

## Trudy Griffin-Pierce: A Celebration of Life

*Brenda L. Haes, Tohono O'odham Nation Cultural Center Museum*

Trudy and I met at the University of Arizona's "Indigenous Knowledge and Cultural Property" conference in March 2007. We sat next to each other during the first day and "clicked" from the start. I couldn't help myself but to look for her the next day, and again we sat together and picked right up where we had left off the previous day. I strongly believe that the CREATOR puts people on our paths for a reason. There is no doubt in my mind and heart that Trudy was put in my life for a reason, and I believe she would say the same. We didn't see each other all that often, but it is the e-mail friendship that ensued, following the conference, that I will forever hold in my heart.

Trudy was a confidant, a cheerleader, and someone whom I could bounce ideas off of and know that she would tell me what she honestly felt; she was a dear friend, and an indigenous sister----someone who knows what it is like "to walk in both worlds." I find it ironic now looking back, as I only kept one copy of the many, many e-mails we shared, some of which resembled tomes before we started a new e-mail shuttling back and forth. With that said, it is not to say that her words of wisdom and inspiration are forgotten, any more than this beautiful, articulate, caring woman will be forgotten. Trudy has left her heartprint on my soul, as she did with anyone that knew and loved her.

We shared the simple things in life, such as my daily wild-life sightings enroute to the Tohono O'odham Nation. Trudy wrote about one of her encounters: "Yesterday I drove up to Kitt Peak and a baby mountain lion crossed the winding road up the mountain in front of me. What a great honor!" I responded the following week with a mountain lion sighting, but this one was probably a young adult. I relayed his indifference to my vehicle as he sauntered across the road at sunset, muscles rippling under his sleek coat. He was beautiful, and yes, I too, felt it was a gift. Many of our conversations revolved about such beauty, from comments about Spring's gift of foals, calves, coyote pups, baby quails and roadrunners, to Rez dog pups and butterflies and birds that frequented her cottage garden. Often Trudy's words included comments, such as "It is such a huge gift from the Universe to see them."

Trudy was looking forward to what the future held. These are her words following a communiqué I sent congratulating her on attaining tenure: "...Thank you for your congratulatory words and thoughts. Yes, it has been quite a long journey and this summer [2008] I am finding myself taking stock and thinking about the person I have become over the last five years. Now I can set new goals and dream new dreams. Like the book with the medicine man up at the Chinle Indian Health Clinic. I'm driving up to see him on Wednesday of the coming week [July 9] to share thoughts and plan what we want to do..."

I spoke to Trudy of my desire to buy a house (June 2008) and set down roots. Trudy replied, "...This summer, as I do things I am finding that I am reflecting on how much more deeply I appreciate where I am now in my life than I would have had the last five years been different. It means so much more to me. And I know that the right house will find you, just as you will find the right house. My thoughts and prayers are with you, my friend." Ironically, my house would end up being the fourth house I put an offer on, on the fourth day of the fourth month that I had been looking, and it was the fourth house I had looked at on that block....but Trudy you already know that, and all the sacredness associated with fours in our culture.

One of the things that Trudy shared in her last e-mail was in reference to the work that we do: "I love your phrase, 'heartwork' for that is truly what it is....Now I can do the work that is in my heart to do..." and she again spoke of the work she was undertaking with the people of Chinle. She closed her e-mail with, "...I hope that you are having a good morning out there [Tohono O'odham Nation]. It is truly a beautiful morning here and I feel so very Blessed to be living here in Tucson."

Trudy, those of us you left behind, and counted among your friends and family members, truly "Walk in Beauty"---YOURS, for we are BLESSED to have known you, and HONORED to have been surrounded by your Love and Light.

In Spirit & Love,

Brenda L. Haes

(Curator of Collections Himdag Ki: Hekihu, Hemu, Im B I-Ha'ap  
(Way of Life House: Past, Present, & Future) The Tohono O'odham  
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## Tribute for Trudy

*Landon Yamaoka*

Trudy was a wonderful professor as well as a very caring human being. I was blessed to have her as a professor in my Native American studies class as well as my senior anthropology end of the year class. She was always willing to answer my many questions in class and she never seemed to get upset or annoyed with me. I came late many times my senior year but she always seemed happy to see me. I remember when she became sick and I asked if she needed any help. I would go over once or twice a week and help walk Mr. Skippy and after her husband passed away I assisted in rearranging her furniture as well as cleaning and organizing. Although her husband was sick and even when he passed, she always seemed to be so strong and brave even though her health was not well. She would still be working around the house and would make me drinks and we would talk about everything. She said I had "genuine concern and interest in the well-being of those around him" but I feel her love for the world helped me grow immensely because she helped me learn about Native American cultures, so I could become more worldly and become a more open-minded person. She will always be remembered by me as a great professor and as a beautiful human being.

Landon Yamaoka  
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