



CULTURE NEWS

Powwow event brings Indigenous dance, food, and celebration to Southern and Dobson campus

Diego Esquivel 03/02/2024

Mesa Community College's American Indian Institute and the Inter-Tribal Student Organization will host the MCC Thunderbird Powwow on March 9 to bring together Native American tribes for a cultural celebration.

Native American Powwows are a tradition that brings together many tribes and includes cultural celebrations such as dancing, art, crafts, singing, and food.

Last year saw the return of the MCC powwow after the event was put on hold due to the COVID -19. The Saturday event marks the second straight year the powwow has returned since the pandemic at the Southern and Dobson campus.

“We have over a thousand native students here at MCC, but a lot of them don't really know that we put on these things. I think getting the word out to them and letting them know that,

you know, we're here, we're here to support them. So that's just another goal that we have here with the powwow," said Shineka Clay, member of The American Indian Institute.

Clay emphasized the importance of Native American representation on campus and how this can be a great educational opportunity for students and members of the community attending the event.

Gourd dances have become a popular tradition at modern powwows. Dancers will be moving to a performance by host drum groups Wild Krew and Southern Slam. These dances look to honor others and are seen as respecting returning veterans and tribal leaders. The Gourd dance will begin at 11 a.m. and last until 5 p.m.

This free event will also feature vendors that will be selling indigenous jewelry, apparel, and artwork. Guests can also expect food, arts, and crafts upon arrival.

"There are what we call special contests for certain categories, because due to our funding and the way that that MCC operates, we are not able to have a (dance) competition powwow, but one of the goals is to have someday a competition powwow where we are able to provide funds to the dancers that contest and all the different dance categories. I think that's one of the goals, but also getting more of the community and the students out there," said Clay.

Despite no dance competition, a drumming contest will take place, judged by Nathan Littlechild Sr., with prizes awarded to the winners. First place winner will take home \$1000, second place will receive \$500, and third place will get \$300.

The powwow has become a tradition at MCC to show representation to its students of indigenous heritage. For more information, students can contact the [American Indian Institute](#) at the Southern and Dobson campus, located in the Kirk Student Center, building 36N.

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