





Ashley Reine Claw hails from Chinle

American flags flapped in a corner of Red Rock State Park Aug. 10 as people awaited the coronation of the 2018-19 Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial Queen.

Contestants, singers, dancers and media milled around the bucking chutes on the east end of the arena before the start of the grand entry.

Dark clouds threatening precipitation did not deter the large number of people on hand for the Friday night performance of Indian dancers and singers from across the country.

The Ceremonial Queen pageantry kicked off the night performance and a familiar Gallup voice guided the evening festivities.

Emcee Sammy Chioda of Millennium Media said 1922 was the year the Ceremonial was born and that “many years have gone by and many drums have spoken.”

“We will begin our program by having our Ceremonial Queen contest. I would like to thank all of the folks involved with this committee,” he said.

The three contestants vying for the crown were all age 20 and members of the Navajo Nation. Kiana Boyd, Ashley Reine Claw and Sierra Vail competed for Ceremonial Queen.

Zunneh-Bah Martin, 2017-2018 Ceremonial Queen, led the contestants into the main arena. She drew a large cheer from the audience when her name was announced.

Throughout the week, contestants competed in traditional and contemporary events downtown.

Dudley Byerley, Ceremonial Director, said, “There are several events we want the Ceremonial Queen to be at to represent the Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial, such as the state legislature and other events to promote our town and the Ceremonial.”

Byerley said he enjoyed all of the Ceremonial festivities because it continues to bring people

together as it has for generations.

“Anytime you see that many people come together and have a good time at any of the venues, it chokes me up,” he said.

Before the new queen was revealed, Chioda shared the winners of the competitions throughout the week.

Miss Photogenic went to Vail and Miss Congeniality was awarded to Claw. Chioda named Boyd first runner up and said the designation was important.

“If our Miss Ceremonial cannot fulfill her duties, Kiana Boyd will move from first runner up to finish up the year as Miss Ceremonial. Congratulations,” he said.

“And now our 2018-2019 Miss Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial Ashley Rain Claw,” he said to a loud cheering audience that applauded the new queen.

Amid cheers and drumbeats, Claw was bestowed with a blanket and the crown as Miss Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial Queen 2018-2019, continuing a legacy that began during the Great Depression.