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# CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

*TONHC Cultural Presentation – 02.18.2020*

# Ancestry

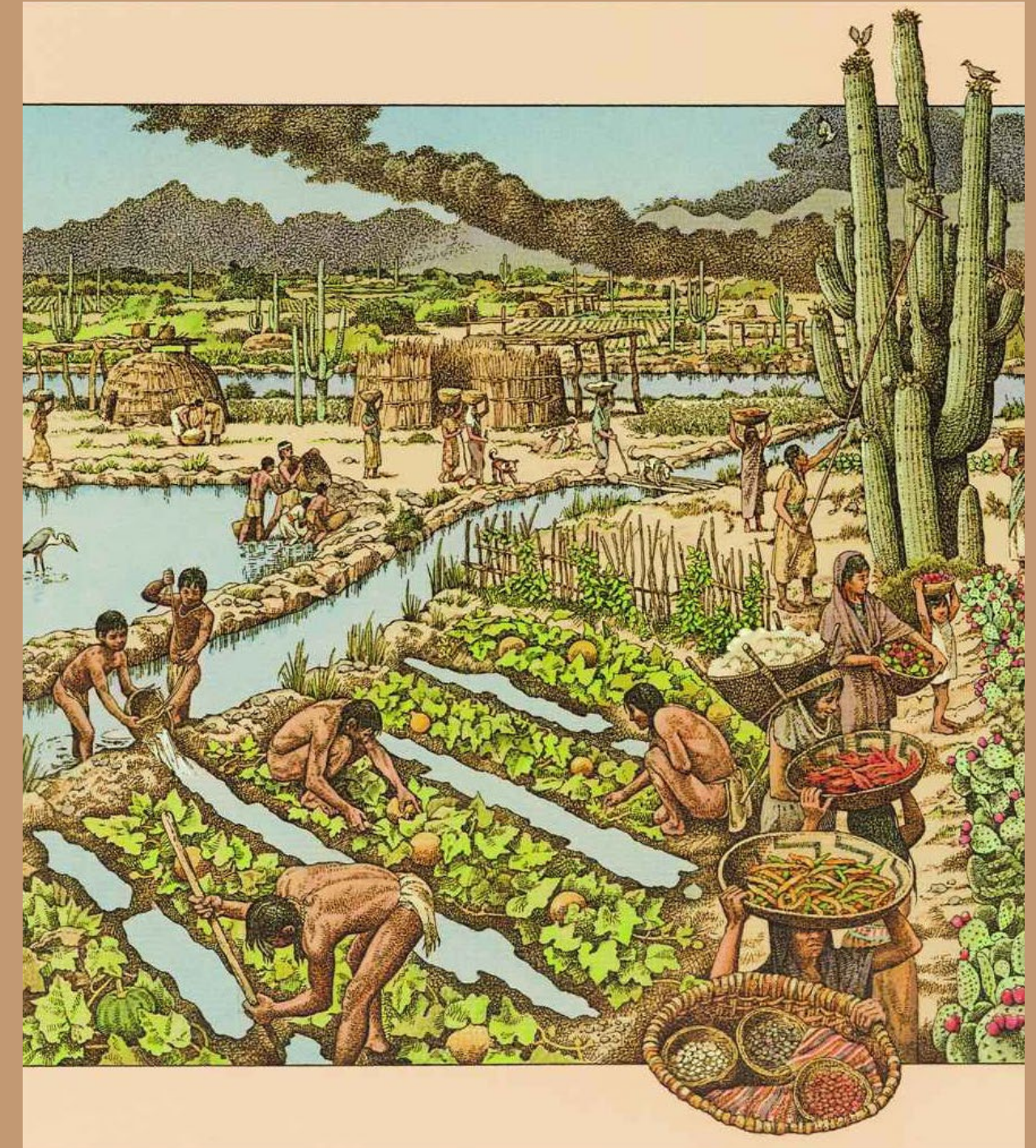
- Circa 1050 B.C.E SW Arizona was occupied by a peoples known as the Huhugam
- This great civilization constructed a massive system of canals (nearly 700 miles in total length!) in and around what is now the greater Phoenix Metropolitan area circa 600 C.E.
- The peoples dwelling in the region historically were eventually classified as 2 different peoples despite a common heritage:
  - The Akimel O'odham (River People) were those who dwelt along the banks of these canals and rivers
  - The Tohono O'odham (Desert People) lived further out where the canals emptied out into arroyos (washes)



# The Tohono O'odham

As the washes sprawled out across the vast expanse of the desert, likewise the Tohono O'odham built their settlements over a vast area to maximize this resource:

- The many branches of arroyos led to many small communities dotting the desert
- Deep in the Sonoran landscape the O'odham mastered their terrain and built a tapestry of crops which, along with gathering and minimal hunting, was able to sustain their society
- Hunting was only for sustenance — no trapping or trading for profit occurred



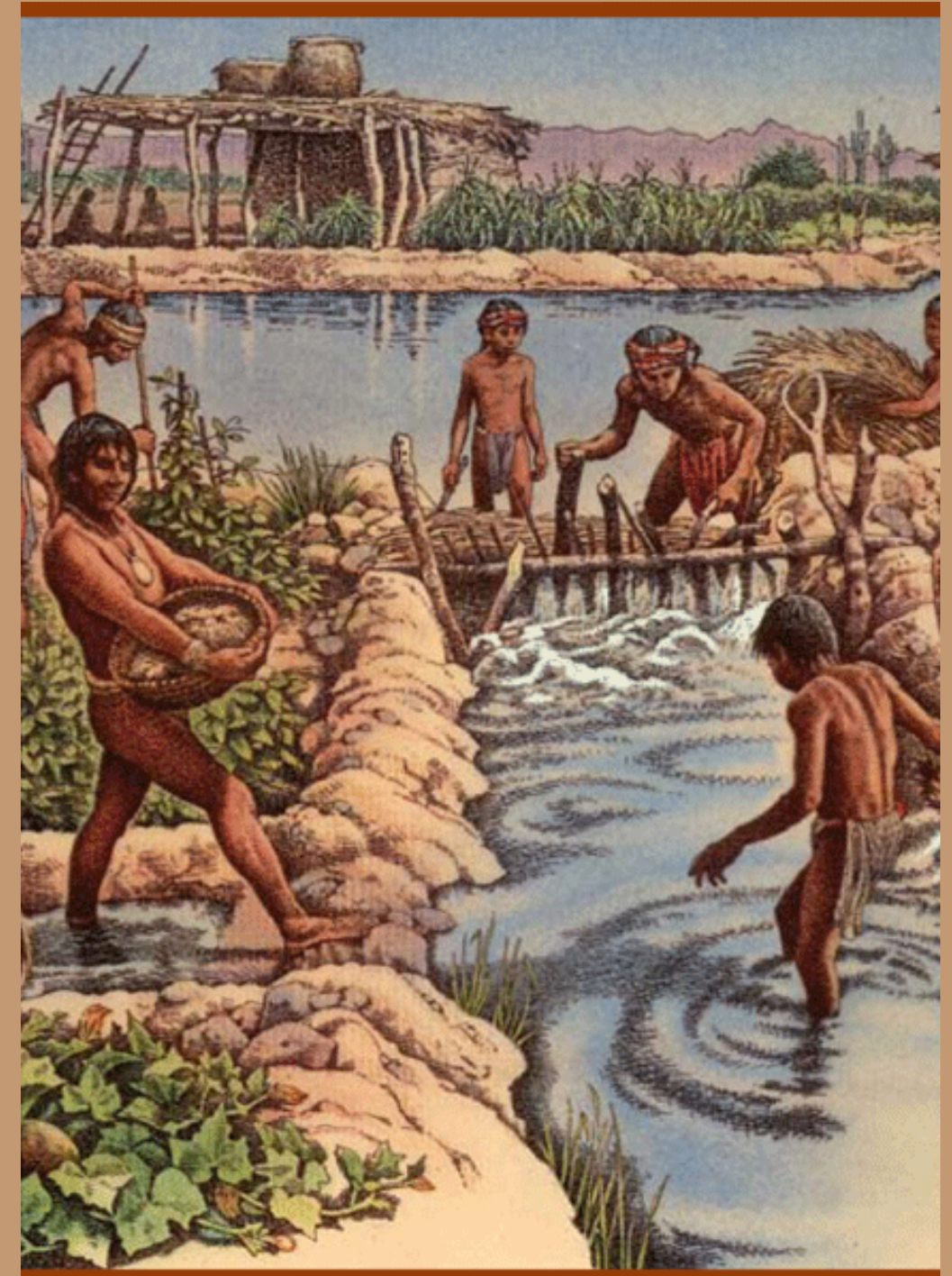
# Ethos

*We:mt* (working together) -

- O'odham society functioned as a whole rather than focusing on individual needs
- Everything was shared – resources, shelter, labor. If something needed doing, the Community saw to it *together*.

*Wohocudadag* (beliefs) -

- This communal sense did not stop with the people of the land. To the O'odham, the sense of community extended to their environment as well.
- Everything was there for a reason and served a purpose. The land, the animals, the plants and the people were all responsible for each other.



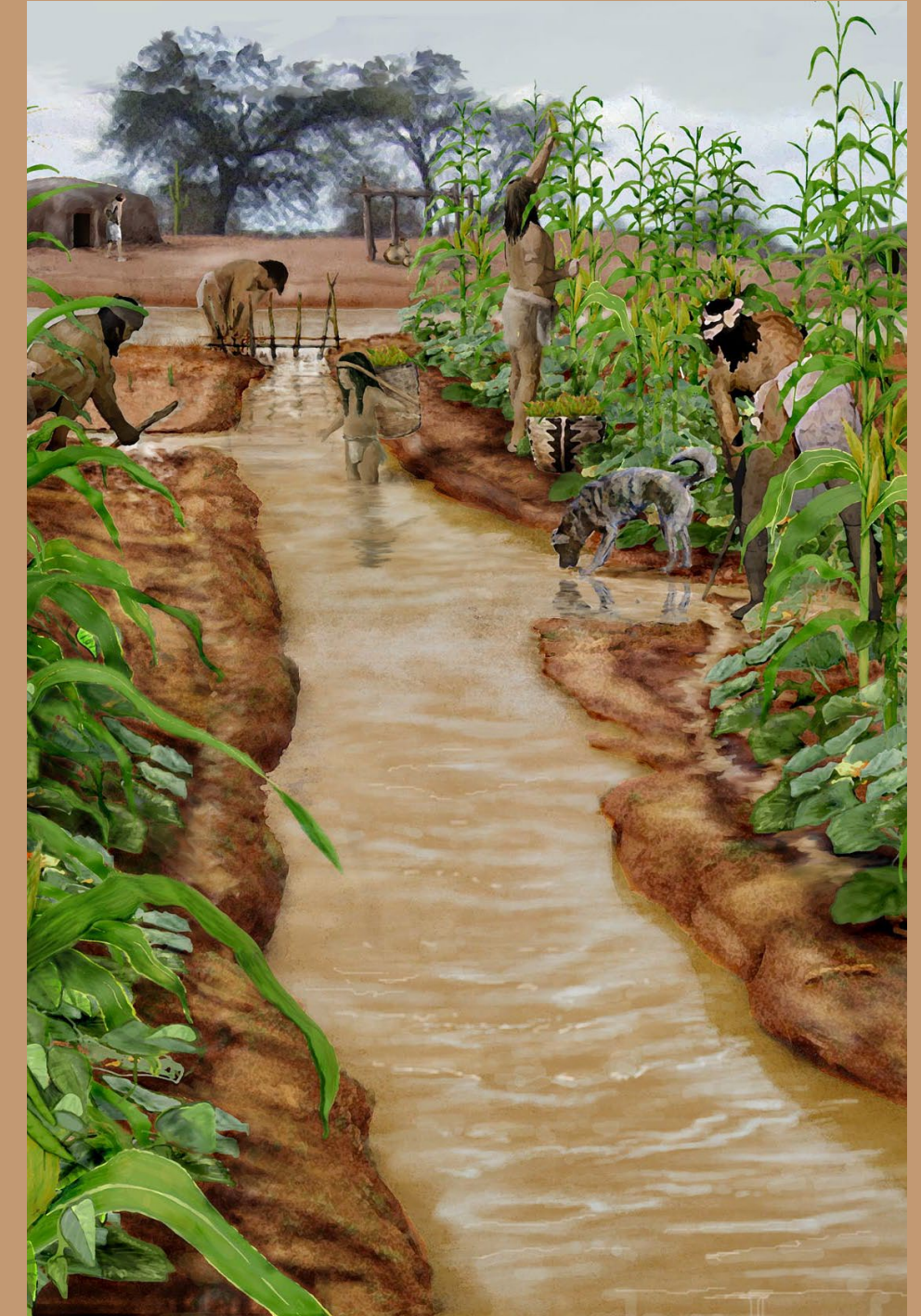
# O'odham Living

## *Himdag* (way of living)

- Survival in the Sonoran landscape was (and still is) challenging given its natural attributes
- This arduous existence however was made possible by their system of beliefs and ingenuity
- The O'odham listened to the Land and chose to live *with* it in harmony (rather than to find a way to conquer it)

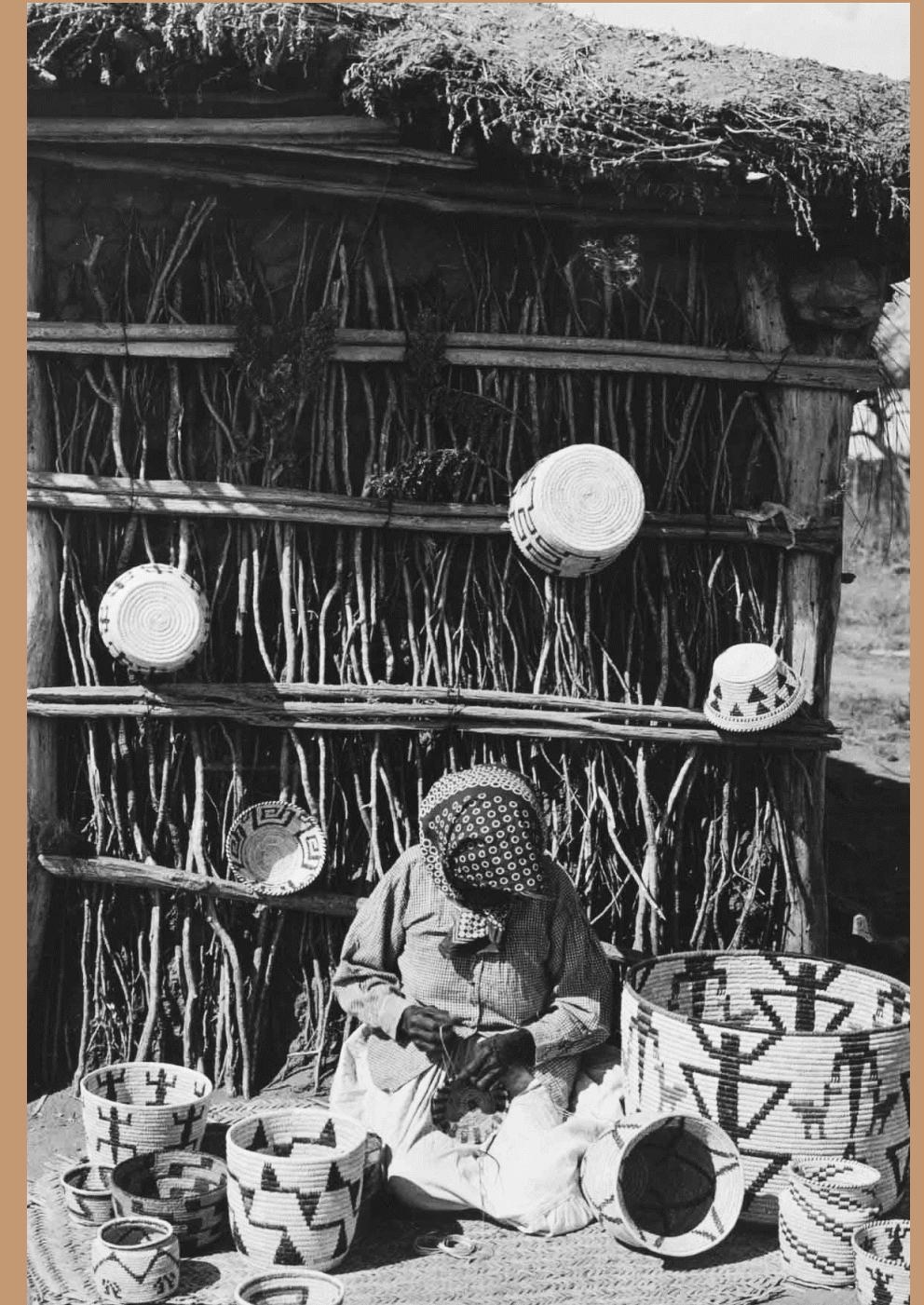
## *Apedag* (well-being)

- Consequently this ideology brought with it the cultivation of a lifestyle that was healthy not only to the body but to the heart, mind and spirit.



# Social Interaction

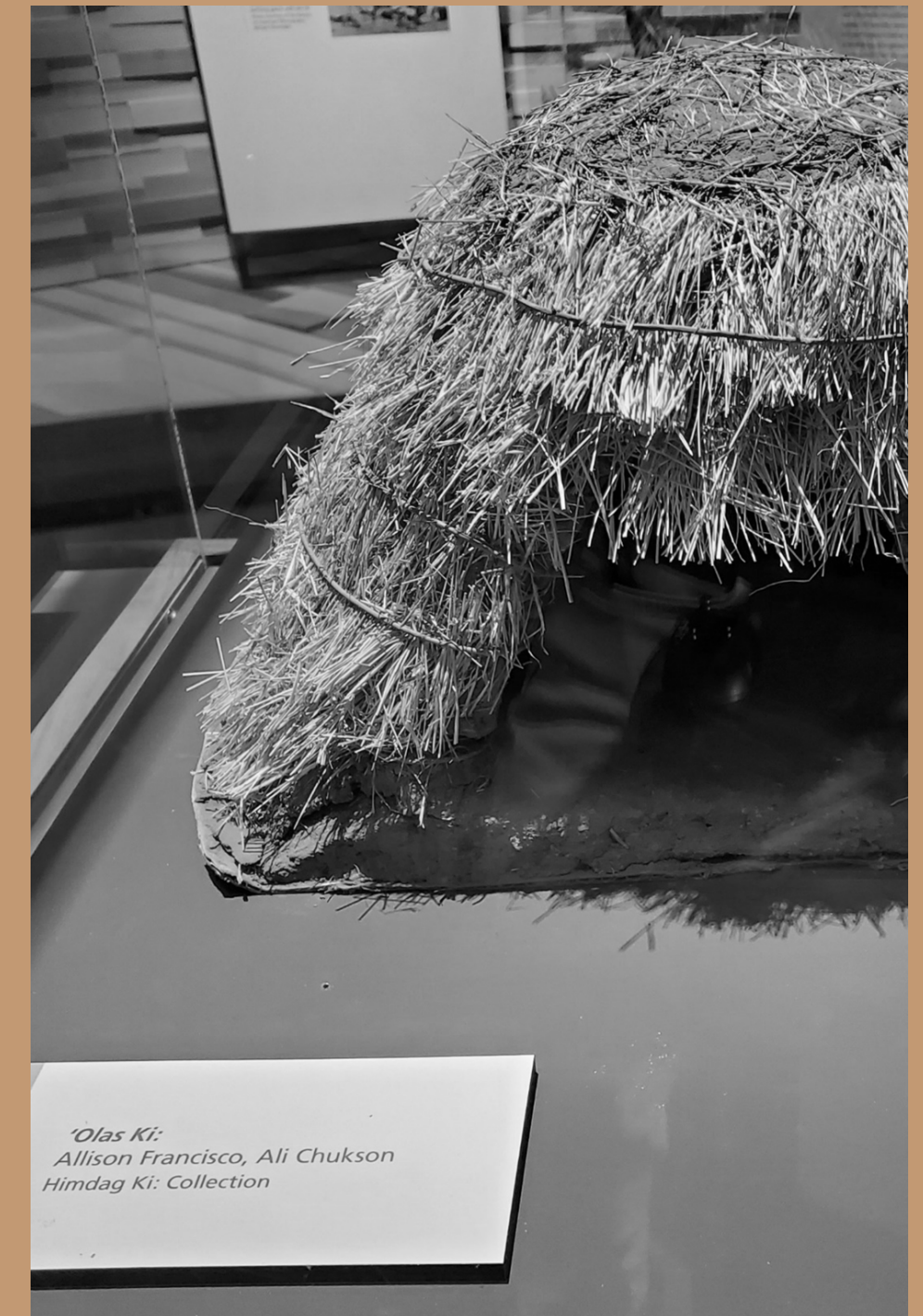
- Much of the Tohono O'odham's material culture was either taken, destroyed or lost to the elements
- Until the late 1990's the Tohono O'odham had no official written form of language
- Despite this their Himdag has survived largely in part through their tradition of *Storytelling*
- Because of its significant role in cultural heritage, the act of telling a story has become a *trusted* way of communication and is characteristic of the O'odham



# Traditional Medicine

In both earlier days and modern times, matters of healthcare are considered to be very private matters:

- Traditional Healers known as Makai practiced healing sometimes in an 'Olas Ki
- Traditional Medicine remains in practice to this day
- As a Healthcare provider you may encounter signs of Traditional Medicine:
  - Feathers (in hair or hand)
  - Ashes (rubbed on face/forehead/hands)
  - Ribbons (around wrist/ankles)



# Western Medicine

The rule of privacy remains a significant factor at TONHC today:

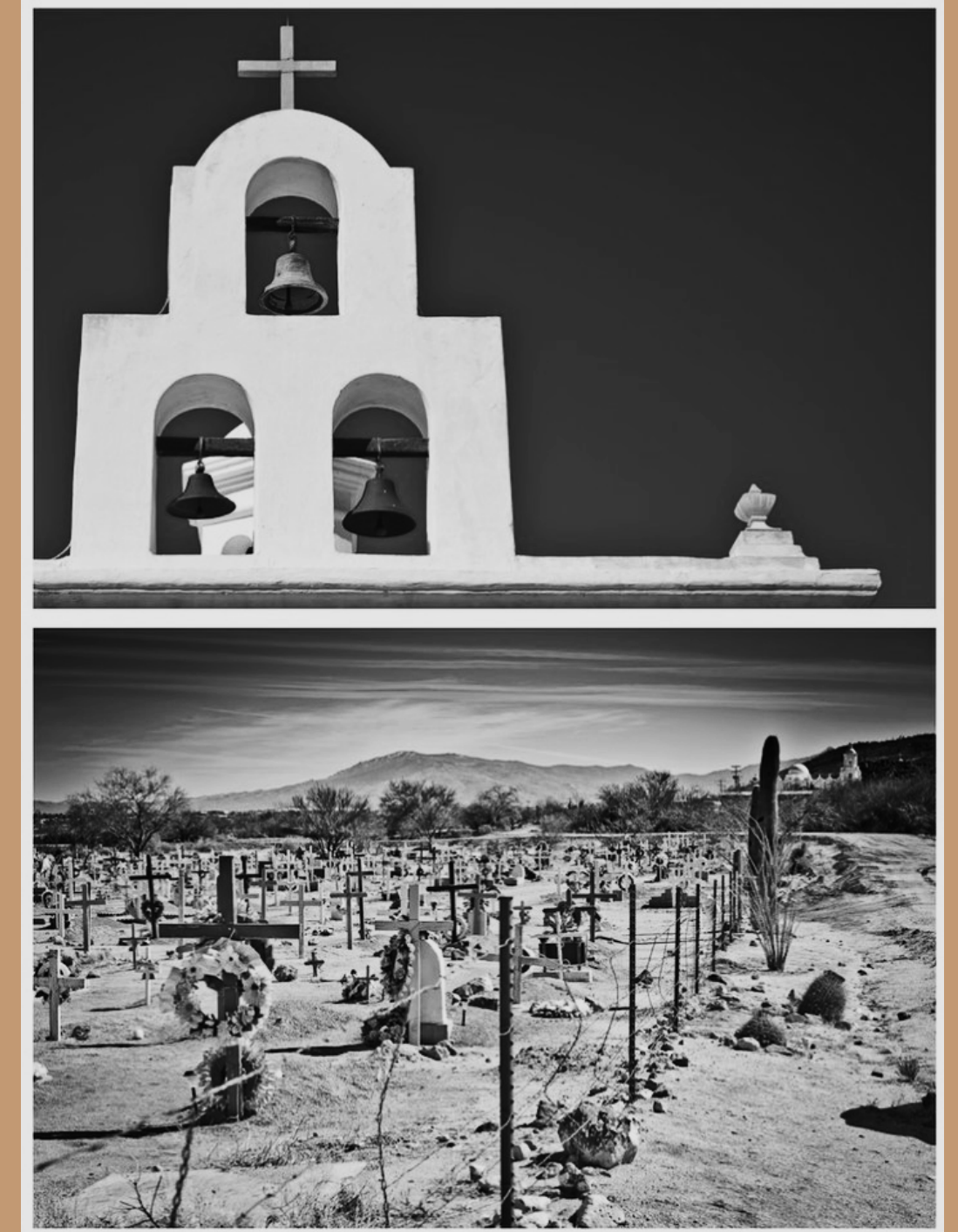
- Physicians are viewed as healers and are perceived as people of power
- This may have hampering effect on Patient/Provider communications
- A great deal of anxiety exists among the O'odham in ALL age groups regarding visits to the hospital:
  - Knowledge deficit
  - Perception of hospital's purpose



# Death and Dying

Traditional culture views the event of Death as a passing into another plane of existence.

- Last days are spent in preparation for the Journey:
  - Traditional healer may visit
  - Clay may be rubbed on the flesh and in some cases may be drank
- After one's passing there is period of 4 days of mourning proceeded by 4 days of prayers:
  - During this time, the Spirit is on the Journey from one existence to the next
  - If any part of the body is dismembered, make attempts to retain and return to family



# QUESTIONS?

“The importance of any story is ‘what is it trying to teach you.’ I’m O’odham, and I’ll always be O’odham, so these stories are a part of me. If I choose not to value my own culture, then I would have a conflict with who I am.”

*- Ron Geronimo, Tohono O’odham*

# CONTACT



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