



Tracing Footsteps: Honoring Diverse Voices Through Dance History in NYC

Module 1: Native American Dance History in NYC: *Roots to Branches*

Contemporary Sister: A Modern Lenape Dancer

INTRODUCTION:

This lesson is an excerpt from the fourth lesson in the K-2 Tracing Footsteps Module 1 Dance Unit written by Dawn DiPasquale. In this lesson students will be introduced to Beedoskah Stonefish, a young dancer of Lenape descent who was the female head dancer at *The First United Lenape Nations Powwow* in NYC in 2018, and Desmond Madera, a musician and Grass Dancer. Students will learn two contemporary Native American Pow Wow dances, the Fancy Shawl Dance and Grass Dance. Students will understand that Native American dances have changed and evolved through Nations sharing their culture with each other.

FOCUS QUESTION

What is a Powwow and how do Powwows bring people together?

OBJECTIVES

- *Introduce Powwows as a Native American social tradition*
- *Learn movements from two Powwow dances: Fancy Shawl Dance and Grass Dance*
- *Perform a structured improvisation based on the Fancy Shawl Dance and Grass Dance*

INDICATORS OF STUDENT LEARNING

CONTENT – Students will know:



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- The meaning of a Powwow
- Movements from two Powwow dances, Fancy Shawl Dance and Grass Dance
- Native American dances have changed and evolved over time
- Powwow dances are improvised, not choreographed

SKILLS – Students will be able to:

- Identify the actions in a Powwow dance
- Identify similarities and differences between the Fancy Shawl Dance and Grass Dance

INTRODUCTION OF THEME (8 min)

Powwow - Define and discuss.

Today we are going to learn about Native American dances that we can see today at a Powwow. A Powwow is a Native American tradition where members of a tribe, neighboring tribes, and invited guests gather to sing, dance, and celebrate culture and community. Dancers at today’s Powwows also dance in competition to see who will be named the best at their specific Powwow dance.

NOTE: Pow Wow, Powwow or pow wow? Our primary sources say all are acceptable.

*The word “**Powwow**” is from the Lenape language. The term was originally pronounced “**pauau**” or “pau wau” meaning a gathering of medicine people and spiritual leaders in a curing ceremony. At contemporary Powwows, religious dances are usually not performed. Powwow time today is when Native American people come together, to join in dancing, singing, visiting, renewing old friendships and making new ones. This is a time to renew thoughts of the old ways and to preserve a rich heritage. It is a social event for everyone to have a fun and entertaining time, whether you’re a Native American or just interested in Native American cultures. It is a chance for our non-Native friends and families to take part in inter-tribal dancing as a Powwow is considered a cultural sharing event for all to learn about Native Americans and share ideas and information.*

- Carla Messinger [Native American Heritage Programs - Powwows](#)



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Introduction of Beedoskah Stonefish and Desmond Madera

Today we are going to meet some special guests! Their names are Beedoskah and Desmond. They are both Native American and are experts in Native American dance and music. Beedoskah and Desmond are Powwow dancers and they are going to tell you a little bit about themselves and their dancing and music. Let's learn along with them!

[Beedoskah and Desmond Video 1 Lesson 4](#)

WARM-UP (5 min)

Music: *Canyon Dream Machine* by Randy Boogie

Follow along with Beedoskah and Desmond as they warm-up to get ready to perform their dances.

- Tap Front
- Kick Front
- Tap Front
- Tap Side Right and Left
- Tap Front
- Tap Across Front / Open
- Tap Across Behind / Open

Feel free to adapt the actions for your class, slowing down, simplifying, and repeating the movements for a more in-depth warm-up.

EXPLORATION (12-15)

[Beedoskah and Desmond Video 2 Lesson 4](#)

Let's take a look at The Fancy Shawl Dance and The Grass Dance and identify the actions we see. What is similar about the two dances? What is different about them? Try some of the movements together as a class.

Fancy Shawl Dance	Grass Dance
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How are they similar?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hop ● Kick ● Turn ● Tilt ● Cross Front 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hop ● Kick ● Turn ● Tilt ● Cross Front
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How are they different?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Straight legs ● On Toes ● Light Tap ● Tilt Arms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bent knees ● Whole foot ● Strong Stomp ● Tilt At Waist
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DEVELOPMENT (7 min)

Music: *Four Direction Ritual* by The Gordon Brothers Drum Masters Group or any songs by The SilverCloud Singers from our shared playlist. **Fun Fact:** The SilverCloud Singers was founded by the father of one of our primary source artists, Josephine Tarrant (who we will meet in lesson 5)

Improvisation

When Beedoskah and Desmond started dancing, they told us they learned by joining in and following along with their families. Today we learned movements from the Fancy Shawl Dance and Grass Dance by watching Beedoskah and Desmond and following along. Beedoskah also told us that there aren't steps and counts that you have to follow - you can choose how and when you do each step. We call that improvising. Now it's your turn to perform the dances your own way. Can you imagine yourself as a Powwow dancer? Let's improvise!

- *Choose your favorite movements*
- *Put them together in any order you want*
- *Try them out in different ways*

Improvisation

Original movement created spontaneously in a free or structured environment. Improvisation involves an instantaneous choice of actions on the part of the dancer affected by chance elements, such as the movement choices of other dancers or musicians in the room. It may involve focused and concentrated movement exploration of a specific movement problem or idea, or may be a simple individual response to music.



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Extension: The Drum

Let's think about music. At Powwows, the beat of the drum is the center of everything and represents the heartbeat of the people. Dancers and musicians work together. It is important that the last step of the dance happens on the final beat of the drum. While students are practicing their steps, you might use a hand drum to give them a steady beat to follow. Challenge students to end their dance with the final beat of the drum. Give them a signal when the final beat is coming by counting down 4-3-2-1

CULMINATION (5 min)

Music: [Desmond drum and sing mp4](#)

Let's perform our dances while Desmond sings and plays the drum! Choose your favorite movements from The Fancy Shawl Dance and The Grass Dance. One option for performing is to ask students to choose which dance they would like to perform. Have all of the Fancy Shawl Dancers perform together, followed by all of the Grass Dancers.

Reflect after each group performs using the following prompts:

- *What did you see?*
- *Thumbs up if you saw ____.*
- *What was different about how each of the dancers in our class performed their steps? Maybe one student did a lot of spinning while another chose to perform a mostly stomping, etc.*
- *Give a compliment to a dancer: I liked when you ____ because ____.*

RELAXATION (2 min)

Music: *Shaman Drum or Shamanic Trance* by Grandfather Sky

Find a quiet place to sit

- Close your eyes
- Listen to the beat of the drum (play gentle music or use a hand drum)
- Move your head to the beat
- Move your shoulders to the beat
- Tap your knees to the beat
- Tap your toes to the beat
- Feel your heartbeat
- Breathe In and Out

REFLECTION (4 min)

While students are breathing, end or lower the music and guide them through a review



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of what they experienced in the lesson. Ask them to think about who they met, what dances they learned, what a Powwow is and how a Powwow is an event and celebration that brings people together. Ask them:

- *How are The Fancy Shawl Dance and The Grass Dance similar? How are they different?*
- *What were your favorite movements to perform? Why?*
- *How can a Powwow bring people together? How can it help people connect with their community?*
- *What events or celebrations do you participate in that bring your family or community together? What do you do? What makes it fun? Why is it important?*

[Extension #1 Lesson 4 Grade K/1 Dance Unit K-2 Module 1](#)

[Extension #1 Lesson 4 Grade 2 Dance Unit K-2 Module 1](#)

EXTENSION 1

“These same moccasins of my ancestors were dancing on this same soil and I think that’s really remarkable” - Beedoskah Stonefish

Beedoskah was the lead female dancer at the First United Lenape Nations Powwow at The Park Avenue Armory in Manhattan in 2018. Watch this [video of Beedoskah and Desmond at First United Lenape Nations Pow Wow NYC 2018](#)**

- Describe what you saw at the Powwow
- What different kinds of dancing did you notice? Who was dancing?
- Why was the Powwow important to Beedoskah and Desmond?

EXTENSION 2

There are many Powwow dances, including The Hoop Dance, Jingle Dress Dance, and Chicken Dance. Research one of these dances with your students and explore the steps and history together. This slideshow from [Indigenous Enterprise - abc Australia](#)** has powerful photos and clear, short video clips of a variety of Powwow dances.

MULTILINGUAL LEARNER AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES EXTENSIONS

- To address potential sensory considerations during Development and Culmination, when students are improvising to music, use music that is calm and steady with no vocals. Recommended album is *Shaman Drum Beats* by Grandfather Sky (all tracks).



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- Watch the sections of the videos that have vocabulary words as titles. Say the words as they appear on the screen while students are dancing.

RESOURCES

[Native American Heritage Programs - Powwows**](#)

[Indigenous Enterprise - abc Australia**](#)

[Dance Enthusiast article on First United Lenape Nations Powwow 2018**](#)

[First United Lenape Nations Powwow 2018 YouTube video**](#)

[Extension #1 Lesson 4 Grade K/1 Dance Unit K-2 Module 1](#)

[Extension #1 Lesson 4 Grade 2 Dance Unit K-2 Module 1](#)

[Tracing Footsteps M1 K-2 Dance Playlist**](#)

[LMA Chart Main](#)

[LMA Chart BODY](#)

[LMA Chart EFFORT](#)

[LMA Chart SPACE](#)

[LMA Chart RELATIONSHIP](#)

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