



Dressed in traditional clothing, or regalia, dancers compete in contests organized by age group and style of dance such as Traditional, Grass, Fancy, or Jingle.

PHOTO CREDIT: SPX Sports – Mankato

# WACIPI

## A Celebration of Life

During the summer, Dakota communities along the Byway hold an annual Wacipi (pronounced wah-chee-pee) or powwow. These weekend-long events bring family and friends together for a cultural celebration of life and heritage. It is also a time to remember and honor relatives and to commemorate special occasions.

In the Dakota language, Wacipi means “they dance” and dancing is at the center of a powwow. Dancers travel from tribal communities across the United States and Canada to participate in exhibitions and contest powwows. A dancer’s regalia can take several years to create and may incorporate heirloom family pieces and objects that are significant.

Each day’s activities begin with the Grand Entry. This vibrant procession is led by flag bearers and eagle staff carriers, many of whom are veterans. Following the flagbearers are honored guests, tribal leaders, and elders. Then dancers of all ages fill the arena’s circle. The host drum group provides the entrance song. The drum holds special cultural significance and is the heartbeat of the Wacipi and the

people. The entrance song is followed by a prayer and honor songs for the flag and veterans.

Food booths and artists selling crafts, clothing, and jewelry are also part of the gathering. Throughout the Wacipi, Native American cultural heritage is preserved, celebrated, and renewed.

## WACIPI ETIQUETTE

*All are welcome at a Wacipi.*

Please follow these general guidelines and others that are shared during the event. The emcee will announce the day’s program and when it is appropriate to stand or when photographs should not be taken. Additional information may be found on the hosting community’s website.

### The Arena

The arena is sacred ground that has been blessed with prayer and offerings. Treat this area with respect. The arena is reserved for the dancers; do not cut across or let children run into and play in it. Pets and smoking are also not allowed inside the arena’s dance area.

### Seating

Some seating or bleachers may be available, but you may bring your own lawn chair. Be mindful of those around you and that some areas may be reserved for elders or people with disabilities. Chairs should not be placed between drum groups and the dance area. Guests should seat themselves behind dancers, farthest away from the dance area.

### Drums

The drum holds special cultural significance. The drum is the heartbeat of the Wacipi and the people. Never touch the drum or drumsticks. Please do not walk between the drum and the chairs of the drum circle.

### Grand Entry

During the Grand Entry, the flag and veteran songs, and the invocation, spectators are asked to stand and remove their hats. Refrain from talking during prayers.

### Regalia

Dancers wear traditional regalia, not costumes. Do not touch someone’s regalia without asking. If you see a piece of regalia fall on the ground, please point it out to the wearer but do not retrieve it yourself.

### Eagle Feather Ceremony

Some staffs and regalia incorporate eagle feathers which are regarded as a special honor. If an eagle feather should fall on the ground, a ceremony is performed to retrieve it. Photography is not allowed during this ceremony.

### Intertribal

Spectators may be invited to dance in the arena during “Intertribal” events. Walk in time to the beat of the drums and follow what others are doing. Be considerate of this time and honor it by being respectful.

### Photography and Video

Ask permission before taking photographs of individual dancers or before recording drum groups. Professional photography and video require permission ahead of the event.

### BYWAY WACIPI CALENDAR



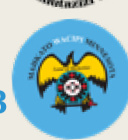
#### Lower Sioux Wacipi second weekend in June

Lower Sioux Indian Community—Morton  
[lowersioux.com](http://lowersioux.com)



#### Pezihutazizi Oyate Traditional Wacipi first weekend in August

Upper Sioux Community—Granite Falls  
[uppersiouxcommunity-nsn.gov](http://uppersiouxcommunity-nsn.gov)



#### Mahkato Annual Traditional Wacipi third weekend in September

Land of Memories Park—Mankato  
[mahkatowacipi.org](http://mahkatowacipi.org)