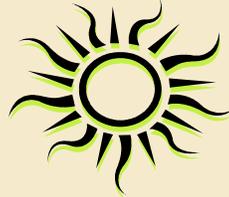




Native Sons



Equipping Native Leaders to Reach Native Americans

**REV. JIM LOPEZ
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT**

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- AIC's enrollment continues to increase! Next semester our dorms will be full!
- AIC Christian Ministry professor David Cleveland help to translate the recently released Modern English Version Bible (MEV), an updated translation of the KJV.

PRAYER POINTS

- New financial partners
- Increased enrollment and finances for AIC.
- Theresa for health issues and full-time, permanent work.

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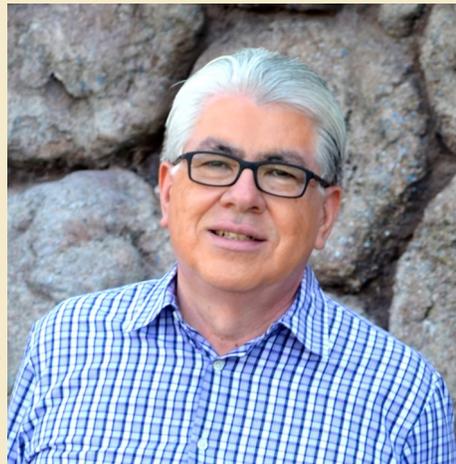
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"Every generation has the responsibility to take it to the next level." When Jim Lopez made this statement he meant it and lives it.

One of six siblings, he was raised by his single mother who divorced when he was very young. Part Mexican and part Co-copah he grew up on the Ft. Yuma Quechan Reservation in Winterhaven, CA. He grew up knowing racial discrimination and segregation. Neither of his parent's went to high school, yet Jim and one of his sister's have earned master's degrees as did his wife Belinda who grew up on the same reservation and under similar conditions. Today, their son J.D. is working on a Ph.D. focusing on Native education issues at Arizona State University (ASU). Though he has not yet earned the degree, J.D. has already had articles published and has been invited to Washington, DC on a speaking engagement.

Bro. Lopez was raised Roman Catholic, but gave his life to Jesus in 1970 under the ministry of Pastor Jacob Escalante (Tohono O'odham) a graduate of All Tribes Bible

School (AIC's original name). Pastor Escalante had a great impact on both Jim and Belinda. Neither of them had ever been encouraged to receive further education. Belinda states, "He instilled the im-



Rev. Jim Lopez

portance of following Christ and reaching our Native peoples in order to give them hope and a future through the gospel message." She notes that their generation picked up the baton and carried it to another level—some getting master's de-

grees—something unheard of for Native students just a few years earlier. Now there are Native students from the reservations that go on to attain doctorates—in the past such a thing was never even conceived as being possible.

Jim & Belinda earned their diplomas from American Indian Bible Institute (AIBI, before it was AIC) and their bachelor degrees from Southwestern AG University (his in ministry, hers in Early Education). Jim then went on and earned his master's degree in theology at Fuller Theological Seminary. Belinda also earned a master's in adult education for at risk student from the University of Phoenix.

Jim served 7-years in the pastorate; 4 as the senior pastor at the White River Apache Assembly of God. He was then asked to come and serve AIBI as the Dean of Students. At this time Belinda was also appointed as a teacher in the Foundational Studies department (today called the Learning Resource Department - LRD). Jim & Belinda stayed 22-years. He served as Dean

ON A PERSONAL NOTE

The fall semester is over at AIC. I remained busy developing and teaching my classes. I am working on a 30-page (minimum) research paper and a 10-page theological paper for my first doctoral course.

Theresa has been picking up work doing substitute teaching. She has also taken a seasonal part-time job in local mall. She is still sending out resumes and hopes to find full-time, permanent work in the New Year. She is also struggling with various health issues. Please keep her in prayer.

Caleb has completed his time in the Marines and is currently staying with Levi & Alicia in MA. He plans to go to Italy after Christmas to spend some time with Natasha. He would like to move there, but there

is red tape to get through, so he tentatively plans to complete a semester in school studying to become a paramedic.

Levi & Alicia are well. Alicia continues to enjoy nursing. Levi is enjoying college and has tentative plans to go onto seminary afterwards. The boys are growing quickly. We are looking forward to spending some time with them over the Christmas break. We also plan to visit Theresa's family (and my sister) in VT and upstate NY over Christmas. It has been 2-years since I last saw family in the north-east.

Thanks for all your prayers and support!

Have a Merry Christmas

And a wonder filled New Year!



of Students, Vice President, and eventually President of the College. Under his leadership faculty were encouraged to earn doctorates; five did so greatly improving the academic standing of the college. Belinda expected to teach for two years, but she and Jim stayed 22-years! During this time she served as not only a teacher, but as the department chair for the LRD department and the Elementary Education department, including holding both positions simultaneously for one semester!

They raised their three children, Joylina, Camellia, and Jameson (J.D.) while serving at AIC. Like all ministry children they went with their parents on ministry and did ministry with them. The students at AIC treated the Lopez children as younger siblings resulting in J.D. eventually stating, "AIC has always been more than just a college for me—it's a home!" He used to watch his father cry out for the school and saw his commitment to AIC. "He believed in the school with everything he had." J.D. would often go with the students on ministry outreach events and saw the impact they had on others. He reflects, "I realized that because of their ministry the lives of others changed forever." He realized, "There are moments in your life that make you realize that you can make a difference."

Jim left the presidency of AIC to serve in the AZ District office as the first designated Director of Intercultural Ministries, a position he held for 10-years. He traveled widely during this time and continued to promote AIC and remained connected with it. Most of the churches he visited as the Director of Intercultural Ministries thought he was still serving at the school. The truth is he has always had a heart for AIC. He has been asked to return on multiple occasions, he states, "Although I have always had a burden for AIC, I have not always had

a calling to it." He has served as a consultant for the school always. He held a position here for a year while also holding his full-time position as Director of Intercultural Ministries with the district. Just under two years ago he was asked by the newly appointed president, David Moore, to return as the Administrative Vice president. He agreed, not because of his past relationship with Dr. Moore, but because of his burden for the college and a sense of God's calling that would allow him to make necessary changes.

Our dorms that had been sparsely populated 3-years ago, will be entirely full next semester. Cafeteria services and student services have been improved. First Nation teachers have been hired as well as administrators and support staff. The attitude here is one of excitement and expectancy. Jim would probably not admit to being a central factor in these changes, but those of us who serve here know better.

Jim has been a nationally appointed US missionary since 1977. He and Belinda first came here as students in 1971 and they have remained connected with the college ever since. He knows the students here personally. He knows their parents, many of whom he went to school with. He knows their grandparents. He and Belinda are connected with the community, because they care about it. They have a burden for the school, a burden that seeks the welfare of the school even at the cost of personal sacrifice. Raising missionary funds runs across the grain of First Nation culture where the community supports its spiritual leaders and leaders do not ask for support. When he transitioned to the presidency he lost funding, when he transitioned to the District office he also lost funding, and when he recently returned to AIC he lost funding. He says, "God provides. It is not about my salary and the things I have, it's about God's calling and the burden that God places on your

heart."

When he speaks of his ministry to the students he acknowledges, "Serving students makes me grow outside my own comfort zone. I learn from them as well as help them."

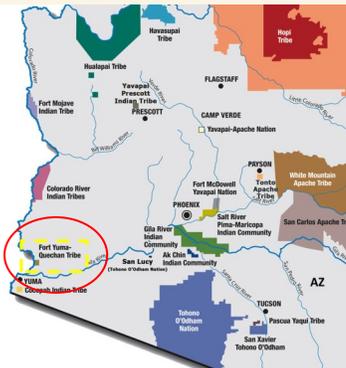
Students look at Jim & Belinda's success and assume they came from strong Christian homes with money. They are surprised and encouraged to find out otherwise and realize, "Wow, If you can do it, with the Lord's help I can do it too!" Belinda has noted that the small size of the college enables the faculty to be able to help students one-on-one and that our small classes protect the individual from becoming lost in the crowd. She states, "I think AIC's lasting legacy will be that it provides an exceptional Pentecostal education through its programs by building character and integrity."

Jim wrote, "AIC has always emphasized that what God has given you, you are to use to reach out to others and to be a part of their life so that they can have a better life and take it to the next level."

The words and lives of multiple generations of students, faculty, staff, and his own family testify that these are not just words, they are the life he lives and the life he passes on to others.

The information in this article is a combination of interview with Rev. Lopez and information taken from articles written by him, his wife Belinda, and son J.D. from the book *A Witness to the Tribes*, edited by Dr. Joseph Saggio & Jim Dempsey.

The Quechan (Yuma Indians)



Fort Yuma Quechan Reservation

(pronounced "Kwuh-tsan"), which means "those who descended". The Fort Yuma Quechan Reservation is the 2nd largest First Nation Reservation in CA consisting of 45,000 acres and bordering Arizona, California, and Baja California in Mexico.

Tribal 2475 people are registered on the tribal roll. When the Spanish first encountered the Quechan in 1603 there were approximately 4,000. 30 Span-

The Fort Yuma Quechan Reservation is home to the Quechan Tribe. Popularly known as the Yuma Indians, they prefer their tribal name—Quechan

ish soldiers and two priests made contact and were welcomed, but there was little further contact for the next 100 years. In the 1700s the Spanish began colonizing, seeking control of the strategic Colorado river crossing and to convert the Quechan people to Christianity. After years of oppression from the Spanish colonists the Quechan rebelled in 1781 effectively driving outsiders away from the land until the mid 1800s.

The discovery of gold in CA initially brought more trade and revenue for the Quechan who ran a ferry service across the Colorado River, but when the US ferry service was started as competition the Quechan ferry service evaporated. In 1852 the US military came diminishing and destroying Quechan power and autonomy. In 1884 the Quechan were forced onto the Fort Yuma Reservation a fraction of the size of their hereditary territory. Although the river land was fertile, areas further out were not and made living difficult. Later, the US government demanded that the land be sub-divided to individuals for farming, promising the development of irrigation systems that were never supplied. As

was common with other Native "redistribution" projects, the government then confiscated and sold the "surplus" land to outsiders.



Quechan Tribal Seal

Originally, the Quechan were nomadic and generally peaceful. They engaged in farming, hunting, fishing, and food gathering. They were also warriors who fought with the Papago, Apache, and other tribes for control of territory and trade. Warfare was also a means of establishing spiritual power and demonstrating this power to others.

Today, the main revenue of the Quechan comes from farming, sand & gravel operations, and tourism. The Quechan also own and operate three tribal casinos.

Information from www.yuma.army.mil & itcaonline.com