

## POW WOW



### IT'S BACK! **FRIENDS POW WOW 2013**

The Clophill Centre, Shefford Road, Clophill, MK45 4BT



**SINGING · DANCING · STALLS · WORKSHOPS**

Featuring **WILD BAND OF INDIANS from the USA**

ALL DRUMS WELCOME

**FRIDAY 13<sup>th</sup> (eve) TO SUNDAY 15<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2013**

CAMPING £9.00 PER NIGHT PER UNIT UP TO 4 PEOPLE. ADDITIONAL PEOPLE £2.50 PER NIGHT. PITCHES AVAIL. FRI, SAT & SUN NIGHT. LIMITED SO BOOK EARLY.

ENTRANCE PER DAY £6 ADULT / £4.50 CHILDREN UNDER 16

WEEKEND PASS (FRIDAY EVE, SAT & SUN ENTRANCE) : £11.00 ADULT, £8.00 CHILDREN

DOORS OPEN 5PM FRIDAY, 10AM SAT AND SUNDAY.

TRADERS CONTACT: Julie McRoberts 07841 592389

ADVANCE BOOKINGS CONTACT: JOHN 01334 658737 or Email: john@fourwindsleisure.com  
www.friendsofthewind.com



As some of you know, Ian and I met due to a mutual interest in Native American culture. We met at a pow wow being held at Bison Farm in Wiltshire.

A powwow is a social gathering held by many Native American and First Nations communities. Pow wows today allow indigenous people to socialise, dance, sing and honour their cultures and predecessors. The dancing events can also be competitive with monetary prizes.

Pow Wows normally takes place over a weekend with people camping out, many in teepees. Even in the uk people camp in teepees. Ian and I camped tents, although now we have progressed to a modern comfortable caravan. Although pow wow is a fun and social event, there are many rules which need to be observed, and a strict watch is kept on proceedings.

As an example, unlike many other festivals of the world, modest dress is required at all times in the dance arena. If you are not dressed in regalia, you must wear long trousers or skirts and long sleeved shirts. You should not have bare feet, no shorts or bare shoulders. Hats and t shirts are also a no no. You must dress respectfully at all times.

You can take photographs, but **ONLY** when the master of ceremonies announces that it is acceptable, and **ONLY** if the person you want a photograph

of gives permission The master of ceremonies will explain protocols at various stages of the proceedings to help visitors understand what is going on so that they can relax and enjoy themselves.

One very strict rule at pow wow is that alcohol and illegal drugs are strictly forbidden.

The largest powwow in the world is held each year in Albuquerque. This Gathering of Nations brings in over 100,000 people to the city and over 3,000 dancers to the arena. There are trader markets – beads, feathers, clothing jewellery, art etc, and of course food; a particular favourite being fry bread with mince, similar to a soft taco.

The powwow grounds are considered sacred. A blessing is performed ahead of time and sets the tone for the event and sanctifies the area. Once the ground has been blessed and prayers have been offered up, the grand entry can safely begin.

The Grand Entry is the moment when the appointed Master of Ceremonies (MC) calls the host tribe and the assembled Native American Nations together to parade in the arena. The first action is to ensure that the flag bearers, representatives of the host tribe and veterans are at the head of the procession, followed by an order of Nations all dressed in their finery known as regalia (not costumes!).

There will be a parade of grass dancers, jingle dancers, hoop dancers, traditional dancers.....and more. you should never touch a dancer's regalia. Many of the ornaments have religious meaning and are cherished family heirlooms.

In the same way that in Western Culture we dress to go out to parties or events, so the same is for Native Americans – “dress to impress” is the rule of the day.

The start time for the Grand Entry could be specific when discussed at the beginning of the day or weeks before Pow Wow; however, it should be noted that whilst Western cultures tend to stick to time, the Grand Entry invariably would start anytime after the initially intended start time and this is respectfully known as “Indian Time”.

The Grand Entry song is played on the host drum and sung by the drum's singers. The drum team normally consists of at least five men, who sit around a

large drum which they beat in unison as they sing. There are often several drum teams at an event, who take it in turns to entertain.

The Grand Entry song is usually sacred to that drum nation and signifies a welcome to all. Wherever possible you should stand respectfully and remove any hats.

The next stage are the prayers, whereby either the MC or a chosen representative of the Pow Wow comes forward to bless all those assembled and thanks are expressed to spirit, sometimes referred to as "Grandfather".

Following the prayers comes the Flag Song and the placing of the Nation flags in the centre of the arena.

The MC then thanks all those who are present and invites the first song and dance which is called the Sneak-Up. The Sneak-up allows a demonstration of how Indian hunters and gatherers would go about on the plains and in the woods in gathering up food and supplies – often this would also demonstrate key tactical maneuvers used during battle.

The Grand Entry protocol for all Pow Wows has remained relatively unchanged for centuries.

There are several more traditions, some of which are unspoken but definitely adhered to, such as women not dancing if they are menstruating due to her spiritual energy. Not picking up feathers which have been dropped or have fallen from regalia. Should you see a feather fall you must alert a staff member immediately. If it is an eagle feather a special ceremony will need to be performed as it represents a fallen soldier. You can stand next to the feather and guard it while waiting for the mc.

Do not point with your fingers, it is considered rude, if you must point, you can use your head to nod in the direction that you wish to indicate.

You should never describe a native woman as a squaw. This is considered a racial slur as it is a slang word used to describe loose women or women's private body parts.

If you are invited to join the dancing, you must only dance around the arena in the direction of everyone else.

After Ian and I met, we became more involved in the uk powwow scene, and even organised two successful pow wows with other friends. The proceeds went

to a charity 'friends of the rez' provided blankets and warm clothing for people struggling on reservations.

Ian was the mc at these events, whilst I ran workshops teaching the making of dreamcatchers and other art. One poignant photograph I have is of our visiting native American dancers sitting at my table learning how to make a traditional dreamcatcher. Sadly some of their traditions are no longer taught to them at home. Two of these dancers went on to become world champion hoop dancers.

If you ever get the opportunity to visit a pow wow in America, I highly recommend it. But be warned. At the first powwow we organised, one of our visitors MOONTEE, told the story of the flute, and how it was used to court a lady.

He explained that if you sit at night and play your flute, the wind carries your notes of love to the woman in the next village. If she is interested, she will come and seek you out. Steve a friend of ours, had seen Julie at her jewellery stall, so he went over the next day and played his flute to her. We did tell him that it could have been a big mistake. The following year they were married, and this was announced at the next pow wow. So even all these years later, traditions can still be relevant. Ian didn't play a flute for me by the way, he was just funny and kind and persistent.