



12-15-1986

Red Moon Pow Wow

Tena Bailey Garrison

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview>

Recommended Citation

Garrison, Tena Bailey (1986) "Red Moon Pow Wow," *Westview*: Vol. 6 : Iss. 2 , Article 17.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol6/iss2/17>

This Nonfiction is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at SWOSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Westview by an authorized administrator of SWOSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu.



a mingling of energies

Red Moon PowWow

By Tena Bailey Garrison

Throughout the nights war drums roll, and Indian chants echo down the dusty Washita River Valley in Western Oklahoma. Hundreds of Indians, from all over America, journey back to their native homeland to make camp and to celebrate a Cheyenne tradition.

Red Moon PowWow, celebrated on Memorial weekend of each year, became an annual event in 1976. Hosted



Cubby Bear Sweetwater, participant in the Traditional Slow Dance, The Gourd Dance, and the War Dance.



Buffalo and Jonita Sweetwater of Colorado Springs at the Red Moon PowWow, 1985.

by the Southern Cheyenne, who are joined by the Northern Cheyenne in PowWow, Indians arrive constantly during the weekend to participate in traditional dances and contests. They set up tents, tepees, and brush arbors two miles east and one north of the small community of Hammon.

"This is a memorial of our ancestors, who have gone beyond," Henry Mann, an elderly Cheyenne said in an interview. "Especially, we remember the ones who gave their lives while serving our country."

Expressing tribal customs and honoring their people, the modern Indians commemorate a life style that has almost been obliterated in America.

A circle of drummers beat ancient rituals, chanting and singing in their native tongue. "Dancers stomp around the drummers, weaving a pattern of organized gracefulness and tranquility while exhibiting bright, ornamental costumes.

Each costume is different, a Cheyenne Original, probably sewn by hand. Brilliant topaz, buckskin white, turquoise, crimson, and blue is displayed, adorned by feathers, beaded designs, and bells.

The gourds of war dancers hiss and whisper, and bells

chime to the beat of ceremonial drums. Sounds of soprano singers trill above the traditional chants, identical to those expressed generations ago when a warrior failed to return to battle.

"The singers must know each song by heart because the Cheyenne language has never been written," Henry Mann said. "We do not have an alphabet."

A county fair atmosphere greets visitors, who are fed at concession stands serving Indian fry bread or sandwiches, cold drinks, and coffee. Cheyenne arts and crafts are displayed for sale.

During the commemoration many gifts are given by Cheyenne families, honoring the memory of their loved



Rev. Lawrence Hart, member of the Cheyenne Council of Forty-four Chiefs.

ones. Similar to the white man's celebration of Christmas, the presentations continue throughout the weekend.

Flags are flown in memory of deceased Cheyennes who have served their country. Each day a different soldier, either male or female, is honored, and a ceremony is held when the American flag is lowered and presented to the honoree's family.

Vietnam veterans are presented in dignified rituals, along with their "War Mothers." The Cheyenne does not forget to show reverence and respect to those who have served their country.

The Hart family, who boast of both chiefs and princesses, attends Red Moon PowWow. Lawrence Hart, a Mennonite minister from Clinton, is part of the Cheyenne Council of Forty-four Chiefs. Hart, who has two college degrees, insists that he is a modern Indian, wearing only modern attire. Yet, he participates in the traditional dances, and his family gives many gifts.

White neighbors are among the welcome visitors who gather under brush arbors to watch the presentation of buckskins, fancy shawl dance and other contests. Each parade is led by a tribal princess, who is selected by the elders of her people.

"A princess must have high moral standards, and she must be from a good family," Lenora Hart said. "It is hard to qualify as a princess."

Ms. Hart explained that the Northern Cheyenne and Southern Cheyenne were originally the same people. When the tribe was moved to Oklahoma, in the nineteenth century, some hid out in Montana and did not go. They were given a reservation at Lone Deer, Montana, where they were joined by other Cheyennes who escaped from No Man's Land. These groups re-unite and mingle their energies in the Red Moon PowWow. ❧



**Supporting Western
Oklahoma**

Member F.D.I.C.

Elk City, Oklahoma

Phone (405) 225-3434