

NATIVE AMERICAN MUSIC, DANCE, AND CEREMONY

The intention of this lesson is to cultivate an awareness of social diversity by exposing the students to Native American culture through music and dance. The traditional ways of song and dance are central to all Native American communities and their festivities.



POWWOW

The festivities generally take place at a gathering referred to as a powwow. In the Merriam-Webster dictionary powwow is described as: 1) an American Indian ceremony; 2) a Native American social gathering.

Powwows are based on fundamental values common to the Native American culture: honor, respect, tradition, and generosity. Cultural legends and stories are preserved throughout the generations, as they are passed along through song, music, and dance through their repeated performance at traditional powwows.



[Example of Youth Powwow Dance](#)

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DRUM

Drum groups typically provide the percussion for powwow gatherings. The drummers sit around a large communal drum and play the beat and sing, while additional singers in the group stand around the drummers and join in song. The members of the group are referred to as a drum family rather than a musical group.



[Example of Native American drums](#)



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SONG

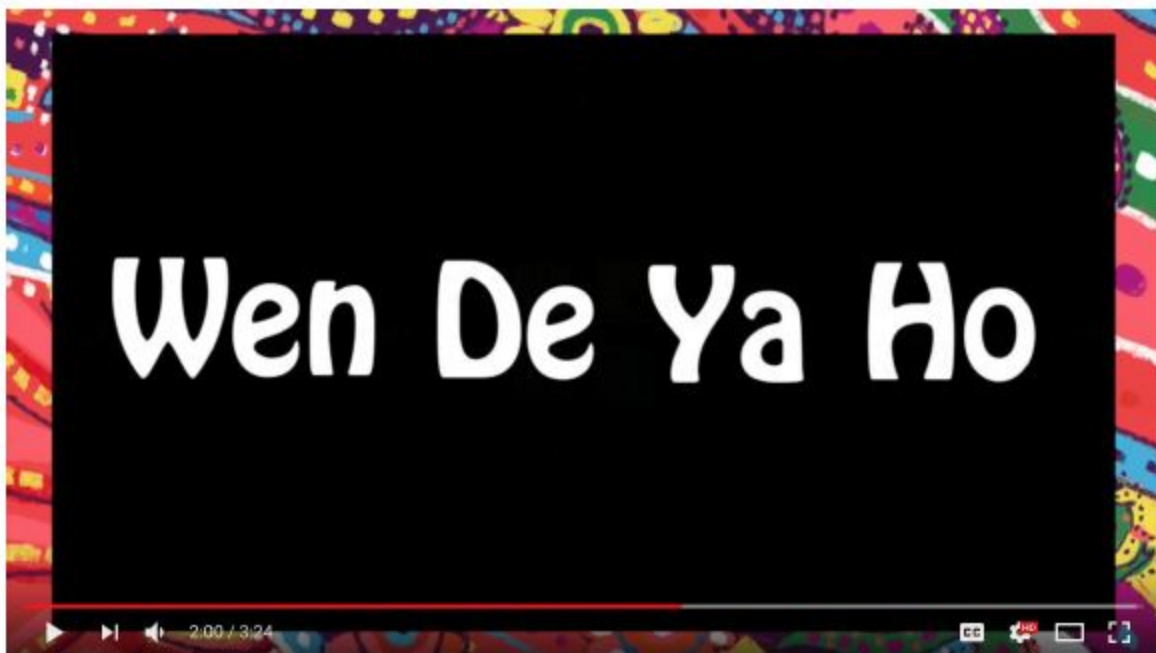
Native American music is traditionally sung in the tribal language associated with the individual song. Vocal arrangement is set by tradition as well. The vocals can take many forms such as solo, unison, and/or harmony singing. Responsorial singing is also a common style of Native American song. Dancing songs are generally accompanied by drummers who set the rhythm of the song for the singers.

The following example song is of southeastern origin. It is a song traditionally sung by the Cherokee tribe. It is a morning song which translate as "Wake up the sun is rising"

[Click to watch Video](#)



Wen De Ya Ho



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DANCE

Dancing is a vital part of the Native American community. Although the movements may vary between individual tribes they use dancing for rituals and ceremonies; such as before a hunt to ensure success or to give thanks and celebrate a fruitful harvest season. In today's modern world, although the intention of the Native American dance remains the same it is performed (mostly) for entertainment at powwow celebrations.

Native American dancing is typically done in an area that has enough space for more than one dancer. A circle is the most common way to see dancers perform. The movements of the dance illustrate the purpose of the dance. Sometimes a leader for the dance is chosen and the additional dancers follow them around the circle. Typically, individual drum families provide the music for the dancing.



[Example of Native American Dance](#)

RATTLES

Various types of rattles are also used as a form of percussion in Native American music. Hand held rattles can be used for accompaniment to drumming and singing during a song but more often various rattles are worn or held by the dancers while they dance. This form of accompaniment offers an additional, yet diverse style of rhythm to the song.



[Rattle](#)



[Chief's rattle](#)



[Rattle | Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History](#)