

# Brattleboro Reformer

## Rotary Film and Food Fest celebrates Native American culture

By JON POTTER / Reformer Staff  
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BRATTLEBORO -- Perspectives and flavors from Native American culture await ticketholders to the Brattleboro Rotary Club's fifth annual International Film and Food Festival this Sunday at New England Youth Theatre.

Two films -- one a documentary, one a feature -- are sandwiched around a Native American-themed dinner at the festival, which is being held to raise funds for KILI Radio, a non-profit radio station broadcasting to the Lakota people on the Pine Ridge, Cheyenne River and Rosebud Indian Reservations, part of the Great Sioux Nation in South Dakota.

The festival begins at 4 p.m. with a screening of "Urban Rez." Dinner prepared by local chefs Steven Reynolds and Tristan Toleno is from 5:15 to 6:15 p.m., followed by a showing of "Pow Wow Highway" from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

A good time for a good cause, the festival deepens Brattleboro Rotary's commitment to helping the people of Pine Ridge reservation.

"We're in it for the long haul," said Brattleboro Rotary Club Immediate Past President Martin Cohn.

After the first three food and film festivals raised money for Rotary International's Polio Plus and a project to build homes for poor families in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, the Brattleboro Rotary Club took up the cause of helping people on the Pine Ridge Reservation after members saw an investigative report on ABC's "20/20" show.

Since then, local Rotarians have sent sewing machines, money for a community calendar and other help, including laptop computers, reassembled in Burlington by Sam Jones, son of Rotary Club member Marcy Jones, who takes old donated laptops, wipes them clean of personal information, salvages the usable components and builds new laptops from the parts. To date, some 65 rebuilt laptops have gone to students at Crazy Horse High School and other people at Pine Ridge, including a young woman who wrote back and said thanks to her

laptop, she is able to go to school to fulfill her dream of becoming a nurse.

"Put a price tag on that," said Cohn.

In addition, last year's Film and Food Festival raised some \$4,500 for KILI Radio, which went toward upgrading broadcast equipment.

This year, Rotary is hoping to raise a similar amount, which will go toward a new soundboard at KILI.

For the 30,000 people who live on the three reservations, KILI serves not only as a vital source of information but also as a key force in the preservation of Native American culture, heritage and language.

The local Rotarians are also hoping to make a trip to Porcupine, S.D., to build a handicapped ramp and install solar panels at KILI.

Mostly, they're hoping to deepen the ties between Pine Ridge and Brattleboro and continue listening to the people there.

"They see that we're here to help fulfill the needs that they have, not just tell them what they need," said Cohn. "It has been just extremely rewarding to be able to do this."

Sunday's event opens at 4 p.m., with a screening of "Urban Rez," a critically acclaimed documentary which explores the controversial legacies and modern-day repercussions of the Urban Relocation Program (1952-73), the greatest voluntary upheaval of Native Americans in the 20th century. Dozens of Native Americans recount their experiences with relocation, including struggles with isolations and racism and the challenges of maintaining cultural traditions while assimilating. Actor, musician and Oglala Lakota member Moses Brings Plenty narrates.

The second film, "Pow Wow Highway," screens at 6:30 p.m. This 1989 comedy-drama-road movie stars Gary Farmer and won the Filmmakers Trophy at the Sundance Film Festival and Best Picture, Best Actor and Best Director at the Native American Film Festival.

In between films is the Native American-themed dinner, which features dishes such as New Native Fry Bread, Grandma Connie's Buffalo Feast, Three Sisters Vegetables, Buffalo Stew, Blueberry Wojapi and Sioux Indian Pudding.

Tickets to the festival are \$25 and can be purchased in advance at Vermont Artisan Designs, 106 Main St. For more information, visit [brattlebororotaryclub.org](http://brattlebororotaryclub.org).

[http://www.reformer.com/news/ci\\_25236052/rotary-film-and-food-fest-celebrates-native-american?source=nav](http://www.reformer.com/news/ci_25236052/rotary-film-and-food-fest-celebrates-native-american?source=nav)