

Cultures Merge



El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro
National Historic Trail

The Pueblo of Pojoaque
National Park Service
Bureau of Land Management

In 1540, when Francisco Vasquez de Coronado led his first expedition into pueblo country, Franciscan missionaries visited the pueblo villages to teach the Catholic faith and to convert pueblo people. Each pueblo village was given a patron saint to celebrate and honor that saint. With time the different pueblo ceremonies became linked to the feast days of their corresponding patron saint and as a result, we see pueblo celebrations like the buffalo dance.

Feast days bring tribal members together to renew their culture, language, and native religion while observing aspects of the Catholic belief that have become deeply integrated into pueblo life. The evening before feast days, the Pueblo of Pojoaque has a nighttime mass (a *vigil*) that is celebrated by carrying the pueblo's patron saint *Our Lady of Guadalupe* through the village while singing Spanish-given songs showing reverence to that saint. Following the procession, the buffalo dancers perform to honor *Our Lady of Guadalupe*.



BUFFALO DANCE

The pueblo buffalo dance celebrates everything buffalo gives. Dancers keep rhythm to songs that offer prayers for snow, good hunting, and plentiful food for the community. Buffalo provides sustenance during the cold winter months and snow offers moisture crucial

to incoming spring crops. The rich cultural heritage of the pueblo people is regularly renewed through dances, songs, and traditions that have not changed significantly from those of their ancestors. Pueblo people seek and regain life by reclaiming their cultural heritage.

The Pueblo of Pojoaque regularly holds its buffalo dance on December 12th in honor of the village's patron saint *Our Lady of Guadalupe*. Open to the public.