

## American Indian tribes gather for United San Antonio Pow Wow



For the San Antonio Express-News

Calvin Osife, wearing Navajo attire, performs in a Northern Traditional dance as American Indians in Texas hold a Pow Wow at the Alzafar Shrine Auditorium on February 1, 2014.

SAN ANTONIO — Calvin Osife has been dancing at powwows his entire life, starting when he was a child and lived on the Navajo Nation in Arizona.

Now 41 and living in San Antonio, he continues the tradition. Osife was one of dozens of dancers at the 17th annual United San Antonio Pow Wow, a two-day gathering that promotes American Indian heritage and awareness.

The free public event continues from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday at the Alzafar Shrine Auditorium. It features traditional dancing, drumming and singing, and traditional foods and crafts for sale.

At last count, 31 tribes from across the country were represented at the United San Antonio Pow Wow, said its president, Erwin J. De Luna.

The purpose is two-fold. First, for American Indian tribes to share and maintain their customs and ensure those traditions continue.

“You see a lot of young people here today,” De Luna said. These children don't attend classes to learn the traditional dances such as the women's fancy shawl dance or the men's grass dance, he said; they learn them at powwows like this, over the years.

But powwows are also opportunities to educate the public at large about American Indian heritage and history, said Ramon Vasquez, executive director of American Indians in Texas, a co-sponsor of the weekend's event.

For example, the clothes dancers wear are not costumes or outfits. They are regalia, said Lipan Apache tribe member Tony Castoreno, who lives in Indianapolis. Everything is handmade; he spent eight hours beading each one of his Apache moccasins. Often, he said, some pieces of regalia are passed down generation to generation.

Vasquez wants to make sure people are aware of San Antonio's American Indian heritage, noting the city's five Spanish colonial missions were built by American Indians.

“People really don't know that we're here,” said Vasquez, a member of the Tap Pilam Coahuiltecan Nation based in San Antonio. “That's been the most surprising thing.”

vdavila@express-news.net

Twitter: @viannadavila

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