

Annual Pow Wow celebrates culture with dance, drums

■ The University's Native American Student Union brought generations together for festivities this weekend

By Danielle Gillespie
Oregon Daily Emerald

Dancing in styles ranging from vibrant and lively to slow and serene, men, women and children dressed in traditional Native American attire joined the Native American Student Union on Saturday and Sunday in McArthur Court to celebrate its 34th annual Pow Wow.

The weekend's events began with a welcoming speech by University President Dave Frohnmayer, followed by a grand entry. For the grand entry, all of the dancers entered Mac Court together as a parade of nations to honor Native American ancestors and the present generation, Umatilla tribe member Thomas Morning Owl said.

"This event gives us a chance to continue to share our culture with the University," NASU member Brent Spencer said. "It gives us an opportunity to sustain our culture and celebrate our heritage."

Traditionally, Native Americans held a Pow Wow before heading into war, but through the years, it evolved into a celebration dance to recognize the importance of Native American heritage, Morning Owl said.

At the Pow Wow, 13 vendors sold Native American crafts such as necklaces, spearheads, moccasins and buffalo jerky. NASU also served everyone a salmon dinner at the University Longhouse on Saturday and offered plenty of opportunities for people to compete and have fun dancing to the drum beats of the bands Eagle Thunder, Rattling Thunder and Fox Tail.

Men and women competed in two dance categories — traditional and fancy. To dance the "traditional," women wear older style dresses and men usually wear buffalo skin. On the dance floor, their movements are slow and more reserved than other Native American dances. To dance the "fancy," men and women usually wear colorful outfits and their movements are energetic and vibrant.

Women also competed in the jingle dance category. For this dance, they wear dresses with metal cones that make musical sounds as the different dance moves are performed.

Office of Multicultural Affairs Academic Advisor James Florendo said he has been dancing at NASU's Pow Wows since he was a student at the University.

"It gives me a chance to dance, and it's an opportunity to share with other people the plant and the spirit," he said. "Mostly, it just feels good."

People also participated in the grass dance, which originated in the plains as a ceremonial dance to bless the ground where people would be dancing at a festivity. For this dance, the men wear outfits with fringes that represent the grass, Morning Owl said.

In addition, people danced in the owl dance, which is one of the few dances that allows for public affection. For the owl dance, women choose partners to dance with. The rabbit dance and the push dance are the only other two dances that allow couples to dance together, Morning Owl said.

Because the event was free of charge, NASU also had a blanket dance as a way for audience members to give money as a recognition of the dancers.

"It's sort of like passing the hat around, but it's with a blanket," Morning Owl said.



Adam Amato Emerald

Participants celebrate Native American culture through dance at the 34th annual Pow Wow put on by the Native American Student Union on Saturday and Sunday in McArthur Court.

Children age 6 years and under had the chance to dance in Tiny Tots, and every child received a prize for going out onto the dance floor. In addition, children ages 7 to 12 competed for prizes in the junior dance categories, and teenagers ages 13 to 18 also competed.

"This gives us a chance to acknowledge our children's learning of tribal dance," Morning Owl said. "Unlike the European culture, we

start our children dancing before they can even walk."

Eight-year-old Cassie Szczepak-ski said she enjoyed dancing in the Intertribal, an event where everyone has a chance to dance in any style they choose.

"It's really fun to dance, and I like to do it a lot," she said.

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May 16th
University Day
Take Back the Night
6:30-9p.m.

May 14th
Anchor Splash
EMU Ballroom • 6-9p.m.

May 17th
Block Party
Featuring DJ Fenix and Paul

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Smoker
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