

The Powwow Guide



***An Brief Informational Text From a
Chippewas of Rama First Nation Perspective.***

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We equally acknowledge our many visitors, friends, and community members who come out each year to support us. Together we give thanks for the blessings that we have received throughout the years as a community and we will continue to give thanks in celebration through song and dance.

Gchi Miigwech Kina Wiya!

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Introduction

Greetings,

These are only the memories, experiences and information of band members and others who have helped with our powwow over the years. The powwow you see today in our community is the result of many years of organizing, planning, and trying to be better year over year. The Rama powwow journey began in the late 1970's when these early celebrations of song and dance were just starting in the local area.

We make no claim that what you will read inside this booklet is accurate for all First Nations groups, or even for all Anishinaabe people, near or far. It is simply a Chippewas of Rama First Nation perspective that we offer here. It is offered as a record of some of the questions we are constantly asked, and the answers we continue to give to those questions.

The powwow tradition on Turtle Island is a long and honourable one. When you consider that powwows have been around in some form for more than two hundred years, Rama First Nation is just new to the movement.

For thousands of years, our community has been known for its outstanding hospitality and our ability to care for all visitors and make them feel welcome. This publication is an extension of that.

We hope it will be a lasting document that helps people begin to understand what powwow represents to us as a community. The powwow passes on social, language and cultural teachings and a way to be thankful for all we have.

Please join us in that dance circle and experience a small part of our way of life, with which we are all blessed.

Sherry Lawson,
Administrator of Heritage Services,
Chippewas of Rama First Nation



Rama Powwow History

RAMA POWWOW HISTORY



As far back as we can remember the Chippewas of Rama First Nation has been a meeting place for visitors. We are a community that is known for its hospitality; from the earliest explorers to the fall fairs in the 1920's. From the powwow under the big tent at the Rama Ball Field, to the competition powwows at the MASK arena, our community continues to enjoy being a host to the many guests who frequent our community on a daily basis.



*Fall Fair at Rama Circa 1920s
Left to Right: Annie Benson, Elizabeth Snake, Molly Wesley, Olive Wesley, Dora Wesley, Thomas Wesley, John Bigwind.*

In the early 1970's there was no song and dance happening

in Rama First Nation and no sign of local powwows in the surrounding area. Emerson Benson, Co-founder of the Chippewas of Rama First Nation Thanksgiving Powwow, was working at the Native Canadian Centre in Toronto and had been surrounded by drumming and dancing on a weekly basis. Being inspired to bring back tradition in his own community, he said "I'm from the area, there's nothing going on, so hey let's try it".

Emerson also recalls how Rama had always been noted for its hospitality.

In 1977, with the support of Rama First Nation band members, the community held its first annual Thanksgiving Powwow at Victoria Park. "It was a real community event [and] there was a lot of volunteerism at that time." For generations people have gathered at Rama particularly in the autumn or harvest months. At these times people would celebrate, socialize, eat, and have fun together. The following year, the entire community and the Social Services Department got involved in what was then a non-competition powwow held every Thanksgiving weekend. The Old Industrial Mall, which currently houses Casino Rama Administrative Offices, Victoria Park, the ball field at Rama, and also the Orillia Roller Skating Place have all been used as venues for the annual powwow over the years.



*Emerson Benson
Nanigishkung **

In 1986, the Rama Powwow again made another transformation as a result of a 'Social Recreation Needs Assessment' (SNRA) which began in 1983 and extended into 1985. The community was canvassed in what was referred to as 'Kitchen Dialogue' by former Chief Ted Williams who held leadership during this time. This was where members of the SRNA committee went to each household to ask a series of questions and sit in the kitchen (a place of comfort) to discuss the people's dreams and aspirations that they had for the community. "Many of the successes we find we have today have come from these kitchen table discussions." relates Ted Williams, "Powwow was part of that talk and some members of the community built on this". James Simcoe and Emerson Benson were both prominent and influential in rejuvenating the powwow in those early days.

Over the years, Rama First Nation has witnessed an exponential growth of the powwow, which was once mainly a small event where about a dozen community veterans would attend along with guests from Walpole, Wiky, Sarnia, and even Milwaukee. Now a competition powwow, the event has grown substantially, hosting between 3000 - 5000 visitors each year. It is an honour to have so many guests visit Rama to partake in an event which has been part of the community's culture for several decades and continues to evolve. Had it not been for the indomitable will of a few individuals in the 1970's, we would not be celebrating so many years of powwow at the Chippewas of Rama First Nation.



*Powwow at Rama Ball Field 1986
Left to Right: James Simcoe, MC*





The Chippewas of Rama First Nation

A Proud and Progressive First Nation Community

Our Story:

The Chippewas of Rama First Nation is approximately 2 hours north of Toronto, Ontario. Our 2,500 acres of interspersed land is nestled in "Ontario's Lake Country" on the Eastern side of Lake Couchiching. We have over 1800 band members including over 700 living on-reserve. We are Ojibwe peoples who are part of the Three Fires Confederacy along with the Odawa and Pottawatomi Nations.

It has been said that when people spoke of our tribe, they referred to us as the people who live near the fence, or at Mitchekuning. Now spelled Mnjikaning, this word can be translated as: "In", "On", "At" or "Near" 'The Fence'. This fence pertains to the fish weirs which are located at the Atherley Narrows, where Lake Couchiching and Lake Simcoe meet. The weirs are one of the oldest human developments in North America and are believed to have been built some 5,000 years ago by the Wendat and others.

The site located at the weirs has been noted as neutral grounds where First Nations people enjoyed festivities, exchanged goods, shared information, and partook in ceremony and storytelling. In 1982, the Federal



Government officially declared the weirs a National Historic Site.

The Chippewas of Rama First Nation were originally part of a larger community known as the Chippewas of Lake Simcoe and Lake Huron of which Chief William Yellowhead or Muskuakie was recognized as principal chief. As hunter-gatherers, our traditional lifestyle involved following deer herd movements in the autumn and winter months to the West, East, and North points of Ontario. Summer months were spent in settlements at places now known as Atherley, Orillia, and Coldwater.

In the 1830's, Lieutenant-Governor Sir John Colborne set aside a clearing for our nation



Silver Nightingale Brass Band 1926: (from left to right) Jim York, Unknown, Murdock Snache, Bob Stinson, George Snache, Dick Shilling, Joe Stinson, Peter Bigwin, Dean York, J.B. Stinson, Fred Benson, Alec Ingersoll, John Simcoe, Dave Joe, Dave Anderson, Levi Joe, Bill Ingersoll, Frank Joe, Bill Shilling, Alec Joe, Lorne Ingersoll, Solomon Ingersoll, Jerry Shilling, Sampson Ingersoll, Wellington Benson, David Simcoe, Harold Anderson, Johnny Jacobs, Tom Williams, Unknown, Unknown, Alder York, Jake Shilling Sr.



Early Childhood Education Centre



Kendaaswin Elementary School and Water Tower

between the Narrows (where Lake Couchiching and Lake Simcoe meet) and Coldwater. The government tried to gather our people together to make them farmers. It was also the beginning of the reserve system that we have today.

In 1836 the Chippewas of Lake Simcoe and Lake Huron were told that their land between Coldwater and the Narrows had been surrendered. At that point, what was once a large nation, was henceforth divided into three bands. Hereditary Chief Aisance and his band moved to Christian Island, hereditary Chief Snake and his band now live at Georgina Island and Chief Yellowhead and his band stayed in this area and are presently known as Rama First Nation. These three bands, now known as the Chippewa Tri-Council, still enjoy a relationship today.

Two years after the alleged Coldwater surrender and because of the influence of Sir Francis Bond Head as well as pressure from European settlers, Chief Yellowhead and hereditary chiefs Thomas Nanigishkung and Big Shilling purchased 1600 acres of non-farmable land in Rama Township for \$3,200 with the bands own annuities. Chief Yellowhead and his people chose to remain 'close to the bones of our ancestors'.

As industrious-minded people Rama has developed endeavors over the past 12 years which include the Getsidjig Endaawaad Seniors Community Home, Waste Water Treatment Facilities, our Extended Care Facility, Health Clinic, Fire Services, Ambulance Services, Police Services, Community Hall, Daycare facilities, the Baseball field, and the Mnjikaning Arena Sports Ki (MASK) with an Olympic sized ice rink,

gymnasium, and exercise facility. The MASK is adjacent to the Library, computer lab and Mnjikaning Kendaaswin Elementary School.

As a proud and progressive First Nation community, we have also developed and continue to maintain the Black River Wilderness Park, Ojibway Bay Marina, Rama Country Market, Shell Station, shops within the CasinoRama complex, and a strip mall which houses the Scotiabank, Ben's Pharmacy, and our Band Administrative offices.



Black River Wilderness Park

Rama First Nation is known for its musicians, artists, and sports figures. We continue to be honoured for our hospitality. We are represented as the 'people of the deer' and this can be observed in our community flag and logo.

Presently, Rama First Nation is the owner and host community for Casino Rama, which draws an average of 11,000 daily visitors to our territory.



Former Hereditary Chief Yellowhead (Muskquakie) "signature" and Dodem, the reindeer.



POWWOW HISTORY

Ancestral teachings indicate that the origins of the powwow tradition come from our relations, the Omahas of Nebraska, the Poncas, and Kiowas of Oklahoma, or a fusion of all three nations.

The word "Powwow" is believed to have come from the Algonquian word "Pau wau" (Massachusetts) or "powwaw" (Narragansett) which was used to describe medicine people and spiritual leaders. Early settlers mistakenly took "pau wau" to signify an entire event where spiritual leaders or Medicine people had gathered with community members.

Over the years, powwows have grown substantially and are today one of the most celebrated events on Turtle Island (North America) with annual festivities taking place across the continent.

Benjamin Bearskin Jr., Powwow Historian

- As told to Dean St. Germain in a telephone conversation

Benjamin Bearskin Jr. came into this world in Chicago, 1952. He has become an accomplished educator, among many things, and is trilingual, being half Dakota. Benjamin began singing at the American Indian Center in Chicago and, through multi-tribal learning from Elders, by age twenty-one he had sung in 17 different languages, in 17 states and 2 provinces, at 1000 Powwows. He started dancing at two years old and has danced Fancy, Grass and Traditional. When he was twenty-seven years old someone called needing an M.C. right away, he did it, and even though it was sudden, and his first time, it all flowed. ↩ ↩

Benjamin tells us how one could talk about the ways of a Powwow for two years, every day, all day, and still not cover everything there is to learn. Also, there are unsaid meanings to be heard in the intonations of songs. It's kind of like reading 'between the lines', and can be broken down into: a circle = 'zero' = degrees. It's mathematical and resonates with the right side of the brain, as music itself does. It interacts with sub-levels of our collective conscious and deals greatly in symbols; it comes from the Creator. Just like the circle, it is simply equal.

The Dakota people have a saying that describes a most lofty goal for a human being to reach. It is 'Ikche Wichasa', which loosely translates into 'Common Man'. The goal is to be equal; equal mentally, spiritually, emotionally, physically within yourself, and without, in all relations. To call someone 'Ikche Wichasa' is to hold them in highest regard because they are closest to being equal in all ways. ↩ ↩

It is said that if you learn all the ways of the Powwow it can add years to your life. If you understand all the parameters you have generosity, respect and honour. Generosity, respect and honour can be learned by thoroughly experiencing Powwow ways. For instance, the giveaway teaches us how to be generous; ↩ ↩

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AND TRADITION

The powwow tradition is a celebration of life and a way of giving thanks through song and dance. It is a time to meet old friends and new friends while practicing the four virtues of: honour, respect, generosity, and kindness. Powwows are all-nation inclusive and offer military recognition since the event is an opportunity to honour warriors who have sacrificed their lives for ours.

Presently, powwows have come to be described as a mainly First Nations social celebration of time-honoured dance, song, drum, and food. It has been said that since the powwow is non-political, non-religious, and part of our social life, the world could find peace by following the spirit and intent of powwow.

Shares his Knowledge about powwow ways.

at the Rama Culture and Research Department in 2009 -

➤ honour songs teach respect and honour. The first song at a Powwow goes something like, "It's a hard way to be....look around....you have to be friend to all you see..."

A Powwow is also multi-generational; four generations, five if you're lucky, are within the Powwow arena at the same time experiencing the same joy. Everyone is included; and when we smile a lot, it opens up our brains. Through this joy our minds are opened up to let us receive the mysterious 'information' found 'between the lines'. When we dance or sing, this happens and it builds character, among other things. The whole development of a person is affected. You'll see kids at a Powwow dance from beginning to end.

It is said that when a dancer dances and prays, or when a singer sings and prays, and it is done well, it has the power to heal people whether they know they're sick or not. In this way it also fosters health for the family and the community; it is a unique family experience being in the Powwow circle. These things can equally be applied to nations or on an intertribal level, and even have the power to reach international levels.

Benjamin's dad saw a vision of international proportions at a Powwow in 1933. It was at the World Trade Fair in Chicago, in the Indian Village of the Indian Center there. People had gathered from all across North America and there were circles of peoples in this great arena. All at once he saw that the Powwow way could bring about world peace...

- Benjamin Bearskin Jr., 2009

The Culture and Research Department would like to take this opportunity to send our thoughts and prayers to the Bearskin family as the late Benjamin Bearskin Jr. makes his journey home.





Grand Entry



The Grand Entry song is the first song that brings in the spirit and sets the tone of the day. It is customary to stand and remove your hat during the Grand Entry Procession. This is the time when all dancers line up by dance style and age to enter the powwow arena. The Grand Entry begins with the Eagle Staffs leading the way. Following the Eagle Staffs are the Canadian and American flags, Veterans Flags, visiting eagle staffs, missing in action flags, Union Jack, the Ontario Flag, and other visiting flags in the surrounding area. Veterans usually carry the flags. Often, Chief and Council and other special invited guests will be asked to be part of Grand Entry.

The participants assemble themselves along the East end of the arena, similarly where the sun rises to start the day.

Grand entry will begin with prayer, to ensure the day is started off right. After the prayer the Arena director will notify the master of ceremony that we are ready to begin Grand Entry.

Below is a breakdown of how Grand Entry is made up in the order of appearance you will see at Rama First Nation.

Eagle Staff: The Chippewas of Rama First Nation Eagle Staff will be first in procession during Grand Entry at our powwow. The Eagle Staff is a symbol of honour and respect and is also considered the first flag of Turtle Island, North America. It is similar to a community flag in that it represents us as a people, yet it also is meant to help push a community in the direction that it is intended to go. The Eagle Staff is always first in processions, clearing the path for the community.

Colour Party: The colour party follows the Eagle staff and represents territories, provinces, communities, and organizations from where everyone comes from. Veterans, community leaders, honour guards and special honorary guests are asked to participate in the colour party and hold the flags.

Veterans: are held in the highest regards at powwows. They are always first in procession in Grand Entry. We give thanks and honour to our veterans of the past and present for protecting our lives and sacrificing themselves for what they believed in at a particular time in history.

Special Guests: Our Powwow likes to acknowledge other visiting leaders, dignitaries, royalty, far away visitors, and guests from surrounding areas with whom we continue to build strong working relationships.

Leaders: Our Chief and Council are asked to be a part of Grand Entry to pay respect to their hard work and endless commitment to the community. We also invite the leaders from surrounding areas to join them. We also like to pay respect to our community people for the achievements and accomplishments they have contributed to their homelands and surrounding neighbours. A leader has more than one definition.

Head Dancers: It is a high honour to be asked to be a head dancer at any First Nations gathering or powwow. The role of the head dancer is to be ready to lead every single dance during the course of the gathering. They are to dance during all specials, honour dances, and grand entries. They are also expected to know all of the different dance styles and steps. Head Dancers are role models and have a reputation for conducting their lives in a positive way inside and outside the powwow arena.

Behind the Head Dancers, all other dancers line up according to their dance style from Eldest to youngest. Although the children are placed at the end of grand entry, they are not really last. When we think in context of medicine wheel teachings, children are actually first in a new beginning. Thus Grand Entry allows us to come full circle.

Powwow Grand Entry can be a time to observe, absorb, and reflect upon ourselves in relation to honour, respect, generosity, and kindness and to remember the importance of these virtues in our daily lives inside and outside the powwow arena as they are symbolized throughout the procession. Honour and respect are represented by our Veterans and our Eagle Staffs at the beginning of Grand Entry. Similarly, generosity and kindness are shown by our child and youth dancers at the end.

Once everyone has entered the eastern doorway and danced into the arena in a clockwise motion around the arbour, the Flag song is sung to acknowledge our Eagle Staff and country. This is also a time to honour and remember past and present veterans who have sacrificed their lives for our protection so that we can continue to enjoy and practice our culture and heritage.



*Pictured at left and right:
Rama Powwow Veterans Circa 1980s*



HONOURING OUR VETERANS OF YOU WILL NEVER

WAR OF 1812 Yellowhead, William And his Warriors

Bigwind, James
Nanigishking, Thomas
Kenice, Peter
Captain Peter
Captain John

GREAT WAR 1914 1918

Anderson, Moses
Benson, F
Benson, Wilfred
Bigwin, Peter
Charles, Herb
Douglas, Alec J.
Fawn, Dan
Fawn, Percy
Hopkins, George
Hopkins, Harold
Hopkins, Russell
Hopkins, Wm.L.
Jacobs, Johnny
Joe, Ernest
Joe, Peter
Martel, William L.
Nanigishkung, Hugh
Sawyer, Ben Sr.
Sawyer, Sylvester
Shilling, Albert L.
Shilling, Arthur
Shilling, Clarence
Shilling, Herbert
Shilling, Jake
Simcoe, Ben
Simcoe, Wellington

Simcoe, Wm.Sr
Snache, Eddie John
Snache, George
Snake, Norman
St.Germain, Barney
St.Germain, John
St.Germain, Jim
St.Germain, Owen
Stinson, Alfred
Stinson, Joe Sr.
Stinson, Robert
Williams, Bert
Williams, Levi
York, Frank
York, Isaac
York, Tom



The Chippewas of Rama First Nation Veteran's Flag recognizes community veterans for their service.



RAMA MNJIKANING FIRST NATION

WE WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN

WWII 1939-1945

Anderson Alice	Sawyer D
Anderson A	Sawyer G.A.
Anderson H	Shilling A
Anderson J.C.	Shilling S
Austin T.M.H.	Simcoe B.Jr.
Benson E.I.	Simcoe E.W.
Benson J	Simcoe E.E.
Blaker E	Simcoe G.
Comego S	Simcoe G.H.
Douglas G.R.	Simcoe M.R.
Douglas H	Simcoe W.E.
Douglas I.J.	Simcoe W.I.
Fawn R	St. Germain C.
Fawn Wm.	St.Germain J
Hopkins, Lillian	St.Germain L
Ingersoll L	Smith F
Joe, Harvie	Smith Myrtle
Joe, Howard	Stiles C.M.
King H	Stiles L.C.
Lawrence E	Stinson S
Martell Wm. Jr.	Williams L
MacDonald A	
MacDonald S	
Marsden L	
Noganosh M	
Pawis G	

KOREA

Charles G.L.
Marsden, E
Sawyer B.Jr.
Shilling C

WWII/KOREA

Watson W/cm

CYPRUS

Ingersoll W
Sharpe C

VIETNAM

DESERT STORM

Snache, Brent

PEACEKEEPERS

Simcoe H

ARMED FORCES

Fawn Daisy



The *Veterans Flag* is carried in the Grand Entry at the Rama Powwow to honour and remember our community warriors.



Powwow Etiquette

INCLUSIVITY:

People of all ages, ethnicities and cultural or religious denominations are welcome to attend powwows. Intertribal dances are meant to get everyone up to dance.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEO RECORDINGS:

Feel free to take pictures! There may be times when special songs and dances take place that are customarily not to be recorded. No recording devices during prayer or eagle feather pick-up are allowed. Please listen to the Master of Ceremonies, as he will announce when it is not appropriate to use video or photography equipment. Also, if you would like a picture of a particular dancer, please ask their permission first.

DANCERS REGALIA:

Dancers refer to their outfits as regalia, never as “costumes”. Please do not touch regalia without permission as they are very precious to their owners. Also, do not pick up any feathers or pieces of regalia that may have fallen on the ground inside the dance arena. Instead, please inform the Arena Director. Fallen eagle feathers represent fallen warriors and require a veteran or someone who has come close to losing their life to pick it up. When eagle feathers fall, they are picked up through song. It is a time when we take a moment to remember the warriors of the past and present who are willing to give their lives to protect us.



Rama Powwow 2012

DANCE ARENA:

When dancing or crossing the dance area, we move in a clockwise motion. The arbour in the middle of the dance arena represents the earth and we move in the direction of the sun's movement around the earth.

Women who are on their moon time are asked not to enter the dance area as this is a very powerful time for women; their strength could upset the balance of the celebration.

ANIMALS:

Dogs are not permitted at powwows. Please leave your four-legged friends at home or on a leash outside the dance arena. The importance of this rule can be reiterated through a legend that has been passed down orally for several generations.

LOST AND FOUND:

If you find anything that does not belong to you, please practice honesty and bring it up to the MC stand and powwow staff will store belongings until rightful owners are found.



Rama Powwow 2012

Powwow Terms

TYPES OF POWWOWS:

All powwows practice the four virtues of Honor, Respect, Generosity and Kindness. Each powwow has its importance and they are all equal to each other. They are celebrations and social events where everyone is welcome participate, have fun and give thanks for the blessings we receive. Each type of powwow is a little different than the next, but they all share the same underlying values and traditions.

COMPETITION POWWOW:

A dance and drum contest event for prizes. These powwows give dancers and singers the opportunity to be the best that they can be, much like the Olympics. Categories for dance contests are determined by age and dance style. Rama First Nation recognizes all tiny tots (0-5) as winners. As such, we do not have a competition for them. Instead, they receive an honourarium for their participation and are encouraged for their interest in dancing as a leisure activity. Any dancers who do not wish to enter into contests are still welcome participants during all intertribal songs.

TRADITIONAL POWWOW:

A time to send prayer to our Mother Earth. We send our prayers through the dance and movements of our feet. This powwow focuses on taking care of Creation and all our relations. This powwow also offers honorariums to all drummers, singers, and dancers ensuring that they walk away with something to help them get back home and to give thanks for the blessings they have offered the host community through song and dance. It is usually free for visiting spectators to attend these powwows. Rarely a 'Special' is performed at these powwows. Specials are dances and songs that are performed for prize money; for example, a hand-drum competition.

NON-COMPETITION POWWOW:

Also known as the "sharing powwow". This powwow, like a traditional powwow, also offers honorariums to all participating drummers, singers, and dancers. Like a competition powwow, 'Specials' (songs and dances for prize money) are sometimes performed.



INVOCATION:

Ancestral teachings tell us that prayer is what comes first for anything in life. As such, we will begin our event with an invocation. This blessing is brought forth by a respected elder of the community most often spoken in our first language, Anishinaabemowin.

GRAND ENTRY:

This is the time when all dancers line up by dance style and age to enter the powwow arena. Eagle Staffs lead the way. Following Eagle Staffs are the Canadian and American flags, Veterans flags, visiting eagle staffs, Missing In Action flags, Union Jack, the Ontario Flag, and any other visiting flags to the community. Veterans will usually carry flags. Often, Chief and Council and other special invited guests will be asked to be part of Grand Entry. It is customary to stand and remove your hat during the Grand Entry.

WHISTLES:

Wooden, copper, and silver whistles may be heard at the powwow. They are sometimes used by whistle carriers for the purpose of keeping a song going during social events like a powwow. Some whistle carriers have Eagle bone whistles which are generally used for ceremonial purposes, by those who have been given the honour to carry them.

GIVEAWAY:

We provide gifts as a way of giving thanks. The powwow giveaway is how the Chippewas of Rama First Nation offers thanks to visitors for coming to dance and sing on behalf of our community. Powwow singers and dancers perform for various reasons; such as, for the blessings they have received, to dance for someone who is ill, or for those who cannot dance. Dancers and singers also perform out of joy, for good health, and happiness. When spectators enjoy the sights and sounds of a powwow, they have an opportunity to feel blessed by receiving a release of any trials or negativity; thus the opportunity to feel good takes its place. The giveaway is also a means of thanking dancers and singers for all of the good feelings that they brought here. A giveaway offers thanks to dancers and singers for honouring a host community with their visit.



Songs and Dances

Songs are a mixture of chanting and language and they tell a story of our past.

Like several cultures around the world, our songs and dances act as a filing cabinet. They represent a living past and tell us stories of our life and history. Each song and dance has its very own unique meaning and importance. Carriers of songs are a type of historian, in that the singer not only carries the song, but also the origin and significance of it. Although First Nations music is vast and predates written history, many songs and dances were hidden away during a time in which our ancestors were not allowed to practice their culture and heritage. Today, several songs and dances that were hidden away have slowly made their way back into dance or powwow arenas.

Just as song is a way to send prayers to Creator and creation, dance is a way to send prayers to Mother Earth, through our feet.

Here are some songs and dances that you may enjoy at a powwow:

GRAND ENTRY SONG: The Grand Entry song is the first song that brings in the spirit and sets the tone of the day. This is when a procession of all dancers enter the dance arena according to dance style and age. Eagle staffs, flag carriers, veterans and dignitaries lead the way during the grand entry.

FLAG SONG: The second song we hear at a powwow is the flag song. Once all the dancers have entered the dance area after grand entry, the flag song is “sent up” to acknowledge our Eagle Staff and our country in honour and memory of our past and present veterans. A flag song is given the same respect as a National Anthem. After the flag song, eagle staff and flag

carriers are introduced during the posting of the colours. This honours all warriors and veterans of the past and present for the sacrifices they have made for the freedoms our country has today. This moment of attention is given to those who have given the ultimate sacrifice. During this time we remember that they are to be honoured and never forgotten.

VETERANS DANCE: The Veterans Dance is a time to give thanks for the sacrifice veterans have made for our protection. Veterans are responsible for allowing us to continue with the customs and traditions that we can still practice today. This dance pays homage to that freedom.

HONOUR SONG: These are songs that are requested to honour someone; for example, a son returned from war or in memory of a relative that has passed on. Honour songs are usually requested prior to the powwow. These are also sung for the accomplishments of fellow community members and/or requested to welcome people home.

INTER-TRIBALS: Once the grand entry and opening ceremonies are finished, the Master of Ceremonies will call the drums to offer songs in the way of 'inter-tribals', which mean everyone can dance, wearing regalia or not. These songs are open to all and give the drums an opportunity to sing. Inter-tribal means all inclusive. People of any and every ethnicity, religious or spiritual belief, and cultural background are invited to dance.

SNEAK-UP: This is a specialty or exhibition Male Traditional dance where the performers tell a story of sneaking up on game or simulating a confrontation with an enemy line. The sneak up also represents storming the shores of Normandy, in WWII.

DUNK AND DIVE: A warrior dance that represents our warriors charging onto enemy or prey. It is a story of how they came to be victorious re-enacting the battle or hunt.

TWO-STEP: This is a social dance where ladies ask men to join them in the dance arena. Sometimes referred to as a "rabbit

dance", the two-step is for couples of all ages and everyone is welcome to participate in it, wearing regalia or not. This dance requires the mimicking of the head dancers. It is a dance of balance, health, and laughter which will leave you walking away feeling good.

TEAM DANCE: Usually performed with four dancers of the same category, this dance is a freestyle to the beat of the drum.

CHICKEN DANCE: This dance imitates the mating dance of the bird. It reflects how the male bird seeks the attention of the female.

Snake dance, Smoke dance, Switch dance, Clown dance, Crow Hop, Round Dance, Blanket Dance, and Jingle Dress Dance are just a few more that have been performed at the Chippewas of Rama First Nation Powwow. Each one has its own unique significance and purpose. The Master of Ceremonies at a powwow will usually explain songs and dances in more depth. There are countless songs and dances that one can enjoy along the powwow trail.



Dance Styles

In North America there are many different nations, each with their own unique dance traditions and styles. Throughout history we have adopted, purchased, and traded with each other's dance styles and traditional regalia.

Dancing is a physical expression through movement of how we feel. There are some dances that originated from ceremony and have been brought into our social powwow arena, for many different reasons.

Dance is a celebration of life, but also, dance has a healing power. Many powwows will hold "specials" which showcase other traditional dance styles from around North America.

Here are some dance styles that you may see at our powwow:

Women's Traditional:

When dancing at a medium, fast, or slow pace, the feet of the women's traditional dancer never leave the ground. Buckskin or cloth dresses are worn and decorated with beading, fringes, quillwork and other ornaments. Women "of a certain age" have earned the right to not dance quickly or in a fancy way. They take small steps.

Women's Fancy Shawl:

A spinoff of women's traditional. This is a young person's dance because of its high energy and fast intricate physical dance steps. The regalia is made up of a cloth dress, leggings, and moccasins and a fringed shawl. The dance style of Fancy Shawl is sometimes compared to the butterfly.

Women's Jingle Dress:

Originally part of ceremony, and adopted into powwow tradition. This dance style is for healing. Jingle dresses are accompanied with moccasins and leggings, and hair ornaments. The dresses are often decorated with ribbon work and sometimes feathers and plumes.

Jingle dancers may carry an eagle fan.

Men's Traditional:

Through their movements, Men's Traditional dancers tell stories of battle and hunting. The regalia is made up of a vest, belt, moccasins and cuffs. This is accompanied with a feather bustle, porcupine roaches, breast plates, war shields, bags and dance staffs.

Men's Fancy:

These dancers depict a faster movement which is much like that of horses. The regalia includes bustles, moccasins, cuffs, and headband and often have bells on their ankles.

Men's Grass:

The dance steps are fast and consist of sweeping movements. The sway of the grasses in the wind is symbolized through the grass dancers regalia and movements. The regalia is decorated with brightly colored fringes made of yarn or ribbon.

Woodland:

This style of dancing is said to represent an old style of the Ojibwe, Pottawatomi, and Odawa nations, otherwise known as the Anishinaabe. This style does not have a bustle but there are some eagle feathers. It is a gentleman's dance where the dancer floats upon the earth in a very natural way. The regalia beadwork represents nature and is often decorated with flowers which is a traditional beadwork style.

Hoop Dance:

Both men and women hoop dancers tell stories with their movements. Each hoop design represents elements of the story the dancer is telling. Each dancer will have a different color and meaning for their hoops. Hoop dancers train long and hard for many years to be great at their craft.



Head Staff Roles

The planning of a powwow usually begins months in advance with the powwow committee. The committee is a dedicated group of individuals usually from the hosting First Nation. The responsibilities of the committee are to research and hire head staff for the powwow, secure a venue, recruit and register vendors to sell crafts and food, as well as, publicize the powwow. The head staff of the powwow runs the event the day it actually occurs. The quality of the head staff is crucial to the outcome of attendees. It is a great honour to be chosen to be a part of head staff because it is recognition of a person's skills and dedication to powwow.

Here is a breakdown of various positions that are held at a powwow:

Host Drum:

The host drum responsibilities are to take care of any and all appropriate songs during the entire powwow.

Master of Ceremonies:

Make sure that all participants and guests are kept informed of the events of the powwow. They are the announcers of the gathering and speak on behalf of the community. They are knowledgeable in the powwow tradition and also usually speak their First Nation language.

Head Veteran:

The responsibilities of a veteran are to take care of any difficult decisions and to pick up any eagle feathers that have fallen on the dance floor as they represent fallen warriors wounded in battle. They also ensure that everything runs properly with the eagle staffs and coloured party. They hold one of the highest ranks in this powwow tradition and are to be honoured and respected.

Head Drum Judge:

They are to make sure that the appropriate songs are sung at all times throughout the course of the powwow and often consult with the head dance judge to ensure this happens. They also are responsible for selecting the proper judges that are not related to anyone who is singing. If there is a discrepancy, the head drum judge will work with the arena director to solve the issue in the arena. The head drum judge is not responsible for picking winners.

Head Dance Judge:

In order to be a dance judge you must have been a dancer yourself. They organize all of the dance judges who will judge and observe the participants. The head dance judge is responsible for creating the dance contest rules and ensuring that no judges are related to any competitors. The head dance judge is not responsible for picking winners.

Head Dancers:

Are expected to dance every single dance, as well as lead off all specials. It has been said, that you must not dance in the arena, until the head dancers have started dancing first.

Arena Director:

Traditionally a wounded warrior is chosen for this position. He is responsible for making sure the dancers are dancing and that the drummers are playing appropriate songs for the current feel of the powwow. He are also responsible for any protocols, or decision making needed inside the dance arena, as well as, keeping the area clean and keeping the way clear for judges and dancers.

Tabulators:

This is the work behind the scenes with registrations. Throughout the weekend they are responsible for adding all tabulations from the ballots they receive only from the head dance judge and the head drum judge. Throughout the event, they take all registrations of singers, dancers, royalty, veterans, and leaders. A special thanks goes to the tabulators as sometimes they have to miss the powwow because they are busy adding and subtracting.



The Drum

The big drum you see at the powwow represents Mother Earth and her heartbeat, which has the power to call nations together. The big drum was a gift from woman to man, which is why the spirit of the drum is female and must be treated and respected as such. Women gave the drum to help man develop a deeper relationship with the earth; a connection to the earth that females already have naturally as life givers, which is why the drum is only played by men. Through participation in singing, dancing, drumming or just listening to the heartbeat of the drum, it has been said to bring the gifts of balance and rejuvenation to people in need. The drum is made from a round wooden frame in the shape of a circle or hoop. The circular shape distributes the tension equally across the drum, but also further indicates the importance of the circle to us as First Nation people. Drum hide is used from many different animals; such as, deer, moose, bear, elk, and horse. Each hide has its own aesthetic properties and resonant quality.

Every nation was given the gift of the drum. Our drum was envisioned by a woman named Omaaniikwe:

Omaaniikwe was forced to hide in the water, away from the violence that had overwhelmed her nation. She had hid there for so long that when she came out she collapsed on the shore from exhaustion. In her dreams she was at first frightened from what she thought was the sight of men pounding their fists. As images became clearer in her dream, she realized that they were pounding on the drum. When Omaaniikwe awoke, she knew she had to bring the drum she had seen to her people. Omaaniikwe went to the men and described to them everything she saw from the stand the drum was on, to the dress it wore. This is how the big drum came as a gift to men from women.

- From memory as told by John Snake to Ryan Stiles

There are many different styles of drums; such as hand drums, water drums, grandfather drums, and many more that all have different purposes and meaning. Each style of drum has its own creation story of how it came to be and why it is important.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: *Why is there a fire at the powwow?*

Answer: There is a fire at the powwow to act as anybody's place of prayer. It is also used for sunrise services, tobacco offerings and a time for meditation or smudge, and for drum groups to tighten up their drums.

Question: *What do all the different costumes mean?*

Answer: Dancers refer to their outfits as "regalia" never "costumes". The regalia represent the different dance styles of the dancer and often has deep personal meaning.

Question: *I'm not a First Nations person, can I still dance?*

Answer: Yes. Once the grand entry and opening ceremonies are finished, the Master of Ceremonies will call the drums to offer songs in the way of 'inter-tribals', which mean everyone can dance: regalia or not. These songs are open for everyone to participate and give the drums an opportunity to sing.

Question: *Why are there no pets allowed in the powwow?*

Answer: The obvious answer is because it would be dangerous for other visitors and the pet probably doesn't enjoy themselves either. Specifically, dogs are not invited in to powwow or ceremony for cultural reasons that can be explained in a legend. So please leave your four-legged friend at home or on a leash outside of the dance arena.

Question: *Why do Veterans get in free?*

Answer: They served as warriors for freedom and justice in the country that we live in. We feel it's the least we could do to not make them pay at all.

Question: *Why isn't there a beer tent if it's a festival or celebration?*

Answer: The powwow arena, is a neutral grounds where everyone comes into the circle with a good mind and in a natural way.

The powwow is a place of sharing and honour. Please plan to smile, laugh, dance, and have fun!





Epilogue

This little 26 page booklet is meant to serve as only an introduction to powwow etiquette and protocol, in the very local opinion of the Chippewas of Rama First Nation. For the entire number of years we have been hosting powwows, we are always asked by visitors, “What does this mean?” Or “How did that tradition start?” Searches of the internet and books currently in print do not supply consistent accurate answers to these queries. People continue to be so curious about our Anishinaabe way of life.

Many times during a Grand Entry, you witness first-time visitors to our event standing in tears; they are so overcome with emotion at the grandeur and power of so many dancers entering the dance arena to the sound of a very old song being sung at the big drum. I have seen a Grandmother with tears streaming down her face, her hands clasped in thanks, as one of her grandchildren, now a Tiny Tot dancer for the first time, is in the arena dancing her little heart out, often absent much rhythm. When you see those little ones dancing in the circle for the first time, you have no doubt that our Anishinaabe way of life will continue. You are proud of their parents and families and community that support this traditional way of life.

This booklet could easily be 100 pages long, and include such topics as outlining the history of the songs, further information on our veterans and flags, and providing details of how and why certain colours are chosen to be used in regalia. But that was not our purpose here. This booklet is meant as just a beginning. These brief pages we hope will serve to only give you a little glimpse into our long powwow tradition, a little peek into our stories and songs, and why we do what we do.

My personal thanks to those who helped create this document: Evelyn Ball, Vicki Snache, John Snake and Ryan Stiles. Our heartfelt thanks to all those who danced the powwow trail ahead of us, and left a path for us to follow.

Powwow weekend is always a fun, colourful, memorable, often emotional time. Please, join us in the dance circle when an intertribal song is called. Everyone is welcome.

Baa maa pii.

Sherry Lawson
Administrator of Heritage Services
Chippewas of Rama First Nation







Chippewas of Rama First Nation Fall Fair Circa 1920s