

Inter-Tribal Ceremonial Queens honor uniqueness of Native traditions

Written by By Mia Rose Poris Sun Editor
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While the rodeo may represent the gritty, rugged side of the Inter-Tribal Ceremonial, the 95th annual event has a glamorous side, too. That is, the Inter-Tribal Ceremonial Queen Pageant, which begins its festivities on Aug. 10. This year, five Native American women who have honored the traditions of their culture and inspired their communities aspire to wear the crown.

“The pageant is an opportunity for these young women to showcase their traditional knowledge of who they are and where they come from,” Fleurette Brown, the 1998 - 90 Miss Indian Ceremonial wrote in a statement. “They honor the uniqueness of the teachings in the Native American traditions.”

No longer the queen, Brown continues her work with the pageant as a committee member.

“Being an ambassador for the Ceremonial Association as the Queen is an experience of growth and development from inside their inner selves to the world around them,” she wrote. “Being able to serve as a symbol for such a prestigious event as the Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial is an achievement a young women will instill into many aspects of her future days beyond the years of her reign.”

“The list of queens I have begins in 1978 with Teri Fraizer being the first queen. I held the title from 1980 - 81. Our oldest daughter held the tortilla in 2006 - 07,” Queen Committee Chair Virginia Ballenger, who is in her second year on the committee, told the Sun in an email.

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"I thoroughly enjoy helping organize this pageant and work with an amazing committee," Ballenger, who owns Navajo Spirit Southwestern Wear, said. She expressed her appreciation for the sponsors who help make the pageant a reality.

The Queen Committee includes Ballenger, Trish Arviso, Fleurette Brown, Cynthia Chavez, Roland and Suzie Wagenbach.

The event begins Aug. 10 with a luncheon at Fire Rock Casino from noon to 1:30 pm, when the five contestants are introduced and will give speeches on how a cultural way of life has shaped them into a role model for today's youth. The miss photogenic competition will also take place there. Tickets are \$20 and available at Navajo Spirit or the Ceremonial office.

Up-and-coming comedian, Isiah Yazzie of Rez City Improv, will perform.

On Aug. 11, from 10 am to noon, contemporary talent takes the stage, followed by traditional presentations from 2 – 4 pm. The mistress of these ceremonies, Sunny Dooley, is a former Miss Navajo and a renowned storyteller. Tickets are \$10 each, cash-only, at the door.

The contestants will walk in the parade that evening.

Aug. 12 brings with it current Queen Kahlaya Mckinney, 20, who will host the contestants. The aspiring queens will visit a nursing home and have a picnic at Ford Canyon Park.

That night, right before the evening dance performances at Red Rock State Park, the new queen will be crowned. The following morning, Aug. 13, the Ceremonial Queen will walk in the parade.

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