

## Spring Powwow Offers a Native American Experience at UNC



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Grand Entry is approaching. All the dancers line up, ready to enter the arena in their regalia. The drum beat takes over your body as you feel the spirit lift you up.

It is time for the celebration to begin. Bodies pulse in the movement of the rhythm, their bright colors flowing in rainbow paths of glory.

This is the scene of a Native American Powwow.

North Carolina is very rich in Native American History, a history that began in America long before our history books tell us. The 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Powwow, which was sponsored by the Carolina Indian Circle, was held at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on March 5, 2005.



Photo by Hannah Hamer

Women fancy dancers participate in a traditional Indian Powwow on the campus of UNC Chapel Hill on Monday, March 5, 2005.

The word "powwow" is actually an adopted English interpretation of the Native American word "pauau" which was a social gathering for spiritual leaders in the

community. They were intended to be very religious ceremonies, but the term quickly became a synonymous term for any gathering of Native Americans in a group.

Outside of the arena area, you may find traditional native foods such as buffalo soup and flat bread. Vendors usually lay out traditional Native American jewelry and other artifacts such as dream catchers, rabbit's feet, decorative regalia ornaments, and weaponry.

The arena, which is where the actual powwow is held, is a four sided square with openings to the north, south, east and west for dancers to enter the sacred grounds. Inside the arena is where the dancing and drumming takes place. Intertribal dances are dances where anyone may come and dance. The only way a non-native or non-dancer may enter the arena area is if asked to by a dancer.

Grand Entry is the beginning of the powwow. During this ceremony, the dancers enter the arena led by the American flag, the Native American flag and the Prisoner of War flag. They play a flag song to honor the flags, which is followed by a veteran's song to honor veterans who have fought in war.

At some point in the powwow, a Native American is honored for the work they have done to enrich their Native American community. This powwow honored Ms. Senora Lynch, who is a Native American artist who donated many of her pieces to the campus of UNC at Chapel Hill.

The drums are not what you probably imagine drums to be. There is one drum per drum group, and there can be any number of drum groups present, depending on the size of the powwow. The host drum for this event was the "Southern Sun Singers." Drum groups consist of a group of drummers playing on one drum. The lead singer starts the beat and the song, and the song is repeated until finished. The songs played are determined by the dance that is about to take place.

Dances are divided into male, female, and tiny tot divisions. Men's categories include men's traditional, men's fancy, and grass dancing. Women's dancing includes women's traditional, women's fancy, and jingle. Tiny tots include all dance types, but for a younger age group.

The regalia that dancers wear depends upon the type of dance that they perform. Native American regalia is interesting, because they are a people who have always made due with the resources available to them, so you may see CD's decorating regalia, as well as the 365 Skoal can lids that decorate the jingle dancers.

It is hard to believe that a ceremony this uplifting was once outlawed by our government. Native Americans have worked very hard to hold on to their tradition and heritage. If you ever have a chance to check out a powwow, you will not be disappointed. For more information on North Carolina powwows, visit [www.tipofthefather.com](http://www.tipofthefather.com).

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#### CORRECTIONS BOX

On the front page of the 03-03-05 edition of smallTALK, the headline for the Southern Writers Symposium was incorrect. The headline should have used the work "Writers" instead of "Writer's."