Pow Wow Etiquette

1. The Committee is doing everything possible to ensure that activities begin and run smoothly. Please cooperate in this regard.

2. Appropriate dress and behavior is required in the dance arena. Listen to the MC to announce special songs or social songs to indicate who can dance. He will also provide information on the dance style.

3. Dance arena chairs are reserved for dancers and singers. Reserved spaces will be indicated with a blanket in that space. The bleachers should provide enough seating space for everyone.

4. Respect the position of the Head Male and Head Female Dancers. Their role entitles them to start each song or set of songs. Please wait until they have started to dance before you join in.

5. Show respect to the flag and honor songs by standing during “Special” songs, stand in place until the sponsors of the song have danced a complete circle and have come around you, then join in. If you are not dancing, continue to stand quietly until the song is completed.

6. While dancing at any Pow Wow, honor the protocol of the sponsoring group.

7. The Flag Song is sung when the American Flag is raised or lowered. Please stand and remove hats during the singing of this song. It is not a song for dancing.

8. Certain items of spiritual significance should be worn only by those qualified to do so. Respect the traditions.
9. Giveaways, attributes of Indian generosity, are held at many pow wows. They are acknowledgments of appreciation to recipients for honor given.

10. If at any time you are uncertain of procedure or etiquette, please check with the MC, Arena Director, or pow wow staff. They will be glad to help you with your questions.

11. Do not pick up anything dropped by a dancer, especially feathers. Alert the MC, Arena Director, or Head Veteran Dancer.

12. No Alcohol or drugs are allowed at Pow Wows.

13. Free refreshments are made available near the dance arena for singers and dancers—please remember this is not for the audience.

14. If taking pictures, remember common courtesy and ask permission from the singer or drum first. Group photographs are usually all right to take, but you might want to ask the committee first.

15. The feast is a continuation of the celebration—in honor of our elders, we allow them to eat before the rest of us. In this case, we also allow drummers and dancers the same honor. If you see someone who fits this category, please open space for them.

Remember that in each area you travel to and visit, things can and will be slightly different than your area. Different groups have different customs and methods of doing things. Different is not wrong, just different. Be respectful of the uniqueness of each area.