

9-15-18

Friends and Allies everywhere...

The New Year Celebration with the Comcaac on July 1 and the High Horse Sundance shortly after mark the beginning of my New Year. Planning is in progress for a season of working with the Comcaac and plans have been sketched on a napkin for a redesign of the cook shack on the High Horse land.

I had to leave the Rez earlier than expected... Jury Duty in AZ ordered me back. The trial was settled in time to turn around and head for the Dine Nation to commemorate the life of Will Price. Will returned to High Horse for a day to enter the arbor and say goodbye before returning to Santa Fe to get on the spirit path. It was a good gathering at Will's dad's compound in Sheep Springs.

It also called for more of a look back into the last year for me... It has been a year with many deaths. At my advanced age, I expect to see more of my cohort dying. But this year, it seems to be people younger than me. And after meeting Will's dad, Wilson Price SR, and hearing Will is his second son to die, really brings home the difference in health care access for Indigenous people in this country and in Mexico. The Comcaac are losing elders and middle age community leaders at what seems to be a rapid rate. Just days ago, Angelita Torres left us.

Younger people are stepping up to become the leaders, both here and there. In Mexico, last year I started chauffeuring for a project of Comcaac women who study healing plants. Once a month, we would go to different sites and do plant studies and share information. This took us around Comcaac territory and on to Guarajio territory for shared learning. These women are beginning to take ownership of the health of their communities.

This same group of health promoters sponsored a neighbor of mine when I brought him to Desemboque. He is a chiropractor who offered to work on people for free for a week. This worked in with their project promoting traditional healing herbs. This pilot should lead into a return for him in the fall and the possible addition of an acupuncturist who has also offered service.

We spent a little less time on the road selling arts to fit in these other activities, but still kept our gross sales up by being selective in markets. And it gave me more time in Desemboque to begin remodeling one of the houses I bought last winter. Had planned to do both houses, but barely managed one... and it still needs some little things. Part of the setback was due to its popularity. It was rented for quite a bit of the time so I could only work on the exterior. And I got a bare start on the other, which I plan to spend this winter working on in my spare time.

These two houses are the beginning of a rental project for Raquel and Teresa Hoeffler. These two sisters have been part of my artist co-op since the beginning. We see a need to diversify to supplement their income since they cannot weave baskets fast enough to satisfy their income needs. Teresa now has lost parts of both feet due to diabetes and is mostly wheelchair bound. And the widowed sister in law they have taken into their two bedroom home has increasing needs with her three daughters growing into their teens.

I am returning to Desemboque to a situation, again, where the water pump is inoperable and the village is without running water. This is an ongoing problem for the people. The one well they depend on is located several miles from the village and operates through pipelines that are decades old and from a reservoir that is maybe older and sized for a much smaller demand for water. Time for an upgrade.

This, tied to access for health care, is a major issue that the Seris are uniting behind to demand help from the government. There is a strong connection between this and early deaths among the people. Angelita Torres was admitted to the hospital initially with a kidney infection brought on by lack of clean drinking water. Severe malnutrition sealed her fate. Adequate clean water and preventative health care could have saved her.

So, we do what we do. I'm not going into great details this letter. I am doing all of the same and more. You can see lots of detail on my FB page if interested.

Thank you to the Friend from South Central Yearly Meeting for buying a wheelchair for Teresa. Thank you to the Friend from Mountain View MM for a donation toward Angelita's funeral expenses... and a set of tires for the van and the trailer. Thank you to Fort Collins Monthly Meeting for continuing to support my work and for the new whiteboard for the preparatory school in Desemboque. Thank you to the Phoenix Friends for their ongoing help and hospitality. Thank you to the William Penn House for their continued support. Thank you all for the donations and support you have given to us over the now more than twenty years that I have been working with these two tribes.

They know us as Friends and allies.

In service,  
Mike Gray