

Province VIII Winter Talk Report

January 08 – 10, 2016

Tucson, Arizona

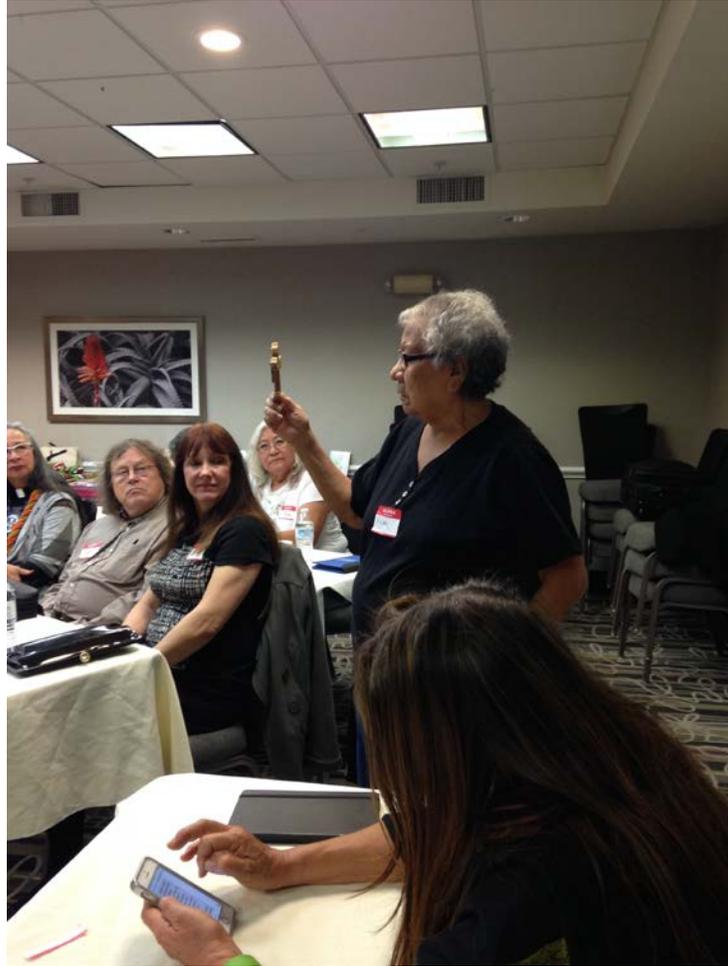
Friday, January 8th:

The theme for Winter Talk 2016 was “Caring for our Elders.” Winter Talk began on Friday, January 08th at 12:00 p.m. or high noon. The start of ceremonies at noon is culturally significant to many indigenous peoples, including native Hawaiians, for various cultural reasons. All participants gathered in the “Spirit of the Circle” where the Rev. Debbie Royals, Director of Native American Ministries in the Diocese of Arizona welcomed all of the returning participants from past Winter Talks. Tucson and its surrounding communities is the home of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe of Arizona, and Rev. Debbie is an enrolled member of the Tribe. We were also pleased to have an official welcome from the Rt. Rev. Kirk Smith, Bishop of the Diocese of Arizona. Bishop Smith warmly welcomed the participants and expressed his support and assistance for these types of gatherings that bring indigenous peoples of the Church together, given the well known fact that it is a challenge to bring indigenous communities together because they are separated by great distances and scarcity of resources.

As the altar was built, each participant came forward and placed items of spiritual significance to them, their families, and/or their communities. At the same time, each participant provided background information on themselves and the objects that they brought with them.



Rev. Anna Frank (Athabascan) poses in front of the completed Altar Winter Talk 2016



Rev. Deacon Vivian Winterchaser (Lakota), Diocese of Arizona, presents a Niobrara cross as her gift to the Altar



Rev. Deacon Leon Sampson (Navajo) presents his gift to the Altar

After the altar was completed, the group had dinner. Following dinner, the group listened to a presentation by Louise Aloy (Native Hawaiian), President of the Episcopal Church Women (ECW) for Province VIII. The presentation provided all participants with the opportunity to learn the important role of the services that ECW provides to the elderly in provincial communities, and focused on how these services can be strengthened and expanded through relationships with indigenous communities. Ms. Aloy encouraged more native women to be involved and actively participate and provided her own experiences as a native woman why she decided to participate in the ECW. After Ms. Aloy's presentation, the group concluded with an early evening prayer service.



**Louise Aloy (Native Hawaiian)
President, ECW Province VIII**

Saturday, January 9th:

The first full day of the provincial Winter Talk began, after a light continental breakfast and morning prayer service, with a panel discussion about the unique challenges that native people face in caring for their elderly. The panel consisted of: 1) Dr. Ha'aheo Guanson (Native Hawaiian), past Director and Associate Professor at the University of Hawai'i Manoa for the Spark M. Matsunaga Institute for Peace and the School of Social Work; 2) The Rev. Dr. Cecil Corbett (Nez Perce), President Emeritus of the former Cook College and Theological School nka Cook Native American Ministries, and Board member of the Indigenous Theological Training Institute (ITTI); 3) The Rev. Debbie Royals (Pascua Yaqui); and 4) The Rev. Dr. Malcolm Naea Chun (Native Hawaiian), Canon for Pastoral Development at the Cathedral of St. Andrew's in Honolulu, Hawai'i.



Dr. Cecil Corbett and Dr. Ha'aheo Guanson address the participants at Winter Talk 2017 in Tucson

Guanson stated that indigenous peoples have a deep spiritual relationship when caring for the elderly, i.e. it is deeply ingrained in the culture. Native peoples understand the "here and now" (the present), and we are part of their journey as the elders walk through the present "each day." Thus, caregivers tend to hold on to things from their childhood which can be a burden; they need to let go, as the elders have done and care for them in the present, each and every day. In the end, we have come full circle and as caregivers are taking care of them as they took care of us. These "precious moments" preserve the quality of life. Guanson told of the story of how her mother sold her home and moved into a care home, but did worse – she had dementia and wandered off at times, staff sedated her to make her more manageable, but when they visited her she was not eating, slumped over. Both Guanson and her spouse made the decision to care for her at their home.

Dr. Corbett informed the group that his parents passed away at an early age, and thus he was left living with his grandparents. Sometimes we need care that "identifies" us as natives, using the example of buying grandma an electric stove, but she really is familiar and is accustomed to a wood burning stove. When elders are not visited, sometimes they are moved to cheaper (and poorer) facility. Regular visits forces the care facility to upgrade and improve its facilities. Corbett

says that care for the elderly "is all [contained] in Psalm 71." Traditional food, places, pictures, music brings back "happier times." In the end analysis, there is no tomorrow because as we approach tomorrow, it becomes today (the present).

Debbie Royals inherited the role of caregiver in her family when her brother mismanaged her mother's finances (house heavily mortgaged and brother not contributing to the payments) and she was forced to return home because her mother wanted to live in her house. Care requires one to pay attention to what is going on with the elderly. As a native, you cannot leave, but you "carry your family with you." She continues to struggle as a caregiver because she does not want to leave her alone, but gives her "little things to look forward to." Caregivers persevere through "suffering with love" as native people do. Gatherings like this at Winter Talk provide positive support for caregivers.

Naea Chun cared for his mother in the last four years of her life. He witnessed the "cycle of aging," i.e., she became dehydrated in the hospital, but came alert when there was human interaction. She would get excited meeting new people, seeing new places, and new things. Thus, we need to remember to deal with the "now, not later." Friends and support is important, but at her age (89) there were not many who survived her. It is important for elderly to experience "companionship/touch." When mother would go through things, she kept what was of value (e.g. picture, jade jewelry, etc.) If it had no value, then she would devalue it, i.e. toss it out.



Rev. Dr. Cecil Corbett (Nez Perce)

After the panel concluded with a question and answer from the audience, Dr. Corbett talked about the “5 Marks of [Anglican] Mission” from an indigenous perspective. First, Dr. Corbett reminded all of us that our different Christian denominations are like plants in a pot – we need to be planted in the soil and not the pot – our indigenous identity is our common denominator. The five marks provides us with the opportunity to develop ecumenical and indigenous ministries. First there is a uniform reverence among indigenous peoples for the “Creator” and knowledge of the “Great Spirit.” As adoration of these concepts grew, creativity grew. A renewing of partnerships with the supernatural, even though there were differing faiths, there was nonetheless similar cultural values when it came to “reverence for the Creator.” At the same time, however, there is lack of knowledge in Jesus Christ in the Trinity and there is a need to “introduce Jesus Christ to our communities.” We need to live into our Gospel, and share our culture and the love of Jesus Christ with our own indigenous communities. Today’s Church places less emphasis on youth, who are from an indigenous perspective “our most precious resource.” What may sound like a controversial statement, Dr. Corbett suggested that the Church needs to adopt a recruitment strategy for our youth similar to what the militant insurgent group ISIS has been doing to recruit youth worldwide. Dr. Corbett recommended “Dear White Christians (2014)” as a recommended reading on this topic.

Afternoon session:

The afternoon was spent traveling to the Pascua Yaqui Village in Tuscon. The tribal Village was created in 1914 in an area known as Guadalupe, when a 40 acre homestead was given in fee to a group of Yaqui, two years after Arizona became a State of the Union. An additional 200+ acres was added in 1964 to create the Pascua Yaqui Indian Reservation, located in Pima County, in the southwestern part of the Tucson metropolitan area.



Rev. Debbie Royals (Pascua Yaqui) shares her knowledge of Yaqui culture at the Old Pascua Museum and Yaqui Culture Center



Painted tribal Yaqui dance masks hang in the Village Museum

Participants spent the afternoon hosted by the Tribe's leadership and Rev. Royals, and were witnesses to the beauty and gracefulness of a tribal Deer Dance performed by members of the Tribe. The Deer Dance, or La Danza del Venado, is a native Yaqui dance. The traditional territory of the Yaqui extend from southern Arizona following the Sonoran desert to the northern Mexican state of Sonora. Dancers reenacted a dramatic deer hunt to honor the natural world and the white tail deer, both who provide for most all the Yaqui's needs.



Deer Dancer in Full Costume

The Deer Dance is one of the most popular dances in the Village today. Because the Yaqui people fought valiantly to preserve their land and culture, the Deer Dance has no European influence and has changed very little over the centuries. This native dance is highly respected for its inherent ritual, primal, and spiritual qualities. The mood of the Deer Dance is created with traditional instruments, employing the reed flute, percussion, rasps, rattles, and chanting to accompany the dancers. Graceful and athletic, the deer dancer imitates the movements of a wild white tail deer. Wearing a deer head atop his own, the dancer evokes the feeling of freedom inspired by all things wild. With proud and deliberate body movements the white tail deer travels through his forest, jumping fallen trees and cactus, listening to the forest sounds and drinking water from a stream. Finally the deer encounters a small band of hunters who stalk him with bows and arrows. A dramatic hunt ensues, and the hunters prevail. The percussion slows as the heart of the deer ceases to beat. The deer gives his life to the hunters so that they can live, enacting the cycle of life.

Sunday, January 18, 2015:



Rev. Debbie Royals (Pascua Yaqui) prepares Communion from traditional elements sacred to Yaqui

The 2016 Provincial VIII Winter Talk closed on Sunday with a celebration of the Holy Eucharist led by the Rev. Rosemary Joe Kinale (Paiute/Shoshone). The Sermon was preached by the Rev. Anne Scissons from the Diocese of Eastern Oregon, and who works closely with the Burns Paiute Tribe from Eastern Oregon.



The Rev. Deacon Reynelda James (Paiute) performs a smudging ceremony with traditional sage and sacred water from her homeland in Pyramid Lake to Maggie Brown (Navajo).



Participants from PVIII Winter Talk 2016 in Tucson pose for a photo