

GATHERING OF GOOD MINDS

January 2017
Newsletter #4



Monthly Gathering

As we enter the new year, the Gathering of Good Minds group decided to organize our talking circle on the topic of Native Medicine and Healing.



In an engaging presentation, Professor Cliff Trafzer, shared his knowledge of Puha and healing. We learned that sacred places such as, Agua Caliente Hot Springs, Oasis of Mara, Colorado River, or Spring Mountains hold concentrations of Puha. Puha'gaants or shaman (medicine men and women), through the Puha are given the power to do the work of healing. It is a misconception that the strength of healers comes solely from the plants or other objects used. Healers have the ability to draw on the Puha from these spaces for the benefit of others, and to heal.

Cliff used the imagery of a spider web, to show us how Puha is far reaching and able to concentrate in spaces. In our geography, Cliff specifically told us about the Salt Song Trail as a way to more deeply understand how power is connected through our landscapes and is remembered in ancestral stories.

The journey of the Salt Song Trail begins with a story of two sisters. The two sisters had to separate, with one sister going north, representing the soul of the sister going into the spirit world. The other sister traveled south, into the Mojave, thus representing the living. The sisters were sad that they had to leave each other, mourning for the sister traveling north.

Singers today sing about the passing of the sister on the north side of the Spring Mountains through the Cry Song. The Cry Song is sung at midnight. The song travels a total of 1,000 miles and singers sing this trail song all night. At dawn during the funeral, the singers end as the living sister arrives back at Ting-i-ayy, the sacred cave in Western Arizona. All along the trail, there are sacred places and other places where people go to receive Puha.

Cliff's presentation set up the talking circle, reminding us of the lesson that power can concentrate in people, carried through water, and held in sacred spaces.

Talking Circle

The people in our talking circle came from a space of care, and honoring each other's stories. As we talked about how healing has come to us, the importance of water continued to be an important theme. People shared how we go to water, to the Puha, to heal.

The imagery and natural flow of water reminded us how we are connected to our life, the land, and our ancestors. Water is life, water heals, we come from the womb, and it connects family, medicine, food, it's all medicine coming from the creator.



Ridge at the Old Woman Mnts.

Water is used to cleanse, to submerge the body and to wash away pain and restore with healing. People shared how "with the water you can feel that love," because it is being used to care for people.

Water plays multiple roles in healing. It takes the form of tears. As in the sisters, we mourn for our loved ones and carries them to the spirit world. Grieving is hard. Growing up, however, crying was frowned upon. In order to survive, one would shut down feelings. Not crying became a way to survive. In order to move through our lives, we must come to understand our grief.

Salt helps you remember your mother, time in the womb and time being cared for. Because of this connection, some shared that a salt bath helps clear your mind.

Most importantly, water is "a gift from the creator, it creates healing and acceptance"

Finding ways to live

Many struggles with life were shared. What we were reminded of is that sometimes we struggle and want to survive, but we have not learned how to live. In this way, talking circles become a way to reach out. A way to support each other.

Returning to the conversation with Mr. Pico that started our talking circles on historical trauma, there was a recognition that we carry things for generations. We tell our children not to mind, because they have to carry their own thing. But this should not leave them alone. Rather they can begin their own talking circles around topics of interest to them. They build the connections, find sources of puha, and continue to heal.

Upcoming Meetings

Our monthly gatherings meet at the University of California Riverside from 5-7:30pm.

Glen Mor, Room
K106/108
University of California
Riverside
400 W. Big Springs Rd.
Riverside, CA 92507

For directions see -
<https://osf.io/ey4p7/>
Upcoming meetings will be held
March 2nd, and April 6th.

If you'd like to know more about the Gathering of Good Minds Project, please contact Juliet McMullin - julietm@ucr.edu or 951-827-7853. Or visit our website or Facebook page
http://healthycommunities.ucr.edu/projects/good_minds.html
<https://www.facebook.com/GatheringGoodMinds>