

GilpinCountyNews

COLORADO: BLACK HAWK • CENTRAL CITY • ROLLINSVILLE • NEDERLAND • THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2009 • 75 CENTS

Fire protection districts merger is still on. **COMMUNITY p2**

Gilpin Wildfire Protection Plan comments deadline extended. **COUNTY p3**

Gilpin ambulance team sets response time record. **HEALTH p6**

Saving your marriage and family. **SOCIAL p9**



DAVE GIBSON

Native Americans gathered to honor their heritage at the 35th Annual Pow-Wow in Denver last weekend. From thirty eight states and three provinces, Native American peoples meet for a powwow each spring at the Denver Collesium. A social gathering with dancing and story telling, over 1,600 dancers from 80 different tribes attended this year's event. **p10-11**

35th Annual Denver Pow-Wow

Native Americans gather to honor their heritage

by Dave Gibson

From thirty eight states and three provinces Native American peoples meet for a powwow each spring at the Denver Collesium. A social gathering honoring their heritage, 1,600 dancers from 80 different tribes attended this year's event last weekend. Storytelling, singing, and especially dancing were involved with 30 different drum teams providing background music. Dance categories are bro-

ken-down according to age, sex, style, and Northern and Southern Nations. Some of the categories were: Traditional, Chicken, Cloth, Jingle Dress, Grass, Fancy, Buckskin and Straight. The youngest participants were the Junior Girl's Jingle Dress dancers starting at seven years old, with the oldest being the Men's Traditional dancers at age 60 and over. With festivities about to commence, mothers were helping their children with last minute hair and costume adjustments.

Every powwow session began with the Grand Entry starting with the Heartbeat Drum Group entering the arena singing the pow-

wow's theme song "A Living Hoop." Followed by the Color Guard, Royalty, and the dancers, they kept circling the stadium in a clockwise direction. Drums and chanting built until all of the 1,600 dancers filled the room. With everyone dancing, you could feel the drums become your heartbeat. A sea of infectious kinetic energy, songs, chants, and jingles crowded the air. Colors exploded from fastidiously fashioned apparel of every design. Fancy Dancers with their elaborate headdresses or "roaches" hopped and twirled about in a trail of streamers. With improvisation allowed, each motion told a story of a past hunt



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or battle. Dips, spins, and shoulder rolls made the costumes come alive in a vibrant blur. Bells rattled on angora-wrapped ankles of the arm-banded warriors. I saw a woman whose buckskin dress was

covered by elk teeth. Porcupine or deer hair topped with eagle feathers made up some of the bonnets. After several songs, the Intertribal Dancing wound down portending the judged dancing events.

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The Jingle Dress Dance was one of the most mesmerizing contests of the evening. Originally attributed to the Ojibwa tribe of Northern Minnesota, it was shared with the Lakota people in the late 1920's hence spreading westward. Legend has it that a medicine man was visited by a spirit in a jingle dress and was told to make one for his sick daughter. Wearing the dress that he had made her at a dance, she was carried around the circle on the first pass. The second time around she made it with considerable assistance. The third time she walked, and on the fourth she danced. For that reason the Jingle Dress Dance is known as a healing dance that brings good spirits. Its zigzag path represents one's journey through life. The ornate dresses worn are works of art with the top halves decorated with intricate beadwork representing the colors and history of their tribes. Attached to the bottom part of the dresses are horizontal layers of

metal cones or bells. Quite often manufactured from the lids of snuff cans, a single dress might hold 700 of them. Styles of the dance vary, but usually include parallel foot movements which are timed to produce the "jingle." Both moccasins must be firmly planted on the ground for the final drum-beat.

The Denver March Powwow provides unity and preserves culture for Native People. I was reminded of the profound sense of community when chairs on the main floor aligned in neat rows, were rearranged into circles. On the final Intertribal Dance of the night, non-dancers could also participate. Most preferred to observe the procession, but a few from the crowd joined in. No one seemed to mind when an old white-guy took twenty minutes to circle the arena in the wrong direction. One by one hundreds of dancers graciously let him pass.



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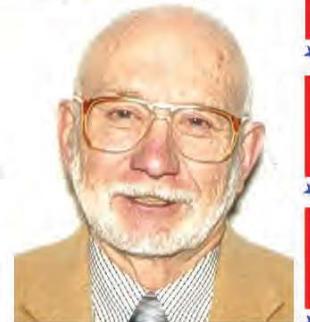


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