

Sun Circle Dance / Val Brinkerhoff

The “*Sun Circle Dance*” is based on a special dance God gave to two Paiute Indian men when they separately ascended to heaven in the late 1880’s. Their names were Numatiavo and Wovoca, father and son in the Paiute tribe who were living in western Nevada in the late 19th century. The dance was given them in a time of great oppression and need among their people. It was to be taught to them and others, that they - (1) might express love to the Father (the Great Spirit); (1) spread peace, love, and brotherhood among the Indian people, including other tribes; And (3) and with the White Man.

When Christ later came to Walker Lake, Nevada in 1890 on or near New Year’s day (marked by first new Moon nearest the vernal equinox), He performed this dance of worship for the Father (and perhaps Mother), singing a prayer of praise while dancing at the center of a circle of Native Americans from different tribes. All that is known of the dance today are its three steps (two steps to the right, and one step back) in a great circle, and the fact that it was danced over a five-day period. On the fourth evening the dance continued through the night and into the morning of the fifth day, after which the dancers washed themselves in a nearby source of living or running water. A feast then followed.

Wovoca was man of spiritual stature among his people, just as his father Numatiavo had been. Both were respected healers among the Paiute people. Wovoca called the dance God gave he and his father (while in heaven separately), “*The Dance of Welcome*” or “*the Dance of Peace*.” He said it was originally designed to build love and unity among Native Americans, while expressing love for the Great Father. He said that when Christ came to Walker Lake, He sang a song of praise to the Father. He did so while centered in the circle of Native Americans from different tribes, all of whom had been invited to be at Walker Lake and meet the Christ. Wovoca was instructed by God to share the dance with other tribes. Sadly, this dance of love and worship later evolved into what is now known as “*the Ghost Dance*,” a dance of war and revenge aimed at the White Man, with a desire to get Indian lands back. The “*ghosts*” of dead ancestors were conjured up to participate in this revenge. The Father, our Savior, and the concept of love among the people has been subtracted from the dance completely. Those who were not at Walker Lake, like Sitting Bull, made the changes to the dance to incite revenge and war. The *Dance of Peace* then become a dance of war and revenge – *the Ghost Dance* (see D&C 93:39).

The U.S. Government tried to stop Native Americans from participating in “*the Ghost Dance*,” as officials believed it was used to incite many Native Americans to war. It was part of what they called, “*the Ghost Dance Religion*,” having nothing to do with the love and peace Christ sought to share with the Book of Mormon Remnant whom He and the Father had invited to gathered at Walker Lake in 1890. Our Lord’s visit there and His teachings (that one day the Native people would get their land back) led to what the U.S. Government called “*the Messiah Craze*.” Those present at Walker Lake sought peace. Those not present sought to dance for revenge. Smithsonian Ethnologist James Mooney was sent west to investigate the “*Messiah Craze*.” It resulted in an 1136 page report, detailing the dance and much more. Portions of it, including Christ’s visit and more are included in Val’s book, *The Remnant Awakens* (4th edition, www.digitalegend.com).

The *Sun Circle* dance features the basic steps Christ taught those gathered at Walker Lake (2 steps forward, 1 back). It is typical of a Near Eastern dance step used among the Jews and known as the “*Hora*.” Val has added arm, hand, and head movements to the three-step dance to symbolically express things like covenant making, worship, receiving and giving, and opposition in general. He did so over a 50-day vow period, which lasted from our Lord’s resurrection day to Pentecost, when the dance was finally completed and shared with others. It was taught first to a group of men gathered at Parowan Gap (a Native American temple site) on Pentecost of 2015. It has since been shared with others. I am honored that the women of the Honeycomb now use this dance as well - as a form of worship for Father, Mother and the Son.

Music *Sun Circle* (5 minutes in length, originally a a dance over 5 days; 5 is the number of covenant making & GRACE).

Attitude *This is a dance of worship and praise to Father, Mother and Son - a type of prayer in movement. All moves involve opposition (male – female, left – right, up – down, etc.). They proceed naturally as the music changes. The steps remain the same throughout the entire dance, including the “free lance” portion of it.*

Feet Take two steps right (Father & Son), one step back (Mother) while moving in a great circle counterclockwise.

Arms & Hands All arm, hand, and head gestures utilize opposing movements that change naturally with the music.

This movement should be graceful, including that of the *torso* involving swaying motions.

Change (opposition) Primary arm, head, and hand changes in the dance occur as one takes a step back to the left.

Major changes occur when the music transitions to a different form.

Head The head moves up or down, and left or right, while the arms and hands transition symbolically, the hands up in cupping shape, and down in blessing (flat) form.

Body The body should gracefully sway with the music.

Start & End Symbolism The dance begins in a squatting position with arms crossed over the chest. This symbolizes

how Porcupine (a Cheyenne Indian from Montana and one of the Twelve Christ called at Walker Lake) began recounting his story of Christ's visit to Native Americans who were invited to gather to Walker Lake in the spring of 1890. Before sharing his experience (July 1890, Montana) with reporters, government officials, and others in a public speech, he sat in a squatting position with his arms crossed over his chest before the people. He then stood, raising his arms up and open to the heavens, praying for some five minutes quietly. He then spoke, addressing the Living Christ who visited Native Americans gathered at Walker Lake. Like Porcupine, Jacob (or Israel) crossed his arms in an X form while pronouncing a patriarchal blessing upon Joseph's two sons - Manasseh (left hand on the firstborn son, physical blessings) and Ephraim (right hand on the birthright son, spiritual blessings). He blessed them after Joseph had brought the whole family to Egypt to rescue them from famine. Many of us have inherited the covenant blessings given to these two boys, an inheritance passed to us through Lehi and his posterity in the Book of Mormon (see JST Gen. 48; Deut. 33; 2 Ne. 3).

13 Part Dance / A Sequence

1. **Squat** - Dancers squat in a circle, arms crossed in an X over the chest, head down in reverence. *Music begins...*
2. **Sunburst** - Dancers stand up, opening their arms as they create a sunburst design going up and out, and around. / *Tribute to Father and Son, while standing on our home, Mother Earth [tied to Mother in Heaven]. / Awakening...*
3. **Steps** - Begin while standing in place. They continue through the whole dance.
4. **Move to the center first, then back** to receive a blessing from God and place it in your heart (repeated 3 times). Moving forward to the center, the head is up, arms reaching up with cupped hands. Arms are brought back down crossing them over the chest, with the head down in reverence. / *Go to God for all things.*
5. **Move to the center & back again to make covenants.** Now raise both arms up in square covenant form. Go to center looking up, head up. When stepping back, head goes down, with arms down in square form - like wings of an eagle. Repeat 3 times. / *The two arms up with head in-between them is a symbol of the sun between the two pillars of Solomon's Temple at the equinoxes. The sun on the horizon was thought to be "the place of meeting" between worlds, between God and man (in a sacred embrace). The head symbolizes the sun on the horizon between two pillars, two standing stones or mountains.*
6. **Begin moving to the right** (2 steps right, 1 step back) **with opposing covenant arms.** Keep both arms in covenant squares, but have the left arm up, the right arm down as you take your first steps to the right. After each two steps to the right, move left. This is the time to reverse the arm and head positions (opposite of before). The head is down when the left arm up, while the head is up when the right arm is up. / *We make changes and covenants before our missions begin.*
7. **Receive and Give** - As music transitions, change the arm and hand positions to one of receiving, where one arm is up, palm cupped to receive, and one arm is down, the hand flat to give a blessing. The head also turns left and right with the changing of arms and hands. Alternate the arms and head, each time you step back, or left. / *We go to God to receive and then we bless others.*
8. **Arms out and in to chest** - As music transitions again, both arms now extend out horizontally, with head up, then bring the arms in and cross them over the chest, with the head down. Do this repeatedly as you do the steps right (2 steps) and left (1 step). Repeat until the music changes. / *Humility before God as opposed to confidence, faith and trust in God.*
9. **Figure-8 flying** - As music transitions, now fly in a small figure-8 with both arms out straight (tilt, one arm high, one arm low). As the music again changes - proceed ahead in one big circle with others, lifting arms up with hands cupping first, then arms as wings swooping down. Repeat this flapping of wings until the music changes. / *Fly - fulfill your mission valiantly.*
10. **Move to center again in covenant making** - As the music transitions, go again to the center with covenant arms up and then down (the arms to the square up and down like eagles wings). Repeat 3 times again. **Now step right again with one arm up, one down** (both in covenant position). Continue the 3 step movement and arm changes until the music transitions.
11. **Cup up and then triangle down** - As the music changes once again, and while continuing the 3 steps, take your cupped hands up to receive together, and then them down, creating a triangle shape to bless **in the name of the Lord.** / *The triangle shape means "the Lord" in Reformed Egyptian, the language used by the writers of the Book of Mormon.*
12. **Free lance while steps continue** - As the music again transitions, dancers are encouraged to "free-lance" with their hand, arm, body, and head movements, while continuing the basic 3 step dance pattern in a great circle.
13. **Sunburst, squat & end** - As the music fades, do a last sunburst, return to squatting position. Reverence & silence. / End.