American Indian Dance Styles

Powwow dances are rooted in traditional practices that stretch back many decades. Each dance has many different stories and interpretations based on tribal and family background.

Women's Traditional Dance
The graceful moves of the dancer sway the shawl that is folded over her arms. The regalia of either buckskin or cloth is often decorated with appliquéd ribbonwork and beads.

Men's Traditional Dance
The old-style dancer's movements symbolize tracking game or the story of a battle. The regalia features a feather bustle worn on the back, near the waist of the dancer.

Women's Jingle Dress Dance
The dancer's flowing steps cause the metal cones adorning her dress to jingle. The cones are often made from the lids of snuff cans.

Men's Grass Dance
With his intricate footwork and agile movements, the dancer causes his regalia, decorated with long strands of yarn or ribbon, to sway. This movement resembles tall grass waving in the wind.

Women's Fancy Shawl Dance
The dancer performs elaborate footwork in this athletic dance. Some people think the quick movements and the colorful shawl worn over the dancer's shoulders mimic the movements of a butterfly.

Men's Fancy Dance
This dancer uses spins, turns, jumps, and hops in elaborate and artistic movements. Two vividly colored U-shaped bustles, one at the waist and another at the shoulders, highlight his regalia.