

## Ceremonial season in Gallup

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 09 August 2019 04:08

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### **Photos by Knifewing Segura and Ryan Hudgeons/RAH Photography**

Gallup is about to be drenched in color and dance. It is almost time for the Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial.

The event, which strives to be the oldest and most culturally aware and respected event in the United States according to their website, runs from Aug. 2 - 11.

Dudley Byerley, president of the Ceremonial Board, said the event continues to grow every year, and that remains the goal as new leadership steps in.

“We try to get everything we got money for,” Byerley said in a phone call July 30. “The Ceremonial makes money, but it costs it all to grow it.”

### **WHAT’S ON THE SLATE**

This year’s Ceremonial includes a Ceremonial Arts Exhibit, a juried art show where visitors will be able to view and purchase authentic Native American art including jewelry, rugs, and paintings. This exhibit will be held at Red Rock Park in both the courtyard and exhibition hall.

“We’re expecting a lot more art entries this year,” Byerley said. “We grew a third larger last year, and we are expecting it to be bigger this year.”

The 2019 Gallup Inter-Tribal Queen Pageant is described as a lifetime memory by the Ceremonial website, where young indigenous women compete for the prestigious title every year. Participants compete in areas like public speaking, an essay competition, private interviews, traditional and contemporary talent.

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Then there is the Tiny-Tot Pageant, where indigenous youth showcase their talents and abilities. The children must have a Certificate of Indian Blood along with their application to enter.

The rodeo has been part of the Ceremonial since its inception, and showcases the horsemanship skills many tribes are known for. The Ceremonial includes eight events including Bareback, Steer Wrestling, Breakaway, Saddle Bronc, Tie Down Roping, Team Roping, Barrel Racing, and Bull Riding.

Some classic rodeo events have also been added to the roster, including the Wild Horse Race, Hide Race, Pony Express Race, Ladies Steer Riding, Wooly Riding, Frybread Pan Throwing, and Chuck Wagon Racing.

The schedule also features a gourd dance, the Ceremonial 5K Fun Run/Walk, the Song and Dance, and the Opening Night/Wine Tasting.

The parade comes at the conclusion of the festivities. The Ceremonial website calls it one of the reasons Gallup is called “The Indian Capital of the World.”

Byerley said there was some controversy over the direction the parade went in this year, with people saying a counterclockwise direction is not culturally correct.

But the current plan to go down Coal Avenue and then come back up on Aztec Avenue is a clockwise route, and thus culturally correct, Byerley added.

## **OVERCOMING CHALLENGES**

Byerley said a main hurdle the Ceremonial Board had to clear this year was the involvement of

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the New Mexico Secretary of Tourism. Byerley said they found old legislation detailing steps that the Ceremonial has not followed in 15 years, and decided they want to follow them.

“It wasn’t all bad, but it made us jump through lots of hoops,” Byerley said. “It’s really hectic.”

This sudden increase in people who have a say in the Ceremonial, along with the additional obstacles, is the reason Byerley has decided to step down as Board President after this year, he said.

“Bless the state for their help, but when you have a table that seats 15 people and you have 30 people giving you different hoops to jump through, that’s more than I want to take on,” Byerley said. The new Board will include current members who are familiar with how the Ceremonial operates, which will help with the transition, Byerley pointed out.

He added while he may be stepping down from the role of president, he will continue to volunteer with the Ceremonial and help with the push for what he said will be a gigantic event for the Ceremonial’s 100th anniversary.

“The Ceremonial has been really good for our town,” Byerley said. “I can’t say enough about local sponsors and businesses.”

Byerley said it is the efforts of Gallup, McKinley County, and local businesses that make the Ceremonial happen every year.

“It’s going to be good, and we want to keep going,” he said. “We want to keep growing.”

***For more information on the Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial, including a full schedule of events, visit <https://gallupceremonial.com/home> or call (505) 863-3896.***

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