

# Passing on a tradition

## Ohlones gather at annual powwow to learn, teach

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WATSONVILLE — Dressed in traditional Ohlone feathers and with paint across his face and chest, Patrick Orozco reminisced to the time that he was asked by a kid if he was a Native American.

"He was shocked when I told him I was," Orozco said. "He thought all Indians were dead and gone."

Misconceptions like that exemplify the loss of Native American culture and tradition. Because of this, Ohlones in the area decided to start an annual powwow to bring people together. The fourth annual Pow Wow to Honor Elders started Saturday and continues today at Mount Madonna Park.

"We wanted to bring all people together to learn and teach," said Xemoc Candelaria, an Ohlone and coordinator of the event. "That of the creator, of mother earth. All that is beautiful and not manmade."

The powwows started "with just one stick and drum," Candelaria said. More than 500 people and about 20 vendors selling food, art, jewelry and other artifacts were on hand Saturday. The event was sponsored by the Tierra Espiritual de Nueva Azlan.

"It's started to grow, but we want to keep it as traditional as possible and don't want to get too commercial," Candelaria said. "No political statements. Just something for everyone to come and enjoy."

Tribes from throughout the state were represented and took part in traditional dances and music. Many dancers wore colorful handmade dress with feathered headbands.

California has the largest Native American population in the United States, but that culture is being lost by its younger generation. The popular images of the media, especially television, have become more appealing to young Native Americans than the study of their culture.

"That's why TV influences us and other things influence us," Candelaria said. "They look up to the fantasy or to drugs."

Learning about culture and teaching respect for elders is a way of insuring the future.

"Honoring the elders is a responsibility," Candelaria said. "If we don't honor our elders now, why should the younger generation honor us when we reach that point?"

With a feather headdress sprouting about four feet and wearing a black and gold Aztec gown, Yolanda Castro came to dance and show unity.

"We're a divided people. The Aztecs were conquered," the 15-year-old Morgan Hill resident said. "What we're trying to do now is bring everybody together so we can be stronger."



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Native American dancers gather before a performance at the Ohlone powwow Saturday.