American Indian Identity as Reflected through Powwow:
“As long as we dance, we shall know who we are.”

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Introduction

At an early summer powwow two women were helping their daughters get dressed; hurrying to make sure they didn’t miss Grand Entry which could cost the girls points in the competition. As the girls ran off to line up with others in their category, the women sat back admiring their handiwork. They exchanged complements on sewing and beading skills, but things hit a snag when they talked about the actual construction of the outfits. The older woman had used Velcro to fasten her daughter’s leggings; in the eyes of the younger woman this was a break from tradition and something to be avoided at all costs. She prided herself on being a “traditional” woman and staying true to the original outfits. The older woman gently pointed out that the wife of Chief Red Cloud, an Oglala Lakota leader, would have been the first in line at a Wal-Mart to buy Velcro, since Indian people have always adapted to using new things yet still remained Indian.

At another powwow a young girl was fastening her beaded hair ties and getting ready to join the other girls in the arena for her round of competition. A white woman who had been watching for a while asked the girl what kind of a dancer she was. The girl replied that she was a Traditional dancer. The woman then questioned her tribal affiliation. When the girl answered that she was Lakota, the woman shook her head and criticized her for wearing a neon pink dress with rhinestone studded appliqués and beadwork. The girl was visibly upset, but the woman continued telling the girl that she was not dressed properly, that her outfit did not look “Indian”, and that she was not upholding her “proud traditional Lakota ways.”

These two stories illustrate the difficulties of defining what constitutes a “traditional” outfit according to Indian and non-Indian standards. These anecdotes also reveal how older ways of color choices, and construction are giving way to new ones and how they challenge the
perceptions of Indian identity. Powwows are only one forum where American Indian identity is expressed, but serve as a showcase for viewing displays of public Indian identity. Powwows like other aspects of native cultures have not remained static and changes have occurred in music, dance, and regalia. Advances in travel, textile, and technology along with the advent of tribal casinos have all influenced contemporary powwows as well as individual Indian and tribal identity.

**Thesis**

Powwows flourish today throughout the United States. These social gatherings have been a way of maintaining native identity and celebrating the survival of tribal traditions. Powwows have changed over time and evolved into a contemporary form. Advances in travel, textile, and technology along with the advent of tribal casinos have all influenced contemporary powwows as well as the expression of individual Indian, tribal, and ethnic identity. While much has been written about American Indian culture, dance, music, and identity there has been very little written about American Indian identity within the context of powwows. Without understanding the interconnectedness of cultural expressions including dance, music, and dance outfits and how they impact American identity, powwows may be mistaken for a spiritual ceremony or viewed merely as entertainment rather than a forum for expressing identity. Due to ever-evolving Indian culture and tribal traditions this paper will examine changes in powwow music, dance outfits, the effects of casino sponsorship, Pan-Indianism and how this has impacted native identity.¹

Competition powwows which draw large numbers of participants nationwide and smaller traditional powwows as well as regional variances will be compared. Including regional and

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¹ “Pan-Indian” is a term used by scholars of American Indian cultural studies, while most American Indians use “inter-tribal” to describe the blending of tribal cultures and traditions. Both terms are used in this paper depending on the source used.
tribal differences allows for a broader investigation of the effect powwows have on Indian identity. Researching this aspect of native identity will add to the body of knowledge that already exists about tribes and American Indians, but it may also bring a new perspective to academic understandings of the role powwows play in American Indian identity. Interviews with American Indians, elders, MCs, drummers, dancers, and powwow vendors will serve as primary sources as they have witnessed changes in powwows in recent history. These interviews include questions about powwow attendance and participation, feelings about changes in powwows, and Indian identity. The intent of the surveys is to synthesize what secondary sources reveal about American Indian identity and powwows. Survey participants included American Indians from reservations, urban and suburban areas, and students attending the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire. The participant pool included people from various ages, income and education levels, tribes, and those living on and off the reservation. Both American Indian powwow participants and spectators were interviewed in addition to Indians who do not attend powwows. The purpose of using a wide range of respondents is to obtain a more accurate picture of American Indian identity within the context of powwows.

Secondary Source Analysis

The focus of this paper is American Indian identity as it is expressed through powwows. However, there are very few writings on that subject. The majority of sources available focused either on American Indian dance, powwows, or American Indian identity. The best of twenty articles I found were three scholarly journal articles focused on the role of powwows in the Native American community, incorporating American Indian music and powwows into curriculum, and southeastern powwows as public discourse. Anthropologist Clark Wissler did some of the earliest research on American Indian dance and much of his field work focused on
warrior and dance societies in the early 1900s. William K. Powers and Thomas Vennum did the bulk of their research in the area of American Indian dance, ceremonies, and culture from the 1960s to the 1980s. Both Powers and Vennum used Wissler’s work on dance societies as a resource. Tara Browner and Clyde Ellis are contemporary scholars of American Indian dance, music, and culture who combine native narratives with existing scholarship.

Nancy Barry and Paula Conlon’s article “Powwow in the Classroom,” written for the *Music Educator’s Journal*, addressed the challenges of creating multi-cultural music lessons and pointed out that including Native American music is especially difficult. The authors felt that a lack of knowledge, concerns about stereotyping, and a fear of offending native students and families has led some teachers and administrators to avoid the subject entirely. Barry and Conlin differentiate between ceremonial and powwow music, which is an important distinction. While there are spiritual aspects which include an opening and closing prayer and ceremonies for retrieving fallen eagle feathers or blessing the arena, powwows are social events, not spiritual ceremonies. The authors provide a good description of events, history of the various dances, and outfits in addition to a list of resources.

Robert DesJarlait’s article, “The Contest Powwow versus the Traditional Powwow and the Role of the Native American Community,” draws heavily from interviews with native elders and powwow dancers from various tribes which illustrates the commonalities and differences between tribal dances and tradition. While Lakota, Ho Chunk, and Ojibwe tribes have their own distinct social, society, and ceremonial dances, powwow brings the tribes together. Boye Ladd, a Ho Chunk and long time powwow dancer, is interviewed and shares a story on how the *Hethushka* dance was brought to other tribes and served as the basis for the Grass Dance which

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evolved into a dance separate from the *Hethushka* or Omaha Dance.\(^3\) The sharing of songs and
dance between tribes has occurred for over 400 years, according to Ladd, which has led to the
creation of the modern day powwow where intertribal dances mix with tribal traditions.

DesJarlait points out that dance outfits have also been influenced by the merging of tribal
influences and that traditional Ojibwe outfits are not easily defined because of the adaptation of
Northern Plains style outfits. The article gives many examples of the differences of contest,
traditional, regional, and tribal powwows. However, in the discussion of cultural differences,
DesJarlait asserts, “At Oyate [Dakota/Dakota/Lakota] powwows it is common at for parents to
carry their children in their arms as they dance.”\(^4\) Carrying babies into the arena is not a practice
that is endorsed by all Lakota people, and there are Lakota elders who admonish people for
carrying babies or young children into the arena. Aside from that, the article is well written and
addresses the tribal differences that need to be accommodated at inter-tribal powwows.

Ann Mc Mullen’s article, “Soapbox Discourse: Tribal Historiography, Indian-White
Relations, and Southeastern New England Powwows, in the *Public Historian* covers powwows
in the New England area and compares them to western powwows. New England powwows
often include ceremonies which may or may not be witnessed by non-Indians.\(^5\) Western
powwows are primarily social events which include spiritual aspects including blessing the arena
and opening and closing prayers, but are not considered to be ceremonies. The history and
political issues of New England tribes are discussed as well as the importance of welcoming
other tribes at tribal powwows and the use of other tribes for support on political issues.

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\(^4\) Ibid, 124.

Clark Wissler was an anthropologist who did extensive field work on American Indian culture for the American Museum of Natural History in New York. His work focused primarily on Plains tribes, their clothing, decorative designs, and warrior and dance societies. He was a meticulous researcher who designed methodologies to fit each project to insure validity. For the research project, *Distribution of Moccasin decorations Among the Plains Tribes*, Wissler designed his project as an “empirical distribution of moccasin decoration in the Plains Area and its fringes.”  

Additions to the museum’s collections had grown too large to use existing studies as frameworks for classifying the types of moccasin decorations and a new method was developed. Wissler created a sampling system that allowed for the moccasin decorations to be classified by design type and tracked by distribution of designs. Designs were counted by the number of moccasins made by a specific tribe and were then placed into a table to illustrate the distribution of individual design types.  

One of the projects worked on was not related to clothing specifically, but was a work entitled, *General Discussion of Shamanistic and Dancing Societies*, which included descriptions of societies, dances, ceremonies, as well as clothing. The warrior and dance societies studied help to create a framework for understanding the evolution of today’s Grass Dance. Wissler was considered to be an expert in this field and both Vennum and Powers used this work as a resource for their own research. However, Browner, author of *Heartbeat of the People*, criticizes the use of this work because it conflicts with traditional and contemporary native narrative. Despite being criticized by some researchers, Wissler’s work is still important as it is a legacy of

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7 Ibid., 11.
detailed methodical research on clothing and decorative designs and its geographic distribution. This wealth of information on clothing and decorative arts dating back to the 1880s aids in the comparison and study of contemporary powwow outfits.

Both Powers and Vennum researched American Indian culture, ceremonies, dance, and music using Wissler’s work as a basis for much of their research. Like Wissler, neither Powers nor Vennum wrote specifically about powwows, but concentrated on elements that are used in today’s powwows. In Grass Dance Costume, Powers explained that the Grass Dance used today developed out of the Omaha Dance that was adopted by the Sioux, based on Wissler’s previous work and his own research. Powers implies that the Omaha Dance and the Grass Dance are one in the same and that the latter originated and evolved from the former. In Vennum’s book, The Ojibwa Dance Drum: Its History and Construction, Walking Soldier a Santee Sioux, told a story about how the Sioux brought the Grass Dance to the Ojibwe. While this version of the spread of the Grass Dance to other tribes rings true, Vennum does not state whether this Grass Dance is the Sioux version or is the Omaha Dance. This adds to the confusion about the origin of the Grass Dance and how it differentiates from the Omaha Dance.

As both an assistant professor of ethnomusicology and American Indian studies at the University of California - Los Angeles and dancer in the Women’s Southern Cloth dance category, Tara Browner had an advantage as a participant/observer writing about powwows. Spending years on the powwow circuit developing friendships with other dancers allowed her to learn first hand of some of the different tribal narratives of the origin of powwow and its dances, adding to and often conflicting with previously written research. In Heartbeat of the People: Music and Dance of the Northern Powwow, Browner reveals a clash between accepted scholarly

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thought based on the works of Clark Wissler on the origin and evolution of today’s Grass Dance, one of three styles of men’s dances, and that provided by native narrative. Browner takes issue with Wissler’s and William K. Power’s research because it tells an entirely different story of the origin of the dance by compressing the Omaha Dance and today’s Grass Dance into one dance rather than being two separate dances with different origins. After reading Wissler’s article, General Discussion of Shamanistic and Dancing Societies, and Browner’s book, I agree with the criticism that the Omaha Dance and Grass Dance of today are presented as being one in the same which is in contrast to the oral tradition recorded by Browner. Traveling the powwow circuit for ten years, as a Northern Traditional Dancer, I have heard many versions of the origin story for the Grass Dance. Lakota, Gros Ventre, Crow, and Northern Cheyenne elders have all related an origin story of their tribe’s Grass Dance which was a separate dance from the Omaha Dance. Browner’s book is a significant contribution to the study of powwow music and dance as it provides a native narrative which addresses some of the shortcomings found in previous scholarly works.

Clyde Ellis, a history professor whose focus is mainly American Indian Studies, has written several articles, authored A Dancing People: Powwow Culture on the Southern Plains, and served as one of three editors of Powwow, a collection of essays on powwows. Most of his work focuses on southern tribes and powwows which is especially useful when used in conjunction with Browner’s work as it allows for various regional differences to be compared and discussed. Ellis disagrees with Browner’s criticism of Wissler and Powers; suggesting in his end notes that Brown may not have been aware of other researchers’ work that supports Wissler’s theories about the Grass Dance and did not read all of Powers’ work. However, many

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11 Tara Browner, Heartbeat of the People: Music and Dance of the Northern Powwow (University of Illinois Press: Chicago, 2002), 19
of the other researchers Ellis refers to are from Wissler’s generation or relied on his work and tend to view American Indian culture and dance through the same ethnocentric lens. LaFlesche was the only Indian researcher listed by Ellis in his criticism of Browner. Francis LaFlesche, son of an Omaha chief, was educated at a Presbyterian mission school and earned a law degree at National University. Edwin Thompson Denig was a fur trader and Indian scout who married an Assiniboine woman and had anonymously published a manuscript about the Crow tribe. Ellis points out that Browner’s is not the sole voice of dissent, Aaron Fry, Chickasaw/Cherokee and an art history teacher at the University of New Mexico, supports Browner’s theory.\footnote{Ellis, Clyde. A Dancing People: Powwow Culture on the Southern Plains. (University Press of Kansas: Lawrence, 2005), 39.}

Browner and Ellis’s conflicting points of view illustrate the importance of using both scholarly research and oral tradition to present the widest perspective. Some of the differences may stem from the many challenges of studying native cultures and practices. One of the difficulties of researching this subject is the reticence of some American Indians to share intimate details of ceremonies, societies and dances with people outside of their community. Another challenge facing scholars studying American Indian culture in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century, including Wissler, is a language barrier; as some of the people interviewed may not have been fluent in English. During the time period Wissler was researching, some older Lakota, familiar with older dance styles and traditions, may not have spoken English fluently which could have presented a problem for researchers who might have had trouble translating Lakota into English without losing the original meaning. Researchers’ religious affiliation, education, ethnicity, and life experiences may play a role in how art, dance, music, or culture is interpreted, resulting in varying perspectives and interpretations of a single topic. Browner’s years on the powwow
circuit as a dancer, Fry’s experience as a powwow MC, and both being native gave them an insider’s view of powwow culture which Wissler and the other researchers did not have.

In the collection of essays edited by Ellis the subjects are wide ranging and include discussions of regional differences, identity, gender roles, sexual orientation, and how powwows have changed over time. Jason Baird Jackson illustrates regional differences in his essay on the blending of the Stomp Dance, a traditional social dance from Southeastern Woodland tribes, and powwow. 13 Jackson explains how the Stomp Dance is broken into two parts; the ceremonial dances take place during the day with social dances following in the evening. The event is specific to the Miami, Yuchi, Peorias, Wyandottes, Creek, and Cherokee tribes with most tribes having their own ceremonial dance grounds. These dances are primarily done by traditionalists who do not travel the powwow circuit often, but recently Stomp Dances have been added to the end of powwows held in Oklahoma. 14 The incorporation of a tribal specific traditional dance in contemporary powwows is a way of asserting tribal identity within an inter-tribal context and is a fairly recent change. The subject of powwow princess competitions, also a relatively new addition to powwows, is discussed in an essay by Kathleen Glenister Roberts. At first glance these competitions seem to be an Indian version of American beauty pageants, but there are significant differences. These differences include having a female host, allowing non-participants to join participants during the talent competitions, and ending the year with a giveaway where gifts are given to thank the people who helped during the Princess’s reign. 15 Although Powwow focuses primarily on Oklahoma powwows it is an important work in the study of powwows, as it

14 Ibid. 181.
15 Ibid, 159-163.
covers a wide range of topics and includes five essays written by native scholars in addition to the work of 15 non-Indian scholars.

In *A Dancing People*, Ellis focuses on the history and evolution of powwows of the Southern Plains, but it is the first chapter that sets the book apart. It focuses on the history of powwows and the role society dances played in tribal culture, the federal government’s failed attempt at suppressing Indian dance, Indian resistance to the suppression of dance and techniques developed to preserve it, and how some traditional society dances evolved into contemporary powwow dances. While government policies banning dance ended seventy years ago, it is important to understand that dance was an important part of tribal identity and withstood years of pressure against it. Indian resistance to assimilation and the survival of traditional dances and the evolution of new dances and powwows is still a topic of discussion among elders and many Indian dancers.¹⁶

The exchange of dances between tribes and public performances helped to spread and create intertribal dances and gatherings. As dances spread throughout the Northern and Southern Plains in the 1800s, politicians and government agencies were working towards the assimilation of Indian people into mainstream society. Some Indian agents and commissioners viewed Indian dancing as an impediment to assimilation. The federal government addressed the “Indian problem” through a series of laws and acts designed to break down traditional family structures and assimilate Indians via removal and allotments, eradication of tribal languages through education and boarding schools, and ending traditional culture by banning religious practices including dancing. The government’s intent was to change native peoples’ identity from American Indian to American. Felix S. Cohen, expert in the field of federal Indian law, wrote *The Handbook of Federal Indian Law* which documents government legislation banning Indian

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¹⁶ Ellis, Clyde. *A Dancing People.*, 39-41.
dance and making it a punishable Indian Offense as early as 1833.\footnote{Felix S. Cohen, \textit{The Handbook of Federal Indian Law} (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 175} Negative feelings towards dance continued in the Office of Indians Affairs from the 1830s and continued into the 1920s. In 1921, Commissioner Charles H. Burke of the Office of Indian Affairs stated in Circular 1665, “The sundance [sic] and all other similar dances and so called religious ceremonies are considered ‘Indian Offenses’ under existing regulations and corrective penalties are provided.” \footnote{Office of Indian Affairs, \textit{Indian Dancing: Circular 1665}. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), 1.} During a meeting held by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, the subject of Indian dance was brought up and the general consensus was that both social and religious dancing coupled with the practice of “giveaways” was standing in the way of Indians making progress as farmers and becoming assimilated. Burke wrote a supplement to Circular 1665, addressing it “To All Indians.” The supplement stated:

\begin{quote}
The feeling of those present was strong against Indian dances, as they are usually given, and against so much time as is often spent by the Indians in a display of their old customs at public gathering held by whites. From the views of this meeting and from other information I feel that something must be done to stop the neglect of stock, crops, gardens and home interests caused by these dances or by celebrations, powwows, and gatherings of any kind that take the time of the Indians for many days.\footnote{Office of Indian Affairs, \textit{Supplement to Circular 1665}. (Chilocco, Oklahoma: The Indian Print Shop, 1923), 1.}
\end{quote}

Indians were given one year to prove they could curtail their dancing, successfully farm and become fully assimilated, but if they failed then something else would have to happen. Burke did not specify what the punishment would be, but withholding or reductions in rations, travel restrictions, and military force had all been previous methods employed by the government to
force Indians to comply with federal orders. The attitude against Indians dances continued until the early 1930s and ended with the passage of the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act. The main intent of the act was self-determination for tribes which included choosing their form of government, establishing eligibility of tribal membership, and self-rule, but it also brought the freedom to continue traditional dances and powwows.\(^{20}\) Despite being told to curtail dancing, Indians throughout the United States had continued it as an underground practice which allowed these dances to evolve into the contemporary powwow which reflects both tribal and intertribal identity. Ellis explained that powwows are a way of maintaining traditions and expressing identity, “As long as we dance, we shall know who we are.”\(^{21}\)

Knowing who you are seems to be a straightforward matter. However, identity is a complex issue as Joane Nagel, author of *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and the Resurgence of Identity and Culture* points out. Nagel argues that ethnicity is not merely biological, rather it can be something that is negotiated, embraced or rejected. Ethnicity is a composite of self-perception and the perception of others.\(^{22}\) Native Americans multiple layers of identity that includes kinship, tribal, and region. Native people may choose to identify themselves differently depending on the social situation, introducing themselves as an American Indian in non-Indian settings or by their tribal affiliation or reservation in a native context. The issue of identity is more complex in the case of “mixed bloods”, either having American Indian ancestry in addition to another race or being from multiple tribes. Nagel uses the example of a person of mixed native ancestry to illustrate this point:

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\(^{21}\) Ellis, *A Dancing People*, 39.  
“in the case of a tribally mixed individual who is half-Zuni and half-Sioux.... Zuni relatives will recognize him as part of the family, but if he was never ceremonially incorporated and if he does not speak Zuni, he may not be considered a ‘real’ Zuni and Zuni Pueblo. In Denver, where he lives, however, he will be recognized by other Native Americans as an Indian and be fully accepted as Zuni, Sioux, or a Zuni-Sioux (whichever he chooses to emphasize).\textsuperscript{23}

A resurgence in Indian identity began in the 1950s with federal relocation programs and increased greatly in the 1960s with the Civil Rights Movement and the beginnings of Indian political activism. Nagel’s article “American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Politics and the Resurgence of Identity,” published in the \textit{American Sociological Review} examines the impact federal policies had on tribes. The motivation of the policies was to assimilate American Indians into mainstream society via education, the forced acquisition of English, allotment, and termination of tribes. The result was “the creation of an English-speaking, bicultural, multi-tribal American population living in U.S. cities.”\textsuperscript{24} In both Nagel’s book and article statistics from the U.S. census indicate a trend of major increases in the percentage of the American Indian population. In the 1950 census, taken a few years after termination policies began there was only a 4% increase in the Indian population. The 1960 census reflects an increase of 46% which is followed by a 51% increase in the 1970 census. Nagel attributes this growth to urbanization of American Indians and high intermarriage rates.\textsuperscript{25}

As Indian populations grew in urban areas so did the number of Indian social organizations that included inter-tribal clubs, athletic leagues, native newspapers, and powwows.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid, 21.
\textsuperscript{24} Joane Nagel, “American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Politics and the Resurgence of Identity,” \textit{American Sociological Review} 60 (December, 1995) : 954
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid, 951
Intertribal organizations became a place of solace for urban Indians who felt a loss of identity. Tribal identity was sometimes supplanted by an inter-tribal identity of being “American Indian” rather identifying with a single tribe, but in some instances these intertribal organizations actually reinforced individuals’ tribal identity within the framework of the native community made up of various tribes.  

James Fenelon’s article “Discrimination and Indigenous Identity in Chicago’s Native Community,” in the American Indian Culture and Research Journal is a case study of American Indian identity in Chicago. Fenelon addresses the issues and challenges faced by native people living in Chicago and attempts to answer the complicated question, “Who are urban Indians?” The most powerful part of the article is the use of the American Indian Economic Development Association’s survey where native interviews clearly illustrate how identity is negotiated. When asked to describe themselves as a Native American the answers included “pipe carrier”, “traditional person”, “fullblood”, “dog soldier”, and Anishinaabe. These answers reflect the varying levels of identity which include tribal affiliation, status in the tribe, blood quantum, and how they viewed themselves in terms of maintaining traditions, which is similar to Nagel’s findings. Most of those interviewed identified themselves both by tribal affiliation and as a part of the larger inter-tribal community. Identifying oneself as part of the larger Indian community does not mean that the community is one cohesive unit; rather, like any larger groups there are differences that cause tensions. One respondent felt that traditionalists were too concerned with ceremonies and maintaining the old ways, but despite the difference of opinion he still identified

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26 Nagel, American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power, 121
28 Ibid, 276.
with the larger native community. The strength in this article lies both in the methodologies used in the survey and author’s own experience as an urban Indian.

*American Indians and the Urban Indians* is a collection of thirty eight essays edited by Susan Lobo and Kurt Peters. The majority of the contributors to the book are American Indian which provides a native view of identity in addition to scholars. Kurt M. Peters essay is a reflection of how Laguna Pueblo identity was maintained through the continuation of cultural practices which survived by making minor adaptations. In Oakland, California a railroad boxcar was converted into a social hall where traditional dances could be held away from the public eye, but could also be used for social dances which were open to the public. Angela Gonzales’ shares a story of meeting an old school friend when his wife suddenly blurted out that she was part-Indian. The discussion continued with the friend’s wife revealing she was 1/32nd Cherokee. Gonzales writes, “just enough to cultivate her deep fascination with dream catchers, but just little enough that she doesn’t have to give her Indianness a second thought.” Conversations like this reflect the tensions between Indians and “new Indians.” There are some who research their family genealogy as a way of filling an important need to find out who they are, but there are also others who see being Indian as being advantageous. Ethnic identity has become a choice for some people to make and is very flexible. Gonzales states that race is defined by DNA, but ethnicity “has strong elements transmitted through the process of socialization, not DNA.” Ethnicity can be viewed within the context of a relationship to a group and can be expressed through clothing, language, and cultural traditions or not expressed at all. The majority of the

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29 Ibid, 279.
31 Ibid, 171.
essays in this collection discuss the identity of urban Indian identity and how it is maintained by some, yet shunned by others.

Donald Fixico’s book, *The Urban Indian Experience*, is a blending of government policies, the urbanization of Indians, and identity. Fixico echoes both Nagel and Fenelon’s opinion that American Indian identity is flexible and situational. In a chapter entitled, “The Urban Indian Identity Crisis,” Fixico describes the experiences of some American Indians during the relocation programs and how it affected their sense of identity. Those who were raised in traditional families on reservations had a harder time adjusting to city life and maintained their identities by continuing their cultural practices and returning home as often as possible. Some mixed bloods seemed to have a choice of passing for white or embracing their Indian identity and trying to maintain their cultural traditions. 32 Fixico gives examples of racism from whites towards Indians and from mixed-bloods who could pass for white and how that impacted identity. Despite the struggles between the two groups of Indians there was still a strong sense of identity as a larger community. This was reflected through events like intertribal powwows. “Powwows emulate traditional ceremonial dances, but have been modified over the years; today, they are colorfully impressive and commercialized.” 33 These inter-tribal events allowed Indians to come together as a community and to express their American Indian identity both as individuals and collectively.

In order to see how identity is expressed through powwows, it is important to understand who attends these events. In 1987 the Survey of American Indians and Alaska Natives was conducted and Karl Eschbach and Kalman Applbaum reported the results in, “Who Goes to Powwows? Evidence from the Survey of American Indians and Alaska Natives,” published in

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33 Ibid, 57.
the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*. The authors describe off-reservation powwows as “an institutional context for the expression of Indian identity and an off-reservation connection to the Indian community.”34 These types of powwows reinforce both tribal and American Indian identity, which reflects an individual’s affiliation with a specific tribe while also being part of the larger inter-tribal Indian community. Reservation communities are sometimes geographically and socially isolated from non-Indians, but these powwows serve as a way of asserting tribal identity and can be used as way of maintaining and revitalizing tribal traditions.35 Most traditional powwows held on reservations are attended primarily by those affiliated with the tribe, while contest powwows held on and off reservations and traditional powwows held off-reservations are attended by a wide variety of tribes. The authors refer to the work of James Howard and his theory that Pan-Indian powwows are merely a pit stop on the road to assimilation for Indian people, because a new Indian ethnic identity is created which will result in the loss of tribal identity and end with assimilation. However, the authors as well as other researchers have found that individual tribal identity is reinforced at the same time as American Indian community identity.

The survey was administered by the Agency for Health Policy Research in 1987 as a way of assessing health-care use by Indians. Those surveyed had to be eligible to receive Indian Health Services, which leaves out a large number of Americans who do not meet eligibility requirements. The survey found that American Indians attend more powwows as their acculturation increased and that Indians living on reservations who practice tradition ways and speak their tribal language attend powwows less frequently. Indians attending powwows were

found to be middle-aged, have more than a high school education, and tend to be intermarried. The authors caution that these findings do not mean that these Indians are substituting cultural events, like powwows for traditional ways. Rather, it appears to be as a response to be intermarried or living off-reservation. This study contributes greatly to research about powwows, but another survey including Indians not eligible for Indian Health Service needs to be conducted as this will offer a broader, detailed picture of powwow participants.

Patricia Barker Lerch and Susan Bullers created a study of Waccamaw Sioux Indians, a state-recognized tribe in North Carolina, about tribal identity. The Center for Survey Methods Research of the U.S. Census Bureau supported this study as part of a much larger one that measured the success of the census in minority communities. Identity markers used in the survey included school, workplace, state, federal, and general recognition, having native parents, looking Indian, attending local (tribal) powwows, and attending Pan-Indian powwows. While tribal powwows are viewed as being more “traditional” by Waccamaw Sioux’s participating in this survey, they did not feel that attending inter-tribal or Pan-Indian powwows undermined their tribal identity. “Powwows shape individual social identity, promote intertribal unity and action, and interact with and support the most important traditional values of family, community, heritage, and parentage.”

While there were very few secondary sources that focused on the expression of identity through powwow the secondary sources on powwows and identity contributed greatly to this paper. The books and articles on the evolution of traditional dances into today’s powwows helped to create a backdrop for examining American Indian identity. Research on powwows revealed a conflict among authors. The main disagreement tends to be between native

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36 Ibid, 73.
researchers who use oral tradition as a major part of their research along with scholarly material and researchers who do not include native narrative with scholarly sources. The research on American Indian identity found that both tribal and American Indian identity was expressed through powwows. Most of the research showed that the Pan-Indian nature of powwows did not negatively impact tribal identity, but helped to reinforce it within the context of the larger Indian community. Only Howard, whose work was referred to in Eschbach and Applebaum’s article, believed that Pan-Indianism was merely a stage that would be passed through on the way to assimilation because of the break down of tribal identity due to Pan-Indianism. Combining the research on powwows and American Indian identity has helped to create a framework for viewing the information found through primary sources.

**Stability in Format**

The format of contemporary powwows dates back to the 1930s, but was influenced both by traditional tribal dances and Wild West Shows. The format of powwows has remained unchanged for the most part. Contemporary powwows begin with a Grand Entry which owes its origin to grand entry parades in Wild West shows that once included Indians in full regalia galloping into the arena on horses followed by gun-toting cowboys. 

Tara Browner gives a very detailed listing of events at a powwow in a table that shows two variations of the order of events. During Grand Entry the Flag Bearers and Color Guard enter the arena followed by Head Staff, Powwow Princesses, and the dancers who are lined up according to dance style with male categories ahead of the female categories. There are variations in the order of dancers as some powwows prefer group dancers according to dance style and arrange the dancers from oldest to youngest, while others group the dancers by age and then according to dance style. An example

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38 Ibid, 13
of the latter arrangement can be seen frequently at larger competition powwows with Golden Age dancers at the front of the dancers arranged by dance category, followed by adult men arranged by dance category, adult women arranged by dance category, teen boys arranged by category, teen girls arranged by category, and lastly, tiny tots arranged by category. The inclusion of Powwow Princesses in Grand Entry is relatively new as princess contests date back to the 1960s which were inspired by American beauty contests.  

The order of events has remained much the same since the 1930s starting with Grand Entry, followed by the Flag Song, posting of the colors, veterans’ dance, inter-tribal dances, exhibition or contest dances by age group and dance style, inter-tribal dances, retiring of the colors, dinner break, Grand Entry, inter-tribal dances, exhibition or competition dances, intertribal dances, awards, and closing prayer. Within the line-up of events and interspersed between inter-tribal dances are “specials” (which are contests sponsored by families to honor a relative) and “giveaways” (which are ways of honoring a person or serve as a memorial). During a “special”, dancers compete for prizes awarded by the family, with winners being chosen by judges selected by the family. Families give gifts to elders, veterans, the powwow committee, friends and extended family who have contributed to the life of the family member being honored or remembered during a “giveaway”. These traditions are carried on today as they have been since the beginning of powwows and are usually done according to the sponsoring family’s tribal traditions.

The master of ceremonies (MC) is responsible for keeping the powwow moving, informing the dancers of the time to line up for Grand Entry, announcing the dancers as they enter the arena during Grand Entry, letting singers know the order of the Drums and number of

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41 Browner, Heartbeat, 94.
songs they will sing, announcing exhibitions and competition dances, coordinating “specials” and “giveaways”, and giving announcements about rules, parking, raffles and other information. Part of the MC’s patter includes welcoming dancers or visitors who have traveled great distances to the powwow, announcing visiting dignitaries like politicians or tribal leaders, supplying information about what is happening in the arena, and providing humor to fill in down time between dances. MCs serve as representatives of American Indian and tribal identity, pointing out to visitors, “this is our way” or indicating specific tribes during Grand Entry. Color Guards representing specific tribes register with the MC, letting him know what tribe they are from and what Color Guard or Veteran’s unit they represent. Other times the MC will identify dancers during the Grand Entry via the tribal designs on their outfits, though this is becoming harder to do as dancers increasingly use Pan-Indian designs.

**Changes in Outfits**

As in other parts of native culture, powwow outfits have continued to change and evolve from their original styles. Wissler’s paper, *Structural Basis to the Decoration of Costumes Among the Plains Indians*, details the construction of dresses, shirts, and moccasins from various tribes and how decorative work was applied in the 1900s. The structure of garments and the materials used often dictated the shape and placement of the designs. *Costumes Among the Plains Indians*, by Wissler was another project done for the American Museum of Natural History and went into even greater detail of outfits worn by various Plains tribes. This volume was based on the same type of methodical research as his other projects and is a wealth of information. The maps were unique as Wissler drew the different types of dress patterns used in

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a region by a specific tribe. The Ojibwa and Dakota shared some of the same types of dresses, indicating that clothing construction ideas were often shared and spread through a geographical region.\textsuperscript{44} The projects on decorative designs and clothing are helpful in establishing the types of traditional dance outfits used by tribes in the 1890s to 1930s allowing for a comparison of contemporary powwow outfits.

Changes in outfits are evident at powwows throughout the United States and are best seen during Grand Entry where dancers are lined up according to dance style. These changes reflect both expression of tribal identity and the influence of Pan-Indianism. According to many older dancers interviewed for this project, changes from more traditional tribal designs to Pan-Indian designs began as early as the 1960s, during a time period when many American Indian families were being located to urban areas. The sharing of designs and mixing of tribal designs to form new Pan-Indian designs is not new as evidenced by Wissler’s work in the 1900s, but was made easier by the close proximity of people from various tribes. According to one Lakota elder, “When I first went to powwows in the early 70’s in Minneapolis you could tell who was Sioux and who was Ojibwe really easy because of their outfits. Nowadays I can only tell some traditional dancers’ tribes by their outfits and the rest of dancers wear the same kind of fancy, flashy designs so I can’t tell what tribe they are.”\textsuperscript{45} Melinda Young, an Ojibwa and college student, traveled to a few powwows each year with her family when she was. Young takes her young son to as many powwows as time and money permit, because she wants her son to feel he is a part of the larger native community. “I like to go and spend time with my friends and family,

\textsuperscript{44} Clark Wissler, “Costumes of the Plains Indians,” 89.
\textsuperscript{45} Frank T. Duran, interviewed by author, 19 October 2006, Salt Lake City, personal interview.
watch the dancers and listen to the Drums. Outfits are brighter and flashier than when I was I was little kid, but it keeps things interesting.”

Robert Hart, a 28 year old Ho Chunk/Ojibwe man and Grass dancer stated, “I feel that powwows help maintain our tribal identity. The fellowship, gathering, and tribal diversity that powwows bring are priceless.” Hart’s use of both Ojibwe and Ho Chunk designs and colors reflects his tribal identity. When asked if going to an inter-tribal powwow rather than a traditional tribal powwow affects his sense of identity Hart replied, “My sense of identity never changes, I know who I am, where I am from, and who I will always proudly be, Ojibwe, Ho Chunk, Native American.” During a “special” held at the 2007 University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire powwow in honor of Hart, Grass Dancers filled the arena where two distinct styles were seen. The majority of the dancers wore contemporary Pan-Indian designs in bright colors and used flashy fabrics for their appliqués, while only two outfits reflected the dancer’s tribal affiliation. One outfit featured satin appliqués inspired by traditional Ojibwe beaded floral work while the other outfit had Menominee tribal designs.

In an article for Windspeaker, Evelyn Thom, a Canadian Ojibwe elder, was interviewed about the jingle dance. She has been a jingle dancer for over forty years, traveling to powwows throughout Canada and the United States. Thom stated,

“The old dresses had no beadwork, just plain fabric or prints. They were the same length back then as they are now. They never wore leggings the way they do now. They just had moccasins made of smoked leather with no fancy decorations. When I was young we

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46 Melinda Young, interviewed by author, 6 March 2007, Eau Claire, personal interview.
47 Robert Hart, interviewed by author, 2 March 2007, Eau Claire, personal interview.
were taught by tribal Elders that we should not wear plumes, carry fans or have any feathers. The Ojibwa women just wore plain headbands.”

Linda Nockidendh, an Oneida elder, Traditional and Jingle Dancer, chose contemporary appliquéd designs in neon orange, yellow, red, turquoise, and white for her Jingle dress. She acknowledged that her dress was wildly different from the original, simpler dresses. She picked the colors that echoed her vibrant personality. “My dress may be covered in wild colors and fancy appliqués, but I still keep the traditions associated with this dress.” Ojibwe tradition states that the Jingle Dance is considered to be a healing dress. Nockidendh, worked as a domestic abuse counselor for many years and sees powwows as a positive way for Indians to gather together in an alcohol-free environment and celebrate their cultures. “I still go to the longhouse and practice traditional Oneida ways. I see powwows as a social event where Indians can socialize, meet up with friends from other tribes and to spend time with friends from your own tribe. I will always be Oneida, it’s who I am. I really enjoy dancing Jingle with all of my friends from other tribes.”

At the 2007 University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire powwow a jingle dancer was shopping for a new Fancy Shawl outfit for her daughter and was asked whether she preferred a tribal design or a more contemporary design for the shawl. The mother replied, “She knows she is Ojibwe. Everyone knows our family is Ojibwe, she just wants to look like the big girls with the pretty designs on their shawls.” The little girl chose a fuchsia floral brocade shawl and dress with neon green, neon orange, red, turquoise, bright pink, royal blue, and white swirling contemporary designs which the little girl deemed to be “just like the big girls.”

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49 Linda Nockidendh, interviewed by author, 28 April 2007, Eau Claire, personal interview.
50 Anonymous 1
Kelsey Andreen, a 19 year old Ojibwe Fancy Shawl dancer and student, reflected on the changes in powwow outfits. “I think that today’s powwow outfits allow freedom for people to express themselves – whether it be more traditional or flashy. I also think the appearance of pan-Indian designs is a sign of changing times, which is not necessarily a bad thing. The important thing is that Indians are coming together showing pride in a part of their culture.”\(^5\) An outfit’s design can express tribal identity or simply reflect aesthetic preference. Christian Clarquist, an 18 year old Ojibwe/Yankton Sioux Fancy Shawl dancer had a new outfit made in time for her role as Head Dancer at the 2007 University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire powwow. She wanted an outfit that was contemporary, but also reflected her Ojibwe heritage. She chose a large black contemporary design to serve as a background for a more Traditional Ojibwe floral pattern. Her mother beaded a floral pattern onto a black velvet vest, cape, and leggings to reflect the way classic Ojibwe beadwork was done. By combining a traditional tribal design with a more contemporary Pan-Indian design, Clarquist was able to express her tribal identity within a Pan-Indian context. Lyndsay Nelson, Ojibwe and college student, started dancing this year and worked on her outfit with Clarquist at a friend’s home. “I am so happy to get my first outfit, I have waited for this for a long time. I wasn’t sure what I wanted my outfit to look like, but I chose yellow, red, orange, and turquoise because they are bright but not neon. I didn’t want to attract a lot of attention to myself with a flashy outfit because I am a first time dancer.”\(^5\) Janet Little Crow, Cherokee and a regalia maker, interviewed for the video Fancy Shawl stated, “These Fancy Shawl outfits, just like the other outfits are an expression of the person who is wearing them, of tribal pride, and of who they are.” The designs and fabric used are brighter, shinier, and more complex than in the past and are made to reflect a person’s identity as well as

\(^{51}\) Kelsey Andreen, interviewed by author, 28 February 2007, Eau Claire, personal interview.

\(^{52}\) Lyndsay Nelson, interviewed by author, 28 April 2007, Eau Claire, personal interview.
catch the judge’s eye. Andreen, Clarquist, and Nelson all agreed that powwow outfits have changed, but even though designs have become more Pan-Indian and less tribally based it doesn’t change how they view themselves as Ojibwe women.

**Changes in Dance**

Just like powwow outfits, dance also reflects adaptation and changes. Traditional dances have changed the least; the most evident changes can be seen in the fancy footwork of Fancy Shawl, Jingle, Grass, and Men’s Fancy dancers.

Evelyn Thom, a Canadian Ojibwe elder, in an article for *Windspeaker* described how the Jingle Dance was done when she was a young child in the 1930s. “We went to the round dance hall and the ladies danced in a circle or a line in the old traditional style, straightforward dancing, no kicks, and no high steps, We were not supposed to pass each other. That’s the old way, how I was taught.” This description is a far cry from today’s Jingle Dance where dancers can be seen passing each other in the arena and using intricate higher steps. Linda Nockidendh, an Oneida elder, Traditional and Jingle Dancer, agreed with Thom’s description of the old way the Jingle Dance was done. When asked about the expression of tribal identity through powwow dances, Nockidendh replied, “I dance traditional Oneida dances and the Jingle Dance. This dance started with the Ojibwe, but now most tribes have picked it up. I’ve been a jingle dancer for a long time, but Oneida dances were the ones I learned as a child. I like the Jingle Dance, but I will always be an Oneida Jingle Dancer.”

The Fancy Shawl Dance is said to have originated in the 1950s in the Plains as represented a major change in women’s dance. Until then, women danced on the outside edge of the arena using small steps. Tom Pearson, a writer for *Dance* Magazine states, “Once seen, [the Fancy Shawl Dance] it is hard to imagine a time when women stepped demurely in the outer

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circle. With one foot forward, these dancers are the forbearers of a revolution in powwow
dancing, balancing tradition and innovation in an ever-changing world.”  
This statement echoes
the sentiments of many dancers who see Fancy Shawl foot work as continuing to change,
becoming more complex and athletic. In the video Fancy Shawl, Julia Roach Ronconte,
Sioux/Ojibwe is interviewed about the beginnings of the Fancy Shawl Dance. She was one of the
original Fancy Shawl dancers and started dancing it in grade school using faster steps like some
of the Men’s Fancy Dance. Grace Her Many Horses, an Oglala Sioux and Fancy Shawl Dancers
recalled how the dance originated right after World War II. It was seen as a response to Men’s
Fancy Dance.  

Christian Clarquist stated, “I started out a jingle dancer and went to Fancy Shawl when I
was in the sixth grade. There is more fancy footwork now than when I started.” At the 2007
University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire powwow, Fancy Shawl dancers from several tribes were
seen using the more contemporary faster, higher steps, and incorporating more spins done with
arms extended to fully open the shawl, revealing all the intricate designs on the back.

Changes in Music

Powwow music has undergone the least amount of changes in the last fifty years.
According to Tara Browner, author of Heartbeat of the People, powwow songs are sung in
native languages and by using vocables which are sounds, not specific words. New songs
continued to be made by different singers, but stay within the context of older traditional
powwow songs. Thomas Hayden’s article, “Original Gangstas: They Were Making Music

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55 Fancy Shawl. Produced and directed by Scott Swearingen and Sandy Rhoades, 30 min., Full Circle Videos, 2005, DVD
57 Browner, Heartbeat, 111.
Before There Was America” written for the *U.S. News and World Report* focused on younger people’s role in native music. Hayden interviewed Litefoot, a Cherokee rapper and actor, about the new styles of music adopted by Indians. “The elders tell us that music is medicine. At a powwow, the essence of drumming is to encourage the dancers.”58 Ramon Benton-Benai, Ojibwe and singer for the Drum, The Boyz, plays computer games between his Drum’s turn to sing which is clearly a part of the modern world. Tapping the drum he says “but I’ll never leave this either.”59 The use of modern technology and being part of a powwow Drum is evidence of living in two worlds. Despite this, when The Boyz sing at powwows they stick to older songs and newer songs are made in the traditional way.

Traditionally, men play on the drum, while women serve as the backup singers. Within the last twenty years there have been some women who are challenging that tradition and playing on the drum, not singing backup. Kelsey Andreen, a 19 year old Ojibwe Fancy Shawl dancer and student, spoke about problems that can arise from these women who are breaking with tradition. At her hometown Indian Center she sang backup with the youth Drum. One of the older girls stepped up and said she wanted to drum as a way of honoring her grandfather. After much discussion the girl was allowed to join the boys on the Drum. The youth Drum was scheduled to play at a powwow a few hours away from the Indian Center, but when the girl sat at the drum elders asked the Drum to leave. In an article for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Christopher Flores wrote about the legal impact crossing the gender barriers of traditional Drums. The University of St. Thomas was sued when powwow organizers refused to allow the female Drum, Sweetgrass Road Drum group, to sing. The Drum is made up of singers who are women who believe that women should not take a backseat to men. Linell Maytwayashing, a singer for the

59 Ibid, 28.
Drum asked, “The times have changed. Single-parent families are a big problem in the Native American community. If women have to play two roles, mother and father, I don’t see anything wrong with us singing on the drum. Who else will teach the children to sing?” Jim Clairmont, Lakota and the powwow’s spiritual adviser, said “Part of this is our teachings about women and men, not that they are unequal, but that they each have their places. A man’s place is around the drum. Women can sing behind the men and can perform sacred dances and wear traditional dress.” The Mankillers is another female Drum who are challenging traditional native gender roles. Irma Amaro-Davis, the Drum keeper, started by singing with a men’s Drum after an elder asked her to join because he felt she was a reliable person who would make a good addition to the group. Amaro-Davis explained “I didn’t think a co-ed Drum was controversial. I’ve always seen women at family drums and community drums. Older men and women tell me women often sang and drummed at family drums, although they didn’t usually go out into the community.”

While there have been very few changes in powwow music, the biggest change has been women challenging the long-standing traditions of gender roles.

**Conclusion**

In the video, *Wasaa Inaabida*, several Ojibwe elders spoke about language containing the virtues, values, spirituality and identity of a tribe. Tribes throughout the United States are working to maintain their culture through the preservation of language, dances, songs, and art. The number of language immersion schools and programs has increased in recent years, reflecting the importance of language to a tribe. Many reservations have started culture classes

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63 *Waasa Inaabidaa: We Look in All Directions*, Directed by Lorraine Norrgard, 60 min., WDSE TV, 2002, DVD.
for their youth so tribal traditions can be learned and passed from one generation to another. With all this focus on retaining tribal identity, it may seem puzzling to hear tribal songs being sung by different tribes or to see the explosion of Pan-Indian designs in regalia at powwows which all but erases the outwards signs of tribal identity in the dance arena. However, these phenomena have occurred for at least twenty five years and are due to several factors. Increased mobility, better access to technology, more availability of new textiles, urbanization of the American Indian population and competitiveness at competition powwows have all been cited by researchers and mentioned by Indians surveyed for this project.

Dance outfits have undergone the most changes which is reflected in vibrant colors and complex multi-layered geometric or curlicue designs. Tribal designs have been worn at both competition and traditional powwows during the last twenty five years, but according to most of the dancers interviewed these designs seem to be restricted to traditional powwows with Pan-Indian designs mainly being worn at competition powwows. The advent of casinos has allowed tribes to sponsor competition powwows where the combined prize money can be well over $100,000 and may be part of the reason for the changes in dance outfits. Although most competition powwows are hosted by a single Indian nation, they are inter-tribal events with people from many tribes competing. The differences in dance styles and clothing for each tribe may make it harder for judges to decide who the best dancer is in a given category. The reduction in the number of tribally inspired designs used in powwow outfits may be an attempt by dancers to level the playing field at competition powwows.

Another way dancers can try to gain an advantage in competition is to use more athletic and complex dance steps. Fancy footwork, combined with stylized head, upper body and arm movements, are another way that Grass, Fancy Shawl, and Grass Dancers can attract a judge’s
The Jingle Dance has also evolved, moving from a dance done with modest shuffling steps to flashier higher steps and the raising of a fan during the honor beats of a song. The changes have been so great that both dancers and judges have asked for an additional category to be added to competitions. Within the last five years the contemporary Jingle Dance category has been added to what is now labeled the “Traditional Jingle Dance” category. The dance steps for Traditional Dance for both men and women have been relatively unchanged, the changes for that category are reflected mainly in bolder colors, shinier fabrics, and more complex Pan-Indian designs often combined with more traditional tribal components of the outfit.

Today’s powwow outfits reflect an increasing preference for Pan-Indian designs, brighter colors, and flashier fabrics rather than traditional colors and materials used to create tribal specific designs. More intricate and athletic dance steps are used in most of the dance categories which are vastly different from the dances’ original steps. Newer songs sung at powwows often reflect a Drum’s multi-tribal makeup, but are also sung as part of a rotation of older, tribal specific songs. The increased use of inter-tribal designs and songs may seem to indicate an erosion of traditional identity. However, individual tribal identity has remained for the most part intact and is expressed within the context of inter-tribal powwows. Tribal identity seems to be something that is very personal, deeply ingrained, and not something that can be easily lost within the larger American Indian community or at an inter-tribal powwow. “Powwows mean different things to each person here, but to me, it is a chance to celebrate being Ojibwe with Indians from other tribes.”

Despite continuing evolution, powwows still serve as a forum for the expression of tribal and American Indian community identity both individually and

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64 Anonymous 3, interviewed by author, 28 April 2007, Eau Claire, personal interview.
collectively. Whatever changes the future may bring, powwows will still be a way of expressing identity, because “As long as we dance, we shall know who we are.”

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65 Ellis, A Dancing People, 39.
Fig. 1. Northern Traditional dancer at Hinckley Grand Casino Powwow 2006. The color and design choices reflect a more traditional style, but the use of metallic fabric appliqués on the sleeves give the outfit a more contemporary look. (Courtesy of Harvey Gunderson)
Fig. 2. Northern Traditional dancer at Hinckley Grand Casino Powwow 2006. The plum color in the shirt is more in keeping with a traditional look, but the neon appliqués, neon ribbon, and satin fabric make it look more contemporary. (Courtesy of Harvey Gunderson)
Fig. 3. Northern Traditional dancer at Hinckley Grand Casino Powwow 2006. The eagle bustle, porcupine roach, and beadwork are more the traditional parts of the outfit, the use of inter-tribal designs in the appliqué and flashy fabrics give the outfit a more contemporary and competitive look. (Courtesy of Harvey Gunderson)
Fig. 4. Grass dancers at Hinckley Grand Casino Powwow 2006. Dancer #2620’s outfit with its satin fabric and ribbon is using the latest textiles, but the beadwork is more of a traditional style. The second dancer to the left wears traditional Ojibwe floral beadwork with a contemporary satin outfit. The third dancer from the left wears bead work with traditional geometric Lakota designs. The fringes are made of cotton fabric strips which is an older style, and the only contemporary part of his outfit is the satin fabric. Dancer #2623 uses white yarn fringe which is the preferred material at contemporary competition powwows. (Courtesy of Harvey Gunderson)
Fig. 5. This outfit worn at Hinckley Grand Casino Powwow in 2006 is made of turquoise cotton with yellow fringe, which stands out in contrast to most of the other dancers who use white yarn fringe. The ribbon work and lack of appliqués give the outfit a more traditional look. (Courtesy of Harvey Gunderson)
Fig. 6. This Fancy dancer chose contemporary looking neon ribbons and hackles to wear with his more traditional fully beaded aprons and yoke.
Fig. 7. This outfit worn at Hinckley Grand Casino Powwow in 2006 uses contemporary neon colored beads and ribbon. (Courtesy of Harvey Gunderson)
Fig. 8. This Fancy outfit was worn at the 1006 Gathering of Nations powwow and uses neon ribbon and inter-tribal designed appliqués made of satin. (Gathering of Nations.com)
Fig. 9. Hera Lonetree-Burgess wears a traditional Ho Chunk appliquéd skirt, tunic, shawl, shell necklaces, and moccasins. The inter-tribal designs on the beaded purse give the outfit a contemporary touch. (Photograph by author)
Fig. 10. Traditional dancers in buckskin dresses entering the arena during Grand Entry at the Hinckley Grand Casino Powwow in 2006. The first, fourth and fifth dancers are wearing fully beaded capes and buckskin skirts. The second and third dancers are wearing cloth appliquéd dresses. (Courtesy of Harvey Gunderson)
Fig. 11. Jingle dancers entering the arena during Grand Entry at the Hinckley Grand Casino Powwow in 2006. The dancer on the left is wearing a traditional black velvet vest with an Ojibwe floral beaded design with her blue floral appliquéd cotton dress. The dancer on the right is wearing a lime green brocade dress with a brightly colored beaded cape. The combination gives the outfit a more contemporary look. (Courtesy of Harvey Gunderson)
Fig. 12. Jingle dress made by Brandy Lonetree-White for a custom order. Ojibwe floral designs give a more traditional look to a very contemporary pink brocade jingle dress. (Photograph by author)
Fig. 13. Jingle dress made by Brandy Lonetree-White for a custom order. Inter-tribal designed appliqués in hot pink, purple, and turquoise accent the neon yellow satin jingle dress which is trimmed in purple fringe for a flashier, contemporary look. (Photograph by author)
Fig. 14. Fancy shawl outfit worn by fourteen year old Quinne Goodwin of the White Earth Ojibwe Reservation in Minnesota in 2006. Her mother, Dana Goodwin wanted to mix traditional Ojibwe floral patterns with contemporary neon fabrics, ribbons and colors. (Courtesy of Dana Goodwin)
Fig. 15. Fancy shawl made by Brandy Lonetree-White for a custom order. Ojibwe Reservation in Minnesota in 2006. The inter-tribal designed appliqués in neon colors on the purple brocade fabric, neon ribbon, and neon green skirt give this outfit a contemporary look. (Photograph by author)
Fig. 16. Map created by Clark Wissler depicting the distribution of American Indian dress styles throughout the United States and part of Canada. (Wissler, 1915)
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