

The Power of the Jingle Dress – Then and Now

The dream

Elders of the Mille Lacs Ojibwe tell of a man who kept having a dream of four women dancing in red, blue, green and yellow dresses decorated with metal cones made from snuff tobacco tins. After he told his wife about the dream and showed her the spring-like dance steps he saw, she and other community women created the dresses. Later the man shared his dream with more people and the women demonstrated the dance.

At the same time, the man's daughter was very sick, hardly able to move. When the women began to dance, the girl stirred and watched, and by the end of the evening, she was up and dancing with the women.

Circa (around) 1919 to present

The jingle dress and its connection to healing first appeared around World War I, perhaps in response to the 1918-1919 global influenza pandemic. Back then, the pandemic disease killed an estimated 50 million people worldwide and more than 600,000 in the U.S., including thousands of Native Americans.

In 1921, the federal government banned traditional dancing among American Indian communities. Despite this ban, the jingle dress dance flourished and spread across Ojibwe communities in the Midwest. It was adopted by some Dakota peoples as well. By the 1930s, the dress appeared on postcards of Ojibwe women from all across Minnesota and North Dakota.

The jingle dress dance began to spread to even more Native communities in the 1980s, as the competitive powwow circuit with dance competitions, grew in popularity. Today Native women and girls from many tribes compete in traditional and contemporary jingle dress dancing around the U.S.

Historic
jingle
dresses



Contemporary
jingle dress

Name _____

I can describe the music and movements of traditional jingle dancing

View this excerpt of jingle dancing and describe the performance using one row of characteristics (across, up and down, or diagonal) <https://youtu.be/8wRMP427-W4> (0:22-3:11)

Accompanying instrument	Dancers' steps	Singers' call and response
What else do you notice?	Tempo	Shape and direction of melody
Characteristics of the singing	Rhythm of the instrument	Dancers' arms

I can place the jingle dress in the context of today

Review this short history of the jingle dance with Ojibwe historian Brenda Child, and learn how it has evolved to include modern protest movements such as Standing Rock and calls for racial justice. <https://youtu.be/1F-1S71fHKs> (16:37)

Write 5 ways the jingle dress tradition is still an important part of Minnesota American Indian culture.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____
