



Native Sons



Equipping Native Leaders; Empowering Native Christians

PASTOR CHERI SAMPSON

DID YOU KNOW

- The Gila & Salt Rivers once ran through their respective reservations, but are now dry river beds as a result of metro Phoenix and California water diversion.
- O'odham and Piipaash warriors served as the 1st AZ Volunteer Infantry at Fort McDowell to assist in the "Apache Wars."
- Captain Juan Chivaria, a traditional Piipaash leader and medicine man was the highest ranked Native volunteer serving in Company B.
- 2nd lieutenant Antonio Azul was an Akima O'odham traditional leader and the highest ranked Native volunteer in Company C.
- See back page for pictures of these leaders.

PRAYER POINTS

- Wisdom and clarity as I prepare for the proposal for Springfield.
- Favor with Springfield so that missionaries to Native people begin to receive pre-field training.
- Theresa's health.

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"No one can stop what I have for your life but you." God's words were a comfort to young Cheri (pronounced "Sherry") in the wake of being dismissed from the worship team of a large Texas church. The lead pastor had said she was, "too fat to be on the worship team." Contrast this to God's words, "No one can stop what I have for your life, but you. Forgive him." She began working through the forgiveness process. A month later she was reinstated. It's a bad story with an OK ending. Pastor Cheri knows that our God is bigger than the episodes that make up our lives.

Cheri was raised in a Christian family & gave her life to the Lord when she was 3. Her father Virgil was a Pima Indian evangelist, her mother Eunice was a white missionary pastor. They had both attended Southwestern Bible College in TX, but did not meet until he came and held services at the Native church she pastored in Sells, AZ.

Cheri grew up singing with her sisters in church. During the summers they traveled throughout the Southwest as her father held evangelistic services. She knew the presence and power of God early in her life

This summer's itineration lasted a full 13 weeks! It was great seeing old friends and making new ones, but it was good to return home! Once home, Theresa and I took a long awaited week of vacation together in Avon, CO. The area was beautiful and we were able to do some sightseeing including going to a rodeo. We discovered something called "high altitude sickness." Apparently some people do not react well to the thin mountain air of Colorado, which can cause difficulty sleeping and breathing. Unfortunately, Theresa is one of these people. Fortunately, you can purchase little cans of oxygen and this helped her tremendously.

I have finished a draft of a basic training manual for those that want to minister to Native people and have just sent it to a number of Native pastors and a few missionaries for interaction. I hope to be able to present it to HQ in November. I am also coordinating with several Native ministers to try to start up some Native Centers for Leadership Develop-

and says, "I have always felt God's presence leading and guiding me." Her mother set a consistent example for her life. "I could feel the presence of God in her room when she was praying. I watched others



Pastor Cheri Sampson

mistreat her and saw how she loved them regardless."

Prior to giving his life to Jesus, her father and his brothers were some of the most notorious and violent young men on their

Rez. Their mother and younger sisters attended All Tribes Assembly. The brothers would chase the church bus with chains in their hands. Virgil and his brothers would become hungry when the service ran long. They would go to the church and have their sisters bring their mother out to feed them. They moved from the parking lot to the church door, then into the foyer, then into the church. Eventually they each gave their lives to Jesus. Pastor Cheri says her father and uncles went "from terrorists to the brothers that sang, traveled, and shared the gospel. You never know what the Holy Spirit will use to draw people."

She saw God's miracles as her parents prayed over others. Her father was legally blind, but God restored his sight. On another occasion his foot had become gangrenous and the doctors wanted to amputate it. Virgil received a word from God, "not a bone of your body will be broken" (Jn. 19:46; Ps. 34:20). He told his Jewish doctor he could not operate and the doctor told him he was crazy. Back at his church, his sister was

ON A PERSONAL NOTE

ment to provide more localized training for Native people that feel called to ministry. John Maracle and I also hope to be able to speak to HQ about our missionary training proposal in November as well.

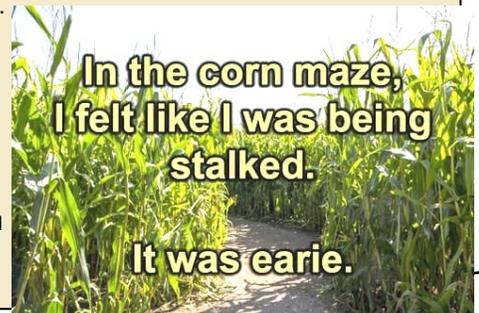
Theresa is well, though she misses Levi, Alicia, and our grandsons. She continues to enjoy teaching and remains a highly sought after teacher by the parents. She is enjoying her new large classroom and the school is navigating the curves of having doubled in size so rapidly.

Levi took a full-time ministry position in Mendon, MA and the family moved early in August. It was tough to see them go, but Levi is happy to finally be in ministry. Alicia is working in a maternity ward in a hospital in Worcester. The boys are enrolled in the church's school and are making new friends and doing

well. They are all glad to be out of the AZ heat.

Caleb is well. He continues to enjoy his work as a fireman-paramedic. He recently began seeing a new young lady. I enjoyed being able to visit him for a couple days before beginning my itineration.

As always, thanks for all your prayers and support!



praying with some others and they too received a word from God, "Not a bone of his body shall be broken." God healed Virgil's foot. Pastor Cheri says, "We saw crazy things like this, both the miraculous and the mundane."

In grade school and high school she had no friends because she served the Lord, so "Jesus was my friend." She grew up sitting and listening to her parents speaking with other Native ministers and missionaries, talking, enjoying one another's company, and strategizing around ministry needs. Her parents and many of their friends are some of the most respected and well known of the early Native ministers in the AG.

Like her parents, she attended Southwestern, but it was a time of stretching and questioning, especially when she discovered that not everyone in a Christian college is actually serving the Lord. Although she attended a Bible college, Cheri actually wanted to become a chief judge like her father. But she was always active in church and always asking God, "Is this what You want me to do?" She worked in children's church, with teenagers, and with singles. While working in the inner city of Dallas she found herself among an international community. It was there she developed a heart for children and a love for her own people.

She returned home when her mother became ill and began attending the Salt River AG. Initially, she did not want to be involved in ministry. The pastor did not push her, and she eventually began teaching. When he resigned she began preaching

and teaching. While attending a Metro Phoenix Indian sectional meeting the Lord impressed her that she needed to get credentialed. She did not think she needed credentials, but God said to her, "I don't need these, but men do." Later, at lunch sitting with her new pastor, the Holy Spirit whispered to her, "you will be the next presbyter. She has been the presbyter of the Metro Phoenix Indian section since February 2011.

When she took her credentialing test and sat before the district officials in their suits and ties they did not ask her many questions. One presbyter, who had gone to school with her father, told her, "I am aware of the problems with the pastor you sat under in TX. You handled that well, so you can handle ministry."

I asked Pastor Cheri what her hopes were for her church, community, for the district, and HQ. She has a heart for people, a heart for ministry, and a heart for missions. She wants to see the people in her church become living examples of Jesus at work and home. She wants Native people to become givers as well as receivers. She hopes to see Native people become missionaries and minister around the world.

In her community she would like to see people's brokenness healed so that they become responsible for their own lives. She wants to see her people treat others with love and respect.

She appreciates the supportiveness of the AZ district, especially for the ways that the leadership helped her father through some difficult

times. She would like to see Native leaders assume more responsibility in the district. She hopes the district will encourage the smaller churches by using them as speakers at district functions rather than highlighting larger ministries. She says, "I am successful when I obey God today, not because of the size of my congregation or group."

She hopes that HQ would begin to see Native ministers as real co-laborers in Christ, "but with a different flavor as seen in Acts and the New Testament." She is not sure that the large church model fits Native communities. She is more concerned with discipleship and relation-building, which tends to occur better in smaller gatherings. She sees the need for a mutual respect between missionaries and Native people, so that what each brings to the table is honored. "It is easy for a missionary to come in and think they have all the answers. It is equally easy for a Native person to think a white person does not understand their hurts." She is right, the ravages of sin are not racially confined.

Pastor Cheri is a dear friend. She is the pastor of Salt River AG on the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community and is active as a leader in her community. She is the first female presbyter in the AZ Ministry Network (AZMN). She is the treasurer of the Native American Fellowship (NAF). In the past she has served as a general presbyter at HQ representing AZMN and then the NAF.

"I have great hope. God is my assurance." God's assurance to Pastor Cheri remains for her and her people, "No one can stop what I have for your life but you."

The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community



There are two major reservations near Phoenix that were originally one larger reservation. The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Community & the Gila River Indian Communi-

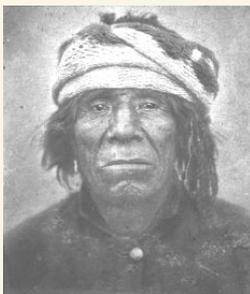
ty The Gila River Rez is larger and poorer than the Salt River Rez. Both have multiple casinos that help to underwrite infrastructure, education, and various needs within their communities. They also help to finance hospitals and road construction in metro Phoenix. The Salt River Rez has developed other business sources of tribal income as well. There are two other Pima reservations in AZ, the Ak-chin Community & the Tohono O'odham Nation.

Two distinct tribes comprise the Salt River Rez; the Pima and Maricopa. These tribes developed friendly relations between 500-1550 AD. They became formal allies in 1694. Eventually, they confederated into a single power. The two tribes share similar values and concerns, but remain culturally distinct. Both tribal names are European designations. The Pima call themselves O'odham and the Maricopa call themselves Piipaash. Both names mean "the People." The O'odham further distinguish themselves as Akimel O'odham (River

People) and Tohono O'odham (Desert People).

The Akimel O'odham primarily settled on the Gila River which allowed them to plant and maintain wooded areas, farm, and engage in fishing, hunting, and gathering. Although the Salt River was used for these same purposes, not many villages were originally established on it, because of the dangers and difficulties connected to the area.

When the Akimel O'odham began settling the Salt River they became known as the Onk Akimel O'odham (Upper River People).



Piipaash Captain Juan Chivaria

the smaller reside in the Lehi District of the Salt River Rez. The Salt River Piipaash call themselves Xalychidom Piipaash (Upper River People.)

The O'odham & Piipaash never experienced a forced removal as was the case with many other

tribes. They have always sought to live on friendly terms with settlers and the US government, even selling goods to the US military and travelers that were a part of the gold rush.

In 1859 the federal government established the Gila River Reserve, but it did not include all of the O'odham-Piipaash villages nor all of their traditional farming, hunting, and gathering territory. On January 10, 1879 President Rutherford Hayes established the original Salt River Reservation comprised of about 680,000 acres. Because of the outcry of those seeking to settle these lands, Hayes reduced the territory to 46,627 acres and split the reservation into the Gila River and Salt River reservations, thus separating the people from one another.

Today, both the O'odham and Piipaash seek to maintain their cultural distinctions, but are in their own words, "immersed in the majority population," because of their proximity to the city.



O'odham 2nd Lieutenant Antonio Azul