



Sewam American Indian Dance Company

School Show Study Guide

Wells Fargo Center for the Arts
Tuesday, October 20, 2015

Sewam American Indian Dance Company

Teacher's Guide

K-6

About the Artist:

Sewam American Indian Dance Company specializes in the dance and culture of the United States Plains Indian tribes. Members have performed to critical acclaim throughout the western United States, including educational venues, veteran's homes, convalescent homes, and most notably at the 1984 Olympic Games and the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival.

About the Program:

Native dancing and music represents a beautiful expression of Native American heritage. It is one of the most meaningful ways in which such heritage is presented to contemporary society, Indian and non-Indian alike. Every song, dance and gesture illustrates a part of Native American heritage as a people with roots in the distant past. Through the singing, dancing, drumming, and colorful regalia, the spiritual and symbolic aspects of humanity are reenacted. Although many of the dances are social, they are also steeped in spiritual significance.

In this program, students will be introduced to some of the most popular and rare Native American dances. Origins and meanings of each dance will be discussed. There will be an opportunity for participation in the exciting Friendship Dance.

Program Goals:

- To build awareness and appreciation for Native American culture both past and present.
- To leave students with a deep and positive impression of the rich dance traditions of the Native American Plains Indians.
- To encourage students to reflect and take pride in their own culture and traditions.

Preparation for the Performance/Follow-Up Activities:

- 1) Geography/Social Studies:
 - There are three nearly 500 distinct tribes in the United States. Between these tribes and those of Canada and Northern Mexico, the languages, traditions and dances differ greatly. Look at a map of the United States and identify which tribes live or lived in which states. There are probably some students with Native American ancestry. Do they know which tribes or where they lived?
- 2) Life Skills:
 - Lead students in a discussion about stereotypes. Today, Native Americans live like everybody else does in the 21st century. Some customs have become associated with all Native American tribes. For instance, although the Plains Dances have been

popularized through Powwows, not every Native American tribe held the custom of Pow wows. (The term "Powwow" probably derives from the Algonquian word "Pauau", meaning, "a gathering of people".) Here are some myths to dispel: Indians do not tap their mouths and make a "whooping" sound. Not all Indians lived in tipi's. Indians don't say "How".

3) Social Studies/Environmental studies:

- The environment plays a significant role in the development of a culture. It determines available food sources, affects clothing, shelter and belief systems. Research some of the Plains Indians tribes (look at the resource list) and differentiate between the customs and lifestyles of different tribes. What effect might geography or environmental factors have had on the customs of those tribes. How would people live in the snow of the Northwest coast verses the desert of the Southwest? The mountains and lakes of the West verses the marsh and grasslands of the Southeast? How would they build their homes? What would they eat? What celebrations do you think they would have and why?

4) Music/Dance

- Make up a dance or a song that reflects your environment such as your classroom, your city or your hobbies.

*REMINd students that they will be an audience at a live performance.
LEAD students into discussion of their job as audience members,
i.e. listening, responding, using their "mind's eye".*

Vocabulary:

Sewam:	Pronounced "say-wahm"; means flower.
Bustle:	A cluster of feathers that are attached to a person's back
Drum:	An instrument used by many Natives, representing the heartbeat
Grand entry:	a procession of all dancers in a Powwow into the arena or arbor.
Regalia:	Personal attire worn by a dancer. Not a costume.
Roach:	Porcupine hair head gear worn by male dancers

Modified from a curriculum guide by Young Audiences of Northern California for Four Winds American Indian Dance Group.

Bibliography:

Drumbeat...Heartbeat, Susan Braine, 1st Ave. Editions
Native North America, Larry J. Zimmerman, Little, Brown
Native American History, Judith Nies, Ballantine
Exiled in the Land of the Free, Oren Lyons (and others), Clear Light Publications

Publications:

Native American Dance: Ceremonies and Social Traditions, Charlotte Heath, ed., (National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution & Starwood Publishing, Inc., Washington D.C.), 1992. Call 1.800.992.2908.
Keepers of the Earth: Native American Stories and Environmental Activities for Children, Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchae, (Fulcrum, Inc., Golden, Colorado), 1988.
The Other Side of the "Christian Curtain": California Indians and the Missionaries, Edward D. Castillo, *The Californians*, September/October, 1992.
Drumbeat...Heartbeat: A Celebration of the Powwow, Susan Braine, (Minneapolis: Lerner Publications Co.), 1995.
Exiled in the Land of the Free: Democracy, Indian Nations and the US Constitution, Oren Lyons, et.al, (Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishers), 1992.

Bay Area Resources:

San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival
World Arts West
Fort Mason Center, Landmark Building D
San Francisco, CA 94123-1382
415-474-3914
www.worldartswest.org

415/241.6229 & 415/241.6230
Oakland Unified Schools
Office of Indian Education
Harper Building
314 East 10th Street, Room 5
Oakland, CA 94606

American Indian Contemporary Arts
23 Grand Avenue, 6th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94108
415/989.7003
www.cominguptaller.org/profile/pr04multi.htm

South & Meso-American Indian Info. Center
P.O. Box 7829
Oakland, CA 94601
510/534.4882 - Administration Office
510/834.4263 - Abya Yala News
<http://saiic.nativeweb.org/>

Intertribal Friendship House
523 East 14th Street
Oakland, CA 94606
510/452.1235
<http://bapd.org/ginise-2.html>

Marin Museum of the American Indian
2200 Novato Blvd.
Novato, CA 94947
415/897.4064

International Indian Treaty Council
Information Office
2390 Mission St. Ste 301

American Indian, Alaska Native & Native Hawaiian Program at Stanford University
Old Union Clubhouse, Rm #12
524 Lasuen Mall
Stanford, CA 94305-3064
650/725-6944

American Indian Educ. Projects
1950 Mission Street, #12
San Francisco, CA 94103
San Francisco, CA 94110
415/641.4482
www.treatycouncil.org/