

## Native American Indian Heritage Month Powwow at the University of Maryland

Robert Selle  
December 7, 2013



*Japanese women choir sang "Hand in Hand" at the Bridge of Peace Ceremony which was part of the 9th Annual Native American Indian Heritage Month Powwow at the University of Maryland, College Park.*

As part of the 9th Annual Native American Indian Heritage Month Powwow at the University of Maryland (UMD) at College Park, a “deeply moving” ceremony, called the Bridge of Peace, brought together Native American U.S. military veterans and representatives of Japan, as well as Native Americans and Americans in friendship and forgiveness. Wounded feelings exist on all sides and the UMD rite was meant to address these and initiate a process of reconciliation.



*Paul Bulow (left), and Jay Wolf (right) walk the Bridge of Peace to reconcile Native Americans and white Americans.*

Powwows traditionally honor American veterans. Since this particular event fell on Dec. 7, remembered as Pearl Harbor Day, it was significant that the ceremony included those from both sides of the war. A nine-woman Japanese Choir, some dressed in their traditional kimonos, set the tone for the Bridge of Peace Ceremony by offering a heartfelt song, “Hand in Hand.” “The Bridge of Peace Ceremony was deeply moving,” said Dr. Christopher Lester, director of the college’s Office of Multi-ethnic Student Education (OMSE), which put on the powwow. “It deserves to cause a ripple effect for reconciliation far and wide.”



*Participants wore traditional clothing and regalia from their Native American and Japanese cultures.*

The Bridge of Peace Ceremony is the signature project of the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP), one of the powwow co-sponsors, which also included UMD's American Indian Student Union. "The Bridge of Peace represents repentance, forgiveness, healing, brother and sisterhood, and new beginnings," said WFWP President Angelika Selle. "It has been taken around the world, and over the last 20 years has brought hundreds and thousands of former enemies together here in the U.S., the Middle East, Europe, and Asia."

In the ceremony the first pair to cross was a Native American, Cherokee, military veteran and a white man whose ancestors were early settlers. The women from Japan, some of whom had grandparents who were veterans of WWII, then crossed the bridge with Native American Veterans. In addition, a young man with both Japanese and American grandparents who were veterans of the war crossed with a Native American veteran.



*Native Americans, Veterans, Japanese-heritage individuals pose for a group photo after the Bridge of Peace Ceremony.*

The Bride of Peace participants stood at opposite sides of a decorated arch representing a bridge at the front of the powwow meeting hall. They would then slowly walk toward one another with a heart of repentance and forgiveness, meet in the middle, exchange gifts, embrace, and then walk through the archway to the applause of all the onlookers.

The ceremony, Mrs. Selle said, is not meant to be just for show but signifies that each pair of participants is genuinely "willing to continue the process of getting to know each other, their hearts, and their cultures and to grow to become friends and true brothers and sisters."

The powwow began with an Intertribal Grand Entry, in which Native American Indians in their sumptuously colorful full regalia danced around the meeting hall accompanied by two circles of Native drummers, who also sang and chanted. The three chief drummers were Zotigh, from New Mexico; Southern Eagle, from North Carolina; and Medicine Horse, from Maryland.

Native American Indian powwows are social events, according to the powwow program. They are designed to be joyful and fun, with eye-popping regalia, breathtaking performances, and moving music. They provide an opportunity to reunite with old friends and meet new ones. But they are also profound

cultural events that are infused with the sacred tradition and wisdom of the ages.

After the Grand Entry, a group of prominent supporters addressed the audience, including Dottie Chicquelo, the OMSE assistant director and powwow coordinator; Dr. Lester; Andrew Fellows, mayor of College Park; Edward Chow, secretary of the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs; Dr. Kumea Shorter-Gooden, UM's chief diversity officer and associate vice president of the university's Office of Diversity and Inclusion; and Keith Colston, executive director of the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs.

Following the Bridge of Peace Ceremony, the powwow continued with the Children's Candy Dance and the Blanket Dance, and the especially beautiful flute music by Eagle Warrior. In the afternoon, there was a Military Veterans Honor Circle in recognition of Pearl Harbor Day. This was a sacred ceremony conducted by Penny Gamble-Williams, Jay Winter Nightwolf, and Dawn Wolf that involved smudging and the bestowing of medicine bundles of sage and sweet grass.