**20th Annual Hart of the West Powwow**

*by Nadiya Littlewarrior, Board member, Friends of Hart Park & Museum*

Please join us at the 20th Annual Hart of the West Powwow on September 28th and 29th. This year’s event features Inter-tribal dancing, wild life animal presentations, American Indian art demonstrations, native food and arts & crafts vendors, and the “Children’s Crafts Area with Chumash Songs & Stories” as told by Ted and Dennis Garcia.

The Powwow opens at 10am both days and entry is free to the public. This year's Powwow presents:

Head Man Dancer: Shiigo Yellowhorse/Dine`

Head Woman Dancer: Samantha Moreno/Lakota

Headboy Dancer: Michael Jimenez/Apache/Huichol

Headgirl Dancer: Nina Moreno/Lakota/Apache

Northern Host Drum: Blue Star

Southern Host Drum: Big Medicine

As a recognized event of Los Angeles County, CA, this year the Powwow is dedicated to our Ancestors. Often referred to as The Old Ones, or the Ancient Ones, our responsibility as we carry on the Red Road, is to honor our Ancestors who went before us and our ways which they protected and passed on to us. As American Indians of “Turtle Island” – these United States – we are honored to continue to protect and practice the ways of our Ancestors for the purposes that we were taught. With humility and pride we gather to respect those who went before us, those who are with us now and those who will come after us. Our Ancestors watch over us and join us when called upon in times of need and joy. We are proud to descend from such strength and integrity, traditions and beliefs as have been hand down from each generation to another.

The participants in this Powwow have traveled great distances to share a part of their heritage and traditions with you. These are not professional entertainers. They are not paid to perform. Rather, they are private individuals who lead regular lives; except, they are blessed with rich cultural traditions that are kept alive through their willingness and opportunity to celebrate and share them. Together, these people of varied backgrounds blend and create an intricate fabric of traditional dances from around this land. We hope that you will remember and cherish this experience for many years to come. As of the 2010 Census of the United States, we know that the highest population of American Indian People live in Southern California, most of them in Los Angeles County. We are honored to welcome each and every one of them from all Nations.

There is a rich history of today’s contemporary powwows originating as “trading places” between the natives and the pioneers as they came across Turtle Island with supply needs. Both the Native and the Pioneer had something to offer each other. Eventually, as time went on and changes occurred between the two societies these gatherings became a way of honoring Mother Earth and all that comes from her. We dance in the arena circle to honor the Creator, each other, our families and all human beings. The dance arena is blessed and considered Sacred by our Spiritual Director, Ted Garcia, and the hereditary leader of the Chumash People, who originally lived on this land along with the Tatavium People. Our arena Director is Victor Chavez, Dine`, and he keeps the Circle Protocol. Our MC, Bobby Whitebird, who is Cheyenne, guides and teaches guests and calls out for the Songs and Dances which are both Sacred and Social in nature, depending on his call. Our intent is Gratitude to Creator and Blessings for our Mother, the Earth.

This year in addition to celebrating our 20th year, we will be celebrating a “Coming Out” for our local Santa Clarita resident, Sam Sierra, son of the Steve Sierra family. This is a “Special” that allows a young person to join the Circle of dancers after their family and community members have made regalia by hand and present them to the Circle in a formal way. There are many such occasions which take place at a Powwow, for example, one couple who comes every year is celebrating their Wedding Anniversary, as they were married at the Hart of the West Powwow. These “Specials” are considered an Honor to the event that the community chooses to celebrate such important experiences there.

On behalf of the Hart of the West Powwow Committee, Friends of Hart Park and the LA County Parks and Recreation Department, we look forward to seeing you there on September 28th and 29th, 2013 at ***your*** William S. Hart Park and Museum.

You’re welcome to check out our link:

http://www.friendsofhartpark.org/Event\_Pages/powwow.html

Cheers!

Nadiya Littlewarrior, Kiwenkikwe (Woman Returning Successful) of the

Potawatomi Nation of Oklahoma

*Photo courtesy Ken Lubas*