

COMMUNITY NEWS

Language conference draws several Indian communities from Arizona, California and Mexico: Yuman Language Summit Immersion Camp

BY DON DECKER,
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Approximately 235 people gathered for the 3rd Annual Yuman Language Summit in the high country of the Hualapai Nation 30 miles north of Peach Springs for a language/cultural exchange campout which began on June 24 and ended on Thursday June 28. Peach Springs is 50 miles northeast of Kingman in western Arizona.

The Hualapai Nation is located in the high chapparal dotted with cedar trees with tall Ponderosas in the higher elevation.

Cattle range freely past the cattle guards and at night, drivers need to be alert for elk or deer who suddenly leap up from the edges of the road without warning.

On Tuesday night one of the staff members from the Hualapai Culture Center in Peach Springs hit one of the local Herefords which was wandering on the edge of the road. This was a total loss of the vehicle but no injuries from the driver.

The campout is located 4 miles off the beaten path west of the marked turn off from a highway that goes to the overlook over Supai Village 30 miles further north.

About 2 miles down the dirt road, a lone fire tower juts into the air breaking the Hualapai skyline. The fire tower appears vacant from the road and a utility power line has 2 strands of wire running along the wooden poles. This provides power to a new outdoor event center built for the right occasion—this time, a language conference for Yuman speakers.

This massive building also has a massive kitchen and high tech bathrooms and shower stall for visitors. Due to the proximity of this gathering site, there are no signals for cell phones.

Here, under the big barn which holds up the roof system with very large diameter round poles, is the center of the 4 day conference. Next to the building are various displays of the various representatives who arrived here on that Sunday June 24. The farthest visitors are the Pai-Pai people of northern Mexico who



Traditional hand built clay with Pai-Pai people of northern Mexico. Photo by Olivia McMahon



YAN members with Margie Campos (r) work on beading projects. photo by Olivia McMahon



Jordan Lewis from YAN culture department working on a craft project.

come from places such as Ensenada, Santa Catarina and the northern most mountains of Baja California. Some of their relatives, the Kumeyaay, live in the surrounding areas of San Diego.

The Pai-Pai speak both Spanish and Pai languages. Traditional Yavapai speakers can communicate with the Pai-Pai people as well.

According to one of the conference coordinators, Paul Owen from the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Tribe, the following Arizona tribes were represented: Ft. Mohave, Colorado River Indian Tribes, Yavapai-PreScott, Ft. McDowell Yavapai, Prescott-Yavapai, Yavapai-Apache, Hualapai, Quechan, and the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Community east of Phoenix.

The Pai-Pai from the Baja California demonstrated various crafts

including clay pottery which gave the participants to make a pot. Children also had a chance to make an arrow adorned with an arrowhead and guide feathers at the rear all taught by skilled crafts people.

Yavapai-Apache Nation Grant Youth Facilitator Olivia McMahon said,

"I'm so proud of all the youth that went. They did great on their presentations". Ms. McMahon, who hosted several teens from the Nation as chaperone, thanked YAN cultural staff members Reba Franco, Jordan Lewis and Yavapai elder Nel Engle who went along with the group.

Other demonstrations included dress making using the bark of an indigenous tree to the area. The bark was soaked in water and strands of it were hung on a stretched wire and women took special large sewing needles to string the wet bark strands into a skirt.

Each group of community visitors had a chance to showcase one aspect of their culture. This included teaching words to greet people and learning numbers in their respective language. The big night was a performance night on Wednesday evening when Bird Songs were sung and the women dancers danced their traditional ways as the men sang the melodic Bird Dance songs. The men paid homage to the Bird Dancers as they stood up momentarily



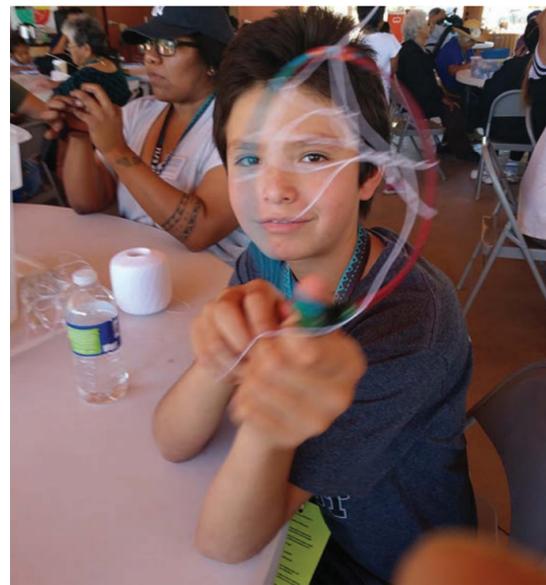
Yuman Language Immersion

photo by Olivia M.



Jordan Lewis from YAN culture center explains.

photo by Olivia McMahon



Jordan Fulmer son of Jason and Olivia at camp.

while still singing their songs.

Anyone could participate in there dances including the singing of the songs.

Earlier in the day, several women were sewing colorful dresses using the modern technology of electric sewing machines to get dresses ready for culture night.

Local hosts from the Hualapai Nation cooked special meals throughout the day for the participants. The visitors were served in a nearby kitchen which was well-stocked with food.

This evening's menu on Wednesday consisted of boiled potatoes, well-cooked tender beef and corn and a dessert.

The Yavapai-Apache Nation youth representatives had an opportunity to share their culture under the direction of Jordan Lewis, a cultural resource specialist for the Nation. About 15 youth participated in this presentation.

"It was very inspirational for our youth and adults. It was coming together and speaking our language, making

catchers and shawls.

"As Yuman people come together (it) makes us a powerhouse and an asset to our communities," added Mr. Lewis.

Thursday morning program consisted of sharing by elders of the various communities including the host community of Peach Springs.

Staff members from the cultural department of the Nation received special recognition from the conference committee included Gertie Smith, Jordan Lewis, elder Yavapai Nel Engle and Reba Franco and with Olivia McMahon as chaperone for the youth.

"We take the understanding of the significance of our cultural and historical meaning of our ancestors who gave their lives for us to be who we are today," added Mr. Lewis.



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