

# Ring in the New Year!

by Val Niehaus

The Forest County Potawatomi (FCP) Powwow Committee along with AODA Prevention Group hosted a first annual New Year's Eve Sobriety Powwow to ring in the new year. And what a fantastic event this turned out to be for all who attended!

The night started off with a dinner prepared by committee members, which was complimented with dishes and desserts brought by some of the attendees. A prayer was said by FCP elder Louie Spaude and everyone dug in.

Grand entry started off the night of dancing. Veterans carrying in flags and staff included Jayson Jackson, Clarence Daniels, JR Holmes, Mary Weso, Louie Spaude, Ardin Mielke, Brenda Shopodock and Gilbert Hammer. Fire Nation singers were then host drum along with Crazy Boy who came in to join for the night. Both drums did an amazing job with every song they sang and many participants were up and dancing all night.

Head male and female dancers were Richard Gougé and Michelle Reed with tribal royalty representing FCP and Sokaogon Chippewa.

A big shout out goes to Jordan Keeble who was emcee for the night. He did a great job of getting everyone out to dance. He even made small gestures to each child and various adults complimenting their dancing or asking how their night was going so far. He comfortably filled small breaks in the action with introductions of those involved in coordinating this event, as well as comments about the recent recovery walk and fire and the involvement of different members in the sobriety initiative.

Keeble shared a bit of his own personal recovery story and discussed some of his future plans. Throughout the evening, he invited a number of other people to share their experiences with addiction and recovery. There were several who had over three years of recovery with one member having an even longer period of sobriety under his belt. All offered gratitude for their sober lifestyle and encouragement to others striving to get their lives back on track. There was one individual who was five months into recovery, and her strength in being able to share her successes so early in her journey said

a lot about her commitment. Sobriety is a tough road to achieve and maintain, but it is definitely easier when a person is surrounded by supportive friends and family who encourage them every step of the way. There was applause and words of encouragement and congratulations offered by those in attendance for everyone who shared their story.

Executive Council members in attendance who gave a bit of appreciation for those who put this all together and for those present were Brenda Shopodock, Nick Shepard, and Brooks Boyd. They were very pleased to see a good turnout; all said how great of a time they were having being a part of this event.

As for the powwow itself, having the two drum groups kept things moving. There were many special dances that the committee decided to do: potato dance, spot dances, round dance, two-step and even musical chairs. As midnight approached, there was a special sobriety countdown into 2019! To top off the evening, there were fireworks to ring in the New Year and, as expected, these were greatly appreciated by those who made it to midnight - especially the young people.

This event, which had been planned with relatively short notice, ended up being very successful according to many who attended. There were many individuals as well as families who enjoyed the food, the company, and the dancing. There were a number of little ones who came to dance for their very first time. It is always great to see the next generation becoming involved in a cultural event such as this. Hopefully, this will be something in which these young people stay involved. This powwow was very family-oriented and the atmosphere was one of fun and good times across the generations. It was obvious everyone was having a good time, and it proved to be an excellent way to bring in the New Year with a sober mind and heart.

Thanks are extended to all who put in the time and effort to make it happen, and here's hoping that this becomes an annual tradition because for those who attended, it truly was a perfect way to ring in the New Year!



Council members share their thoughts about the night.



Having a great time all together as you can see! submitted photo



Pictured are Arden and Travis Thelen, winners of the potato dance. They must practice at home a lot!



Jordan did a great job as emcee all night!



Jaycee Tuckwab's not too sure what to do with her winnings from the spot dance.



The last standing into the New Year! submitted photo