



post-performance some elders retreat to the cool tepees on the edge of the plain. A shy young man wearing a wolf's head atop his own credits his obviously nimble-fingered mother and sister for his handmade regalia festooned with porcupine quills and eagle feathers. The significance of the wolf theme? None, really, he just likes the look of it.

The Ladies' Shawl Dancers and Jingle Dancers, if more stately and measured than the men dancers, are no less bedazzling. The jingle dancers chime with row upon row of silvery 'jingles'. Once fashioned from snuff tin lids rolled into cones, the jingles are thought to ward off bad spirits and welcome good ones.

There's a mere smattering of curious tourists in the bleachers amid families quietly cheering on their loved ones. The few stalls dotted around outside the marquee offer an odd mix of the traditional and the new: bannock and bologna sandwiches, feathered cowboy hats, Northern Plains powwow music CDs, a few beaded necklaces and those ubiquitous South American woven blankets.

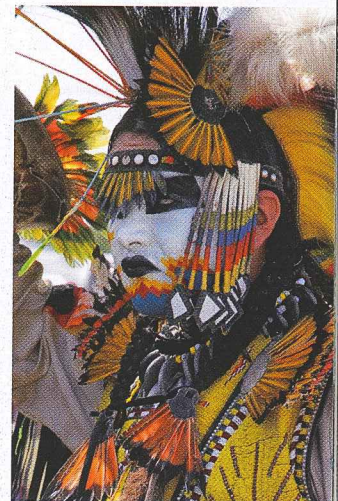


Powwow competitors wait in beaded and feathered finery for their turn to perform.

Such low-key profiteering – and a 'no alcohol' rule – adds to the feeling that the Dakota Dunes powwow is not a drummed-up tourist exercise, but a genuine cultural event it's a privilege to share. ❏

BY KAREN GOA

- »» **Entry to the Dakota Dunes powwow is free and all are welcome.**
- »» www.whitecapdakota.com
- »» www.dakotadunescasino.com



Wild Encounters

FIVE SALIVATING LIONS CIRCLE a caged truck of people, as it slowly moves into the den. An impatient lioness, with paws the size of dinner plates, springs and lands squarely on top of the cage.

Strangely, it's encounters such as being sized up as meals-on-wheels by a hungry lioness that makes Christchurch's Orana Wildlife Park a thrilling place to visit.

With over 400 animals from 70 different species, New Zealand's only open-range zoo offers the chance to hand feed a giraffe, talk to a tiger, eyeball a rhino or be driven

into a lion den.

The 80 hectare park-like grounds are a fair distance to cover on foot so, on arrival, we board the open-air Safari Shuttle. As we trundle around the park watching wild dogs prowl through sun-bleached grass and giraffes with legs astride trying to reach low branches, it seems like we're in an African savannah.

At one point we make an unscheduled stop near the cheetah enclosure. Our driver is concerned that a child's leg might be scratched on a tree, if he doesn't keep it inside the shuttle. I'm more worried about the leg being bitten off as, at first glance, we seem to be separated from the cheetah by a mere puddle of water. On further inspection I see the moat has a well disguised, sturdy electric fence.

We move on past the house of the Sumatran tiger, which gazes down haughtily from a log. A keeper instructs a group of visitors to keep behind the red line. "Don't make sudden movements," he tells them. It's a sobering reminder that for all their cute fur, these are still wild animals. ❏

BY ANGELA PEARSE

- »» www.oranawildlifepark.co.nz

PHOTOGRAPHY: ORANA WILDLIFE PARK

Cheetahs are among the 70 different species at Orana Park.