

# IN-LON-SCHKA



# OSAGE CEREMONIAL DANCES

Osage Culture Traveling Trunk Project





# In-Lon-Schka

The In-Lon-Schka is one of the most important ceremonial gatherings in Osage culture. The Osages received the In-Lon-Schka about 130 years ago as a gift from the Ponca and Kaw people, who are closely related to the Osage. The In-Lon-Schka celebrates and passes on Osage culture, and unites Osages from around the reservation and country.

The In-Lon-Schka and the modern Native American pow-wow both include singing, drumming, and dancing. However, they are not the same. The In-Lon-Schka is spiritual. The pow-wow is mainly secular.

**Secular:** Not spiritual.



Photo by Megan Scales

Osages proceed to the arbor for  
In-Lon-Schka dances.



The In-Lon-Schka dances take place over three weekends in June. Each weekend, the dances are in one of three Osage communities. These communities are Grayhorse, Hominy, and Pawhuska. Each weekend, the dances begin on Thursday and end on Sunday. On these days, people dance in the afternoon, eat dinner, then dance again late into the night. Many Osages come from all over the country to watch and participate.

No one is allowed to photograph In-Lon-Schka dancing. That is why the pictures here show events just before or after the dancing.



Osage Andrea Hunter at In-Lon-Schka dances in Grayhorse in 2013.



The In-Lon-Schka dances take place in arbors. A drum is placed in the middle of the arbor with the drummers and singers sitting around it. Then dancers surround the drum and dance around the arbor counter-clockwise. Osages dance in a straight style, taking small steps in beat with the drum.

**Arbor:** a building with no walls that is open to the outdoors.



This photo shows Osage men walking to the arbor entrance to start an In-Lon-Schka dance session. The arbor is visible behind the men.



Osages wear **regalia** to participate in the dances. Men and boy's regalia includes a dance shirt, scarf, breechcloth, leggings, moccasins, and a **roach**.

Osage women and girls also wear special clothing, such as shawls or blankets draped over other clothing.

**Regalia:** Special clothing designed and worn for a particular ceremony or celebration.

**Roach:** A men's headpiece made with deer hair, porcupine hair, and an eagle feather.



Photo courtesy Osage News

Osage woman in shawl



Photo by Megan Scales

Osage man wearing **roach** and other In-Lon-Schka **regalia**

To prepare and hold the In-Lon-Schka dances, Osages holding various positions do a lot of work. These positions include Chairman of the Dance Committee, Drum Keeper, Town Crier, Head Singer, Head Cook, Tail Dancers, Water Boys, and other positions.

The Town Crier (right) is appointed for life. His job includes ringing a bell to indicate that the dances will soon start. The Town Crier also calls people to come forward to be honored.



Town Crier



The Water Boys serve water to singers and dancers at the In-Lon-Schka dances. Each Water Boy carries a bucket of water and serves the water with dippers.



Photo by Megan Scales

Water Boys





Photo by Megan Scales

Osage men walk to arbor entrance for In-Lon-Schka dances