.

At the NOAC AIA Dance Clothes Coaching Session a dancer has the opportunity to discuss his dance clothes with a senior powwow dance enthusiast, tapping into years of experience in the areas of dance, dance clothes, craft and powwow culture. This outline is to be used as a guiding framework, with the understanding

that 'change happens' and everyone needs to keep his eyes open to the latest trends - competitors and coaches alike.

It is the goal of all Arrowmen who have been selected as NOAC Dance Clothes Coaches to share their knowledge and experience with younger dancers (and their support teams) in the hope of inspiring yet another enthusiastic, better-dressed dancer.

A note about DANCE CLOTHES:

The most important thing about a set of modern **Northern Women's Traditional** dance clothes is the overall look. Dance clothes are meant to be danced in, not to be judged in a still position. The components of your dance clothes should move well when you dance and work to enhance your dancing style. For this reason, materials, size, shape, and placement of the individual dance clothes components listed above must be in order. When specific materials are called for - such as beadwork - an adequate substitution of cloth, fabric applique, sequins, painted material can be used. However, proper colors, designs, and proportions must be in place for the article to get maximum points and for your dance clothes to have maximum visual impact.

This outline is not just a "scoring sheet"; it is a resource for you to constantly improve your dance clothes to be the best they can be. When you look at the individual scores of the various headings as well as the overall score, think of what you can do to improve each item, even if just by just a couple of points. Our goal is to help you to elevate your dance clothes to a higher level. By continually improving your dance clothes, your presentation on the dance floor will improve as well.

A note to DANCERS:

This outline is designed to summarize what a Northern Women's Traditional dancer would wear at a contemporary powwow. It represents the norm as defined by modern dancers in the Northern Plains and across the country.

Be aware that although a printed or recorded work may have been relevant at the time of its making, Northern Women's Traditional is an ever-changing dance style and these works can sometimes become outdated within a short period of time. If possible, attend powwows and notice the subtle trends being added to Northern Women's Traditional dance clothes of today. If you live in an area where it is difficult to attend powwows, you can use resources such as:

www.youtube.com, www.gatheringofnations.com, www.powwows.com,
or www.pinterest.com

to view photos and video footage of powwow dancers. Please be respectful of other's dance clothes. Model your dance clothes after contemporary dancers, but do not copy a specific set of clothes verbatim. While Northern Women's Traditional dance clothes of the past have their place in history, some of the components may not appropriate for contemporary dance styles. Stay current and up-to-date on your dance clothes' style.

WOMEN'S NORTHERN TRADITIONAL DANCE MAXIMUM SCORE: 60 Points

SCALE:

0 = Missing or Inappropriate Item

1-3 = Acceptable

4-6 = Good

7-9 = Excellent

10 = Superior

STANDARD ITEMS

SCORE

Item 1: HEAD: Plumes and Feathers, Barrett, Hair Ties. (10) _____

Superior: Imitation eagle feather plume or center tail feather. Typically a beaded hair barrette secures the plumes/feather at the center back of the head. Beaded, quilled, parfleche and/or shell hair ties, all coordinated in color and style. Quilled wheel, small beaded medallion/barrett or conch/abalone shell disc with imitation eagle plume attached (in addition to the center feather) worn at the top side of the head. French braided hair. Short hair.

Acceptable: Items in place but mismatched or not necessarily coordinated. Fluffs instead of plumes. No additional feather. Undecorated hair ties. Braided hair. Short hair.

Inappropriate: Missing items.

Item 2: BODY: Dress, Dress with Cape, Buckskin (10) _____

Superior: Dress or dress with cape fit nicely, are the proper length, made in the correct style and made from correct type of fabric. Suggestions - wool, broadcloth, velveteen, subtle plaids or subtle prints.

Cowrie shell, elk's teeth, dentalium shell, ribbon trim, or fabric applique decorations on dress bodice or cape. Optional gusset (tribe specific: usually Lakota, Plateau) inserted with gusset hem dropped 3-5 inches below the dress hem.

Buckskin fits nicely, is the proper length and style, and made with the correct color hide (off- white, cream, brain tanned, smoked). Decorated with appropriate beadwork (including pattern and placement), cowrie shell, dentalium shell, or elk's teeth. Additional coordinating decoration on lower portion of dress or buckskin.

Bead and hairpipe breastplate (Northern style - front only, past the waist in length). Tack belt, parfleche belt, beaded belt, concho belt (Belt dragger drop

optional.)

Acceptable: Undecorated dress or cape. No cape. No gusset inserted (if needed to be tribe specific). Ribbon trim on dress and/or cape. Plain leather belt. No Belt dragger.

Inappropriate: Hem too short on dress or buckskin. Improper fit or improper use of fabric (bright prints). Wrong color buckskin (non-natural colors ie: red, black, purple, green etc.) No belt. No breastplate.

Item 3: LEGS AND FEET: Leggings and Moccasins or Northern Style Boots. (10)

Superior: Fully beaded leggings and moccasins. Partially beaded leggings or moccasins, or fabric applique leggings and moccasins. Northern style boots with beaded decoration (aka "high top" moccasins, or "Crow" boots). Full fabric applique leggings.

Acceptable: Partial fabric applique leggings. Undecorated leggings and moccasins. Undecorated Northern style boots. Commercial hide boots.

Inappropriate: No leggings, moccasins, or boots. The use of tennis shoes or other inappropriate footwear in place of moccasins.

Item 4: ACCESSORIES: Choker, Jewelry (10) _____

Superior: Choker with a decorative drop, barretts, earrings, rings, and/or bracelets coordinated in style and color to compliment the dance clothes. Accessory materials may be made of silverwork, bone, shell, horse hair, painted rawhide. Beaded flat purse. Big imitation eagle feather fan. Decorated arm shawl.

Appropriate: Accessories are present but not coordinated in color or design. Plain flat purse or no purse. Smaller fan of alternative legal feathers. Undecorated arm shawl.

Inappropriate: Accessories missing. No shawl.

Item 5: OVERALL: (20)

Scale: 1-5 Good start, room for improvement; 6-10 Solid basic dance clothes, lacking some items; 11-15 Excellent; 16-20 Superior

Does the set look complete? Do the dance clothes have the right "look"? Are the clothes consistent with current styles?

FINAL SCORE (60)_____

Ribbon Scale: White 1-16 Red 17-32 Blue 33-48 Gold 49-60