

POW WOW 101

A Pow Wow is a sacred social gathering held by many North American Indigenous communities. It is an event to dance, sing, socialize and honour traditions and culture of Indigenous peoples.

A Pow Wow can be one day or last all weekend, from a Friday to Sunday night, with breaks for supper and sleep.

Everyone is invited to attend a Pow Wow! If you see one promoted, consider yourself included.

Make your first Pow Wow a success by observing these general protocols and information:

- **The Grand Entry** is the official opening of the Pow Wow, often led by veterans, Flag Carriers and Head Dancers. As a sign of respect, standing and removing hats is the protocol during this opening (unless one's ability or mobility is preventative).
- The **Master of Ceremonies (M.C.)** helps run the Gathering by announcing singers, drummers, and dancers. They conduct the Gathering, provide historical significance of each dance, and will notify attendees of Honour Songs that require standing.
- The M.C. will let you know when you can join the dancers and dance to a drum song.
- **Regalia** is the clothing that dancers wear. It is not a costume. Regalia is often spiritually or historically significant: either handed down through generations, handmade by family members, or meticulously crafted by the individual. Never touch someone's Regalia. Regalia has deep personal and ceremonial significance.
- **The Drums** provide the heartbeat of a Gathering. Some drums have traditions that dictate when and where they can be played, while "Drums" can also refer to the group of performers. Do not attempt to play or touch without permission.
- **Photographs** of the dances are generally permissible, however one should never take a close-up photo of a dancer without first asking. If in doubt, find an organizer and ask. If a sacred event is taking place, the M.C. will announce that photos are not permitted.
- Sound recordings of the drums require permission from the performers. Some songs are also sacred and should not be audio recorded without permission.
- **Alcohol and Substance use is strictly forbidden.** Pow Wows are sacred and sober events. Best not to have alcohol in your vehicle when attending a Pow Wow.
- **No pets** are allowed on the Pow Wow grounds. Service animals are to remain leashed.
- Some Pow Wows search vehicles prior to allowing entry: **no weapons, including guns, bats, or golf clubs.**
- There will be food, crafts, and jewelry for sale. Be prepared and bring cash.

Additional Resources

[CBC Kids - Do you know what a Pow Wow is?](#)

[CBC Kids - Do you know what Regalia is?](#)

[Canadian Pow Wows](#)

[Pow Wow 101](#)