

2020 Ceremonial still planned for August

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Members of the board for the Intertribal Ceremonial Association are still planning to put on the event this August, but it won't be the customary one.

Dudley Byerley, who has overseen the past four Ceremonials, has been known for wanting each year's event to be bigger and more enjoyable than the one the year before. But the crisis surrounding the spread of COVID-19 has made that impossible this year.

Indian shows and major sports events have been canceled for the early part of the summer. But there are hopes that states will have the spread of the disease under control by July 4, so some events can be held. Gallup has already announced it is canceling the summer dances this year.

So, if the Ceremonial is held in August, it is likely to be a lot smaller in scope.

For one thing, don't expect to see the usual array of Indian dance groups from all over the United States and Mexico making an appearance, Byerley said.

While the dances held on Friday and Saturday evening are extremely popular, they are also expensive to put on and given this year's realities, events that are put on will have to at least be expected to break even.

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And if the states are able to get the virus under control and reduce the death toll, no one expects to see any travel between states to be acceptable.

Instead, Byerley said, the association will use local dance groups. Events like the pow-wow, which also costs more than they bring in, will be reduced or eliminated.

Social distancing is still expected to be in effect, so that may kill the parade events.

This won't be the first time the Ceremonial has been reduced in size.

The World War II years saw a reduction in size because of travel restrictions and some of the events in the 1990s were also small as the association was having severe financial problems.

That's also expected to be the problem this year as the association has been relying more on sponsors to help defray the costs. With most businesses in Gallup now shut down because of the directives to stay at home, Byerley said the association won't be able to count on those funds this year.

This is the 99th annual event which means next year will mark its 100th anniversary and Byerley has been making plans for years to make it memorable. That hasn't changed, he said.

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