37 Years of Tradition: Ceremonial Queen Contest Seeks Contestants

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Each year, as the Ceremonial time rolls around, young ladies apply to be the next Miss Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial. This year is the first year for organizer Virginia Ballenger.

The first queen was crowned in 1978, and that was Teri Frazier.

While the contest is open to all unmarried young women ages 18 to 25, with no children and at least half Indian heritage, according to Ballenger, the contest only has two candidates at this time. Ballenger hopes that there will be at least five competing by the time the Ceremonial begins.

“I’ve got several phone calls from potential young women who are still trying,” Ballenger said.

The crowning will be held on Aug. 8 at 7:30 pm in the dance arena at Red Rock State Park.

The candidates will have to present a traditional as well as a modern talent or skill and go through an interview with a panel of judges.

The judges for this year’s competition are Brenda Milosevich, Sandra Becenti, Ruth Kawano, Michele Lovett and Kathryn Babcock.

“She will also be judged on an essay titled ‘Why would you like to become Miss Gallup

Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial and how will you provide a positive role model to the title and what goals would you like to execute through your reign?'," Ballenger said. "She will also give a speech on how the cultural way of life has shaped me into a role model for others."

The candidates will also be judged on general appearance as well as personality.

Last year's Ceremonial crowned Mykhal Mendoza, a member of the White Mountain Apache tribe. She has fulfilled her duties as the 2014-2015 queen. Her final duty will be to welcome the new Ms. Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial Queen.

"We don't crown the new queen until after the ceremonial," she said. "The new queen will reign over next year's festivities."

The 2015-2016 Miss Gallup Inter-Tribal Ceremonial will have her hands full for the next calendar year as some of the events that they have scheduled her for already include the New Mexico and Arizona state fairs, Navajo Nation fair, the Zuni tribal fair, and the Gathering of Nations.

"Her duties are to attend various events to promote the Gallup Inter-Tribal Ceremonial [as well as] to serve as a goodwill ambassador for the City of Gallup," Ballenger said.

While the Queen will have the respect and the pride that comes with the title and the crown, she will also receive a $2,000 cash award. Some of the other candidates will still have a chance to be crowned as Miss Photogenic, Miss Congeniality and first runner up and the other prizes on the table for such positions include a luggage set, a sewing machine, jewelry from various businesses in Gallup along with gift certificates.