

World Cultures Samples

Heartbeat of Mother Earth

By CR Willing McManis
Art by Wayne Alfano
Photos by Indian Country Today



When I was growing up on the Grand Ronde Indian Reservation in Oregon in the 1960s, there were no pow wows—only a potluck at the tribal community center. Old men, dressed in black pants and white long-sleeved shirts, sat around the cafeteria tables. Their large hands pounded the tabletops in unison as their voices sang in Chinook. A few elderly women rose from their folding chairs. They danced, holding their lacy sweaters like shawls. Their feet stepped to each beat of the makeshift drum. My cousins and I hopped excitedly, as if the floor was on fire. And the grandparents all smiled.

Today, pow wows are more than social gatherings.

"Pow wows are a public celebration of native song, dance, and crafts," says my friend Chris

Charlebois, an Abenaki from New Hampshire.

However, pow wows didn't start out that way:

Pow wows are a public celebration of native song, dance, and crafts.



The word pow wow originated from the Northeast Indian language—Algonquin. *Pow wows* described the medicine men who danced at the sacred ceremonies. English settlers watching thought *pow wows* meant the ceremony, not the medicine men. Soon the word *pow wows* changed to *pow wow*. Its name has come to mean the event ever since.

Every pow wow is different. Some pow wows, like the "Crow Fair" in Montana, have as many as 50,000 visitors. Smaller pow wows, such as the Native American Pow Wow in Swanton, Vermont, are like family reunions. No matter the size, all pow wows include drumming, dancing, crafts, and food.

Listening to the Beat

The Native American drum is considered the heartbeat of Mother Earth, a gift given by the Creator. As many as twelve men sit around one drum, about the

size of a school-bus tire. The drum is usually covered with animal hide over a wooden base. Symbols may be painted on the hide, or animals may be carved on the wood.

The drumkeeper is responsible for calling out the songs and leading the rhythm. Drumsticks are raised and lowered together. Voices sing at full volume, and everyone moves to the beat.

"When we sing, we're asking the Creator to hear our prayers," says Greywolf, drumkeeper of the Megasuwin ("reflections of the sun") drum in Vermont.

Stepping Out Native Style

Dancing goes with drumming. Most pow wows have intertribal dancing. That means everyone, including non-Indians, can enter the dance circle.

Indians wear jeans and T-shirts or fancy Native American clothing called "regalia" when they enter the circle. Beads decorate the dresses, and ribbons adorn the shirts. One particular dress worn at pow wows is called a jingle dress. It is covered with hundreds



Regalia

Indians call their clothing regalia, not costumes. Costumes mean pretending. Indians are not pretending to be Indians. They are wearing their "best" clothes, which is what the word *regalia* means.



The author has attended many pow wows as a spectator, pow wow chairperson, or dancer in Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Florida, and Washington, D.C.

of cones rolled from lids of small tin containers. The dancer must move so that all the jingles sound at the same time.

Selling on the Pow Wow Trail

Before a pow wow opens, Indians set up outdoor tents for selling their goods. This activity comes from the days when Indians would meet each other and trade. Some lay down blankets or unfold tables to display or sell turquoise jewelry, clay pottery, and dreamcatchers.

Buffalo Burgers, Anyone?

Certain foods are often found at pow wows. Fry bread, a dough flattened and cooked in a deep fryer, for one. Children like it with maple syrup or powdered sugar. My husband prefers fry bread topped with

ground meat, lettuce, grated cheese, and chopped tomatoes—called an "Indian taco." Other foods served at pow wows might be buffalo burgers, succotash, acorn soup, or alligator bites.

Over 900 pow wows happen each year in the United States and Canada. Vermont, where I live now, has six pow wows during the summer months.

Pow wows have also come to Grand Ronde. Their first one began in the late 1970s, after my family moved away. It grew from a small gathering and now has more than 15,000 people. Some day I plan to go. I doubt I'll see men pounding tables or women using sweaters as shawls. But I bet I'll see children hopping to the drums—and grandparents smiling. 🐭



Listen to some Native American drumming! Visit HighlightsKids.com.

It's early morning. Work crews hang Norwegian flags from lampposts along the main street in Decorah, Iowa. As the sun rises, the breeze freshens and the flags start to ripple. Courthouse Square begins to fill with kids let out of school.

It's May 17, and the kids have something special to do!

Red, blue, and white Norwegian flags are handed out. Some of the kids practice dance steps from the Trip to Helsinki or the Mountain March. All the kids shuffle into position. First, the Nordic Dancers. Next, the fourth- and fifth-graders of St. Benedict's, then West Side Elementary. A long banner is unfurled at the front. Two students raise flags: one American, one Norwegian.

Everything's in place. A signal is given and the kids roar: "Hooray! Hooray! Hooray!" The Children's Parade is on its way.

The tradition of Norway's Children's Parade began in 1814, when Norway was governed by Sweden. Norwegians wanted to rule themselves like the people in the United States. So on May 17, 1814, Norway followed the United States' example and wrote its own constitution.

At that time, though, Sweden wasn't ready to let Norway go. Norwegians continued to hope for the day that they would govern themselves. To remind Sweden—peacefully—that they wanted independence, every May 17, Norwegians marched in parades led

Parades led by kids helped Norway win independence.

Make Way! It's the Children's Parade!

By Dan Risch



The Junior Nordic Dancers of Decorah, Iowa (inset). Traditional parade through downtown Decorah (above).



Iowa Sitting in the U.S. Midwest, Iowa has long been known for corn farming. Now it's also known for wind farming. Rows of giant windmills make electricity from winds crossing the Great Plains.

by children. The Children's Parade of Syttende Mai (Norwegian for May 17) was born.

Finally, in 1905, Norway got its wish and became independent.

Today, wherever people of Norwegian heritage live, spring blossoms with celebrations on May 17. In fact, the path of Norwegian immigrants settling across America in the

1800s can be traced by where Syttende Mai celebrations take place. Parades are held in New York, where the first Norwegian immigrants gathered, and in Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Seattle, Washington.

In Norway, the morning of May 17 starts much as it does in Decorah and other Norwegian American communities. "Kids gather at the school, and we march to the church," says Ivar Lundby, a student in Oestfold

County, Norway. "We all carry flags, and the school band plays."

Anna Sofie, another Oestfold County student, explains why children lead the parades.

"Children and families are most important. And we march as representatives of our country." She adds, "Kids . . . have fun, too. I like waving the flag behind our marching band. And the best thing is wearing my special busad [Norway's national costume]."

Fun is also on the march in Decorah. "I like marching because it's fun to walk with your friends on a special day," says fourth-grader Laura Munkle.

Classmate Rita Marie Guzman adds, "It's great when the kids



Norway Norway lies northeast of Great Britain. Half of the country is within the frigid Arctic Circle. Can you guess one of Norway's favorite sports? Skiing!

On May 17, wherever people of Norwegian heritage live, kids lead the way to remember how Norway won its freedom.



The children's parade in Oslo, Norway.

can shout without teachers telling them not to." And like Ivar and Anna in Norway, Jacob Stock enjoys waving at people watching the parade. But he also points out that "the parade's important because it's [a reminder of how] Norway won its freedom from Sweden."

Annalise Johnson sums up what she appreciates most about Syttende Mai. "The marching! All the noise and people. And the colors! Red, white, and blue. We were like a giant flag rolling down downtown Decorah."

So make way! Here come the kids marching to remember Norway's peaceful separation from Sweden—and to have fun!

Story and Photos by
David Edwards

Making the

Learning to make saguaro syrup sounded like an adventure my family would love.

It's six in the morning and already hot. In just a few hours, the thermometer will register over a hundred degrees. My family has come to Southern Arizona's Colossal Cave Mountain Park to participate in something few tourists experience—the annual saguaro-cactus harvest. For a single day each year, Colossal Cave Mountain Park hosts a Tohono O'odham saguaro harvest. Any other time of year, it's illegal to harvest saguaro fruit here.

Mature saguaros stand fifteen feet and higher, and the fruit we'll be gathering grows on top of their spine-covered arms

and trunks. The obvious question: How will we reach them?

Here to answer this question—and more—are Regina (Gina) Siquieros; her sister, Angie Sarafacio; and Regina's 16-year-old grandson, Gustavo Verdugo. They are Tohono O'odham. The Tohono O'odham (Desert People) were once called Papago Indians by non-natives. They make up the second largest Native American nation in the United States.

Gina begins by showing us how to make our *hakuipad*—harvesting sticks—from saguaro ribs. The wooden ribs are straight, unlike most plants growing in the Sonoran Desert, and light, but none of them is long enough to reach the fruit. We bind the ribs together using pliers and baling wire, positioning the thickest, heaviest rib on the bottom. We attach a small creosote branch crosswise near the top of our



Saguaro fruit tastes like watermelon mixed with pear.



A potful of saguaro fruit before the first boil.

Deirdre pulls down saguaro fruit with her harvesting stick.

World's Rarest Syrup

harvesting sticks. Creosote is very strong and won't easily break when pulled or pushed, which is how we will bring down the fruit.

Saguaro fruit is about the size and shape of a large egg and covered with a reddish-green peel. Beneath the peel, the fruit is bright red and freckled with as many as two thousand tiny black seeds. The fruit feels like a fresh fig in your mouth, but tastes more like watermelon mixed with pear.

Gina explains that the first fruit we gather is very special. We must take a small piece of it and place it over our hearts. Then we are to ask for blessings, such as good health and kindness. Gina jokes that those who arrived late might ask to become early risers! We all ask for patience, because it will take a lot of patience to make syrup from the fruit we'll gather.

As we nudge the saguaro fruit loose, I stop and listen. The falling fruit sounds almost like rain—a



Gustavo, Angie, and Gina sing a traditional Tohono O'odham song.

soft thump when the fruit lands in the dirt or a sharp patter when it's caught in the buckets.

When the first fruit is taken from each saguaro, we leave the peel red-side up at the base of the saguaro, open like a flower. Gina says this will help summon the summer rains.



Gina stirs the saguaro fruit during its first boil.



Seeds and pulp must be strained from the syrup.



Gina pours saguaro syrup into jars.

Do you like syrup?
Make a waffle sundae!
Find out how on
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