Jicarilla Apache Nation
Chama, New Mexico
June 2018

COMMUNIQUE # 22

Following the instructions of the original Circle of Traditional Elders, the 41st Annual Circle of Traditional Indian Elders and Youth Gathering took place on the homelands of the Jicarilla Apache in northern New Mexico along the east side of the Chama River. It was a spiritual gathering made up of grassroots indigenous peoples from the four directions of Turtle Island (Nii goo dzan) and the now called Americas and other nations around the world. Born from a vision of elders, the first gathering took place in 1977 at the headwaters of the Missouri River and hosted by the Crow Nation. Since then, 21 Communiques have been issued from the Elder’s gatherings and can be viewed at www.twocircles.org.

The theme that emerged from those who spoke at the 41st gathering is the need for healing and the importance of family, their roles and responsibilities. There is a breakdown as foretold by prophecies that children would lead their parents, and the families would scatter like ashes in the wind. We are a witness in our own communities as the youth are hungry for the lessons of the elders, yet teachers are becoming in short supply as we are losing native speakers and those who are knowledgeable about culture at an alarming rate.

Indigenous people live life from a spiritual base. There is no separation. It permeates every action, thought and decision making, every day, for the betterment of the people. As spiritual beings, our traditional worldview holds to the interconnectivity of ALL things, from the birds that fly to the creatures that crawl on the earth. The White people live life from a material base causing them to be abusive consumers of Mother Earth’s resources and the source for the eventual destruction of the human species (Communique #11).

THE NATURAL LAW

The natural law of life requires respect and responsibility as our sacred duty.

In Jicarilla Apache worldview and sacred instructions, older people or Elders carry ancient wisdom and instructions that are meant to be respected by those younger than them. Apaches respect people with grey hair because they have experienced a long life and teach by changing the way a young person thinks. Much is through role modeling understanding what’s good and bad. Parents and grandparents teach their
young, not by hitting, but by showing the young that they are important to the survival of the people and are expected to not steal, not lie, not to be lazy and to represent the people in all they do. Many young people have lost this understanding. They have become sensitive to correction by older people as cited by Musgokee elder who stated that some of the young people assert abuse and trauma that require years of counseling. This is out of balance with the natural law.

According to a Santa Clara Pueblo elder, man is to “carry the bones of the ancestors”, meaning caring for the people and nations on our Mother Earth. The common man used to walk ahead of the woman and children to protect and clear the way. Man was the warrior, provider and protector of the village and clan. Eventually, woman walked beside him and today, she walks ahead of him. In many cases, woman has become the provider and protector of her family and has left the man behind. Man is reticent wanting acceptance while others are angry and act out accordingly. This is out of balance with the natural law.

Though education is important to indigenous communities, some elders say it takes the young people away from learning sacred ceremonies and ways of being that are deemed important to the survival of our Nations. The ability to live in two worlds is compromised and we see the white man culture overpowering our young people causing some of them to become as the white man with a materialistic view of life rather than a spiritual view of life. This is out of balance with the natural law.

HEALING: IT'S THE ONLY WAY!

There are many, many examples we can cite for the atrocities of the past, the destruction of our way of life, millions of people killed, our suffering from the loss of the natural environment, the animal nations, the birds and the living forest, yet we MUST FORGIVE AND FORGET! We know there is much anger about the past and we remember the devastation to our people. We must find a way to balance the good and the bad: to balance the positive and the negative things that have happened. We must find a way to heal and it is something we have to do because we are out of balance with the natural law.

Find healing. Be the positive role model for future generations. Be the parents! Protect the children! Teach them about the sacred ways. Let them hear the important messages of our great leaders. Each life is a gift and a manifestation of the Creation. RESPECT for life is our sacred duty.

Our native languages are all powerful. Language is spoken from the mind and heart. The mind creates and the heart loves. It is responsible for (diyii) medicine power. Think and speak good thoughts and bring about positive change for the people. Language is necessary for transferring traditional understandings that cannot be fully explained in English. Native languages are living phenomena that connect one to the natural environment. It holds histories, emotions, love for one another, and love for all
creation. It is the glue that binds our people and brings us home. We, the Circle of Traditional Elders and Youth applaud those who teach language and culture to the future generations. We reaffirm our commitment to share native wisdom and knowledge. We thank people and organizations that provide the resources and support toward gatherings such as this and other events where indigenous peoples can gather, conduct ceremony and pray for all the people. I heedn. Sa n leeł. (Thank you. May you have a long and healthy life).

Nzhóo naakaigo.
Maahe’ daarín dzigo.
Nii gos dzan mik’a naakai i.
I heedn, daya’dé nahásin i i.

Let us go forward in prayer.
Let us be thankful as we walk on Mother Earth.
Thank you for giving us everything, to sustain life.

POSTSCRIPT

The topic of human beings from the stars was brought up at this gathering. It was mentioned that these advanced races of human beings were much like the natural evolving human beings of Earth, one which was the indigenous peoples of the Americas. Other species are on the Earth which lead to much speculation and sensationalism and we, the Elders, acknowledge there are things that are unknown to some of us and we respect new information which may produce teachings that are helpful to the Earth humans.

Transcribed by Lorene Willis (Jicarilla Apache/Choctaw), Lisa Powers (Comanche), Ruchaneet Printup (Tuscarora), Leonard Bends (Crow), Fred “Coyote” Downey (Wailaki), Bryan F. Vigil (Jicarilla Apache), Maureen Olson (Jicarilla Apache).