

## UA Pow Wow Promotes Unity

University Communications  
April 2008

Each year around August, the Wildcat Pow Wow Society begins planning for an event that works to unify not only the campus community but American Indian populations in the region.

Now in its 13th year, the "Wildcat Pow Wow" is a major undertaking, said Vetesha Smith, president of the student-run society at the UA. This year's pow wow begins Friday.

Students and alumni spend months planning for the event, which draws hundreds of attendees. Participants learn about various pow wow dances, including the "Jingle" and "Grass" dances, and their accompanying regalia.

Arts and crafts vendors sell their works, with some coming from Mexico for the event. And thereâ€™s also singing, drumming and lots of food with both traditional and contemporary indigenous dishes, such as Indian tacos, mutton stew and fry bread.

The event also will feature several information booths hosted by UA American Indian student organizations and Seafha Blount, the 2008-09 Miss Native American University of Arizona.

"Itâ€™s an event that was traditionally begun as a ceremony but now is more of a social event and a competition," said Smith, who is also a UA junior majoring in mechanical engineering.

"Itâ€™s not only for native people, but itâ€™s for everyone. Thereâ€™ll be dancing, singing and food involved â€“ so itâ€™s really a gathering of the people," she said.

The two-day event will be held at Bear Down Field, which is located north of Arizona Stadium.

During Saturdayâ€™s dinner break, the Aztec Dancers from Mexico will perform, as will the White Mountain Apache Crown Dancers, which is a "very rare special viewing," Smith said. Cameras and video recorders are banned during both performances.

Also, Karen Francis-Begay, who is special advisor to UA President Robert N. Shelton on American Indian Affairs, will be honored during the event. Francis-Begay, a member of the Navajo Nation, received the appointment last year.

Though pow wow events traditionally are held for American Indian tribal members, the UA pow wow is open to all members of the community â€“ on and off campus. Smith said the pow wow is especially important because it helps raise awareness about American Indian heritage and culture.

"Iâ€™ve met students who donâ€™t know what a pow wow is, who donâ€™t know the purpose and donâ€™t know that the UA has a pow wow of its own," Smith said.

But for her â€“ and others on campus â€“ the pow wow and the Wildcat Pow Wow Society have been an important part of her life as a UA student, Smith said.

"I feel like I've grown with the pow wow," said Smith, who has been involved with the society since her freshman year. "Every year it's a little different and it's getting bigger and bigger with more people enjoying it."

Gourd dancing will begin Friday at 5 p.m. and continue Saturday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For those who intend to compete, the grand entry will be held Friday at 7 p.m. and will continue Saturday from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. Dancers will range from small children to those 50 and older.

Admission is \$2 for those in the military with a valid identification, \$5 for adults and \$3 for ages 13 to 17. Those under the age of 12 are free. UA students and staff also get free admission with a CatCard.

For more information, call 621-3835 or send an e-mail to [wildcatpowwow@gmail.com](mailto:wildcatpowwow@gmail.com) <sup>[1]</sup>. Additional information may be found at <http://www.wildcatpowwow.bravehost.com> <sup>[2]</sup> and <http://www.myspace.com/wildcatpowwow> <sup>[3]</sup>.

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