"THIS IS MY HOME,
THIS IS MY ONLY HOME,

THIS IS THE ONLY SACRED GROUND
THAT I HAVE EVER KNOWN"

DAVE CARTER, FROM "GENTLE ARMS OF EDEN"
Board greeting

Good evening and welcome to EARTH CHANT! This evening marks the final production of Aurora Chorus' eleventh concert season, and what an exciting season it has been! Some highlights include: two sold-out winter concert performances, three successful community events, a dedicated Aurora Board on target to meet organizational planning goals, and a robust fundraising campaign that is bringing us close to our year-end objective.

As I write, I am amazed at how the Aurora community has grown in commitment and number during this 2002-2003 season. Aurora is expanding in all directions, and it feels good! To the singers, who play an enormous role in producing and publicizing the concerts, to the Aurora Board, which provides organizational guidance and direction, and to those of you who have responded to our fundraising efforts with generous contributions, I offer my deepest gratitude.

To all of you who attend our concerts and "spread the word" about Aurora Chorus, you are part of the tremendous collaborative effort that makes Aurora the success she is. May your enjoyment of tonight's performance be enhanced by knowing that you play a vital role in the concert itself, as well as in our Aurora community.

Warmest Regards,
Sarah J. Stebbins, Ph.D.
Chair, Aurora Board of Directors

Director's greeting

Dear Friends

Thank you for joining us this evening. As I write, I am preoccupied with thoughts of war and peace. No matter how one views the actions taken by our country in recent weeks, we all must face the reality of the human capacity for destruction and violence. How does one respond?

"We pray that old lies will die; that visions will dance on the land, that we will learn a song to heal the Earth..."

The women of Aurora Chorus know the power of song. It replenishes our spirits every Thursday evening when we come together to rehearse. The songs of EARTH CHANT are especially powerful. They ask us to listen -- the Earth calls to us as Lover, Teacher, Provider and, above all, Spirit. Twelfth century mystic Hildegard of Bingen writes of the Spirit:

"You are the mighty way in which every thing that is in the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth, is penetrated with connectedness, is penetrated with relatedness."

The native peoples of North America understand this "relatedness" and know that whatever we do to the Earth, and to each other, we do to ourselves. It is important to remember this ancient wisdom. Tonight, Aurora Chorus is honored to welcome artist and poet Gail Tremblay as our special guest. We also thank elder Rod McAfee of the Akimel O'odham Nation for gracing us with an invocation at the start of our musical journey.

Ms. Tremblay writes:

"...love can change the world as sure as the magic in any steady song."

Believe this. Pray... Love... Sing.

Joan Szymko, Director
Aurora Chorus

1. from "Indian Singing" ©Gail Tremblay
About Aurora Chorus

Aurora Chorus honors the strength and beauty of women’s lives through the fine art of choral singing. The chorus demonstrates the uplifting and transformative power of music. Aurora sings peace — for ourselves, for our community, and for our planet.

Since 1992, Aurora Chorus has welcomed singers at all skill levels, and maintains a membership of over 100 singers from the Portland metropolitan area. Led by director Joan Szymko (SHIM-koh) Aurora has become a source of strength and inspiration in our community through finely crafted performances of music as rich and diverse as the lives of the women who sing. Aurora presents at least two major concerts each season and makes appearances at community outreach events throughout the year.

Aurora’s Web site is www.aurorachorus.org.

Recent Portland performances include:

- International Women’s Day (March 2003)
- Peace Rally (January 2003)
- Martin Luther King Day Celebration, Chiles Center (January 2003)
- “Deep Peace,” sold out winter concert (December 2002)
- “Celebrate Our Community,” 9/11 Commemoration (September 2002)
- “Full Circle” Tenth Anniversary Concert (May 2002)

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Ticket sales account for only a portion of the substantial costs for producing our programs. We gratefully acknowledge all who have contributed goods and services that enable our programs to be realized.

Please add your support by sending a TAX DEDUCTIBLE contribution to:

Aurora Chorus • P.O. Box 80312 • Portland, OR 97280-1312
Director

Joan Szymko, now in her ninth season as director of Aurora Chorus, has over twenty years of experience as a choral conductor, composer, teacher and performer in the Pacific Northwest. Throughout her career she has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to creating and presenting quality choral music for women's voices. As resident composer for the acclaimed DO JUMP! Movement Theater (1995-2001), Szymko performed with the company at home in Portland and on tour – including runs on Broadway, the Kennedy Center and the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles.

Szymko is emerging as a choral composer of renown, and her music is now being performed by choruses across the country. Her work was showcased most recently at the national convention of the American Choral Directors' Association in New York City last February. She has received funding from the Portland Regional Arts & Culture Council (2002), an Oregon Arts Commission Individual Artist Fellowship (2001) and was selected to participate in the ASCAP Foundation's prestigious Film Scoring Workshop in LA (2001).


Guest Artist

Gail Tremblay is an artist and poet whose works draw upon the traditional culture of her Native American Onondaga/Mi'kmaq heritage. Her poetry and art point to the "natural way" and the "web of light" that is life. Originally from the northeastern part of the continent, Tremblay's connection with the Pacific Northwest dates from the late 1960s. She currently teaches programs in the visual arts and creative writing at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington.

Tremblay's works have been widely exhibited and anthologized, appearing in "Harper's Anthology of Twentieth Century Native American Poetry," "New Voices from the Longhouse," "Dancing on the Rim of the World," "Returning the Gift," and "Literature Around the Globe," among others. She has published three collections of poetry: "Night Gives Woman the Word" from F Limited Gallery, "Talking to the Grandfathers" from University of Nebraska, Omaha, and "Indian Singing" from Calyx Books (Corvallis, OR). A revised collection including new poetry and art, "Indian Singing" is a visionary quest, a work of hope that offers enduring lessons to accommodate change in our troubled times. Tremblay writes of her work:

"Indian Singing" is a book of poems about enduring in a confused world... In these poems, I am trying to speak of maintaining a conscious way of living on the Earth, a way that will not work toward creating the end of the world, but that talks of human beings adjusting to the constant change of the universe by finding ways to be in harmony with that change."
Women's Spirit Drum

The Women's Spirit Drum is a women's ceremonial drum that was birthed to give voice to women's ceremonial songs from all traditions. To indigenous peoples throughout the world, the drum represents the heartbeat of Mother Earth. As women, we are connected to the Mother and to all of Creation through our moon time, through the joy and pain of childbirth, and through the nurturing of both our children and our own creativity. The songs sung around the drum explore these aspects of being a woman. The Women's Spirit Drum honors the elders who have passed these songs on to us — may their teachings endure forever.

The Women’s Spirit Drum is led by Linda Neale. Tonight’s singers are: Sharon Roe, Linda Neale, Julia Good, Sandy Hise, Beverly Ford, Stacy Cohen, Barbara Kollmar, Yolanda Edwards and Lauri Shainski.

Linda Neale is a fourth generation Oregonian of English/Norwegian/Polish descent, raised with the reality of the Pacific Ocean, the Cascade Mountains and the High Desert in her backyard. Trained as a concert violinist, she graduated from Stanford University in psychology and spent her first three post-graduate years living and teaching on the Navajo Indian Reservation in Northern Arizona. Neale is a licensed marriage and family therapist in the state of Oregon. In 1991, she founded the Earth & Spirit Council, a non-profit educational organization which has as its mission “to help people re-establish their spiritual connection to the Earth and to engage ourselves and others in Earth-conscious living.”

Neale has participated in many indigenous ceremonies throughout North and South America, and has learned from her elders. In 1999, she became the first caretaker of the Women's Spirit Drum, and began singing indigenous women's ceremonial songs. Various medicine men and women have given her permission to teach their songs to others. Neale facilitates ceremonies throughout the Northwest and is currently writing a book with the working title “Reclaiming Ceremony.”

The Earth & Spirit Council is a volunteer organization of environmental and spiritual leaders, activists and concerned members of our community. At the heart of the Earth & Spirit Council is the belief that the spiritual dimension of life offers the greatest untapped reservoir of power, imagination and courage for meeting the challenge of the damaged Earth, calling humanity into a new relationship with the natural order. Our primary long-term goal is to facilitate a fundamental shift in the way people view and interact with the environment — to one which honors and respects the interconnection of all life. We believe that this change in perspective is essential for halting environmental destruction and alleviating the serious ecological and social problems we face.

Why is Ceremony Important?

By Linda Neale

If you ask people where they are most likely to have had a spiritual experience in their lives, they usually do not say sitting in front of a television, or at work, or in church. Most people talk about a personal experience with Nature, or a near-death experience, or an experience in some kind of ceremony.

What do we mean by “ceremony?” The word ceremony comes from the Latin caerimoniam, which means sacredness or a sacred rite. “Sacred” comes from sacre, to set apart or consecrate, and is related to words meaning both “sane” and “safe.” So, in ceremony we create a space, with much preparation and work, which is sacred, set apart from our everyday life, sane, and safe. In this sacred space, anything can happen. We may plan how it is going to be, but in real ceremony, another dimension opens and affects the best-laid plans. We create a sacred space by asking God, or the spirits, for help in creating our ceremony, and by saying thank you. If we ask for help in a respectful and humble way, we almost always get it. That is why ceremonies help people to experience a teaching rather than just read about it.

When learning occurs in this fashion, it becomes more than just an intellectual understanding; it is absorbed into one’s entire being. As Linda Palladin says in her book “Ceremonies for Change,” “ceremony gives us a way to channel our energy and focus our mental intent. This unique form of communication sets it apart from customary expression and embeds the message in the deeper levels of the mind.”
Program Notes

We begin tonight’s program with a Lakota Sioux Prayer, honoring Mother Earth and Father Sky, and calling to the Four Directions for guidance. Cherokee Morning Song is also sung to the four directions, with thankfulness for witnessing another morning; pop singer Rita Coolidge, of Cherokee descent, arranged and recorded this traditional song on her 1997 release, Walela. Cherokee artist and poet Jimmy Durham paints images of creatures, trees, plants, storms — all dancing in our next piece, Sky Dances. Roy Brown’s composition captures the essence of the dance where humans are just one of the dancers in the cosmos.

Poet Dar N’Var tells of a more individual relationship with the earth in The Earth is Singing My Name — “I heard the Earth calling my name... she sang to me a song of myself.” In Earth Chant, the relationship deepens; the earth is lover, pain bearer, counselor: “Can I love as you love? I ask of the water, rhythm of my desire.” The rhythms of the waters are the rhythms of Yemaya, the Orisha of the oceans. The oceans gave birth to life as we know it, and Yemaya is called “The Mother of the Orisha.” Stemming from the spiritual beliefs of the Yoruba of West Africa, Orisha are guardian spirits and aspects of the Supreme Being that are manifested in nature. Yoruban slaves carried their beliefs to the New World, and the chant we sing is Afro-Cuban, translating: “my Mother Yemaya Asegu is the owner of the waters.” The forces of nature are always calling to us. The results of listening to and heeding this call can be delightful, as in Julia Jumps, or deeply healing, as She Speaks to us in all manner of things.

After intermission we welcome special guest Gail Tremblay to the stage to read from her poetry. Her collection, “Indian Singing,” is “a book about finding ways to endure in a confused world. It celebrates cultures that understand the need for ceremony and that respect the Earth as the supporter of life.” (GT) Aurora Chorus returns to the stage singing Great Spirit, composed by chorus member Joan Andrews.

Oregon composer Ron Jeffers heard Ms. Tremblay read her poetry in the mid 1990s and was moved to create a work based on poems from Indian Singing. His masterful setting includes spoken as well as sung text. We are honored to have Gail Tremblay as our narrator.

Chief Seattle, also spelled Sealth, (1790-1866) was chief of the Duwamish, Suquamish and other Puget Sound tribes. The text of This We Know is thought to be from his famous speech of 1854. There are many versions of the speech, and the authenticity of the version that Joan Szymkic used for her setting has been debated. Whatever the source, the words are true to indigenous beliefs that “all things are connected — whatever we do to the web of life, we do to ourselves” — words that must be heeded for the sake of all life on earth.

The Earth is mother, the source of all life, and Adama, an Israeli folk song, joyfully and emphatically celebrates this fact. Dave Carter’s Gentle Arms of Eden says it another way: “This is my home, this is my only home, this is the only sacred ground that I have ever known.” We are but one species on the planet, but in a geological blink of the eye have wielded all manner of destruction upon the Earth’s ecosystems. We have been “filled with greed and will” and have turned a blind eye toward much of the defilement of our Mother Earth. Why Am I Painting the Livingroom? helps us laugh at ourselves — those of us who aren’t blind but retreat to our own little worlds, perhaps to avoid the feelings of powerlessness and grief that accompany the enormity of the struggle to create positive change. But really, how do we respond? What can we do? Gail Tremblay offers these words:

Together women struggle to remember how to live, nurture one another, and pray that life will fill their wombs, that men and women will come to Earth who know that breath is a sacred gift before the rising sun and love can change the world as sure as the magic in any steady song.

Aurora closes with two such steady songs. Ise Oluwa is a celebration song from Nigeria — “That which the creator has made can never be destroyed” — sung in Yoruba alongside the words of 12th century mystic, artist and theologian Hildegard of Bingen, who proclaims, “injustice to nature will cause hardships on humanity itself — for creation demands justice.” We end with a song of praise: “we sing, returning home to the Blue Green Hills of Earth.” Our only home.
In Dreams

In dreams, I dance all night around the drum; I pray on mountain tops at rising sun; hummingbirds resist the mountain wind, touch flower throats with narrow sticky tongues. The planet whirls and raptors soar and dive; creation wakes the wit; I am alive.

We pray that old lies will die; that visions will dance on land, that we will learn a song to heal the Earth and bless the four directions, the five colors of people and corn. That everyone, black, white, yellow, red, and mixed will see the sacred light that weaves creation into a dazzling pattern where life is supported by the interaction of every creature the force that created thinks of. We stand on the beach by the edge of the water and weep, let grief wash the madness away until we see the beauty in the sun.

Light wakes us up from life’s nightmare and we sing.

We Wake the Day

We wake; we wake the day, the light rising in us like the sun — our breath a prayer brushing against the feathers in our hands...

...Light dances in the body surrounds all living things — even the stones sing although their songs are infinitely slower than the ones we learn from trees. No human voice lasts long enough to make such music sound...

We wake; we wake the day, the light rising in us like the sun.

Dark Nights

On dark nights, when thoughts fly like nightbirds looking for prey, it is important to remember to bless with names every creature that comes to mind, to sing a thankful song and hold the magic of the whole creation close in the heart, to watch light dance and know the sacred is alive.

Sehia: rak remember it
Thó nonkwá that way
ionsasewé ’tsi go back there
nisewweienndó:ten. to your culture
Séhia: rak remember it
Nitesewehtahkwens your belief

On dark nights, when owls watch, their eyes gleaming in the black expanse of starless sky, it is important to gather the medicine bones, the eagle feathers, the tobacco bundles, the broided sweetgrass, the cedar, and the sage, and pray The world will heal and breath feed the plants that care for the nations keeping the circle whole.

Sehia: rak
Séhia: rak nitesewehtahkwens.
On dark nights, when those who think only of themselves conjure over stones and sing spells to feed their wills, it is important to give gifts and to love everything that shows itself as good. It is time to turn to the Great Mystery and know the Grandfathers have mercy on us that we may help the people to survive. ...

...On dark nights, the women whisper how they love, whisper how they gave and give until they have no more — the guilt of being empty breaks their hearts. They weep for sisters who have learned to hate, who have gone crazy and learned to hurt the fragile web that makes the people whole. Together women struggle to remember how to live, nurture one another, and pray that life will fill their wombs, that men and women will come to Earth who know that breath is a sacred gift before the rising sun and love can change the world as sure as the magic in any steady song.

Sehia: rak
Thó nonkwá ionsasewe’ tsí nisewweienndó:ten.
Séhia: rak nitesewehtahkwens.

Translations

CHEROKEE MORNING SONG

We n’ de ya ho I am of the Great Spirit, Ho!

YEMAYA

Yemaya Aseye
Yemala Alosú
My Mother Yemaya Aseye
Yemala Alosú
is the owner of the waters

ISE OLUWA

Yoruba

Ise oluwa
That which the creator has made
Kole boje ahh can never be destroyed

ADAMA

Hebrew

Ah adama O Earth
Bo-sh’fele in the low places
u-va-rama and in the heights
Bos-mera u-va-chama in the rain and in the sun
At iemen, adama You are our Mother, Earth
At admat kol chai You are the (blood) of all life
Ba-ye’o u-va-sama In hunger and in thirst
Ba-m’kar ha-n’shama in the source of the soul
At iemen, adama You are our Mother, Earth
At admat kol chai You are the (blood) of all life
Ah adama O Earth

Membership & Event Information

Want to sing with Aurora or plan ahead to hear our next concert?

Register to join or add your name to our mailing list to receive advance notice about future performances.

Sign up in the lobby!

For more information call 503-AURORA-1 or visit www.AuroraChorus.org
EARTH CHANT
SATURDAY, APRIL 19 - 4PM & 8PM

PRE-CONCERT MUSIC
WOMEN'S SPIRIT DRUM, LED BY LINDA NEALE
BLESSING
ELDER ROD MCAFEE, AKIMEL O'ODHAM TRIBE

AURORA CHORUS

Sioux Prayer
Cherokee Morning Song
Sky Dances
The Earth Is Singing My Name
Yemaya
Earth Chant
Julia Jumps
She Speaks

Joan Szymko
words, trad. Lakota
trad. arr. Rita Coolidge
additional arr. Szymko
Roy Brown
poem, Jimmy Durham
arr. Jennifer Stasack
Marjan Helms
poem, Dar N'var
trad. Afro-Cuban
arr. Szymko
Colleen Haas
vocal arr. Diane Benjamin
Harmony Grisman
Susan Osborn
arr. Szymko

INTERMISSION

INSTRUMENTALISTS

JUDY A. ROSE
PIANO, PERCUSSION
DALE TOLLIVER
CELLO
ALAN JUZA
OBODE
LINDA NEALE
HAND DRUM
KELLY MATHIS
PERCUSSION
JOE JANIGA
PERCUSSION
DAVE MULLANY
GUITAR
EILEEN HAGEN
ACCORDEON
CHRIS KOKESI
FIDDLE
AURORA CHORUS
WOMEN IN HARMONY FOR PEACE
JOAN SZYMKO, DIRECTOR

POETRY READING BY SPECIAL GUEST
GAIL TREMBLAY

AURORA CHORUS

Great Spirit

Indian Singing
1. In Dreams
2. We Wake the Day
3. Dark Nights

This We Know

Adama

Why Am I Painting the Livingroom?

Gentle Arms of Eden

Ise Oluwa Kole Baje Oh

Blue Green Hills of Earth

WOMEN’S SPIRIT DRUM

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<th>WOMEN’S SPIRIT DRUM</th>
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<tr>
<td>LINDA NEALE</td>
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<td>STACY COHEN</td>
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<td>BEVERLY FORD</td>
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<td>JULIA GOOD</td>
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Joan Andrews
based on trad. text

Ron Jeffers
Gail Tremblay

Joan Szymko

Isreali folk Song
arr. Szymko

Pete and Lou Berryman
arr. Jane Ramseyer Miller

Dave Carter
arr. Szymko

trad. Yoruba (Nigeria)
add. text, Hildegard of Bingen
translated by G. Uhlein

Kim Oler
arr. Carl Strommen
cello, oboe arr. Szymko

narrator: Gail Tremblay
HAND DRUM: Linda Neale

soloist: Lesley Sepetoski

soloists: Weisha Mize & Bonnie Singer

singer: Robin Sutherland
Are you moved...

TO SING WITH AURORA?
Aurora Chorus welcomes singers of all skill levels from the Portland metropolitan area. We are pleased to answer your questions, or to place you on our waiting list for next term!

TO HELP... BUT MAYBE NOT TO SING?
Aurora Chorus is always looking for volunteers to join our community of strength and inspiration, and to support our vision of "POWERFUL WOMEN SINGING PEACE." We have a place for you here!

TO LEARN ABOUT SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES?
Aurora Chorus is working to expand our reach into the community, and is seeking sponsors who support our vision. Would you like to contribute financially to the health of Aurora?

PLEASE CALL 503-AURORA-1 (503-287-6721) or E-MAIL info@aurorachorus.org

Full Circle

CELEBRATING A DECADE OF WOMEN SINGING PEACE.
Aurora Chorus comes "Full Circle" with a tenth anniversary CD recording of chorus and audience favorites, new favorites and featuring two powerful premieres, works commissioned especially for Aurora's tenth Anniversary: "I AM" by music director Joan Szymko and "A Circle of Women Singing" by our very first guest artist, Betsy Rose. Add this very joyous and heartfelt celebration to your CD library or give the perfect gift!

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Aurora Chorus: women in harmony for peace

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- Margaret Blake
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- Elaine Boll
- Barbara Bonner
- Sherry Briskley
- Chris Brown
- Main Burns
- Katelin Brewer Colle
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- Diane Dickey
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- Barbara Gray
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- Ann Heimlich
- Margaret Jenkins
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- Diane Kneyed
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- Marylin Lindberg
- Belle Mann
- Arla Melum
- Carolyn Parsons
- Mary Priester
- Ellen Reardon
- Gillian Schmidt
- Marylyss Schwengels
- Deb Smith
- Ruth Sperter
- Catherine Thomsen
- Carol Walker

ALTO 2
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- Pat Blanco
- Rachel Brooks
- Sharilyn Cohn
- Jan Conwin
- Jennie Finn
- Lisa Fithian-Barrett
- Victoria Gill
- Janette Hanks
- Maryna Hazilza
- Lee Johannes
- Deb King
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- Linda Milone
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- Jane Moore
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- Gwen Purus
- Laurie Shantellenvin
- Brenda Spicer
- Pris Taylor
- Carol Timper (CJ)

* Administrative section leader
** Music section leader

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AUDIO RECORDING
- Dan Mincich

FLOWERS
- Clarence Walker Flowers

Special Thanks
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- Susan Kaefer
- Rod McAfee
- Linda Neale
- Gail Tremblay
- Pacific Crest Community School
- Saint Mary's Academy
- Patricia Thurston
- Pat Barr

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- Rita Petrase

PROGRAM
- Gwen Purus, editor
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- Diane Kenedy, proof reader

TICKETS
- Kira Phifer, co-chair
- Eva Hueneke, co-chair

VOLUNTEERS
- Gahlya Auel
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- Chet Caruthers
- Marya Hazilza
- Lee Johannes
- Brenda Spicer
- Pris Taylor
- Carol Timper (CJ)

* Administrative section leader
** Music section leader

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- Judy Wener
- Ann Wilson
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Women's Spirit Drum
- Linda Neale, leader
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- Yolanda Edwards
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- Julia Good
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