Q & A Exclusive! Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial director Dudley Byerley talks changes

Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
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Merging 'Old School' concepts to this year's extended Ceremonial

It's that time once again for the annual Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial, in the town known as the "Indian Capital of the World."

In its 96th year, there's been changes, and the man behind those changes, Ceremonial Director Dudley Byerley, talked with the Sun about the ambitious move of adding another week of festivities. He opened up about additions, such as the new Tiny Tot Pageant and Best Dressed Grandma and Grandpa Contest, and the $40,000 payout to the artists at the Red Rock Park exhibit hall.

Sun: Everyone is asking..."Why is the ceremonial longer this year?"

Byerley: Well, mainly because of last year. A survey was done of people who came out and said there was nothing to do on certain days of the Ceremonial. Was there any major event going on? Questions like that and also from local Gallupians, especially sponsors like local businesses. We want more Ceremonial traffic that will help out everybody. Simple economics – more hamburgers, more jewelry ... means more fun for everybody. We're trying, and in a growth mode, and we want to grow more this year. In fact, at the nightly performances this year we will actually have live eagles at the Ceremonial. That is going to be a sight to see … we're growing to our 100th year and getting there is what we are looking towards.

Sun: It's going to take a lot work isn't it? How are you going to do that?

Byerley: Word of mouth and volunteers. We need bodies for all of the scheduled events. It takes 70 volunteers to check in all of the artist entries, and that is just one event. If you want to volunteer and have some fun at the same time, drop by the Ceremonial office. We need about 150 Volunteers to make this happen for this year's ceremonial.

Sun: Wow, that definitely is a lot of people needed. So, what changes have been made added or taken out?

Byerley: Nothing is taken out ... just lots of added. This year the The Danza de los Voladors (Dance of the Flyers/pole flying) will be back. This group has always been great and the people always get excited to see them. The Song and Dance is set for three days. That will be a big change because they can bring in their own vendors now.

The $40,000 is a big change for the artists who will be entering into the contest; the 5k Fun Run/Walk is back; open mic at the El Morro Theatre; the new Tiny Tot Pageant; and Best Dressed Grandma and Grandpa Contest is going to be fun to watch. Also added this year is the new storefront business look. Where local businesses try to give a new look to their stores along the streets. Basically, we're going back old school, bringing back those ideas that made the Ceremonial great.

Sun: Wow that is totally exciting and good to hear! What do you hope to gain out of these changes?

Byerley: A lot more attendance – a lot more fun! The cost is also lower this year. The events are getting bigger. The night dances have doubled. The rodeo people will definitely love it because it's going to be like how it was back in the day. Of course, there will be a parking charge, but the cost of seeing the Ceremonial this year will be a lot lower and that's great.

I want to say a really big thank you to Firerock Casino, Western Refining, and Coca-Cola for really stepping up. I forgot to mention that at the nightly performances there will be a big 13-foot television screen where you can see instant replays. It's really going to be great this year. Our board members are younger with great ideas.

Sun: That's great to hear, anything else you would like to add?

Byerley: This year we have a new club called The Centennial Club, you've seen those banners along Highway 66 right? Well, anyone who wants to be a part of this club can, whether it be an individual, family, or a business, anyone can sign up and anytime. Each banner is $250 dollars a year, and for the next four years this money goes into a savings account. We hope to have $100,000 by the time we hit our 100th Annual Ceremonial or centennial, and this will be the prize money for the artist show. We hope to maybe sell 200 of these banners. Currently, 70 are sold right now. We need a minimum of 100. A nice plaque goes with it, and we hope everyone gets behind it.

Sun: Wow that is a great idea! Well, Mr. Byerley I do greatly appreciate you taking the time out for this, and Happy Ceremonial.

Byerley: Thank you and come out everyone and join the fun at this year's Ceremonial!

The Ceremonial runs from Aug. 4-16. For more information on the ceremonial visit the website at www.gallupceremonial.com or call (505) 863-3896.

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