

Keeping Tradition Alive: Gourd Dance & Contest Pow Wow

Written by By Dee Velasco Sun Correspondent
Friday, 31 July 2015 05:14



The 94th Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial is sure to please everyone this year, with events such as the: Queen Luncheon, Amphitheater Performances, INFR Tour Rodeo Performances, Parades, Native Film Series, and the Gourd Dance & Contest Pow Wow.

Kicking off Aug. 5, the Ceremonial draws people from all over the world and this year is no exception. A big highlight of the Ceremonial is the Gourd Dance & Contest Pow Wow. This year's pow wow is set for August 7 - 8, in the Red Rock West Arena, at Red Rock state park.

Mike Salabiye, coordinator, for this year's event, says, "We hope to beat last year's attendance of 300 dancers to over 400 dancers."

Salabiye, who is no stranger to pow wows, has helped coordinate various pow wows, such as the Navajo Nation Fair and other organizations. He says this year's event will be fun and different.

"This year we will be featuring Honored Elders. This is to honor those elders who have participated and have been in the pow wow circuit, and who have helped and been a blessing to the circle."

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The circle is where the dancers dance and is a traditional, symbolic area.

“We will have young people as well as grandparents honoring these elders by songs, speaking of them, and giving them gifts,” Salabiye says. “This year we will be honoring Norman Largo (Dineh) from Brimhall, NM, and Marjorie Boyd (Dineh) Asdzani from Church Rock. Both are great people who have attended numerous pow wow’s and are local residents.”

Different dance categories will also be added, Salabiye said.

“We will feature Tiny Tots Combined, which is open to newborns up to 6 years old, and boys and girls, who will compete in all dance styles.

Prizes will be given to all participants and this is sponsored by Emerson and Caris John. This should be an event you do not want to miss because these are little ones who will be entering the circle and learning about tradition.

Some of the categories will feature both northern and southern traditional styles, and others will be split.

The pow wow will feature traditional standard dances, for all age categories too. Dancers could win up to \$400 or more depending on the entry of participants. This changes of course due to the influx of entries. So, the more participants ... the more money is payed out and this becomes very competitive as well as exciting.

Host Drums and Head Dancers will be selected per session, and even the drum groups will have their own criteria of performance. They are judge by how lively they perform, the reaction of the crowd, the synchrony of the drummers and behavior.” Salabiye said.

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August 7 will start off with a Gourd Dance at 3 pm and a Grand Entry at 7 pm.

This year's Master of Ceremonies will be Erny Zah (Dineh/Choctaw/Jicarilla Apache) from Dulce, NM.

"Erny is a former dancer and very popular in the pow wow circuit, he was chosen because he knows the dances, songs, the people, and is extremely funny, he said. "He not only keeps the audience excited, he's very articulate and educates the audience as well."

This year's Arena Director will be, Faron Owl (Quechan/Paiute) from Winterhaven, Calif.

"We were really please to have Faron be our arena director," Salabiye said. "He puts on quite a show; he is an teacher/educator and runs events smooth."

This year's scoring and tabulation will be done by BTN Book Keeping, Salabiye said.

"This is done so that the judging will be fair and most of all the scoring fair as well," he explained. "The Head Drum Judge has to be well respected, honest, and well know in the pow wow circuit. We like to show and follow our code of ethics and pass it on to the younger generation, so this is why we want everything to be fair and judged accordingly. That way there is room for general complaints and favoritism like you find in some contest pow wows, and that is pretty sad."

Dance specials will include a special initiation into the pow wow circuit for Jr. Boys Fancy Feather-Zundell Joe of Kirtland, NM, and Teen Girls Versus Women's Fancy Shawl.

"These that are going to initiated into the circle are given words of wisdom from their elders about, respect, honesty, and, tradition, so this is indeed quite a honor to see," he said.

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This year's gourd dance groups are from Kiowa organizations, Salabiye says.

"We will have, Rick Yazzie (Dineh) from, Flagstaff, AZ, who will emcee and interpret to those who speak Navajo as spoken from the Kiowa dance groups."

Day & Night, local singers, will also be on hand to entertain the crowd during the pow wow.

This year's Gourd Dance & Contest Pow Wow will be exciting and a must see to those who have never attended one.

"We invite everyone to come out and enjoy this year's event and be a part of the circle. We hope to draw in a huge crowd. We like to thank our sponsors and everyone for all their help, so we hope you come out and enjoy the festivities of this year's Gourd Dance & Contest Pow Wow."

For more information email mrsalabiye@yahoo.com or by calling 505-863-3896 (Ceremonial Office).