

Taranaki Multiethnic Extravaganza , 26<sup>th</sup> March 2011  
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Nations of the world gather in New Plymouth again on Saturday in Taranaki's annual Multiethnic Extravaganza.

The extravaganza is a colourful, musical celebration of cultures organised by the Taranaki Multiethnic Council that attracts thousands to the Yarrow Stadium venue. There they can enjoy live entertainment from dozens of cultural groups and sample the spread of food from those cultures.

This is a chance to relax into a happy melding of people and performance that's proven a huge success over the years. That mix gets a new flavour this year with the headline performers Rhythm Interactive.

Public participation is the focus for Rhythm Interactive, explains Multiethnic Extravaganza organiser Bryony Tubby. "They are bringing 500 drums here in three trucks and will do two shows at the stadium."

Rhythm Interactive was founded in 2003, and since then has become one of the most innovative and interactive entertainment shows for the conference and events market. After its first opening show in Queenstown, Auckland-based Rhythm Interactive has successfully performed more than 400 shows nationwide and connected close to 60,000 people through rhythm. It's the ultimate way to place the wow factor into events, they say.

Taranaki's Extravaganza patrons will get their first opportunity to enjoy this hands-on cultural experience, Bryony says. They will be able to join in the action and play one of the African drums in a massed performance.

It will actually start with the street parade that launches the extravaganza programme.

Floats, cultural groups and musical performers will parade down Devon St at 10.30am from the starting point at the corner of Gill and Gover streets to the clock tower corner at Robe St. "The drum trucks will be part of the parade and there will be 150 drums to play," Bryony says.

Parade organisers are inviting everyone who would like to play one of those drums to meet at the parade starting point. "They should wear a bandana to feel part of the team," she says, "and they will be given a drum and taught to play a simple rhythm."

As well as the potential to be one of the drummers, there are also flag bearer places available. "We have 77 flags and nameplates of different countries to display and we want to fly as many as we can. A lot are taken up already but others are available because the people from those countries are not in the area or can't come along on the day."

If anyone in the region is from a particular country and wants to represent their homeland, they can register with Bryony. Others are welcome to come along and help carry the flags.

“There’s a lot of noise and colour in the parade,” Bryony says. That buzz of excitement and happiness will flow up into the stadium venue.

“We are back on the number two ground where we were last year. That worked really well – everyone felt quite connected and we had good comment about the change from the main ground.”

Signage and access for disabled people has been improved this year, and all the gates will be open, she adds.

A large marquee has also been set up on the ground with plenty of chairs to allow older people who find it difficult to manage the bleachers seating. “That’s somewhere for them to go and enjoy the day.”

Entertainment during the day embraces performances from Chinese, Indian, Kiribati, Filipino, Irish, Samoan and Middle East communities in Taranaki. Food stalls will be plentiful and flavours will also reflect the groups making up the entertainment programme.

Saturday’s Extravaganza date threw up a potential clash this year with the popular annual Francis Douglas Memorial College gala day. A free shuttle bus service was the answer, Bryony says.

“We always run a free bus pickup from the clock tower, so we added an extra service out to the gala day and back.”

That’s also provided extra car parking options for people wanting to experience both the extravaganza and gala.

Westown School allows the Extravaganza patrons to use their grounds as a car park, but extra parking is welcomed, Bryony says. So people going to the FDMC gala can park there and catch a shuttle to the extravaganza and back to their cars later.

“They can do both events without the rigamarole of finding another park.

“We don’t want Francis Douglas to miss out for their major fundraiser and we need extra parking, so it’s a community service that benefits everyone.”

Plenty of people and organisations put in a huge effort to help make the Extravaganza a success each year, Bryony says. “We also have a lot of sponsors who are on board because it is a community event. It is only a gold coin donation for entry and that makes it accessible for everyone.”

A percentage of the gatetakings this year will be given to the Christchurch earthquake appeal and Red Cross donation boxes will also be at the information desks at the Extravaganza for people wanting to make their own donations.