

A Native Pow Wow

Written by

Friday, 09 December 2005 16:00



This morning after I delivered the weekly activity schedule (our service contribution to the park), I headed to Coachella with Jennifer to attend a native Pow Wow. I have been enthralled by native culture, particularly Pow Wows since I became friends with Dolores Todd, 25 years ago. Then after becoming friends with Rosanne, my interest in everything native increased even more. This Pow Wow is the 9th annual Winter Gathering hosted by the Chemehuevi Indian Band and I wanted to see how it might differ from the Pow Wows I had attended in Rama, Ontario.

As soon as we arrived, I could hear the native drumming and chanting which immediately brought tears to my eyes and shivers up my spine. I find it to be a very emotional experience and I seldom attend a native event without experiencing those feelings. The dancers in their beautiful regalia were so colourful and there were dozens of them dancing to the music coming from the circle of drummers surrounding the outdoor arena. We saw entire families, from grandparents all the way down to babes in arms, dressed in traditional native attire and they were all taking part in the dances.

There was a concession area set up where about thirty vendors were selling a variety of native crafts or jewellery. Any Pow Wow would be remiss to not include food vendors and there were a few selling fried bread and "Traditional Indian Tacos", something I had not seen in the Ontario event. Over all, we spent almost four hours there and I could have easily stayed much longer were it not for the fact that it was hot standing in the sun. My previous Pow Wow experience has always been at the Rama Thanksgiving one, so this was quite different for me to be outside and hot as well!

At one point, as I was standing back enjoying the activities, two young teenaged native boys approached me with CD's in hand. They were drummers from one of the tribes performing here and when they had a break they would peddle their groups CD's. Well, I bought one and wouldn't you know it, I had to come to California to buy a native drumming CD from a tribe in Alberta, Canada!