



California State Parks

Video Transcript



The Miwok Dancers at Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park

As you see our people standing here, we call ourselves the Miwok Dancers. Our costumes are made of authentic things of the land.

The headbands we have are made of the flicker bird, the yellowhammer. They're authentically made. The black is the tail feathers, the orange is the wing feathers; the feathers are stripped off and sewn between the tail feathers. It takes about twenty-five birds to make one of these headpieces.

The necklace is made of the old Indian trading money-- the "wampum." They're decorated with abalone shells.

The tail feathers the boys have on are made of various birds--the hawk, the eagle, buzzard, crow, duck--whatever we had in the area. They carry a wand in front of them; we call this our Guide Feather. While they're dancing you'll notice they have this feather in front of them. The buckskin wrap-around you see on their bodies is made of the deer hide; they're from the land also, from our deer. The moccasins are made of deer hide.

The girls have on abalone decorations, bead decorations. The beads they have on are real old--some of them are the Hudson Bay trading beads. We got them in our collection many, many years ago.

This ceremonial house is one of the largest in the state of California, authentically built by our Indian people. It took us about three years to complete this. It's sixty feet in diameter, it has two-hundred-and-twenty poles in the rafters, thirty-two feet long. These big four center poles are oak; they weigh about four tons each. The headers you see up above is oak; they weigh about four tons each. The smoke hole is three feet in diameter; the hole you see up above is woven with wild grape vines. This was made by our people, mostly supervised by me over the years. This is our culture; this is our ceremonial house.

Our opening dance will be a Tuta Dance, one of the old time dances done many years ago. This is our opening theme for many of our celebrations--what we call Big Time. We don't call our things Pow Wow, we call it Big Time. So this is the Tuta Dance.

If you wonder about our music, this is made of the elderberry tree. We cut them out when they're about three years old. We take the center out of them, which is a soft center, and we split them down to almost nothing; this is our music. This is a deer hoof rattle, made of the

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deer hooves. All our things are made of the land, authentically made from the animals of the land; this is our way.

Our next dance will be the Acorn Basket Dance, done by our ladies. The reason we call this the Acorn Basket Dance is when we have our Big Time and the tables are all set with food--mostly acorn food, this is our staple food of our Indian people--the Indian ladies used to go around the table dancing with baskets and singing, and the men sang for them. This is the way we've done our Acorn Basket Dance.

Our next dance will be the Coyote Dance. During our Big Time we have one person we call the Coyote. He's like the clown is to the other groups of people. He goes around, makes fun of the dancers, and tries to distract their attention and say, "You're doing it wrong." He tries to make them misstep and this kind of thing. So this is why we call it the Coyote Dance.

Thank you

Running Time: 9 minutes
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