

# Powwow of love



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The 30th annual MSU Pow-Wow of Love was held on March 16, 2013. Arriving at Jenison Fieldhouse around 7. 35pm, I found myself breaking one of the rules. I entered the building from the east entrance - where the entrance was reserved just for the dancers. I then walked towards the dance arena, where the crowd gathered. The first thing that caught my eyes was the colorful and unique dance regalia or outfit worn by the dancers. Bright colors such as yellow, orange, red, and light blue wrapped around the dancers beautifully.

The older looking male dancers were wearing the feather warbonnets on the head and bustles on the back. Dancers with striking multicolored beaded and fringed outfits were crowding the dance floor. Some of the female dancers dressed simple with their colorful fringed shawls. I noticed that some dancers even had bells attached to their ankles or dance outfits that they wore. I also was told that the feathers and leathers used were inherited from their father up to their great grandfather. The sight was so magnificent - it made me excited to stay for the show.

The dancing has already started when I arrived. I was told that they were doing the ' Intertribal Dance'. In this particular dance, everyone is welcome to take part - even the spectators. The dancers moved in a circular clockwise motion a without any particular moves. They then invited the public to join them in the dance. I was hesitating to try it at first. But I told myself that won't get the experience anywhere else. So, I decided to just do it. The basic step is the same step used by traditional dancers. First, one foot is tapped on one beat, placed down flatly.

The action is then repeated with the opposite foot, without missing a beat. I enjoyed taking part in the dance as it was the only chance for me to

experience the Native American culture closely. Other dances that were performed are the ' Fallen Feather' dance, the Two-Step dance and the ' Social Dance'. Out of all these dances, the ' Fallen Feather' dance fascinated me the most. It was performed because a feather fell from dancer's outfit. It was performed by four of the veteran male dancers. They danced around and one of the dancers picked up the feather at the end of the dance - while saying the prayers to it.

The feather was then given back to the dancer who dropped it. I was told that in some cases, if the feather is not claimed, the person who picked it up can give it to anyone he thinks deserve the feather. During this dance, the spectators were asked to stand and remove their hats to respect the ceremony. Also, to protect its sacredness, pictures and videos were not allowed to be taken during the dance ceremony. After watching all the dances, I went to check out the art vendors. I would say that the arts and handicrafts made are eye-catching. The beadworks are impeccable.

Most of the arts were based on their beliefs and lifestyles. For example, the dreamcatcher was made to prevent nightmare. The rabbit foot, the turtle necklace, the bone knives, blankets and weavings were some of the famous handicrafts sold that day. I even bought myself a dreamcatcher as a souvenir. I feel so honored to have experienced this ' Pow-Wow' event. They have such great pride and respect for their land, culture and tradition. Most of the Native Americans that I encountered that day do not look like those people I saw in the movie - they look much like the Americans.

And what amaze me most is that they still live up to their culture and tradition despite the difficulties they experienced in the past and the U. S.

government's policies towards banning some of the Native American cultures in the name of 'assimilation' - to assimilate Native Americans into the mainstream US culture. Overall, this experience has altered my perceptions about how the Native Americans really look and live their life. Being an international student, this is definitely one of the most memorable nights I've ever experience in the U. S.