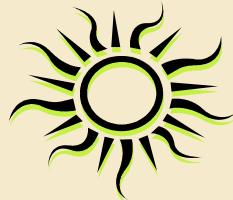




Native



Sons



Equipping Native Leaders; Empowering Native Christians

THE CROWN DANCE

- The Apache Crown dance involves dancers dressing up in regalia representing sacred mountain spirits.
- Dancers put on a "crown," which is a headdress in the form of an animal, such as a deer, an eagle, a bear, etc.
- Dancers mimic the movements and behaviors of the animal crown they put on.
- The moments of stillness when the dancers freeze in place are meant to honor the spirits.
- Though many crown dancers today compete for money and do not know the depth of these sacred ceremonies, genuine traditional dancers talk about spirits coming on them when they put on the crown and engage in the dance.
- Beware of those who want to do such presentations in your church.

ERVINA'S PRAYER REQUESTS

- A larger home for Ervina and her children.
- A larger and more dependable car for Ervina and her family.
- Ervina's 13-year-old daughter Julia.
- That God would break strongholds of alcoholism, addiction, depression, and suicide on the White Mountain Apache Rez.

John & Theresa Flood
US Missionaries to
Native Americans

4820 W. Kristal Way.
Glendale, AZ 85308
Phone: (623) 518-6775
Cell: 623-824-2053
b4theflood@me.com

www.nativesonsministry.com

Field Address:
US Missions
1445 N. Booneville Ave.
Springfield, MO 65802
Offering Acct. # 2570281

ERVINA LAVENDER

It's hard to overcome addiction. I had to get to know God. The storms of life have come, and I have been shaken, but God has given me victory." Ervina's life has been filled with hurt, heartache, loss, and struggles with drug and alcohol addiction. Her grandparents were pastors at East Fork Miracle Church on the Rez and always warned, "You better be in church." This struck fear into Ervina's heart; she saw God as unloving and judgmental. Both her parents were severe alcoholics, and domestic violence was common. By the time she was in 5th grade, her parents separated. Her father remarried and moved on, so she saw little of him. Her mother would go on 1-2-day drinking binges, leaving Ervina and her siblings alone. There was always food in the house, but it was not a healthy situation. It did not go well when her mom tried to discipline her and the other children. Eventually, her mother also remarried.

Ervina began drinking when she was around 14. She says, "Drinking helped ease my tensions and helped me forget my problems." When she was 15, she became friends with a drug dealer's daughter who gave her crystal meth for the first time. When she was 16-17, she



She had 4 children by her 1st boyfriend, but they were both drinking a lot. They tried to work out their relationship, but he became physically abusive. The first time, he beat her so badly that she did not recognize herself in the mirror. She was pregnant and tried to return home, but her mother said, "No, you figure it out."

Her boyfriend's upbringing was worse than hers. He was raised in a traditional home (worshipping the mountain spirits and engaging in Native spiritual rituals). He experienced abusive discipline growing up. The more he drank, the more abusive he became. Ervina turned to drinking and meth to cope with his verbal and physical abuse. They promised each other they would change but always fell back into the same habits. She lost her home, car, and job. Her boyfriend gained custody of their first three children and she left pregnant with their fourth child. He told her she needed to go to rehab. They had been together for 12 years. He moved on and started another family.

She entered rehab at the Rainbow Treatment Center on the Rez. Her mind was filled with thoughts like, "You will never amount to anything. You are no good. No one will want you

wanted to leave home. She dropped out of high school and began living with her 1st boyfriend. "I felt protected around him. He did not talk at me. He talked with me. I thought, 'If I give myself to him, he will love me and not leave me.'" Her mother wanted her to return home, but Ervina refused.

ON A PERSONAL NOTE

Theresa is away in Vermont visiting family and friends for 2 weeks. We had difficulty finding a dog sitter this year, so she suggested we take separate vacations. She has wanted to spend time with her family and old friends in Vermont for some time, and is now out of our 110-degree weather.

The Native School of Ministry on the White Mountain Apache Rez is going very well. We are currently finishing up the 14th course, called Preaching and Teaching. Normally, we work through a course in three weeks, but I added an additional three weeks to give each of the students a chance to preach a 20-minute sermon.

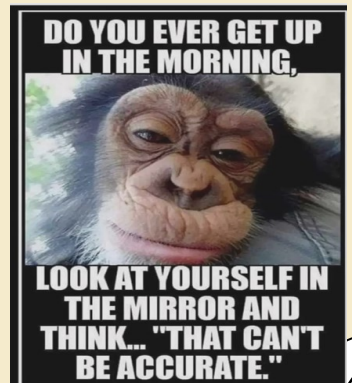
We lost Theresa's mom, Shirley, at the end of April. She had been working on a puzzle at the kitchen table and appeared fine. She went to relax on the couch and said she did not feel well. Theresa called an ambulance. The paramedics encouraged Shirley to go

to the hospital, though they couldn't see anything amiss. She coded on the couch. They revived her and took her to the hospital. At the hospital, she requested a DNR. Theresa's sister flew in from Vermont, and we all spent time with Shirley at the hospital over the next two days. Shirley was placed on a morphine drip for pain and slipped into a coma Friday night. She passed away early Monday morning. This has been hard on Theresa and our family but has also been expected for some time.

Levi and the boys are well overall, but divorce is a long-term wound and is affecting each of them. Caleb and Erin are well. Erin is a specialty welder and the best in her shop. She recently discovered that the male welders were making \$2 an hour more than her. Erin is pretty shy, but Caleb encouraged her

to confront her boss and ask for a raise based on her abilities. She did and is now making \$4 more than she had been.

As always, thanks for your prayers & support!



and your kids.” She became suicidal. She returned to her grandmother’s with her fourth child, a little girl. However, she feared dragging this daughter into the chaos of her lifestyle. She stayed at home raising her daughter for the next 3 years with the help of her grandmother, sister, and mother. She ended up in another abusive relationship worse than the 1st that left physical scars all over her body. She ended that relationship. Trying to maintain her sobriety, she started working and life was content again but later struggled and fell back in her addiction. “By 2020, I was going down with thoughts of suicide. I lost my car and job. I lived under the threat of losing my daughter. I was very depressed. I stayed in my room and did not care for my daughter.”

All during this time, God was at work. When 17 and pregnant with her 1st child, her mother came, gave her a Bible, and encouraged her to read it and seek the Lord. Ervina said, “This was hard to receive. I was angry. Why are you telling me this now? But she was persistent in telling me about Jesus, and her words lingered... ‘God loves you and wants you back.’” When 6 months pregnant, doctors said her baby would have health problems. Fearful, she read in Matthew how Jesus healed. She cried out to the Lord for her son. He was born healthy but with only one kidney. She then had a dream of 2 hands coming towards her with 2 kidneys. A promise from God. While at her grandmother’s, her old friend Shawn came by. They hung out together and he began telling her about Jesus as they both struggled with addiction. She started watching sermons on YouTube, including Joyce Meyers, who spoke on abuse and how God had helped her. Ervina’s father also came, encouraged her, and talked about God, but she didn’t want to listen.

On one occasion, while at her grandmother’s, Ervina was drinking on the backroads with her 3-year old daughter in the back seat. Somehow, she ended up at a steep ledge with the car hanging half off it. Fearful, she grabbed her daughter and scrambled out. She says, “I felt 2 angels holding the back of the car as we got out.” Later, at home, she called her father to help retrieve the car. He told her that he and her grandmother had been praying all night and had seen the car in a vision stuck halfway off a cliff. The car was repossessed. At home, in despair, she was listening to a song about surrendering to God. However, she heard demons in her room talking about her killing herself. She went to her grandmother’s prayer place on a mountain with 3 crosses and sought the Lord. “I don’t want to die. I don’t want to commit suicide. I need Your help.” God’s peace came over her, and she returned home.

On another occasion, after finishing her laundry at a neighbors, she saw a man with a backpack. She tried to avoid him, but he came and asked if she knew the Lord and knew she was going to heaven. She answered, “Yes.” He persisted, “How do you know you are going to heaven?” She replied, “Because I am a good person.” He showed her that God’s grace and love save us, not our good works. He led her in the sinners’ prayer. She says, “I felt a heaviness released. I opened my eyes and felt peace. It was sunny but sprinkling lightly. It never does that here.” The man told her, “God had a favor on you Ervina,” then walked away. However, this was not the end of Ervina’s struggles.

A week later, her children’s other grandmother came with her 3-oldest children. They said they wanted to stay with their mom. Ervina could see that one was being abused. The grandmother refused, stating she needed to be sober, have a job, and get a home to get them back. “My heart broke all over again. My children were crying out for me as they were driven away. I heard an internal voice saying, ‘You can’t even do the one thing you should be able to do.’ I went and found the bottle in my room and began drinking again. This led to my downfall.”

She decided to kill herself but became physically unable to move. She told her mother and father. They helped her get into rehab in Phoenix, where there was daycare. It was run by a man named Anthony “Chiefo” Parker from the Rez. “October 4, 2020, is my sober date. I entered the program, completed all the courses, and stayed sober. I didn’t want to attend church but did. Once, my aunt Alvina Parker preached on the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn. 4) in a required women’s group class. She said the Samaritan woman was an example of God still loving and wanting me. This helped rekindle my relationship with God.”

The rehab program was holistic and included counseling, exercise, nutritional training, and biblically based spirituality. Ervina’s time in rehab was not without trials. Once, she heard her old boyfriend, Shawn, was with another woman. Broken-hearted she wanted to buy a bottle. However, a friend encouraged her to use different coping mechanisms. Eventually, she forgave Shawn and they reconnected. She returned to the Rez after they reconnected to attend a family member’s memorial service and “fell back into the desires of the flesh.” She felt terrible and asked Shawn what she should do. He told her, “Ask for forgiveness and try again.” Her father was a life-long alcoholic and was

found dead while she was in rehab. Her grandmother also died while she was in rehab from a brain aneurysm. Others took over the original treatment center. The new leaders began teaching Native traditionalism and new-age spirituality. Many of the clients backslid.

Chiefo started another more balanced and structured treatment center, so Ervina and Shawn transitioned to it. Later, Chiefo opened another center and asked Ervina and Shawn to come to work for him. They agreed, and she became the house manager, and he worked security. The position came with a room at a hotel. All was well for a time. Ervina and Shawn were engaged and had a little girl. She describes Shawn as a loving father who treated her well. However, one day, while Shawn was watching their new daughter, he relapsed. Ervina returned home from work to find their month-old baby on the floor, barely breathing, and Shawn deceased on the bathroom floor. She resuscitated her daughter and called an ambulance, but they were unable to do anything for Shawn. Yet another great heartache.

Ervina returned to the Rez feeling defeated, weak, and lost. “Passing a Circle K store, the thought came to me, ‘Why not buy yourself a drink?’ I really wanted to drink my life away and end it all. Getting mad, I declared God’s Word, ‘If God is for me, who can be against me?’ I shouted it, and the presence left.” Sometimes, she found it hard to get out of bed but realized she was under spiritual attack and needed to get back up. Since returning to the Rez, housing has opened up for her, and she has regained custody of all her children. Her 13-year-old, Julia, also got into drugs and alcohol. She was hospitalized for a time in a children’s rehab program but is home now. She has been diagnosed with severe depression and labeled a schizophrenic by doctors because she hears the same voices Ervina has heard encouraging her to commit suicide. Pray for Julia.

Ervina enjoys the Native School of Ministry courses and digging deeper into God’s Word. She is also leading a Faith Recovery class for those struggling with addiction. She says regarding her experience in battling the enemy, “Shawn is down, but I can’t stay down, I have to get back up and keep marching on. I have a mission to complete. I have to keep marching forward. I am clinging to God amid the storms. I am holding onto God. God is faithful, but the enemy attacks quietly. I have been walking this Christian walk for four years, but my foundation was shaken in the first year. The storms of life have come, and I have been shaken, but God has given me victory.”

The Spirit of Death/Suicide



There is more to Ervina’s story than I have room to tell. One item worth taking additional space for is the presence of a tangible entity that Ervina experienced repeatedly—the spirit of death. She alluded to it repeatedly when discussing a voice or voices encouraging her to commit suicide. Many experience this, and it is vital

to recognize that such a voice does not originate from us. These genuinely are demons that whisper in our ears. In December of 2021, I wrote about Delbert Gordon, who was also suicidal but literally saw 2-foot demons in his workshop encouraging him to poison himself. This is a glimpse behind the spiritual curtain.

Ervina discussed at length with me the death of her father, grandmother, and boyfriend, Shawn. After her grandmother’s death, she describes “an entity that would enter my room. Its presence was paralyzing. I saw its form bend down over me. In the ugliest, creepiest voice I have ever heard, it said, ‘Hello.’ I cried out to Jesus, and it disappeared.” It reappeared after she received a phone call from her aunt asking about her father’s whereabouts. On this occasion, Ervina began crying out to God on behalf of her father, and God responded, “He is home.” She thought this meant the Rez, but he was found dead on a trail in mid-December. After her father’s death, in the last week of January, Ervina and Shawn moved into a new home. The entity reappeared. She told Shawn that she could feel “death” again

and went to church to be prayed over. Someone else visited their home and stated that they could “feel something in the room.” On February 1st, returning from work, Ervina discovered Shawn dead of an overdose. Ervina’s daughter, Julia, is now hearing voices, as her mother has, encouraging her to take her own life. Not all who hear voices are schizophrenics. Doctors have labeled Julia as such, and she is on heavy medications for this. It is just as likely that she is under the same spiritual attack that her mother has often experienced. So please pray for Julia.

You can feel a spirit of depression and darkness when you enter this Rez. Those living there talk about it and know it needs to be broken. You can also see its effects across the Rez and sense a spirit of hopelessness, which is closely associated with the suicide spirit.