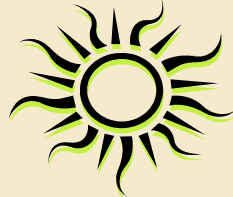




Native Sons



Equipping Native Leaders; Empowering Native Christians

PASTOR WINTER ELK VALENCIA

STRANGE CHRISTMAS LAWS

- In 1659 the Puritans outlawed Christmas in New England and levied a 5-shilling fine for its celebration.
- Wearing Christmas costumes while driving in the UK is punishable with a 5000 pound fine and 9 points on one's license.
- In Maine, you have until Jan. 14 to remove outside Christmas lights. In San Diego you have until Feb. 2. Failure to remove lights can result in a fine.
- It is illegal to celebrate Christmas in N. Korea, Saudi Arabia, Brunei, Albania, and Tajikistan.
- The right to say "Merry Christmas is protected by law in Texas.

From www.recordinglaw.com/weird-christmas-laws-from-around-the-world

PRAYER REQUESTS

- Pastor Winter—God's guidance and direction as the new pastor at Salt River AG.
- Levi & Alicia as the family grieves the death of Alicia's brother.
- The successful launch of Native Ministry schools in January.
- For God to raise up trained Native minister in Native country.

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"Once you know your life can be different then you want that for everyone." Pastor Winter Elk Valencia was raised on the Pi-ma-Maricopa Indian Rez just outside of Phoenix, AZ. He has 6 siblings from his mother and 10 from his father. Pastor Winter's father was little involved in his life because of alcoholism. His mother was a Christian, so he grew up in church and felt loved and valued by her and his siblings.

Despite his mother's positive influence, the troubles of the Rez pulled him down. By the time he was 9 he was drinking and smoking pot. Soon, he was introduced to crystal meth and became instantly addicted. At 13 he joined a gang. His life vision was making lots of money selling drugs and becoming an influential gang leader though he knew this path would lead to jail.

Amid his misadventures, Winter sometimes wondered if there was a God, but he was not particularly concerned about this. Occasionally, he felt God existed, but then he wondered, "Why His existence did not make a difference? This assumption bothered me the most. If there was a God, then why didn't He care?"

Winter's best friend, Tim, was caught in the same problem lifestyle as Winter. As a result, Tim's parents demanded that he

attend church with them. Tim's parents invited Winter to church. He was not interested, but Tim told him about the pretty girls there, so he eventually agreed. He went once and then a few more times. It was good clean fun, and he realized he had not known this since joining a gang.



Pastor Winter Elk & Jane Valencia

The youth encouraged him to attend a Christian youth camp with them. To celebrate, his father's side of the family threw a drinking and drug party for him. Winter attended the camp, his pocket filled with drugs. He felt out of place and nervous. Two days into camp he had burned through all his drugs. After a few days, he

began to relax and have fun, but he didn't pay attention to the preaching.

During the Thursday evening service, "For the first time, I was hearing." He began thinking about God, He reflected on "the unspeakable things I had done in the past. I had hurt people, robbed, hated, demeaned, and been an unwavering slave to money. What I was hearing sounded absurd. Had God preserved my life and offered His Son's life for criminals and those who have wronged Him, even for me? I stood up from my seat full of sorrow and yearning for the chance to be different. What I was being shown was too much, I was guilty and there was no way out."

That night, Winter accepted Jesus into his life. He says, "I could not stop smiling. My senses were exploding with newness as if they were functioning for the first time. Everything was new, even me, I was new." He returned home sober and began attending the Salt River Assembly of God. He returned to school and was put into a special class. He did well and was allowed to return to his previous high school. However, he fell back into his old life and was sent to jail.

ON A PERSONAL NOTE

Theresa and I are well. Her mother, Shirley arrived in mid-November and is again with us for the winter months. I recently was pointed to a different curriculum that better matches Native learning styles and needs and that meets the educational standard for credentialing so will be using this moving forward. It looks like I will be planting two Native ministry schools on the White Mountain Apache Rez in January—one meeting electronically and the other at a church. I am also working with two NM pastors and hope to launch 1-2 schools at their churches in January also.

Theresa continues to enjoy teaching preschool and enjoys wonderful relationships with her supervisor and co-workers. The school is planning a "girls' weekend away on

Dec. 16-18 up in Prescott, AZ. There is now snow in Prescott and Theresa has become intolerant to cold but is looking forward to it anyway.

Levi is well, but Alicia recently lost her only biological brother (she has stepbrothers) so has been struggling with his loss. He knew the Lord, but the circumstances around his death are difficult. Overall, Dillon and Torrin are well.

Caleb and Erin are well. Caleb recently resigned from his fire department and is now working as a paramedic in an emergency room. The hours and pay are both much better and the patients are much nicer. Erin also has started a new position that pays better and is closer to home.

As always, thanks for all your prayers and support!

HAVE A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS & WONDER-FILLED NEW YEAR!



While in jail, a former girlfriend, bore his first child, Violet. Once free, Winter returned to church and took night courses to finish his high school degree. His Sunday school teacher was a relative, Pastor Cheri Sampson. She inspired him to attend Southwestern Assembly of God University (SAGU).

He attended SAGU and did well academically. It was his first time away from the Rez. He was "having a great time and spreading my wings." he made good friends and met and began dating his wife Jane. However, after a year, he fell back into addiction. While doing his church internship in his final year he realized he needed accountability. In what he describes as a "do or die" moment he confessed his addiction to his mentoring pastor. The pastor's eyes lit with fire and Winter backed up into a wall. "He offered to help me but told me to stay accountable. I could call any time, day or night, but the pastor also warned that he was putting his reputation on the line for me." Winter remained clean, graduated from SAGU, and married Jane 6 months after. He never returned to drugs, but admits it took about 7 years to get over the psychological addiction.

He had begun working at an emergency youth center while at SAGU and felt he wanted to continue in this field. He decided to go to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (GCTS) in MA. He wanted more tools, including the biblical languages. He also saw earning a Master's degree as a resource that would give him more say in case management in behavioral health services.

Shortly after marrying, Violet's mom called. She was losing her children to Child Protective Services (CPS) and wanted Winter to take Violet. Initially, this was hard on Jane, but eventually Jane and Violet became very close. The family moved to

MA and Winter began attending GCTS. Two years later Winter and Jane had their first child and then two more. Today, he has 5 children, including Violet, who is now 24. They lived in Gloucester where they attended an AG church. Winter applied for a family pastor position at the church, but the church selected another candidate. This deflated Winter. He thought to himself, "You guys are professional Christians, and I'm not."

They remained in MA for about 7 years. Winter never finished his Master's, though he wanted to via correspondence courses. He is just three classes short of the degree. While living in Gloucester, Winter was in a car accident and injured his back. He was getting steroid shots and on pain meds. For 7 years he woke in pain up to 11 times per night. The accident affected him more than he realized. Many commented that he had "lost his optimism." Finally, tired of taking painkillers he stopped. He immediately began to feel better and to sleep through the night. He is not pain-free, but the pain is much better than it had been.

MA is an extremely expensive place to live, and Winter's family had a hard time paying rent. They decided to move to MO near Jane's family. Winter continued to work in behavioral services. Living in MO was difficult for Winter but proved to be part of God's will. While there, one of his brothers died. Winter says, "It was one of the hardest things I've ever been through." His co-workers were supportive and helped with his workload, but also encouraged him to get counseling. In counseling, he began to think about the needs back home. Jane also began to discuss moving to Salt River. They returned two years ago, and he was hired by the Pima-Maricopa Youth services

after his boss heard his testimony. She groomed him to take her place and he was recently promoted to that position. They also returned to his home church, the Salt River AG where he has just been voted in as the new pastor. He says, "Accepting a promotion and work and becoming a full-time pastor is not something I recommend." Indeed, his hands will be very full as he raises his family, begins pastoral ministry, and takes on additional responsibilities at work and in the community.

Pastor Winter feels the three biggest needs in the church are discipleship, raising leaders, and finances. The church is small, so even though Pastor Winter would like to focus solely on pastoral ministry he knows he cannot. Pastor Winter says, "There is a lot of back and forth in people's lives here. They mess up and then feel they need to rededicate their lives to Jesus." He would like to see the people develop a better understanding of God and His grace so that they can overcome sinful habits while at the same time understanding that God still loves them even when they fall short. He says, "Discipleship involves teaching as well as walking the journey [with the Lord]." Currently, there are two key leaders in the church, and it's difficult to get input and participation from others. The church recently participated in the community's Christmas Light Parade. They were the only church in the community that participated. Pastor Winter was especially excited about the church's involvement because it brought people together around something bigger than their individual needs, it helped to build community and cooperation within the church and gave the people a chance to interact with the larger community. Ultimately, I think Pastor Winter's goal is to help others to catch his vision, "Once you know your life can be different then you want that for everyone."

The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community



The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community is located slightly east of Scottsdale, AZ. In fact, parts of Scottsdale are leased from the Salt River Pima-Maricopa tribe. In stark contrast to the Salt River Rez, Scottsdale is

one of the richest communities in AZ and home to many well know celebrities.

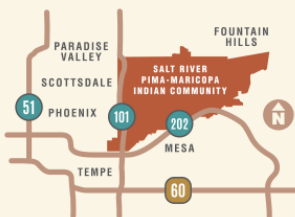
When Pastor Winter Elk Valencia was young, the Rez was plagued with gang violence, drugs, and alcohol abuse. Pastor Winter reports that as much as a third of the community was often so drunk that they would be unable to talk or stand and could be found passed out all over the Rez, even in 118-degree weather. Addiction affects more than the individual, it affects the whole family. When parents are addicted child neglect and abuse run rampant. As Pastor Winter notes, "One would think, with so little hope, people would jump at any chance to be free from the drama of life on the Reservation but instead of being educated and wanting a better life the young aspire to be drug dealers and criminals. The youth of the Reservation would rather be outlaws and earn street credit than conform to a nine to five-blue collar lifestyle." He notes that conditions are better today but are still not ideal.

Because the Pima-Maricopa community is right next to multiple cities including Scottsdale, metro

Phoenix, Mesa, Tempe, and Fountain Hills (another rich community) access to jobs and resources is better than on many reservations. The tribe owns a resort, a golf club, a casino, and a minor league ball field used for major league spring training and other events. Proceeds from these business ventures are used to improve tribal infrastructure, education, health and human services, as well as quarterly distributions to individual tribal members known as "per cap."

Many of the Pima-Maricopa people will readily admit that they are more enculturated to mainstream America than other tribes. The people desire to hold onto their culture while embracing modern society. Even so, there are distinctions between the Pima-Maricopa and the surrounding culture. The modern approach to education is valued by some, but not all. Loyalty to family, friends, and one's people is highly valued. Humor is an important part of community values but is not necessarily understood by mainstream Americans. For instance, laughter at a funeral is frowned upon in mainstream America but is viewed as helpful to the community and a sign of solidarity among the Pima-Maricopa.

Likewise, family is very important among most



Native communities including the Pima-Maricopa. It is common for multiple generations in a family to live in one home or near each other. Mainstream America views the failure of young adults to leave home by their mid-twenties as problematic. This is not so in Native country. On the positive side, multi-generational homes demonstrate closeness within the family as members pool resources and help with shared tasks, including child-rearing. If a husband and wife have more children than they can support, or give proper attention to, it is not uncommon for grandparents, uncles, and aunts to take in some of the children. On the negative side, sometimes adult children fail to leave home because of addiction and unwillingness to work. There are instances where grandparents have legal guardianship of their grandchildren even though their adult children are still living at home.

Like other tribes, the Pima-Maricopa are concerned that their children be raised in their culture and know who they are. For a long time, Native children were adopted into mainstream society resulting in a loss of their cultural identity. The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) was established to ensure that Native children are placed in Native foster homes to address this problem. In 2013, the Pima-Maricopa had over 450 of their children in foster care. This number is going down and the tribe's goal is to get the number below 100. But as Pastor Winter and Pima-Maricopa community acknowledge, "Even one kid in social services is too much."