

SHAMANIC ENERGY

Healing land is her business



By Erin White

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Susan Luzader Prust bought five acres of land on North Craycroft Road for her startup business PetSet — a sort of Miraval for dogs.

She loved the sprawling space, dotted with green and packed with decades-old mesquite trees, but parts of it felt “a little spooky and scary.”

The businesswoman worried her company wouldn't flourish amid the negative energy she felt. Then Prust hired Pam Hale Trachta, a shamanic energy healer who runs a business called On Solid Ground, to help her “heal” the land.

Energy healings, particularly in forms like Reiki, have surged in acceptance in recent years. The tradition dates back centuries among native South Americans, and the year-and-a-half-old Ealy Center for Natural Healing here, which is licensed by the state Board for Private Postsecondary Education, works with clients and teaches energy healing.

Trachta comes to shamanic healing through a circuitous path — after years in the suit-and-tie world of business. Educated at Stanford



Pam Hale Trachta, in red, kneels with client Susan Luzader Prust on Prust's land.

University, Trachta worked as a fund-raiser for the school and for the University of Arizona before moving into organizational consulting. After she was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2000, she discovered shamanic cleansing in her search for treatment.

SEE SHAMANIC / E5

On Solid Ground

- To contact Pam Hale Trachta, call 825-5463.
- Prices can vary, but diagnostics, including a written report, start at \$500. Extra ceremonies, like the despacho (or offering), cost \$150. She asks that clients allow at least three hours for the initial interview. Trachta will bid for large jobs.

SHAMANIC

Continued from Page E1

She sees her new gig, which the healer describes as “space cleansing and blessing service,” as a logical extension of her business experience — bridging the hazy concepts of the spiritual with the practical, day-to-day methods of business success.

That's reflected in the name of her business: On Solid Ground.

“Have you ever seen a certain spot where business after business fails? Twice is a coincidence,” Trachta says. “Three times isn't.”

She visited her son-in-law's company in Colorado three years ago and says she got a negative sense as she walked past a file cabinet.

“My son told me that that was where they kept the books and that they thought the accountant was skimming money,” she says.

Years of traditional consulting left Trachta searching for a missing link and feeling her work incomplete. She tired of instructing companies to replace personnel and of crafting a new strategy only to leave the overall “energy” unexamined.

After Prust hired her, Trachta walked the acreage, calling in the four directions to create sacred space. Trachta then set out to find the heart of the land — what she considers the energy center.

“It is spiritual work — there's no way around that,” she says, “but as soon as you mention that, people start picturing ghosts.”

That's not an accurate idea of what she does, she says. “I work as a bridge to invisible influences that can be worked with to assist our quality of life.”

She struggles to verbalize the process in concrete terms. “It's just a knowing,” she says. “All of a sudden, I got to a spot and felt sadness, a lump in my throat, and I ask, ‘Is this the heart of the land?’”

The two women sat on the land, and both say that, in their mind's eye, they saw a young Apache man who told them he was sad because he'd had to leave.

After talking with the spirits still on the land, Trachta recommended a corn ceremony for healing. The two women layered tissue paper with symbolic bits — stickers of dogs, flower petals to represent plant life,

sugar for Mother Earth, pink sugar for attracting clients — and buried the *despacho*, or offering, at the spot Trachta identified as the heart of the land.

The ceremony, Prust says, was performed to create the type of energy that will draw people to her business.

“I want people to think of this spot and smile,” she says.

Trachta's clients quickly admit the far-outness of the idea.

“People are probably saying, ‘What is up with this wacko?’”

Continue >



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Pam Hale Trachta chants with client Susan Luzader Prust at a spot on Prust's property where they buried an offering to the spirit of the land.

Prust says. "But I really believe that whenever you live on a piece of property you leave a footprint. I wanted to know what footprints were on the property."

Peggy Bendel, who hired Trachta to look at her newly bought property near the Dragoon Mountains, says she felt unnerved by being the first person to build on the land.

"There's no question that when you bring in a bulldozer, as we've already done, there are plants we're killing, there are animals whose homes we're destroying."

She says that some of Trachta's intuitions agreed with scientific studies.

"She sensed the way the fleeing animals had run and said, 'I think you're likely to find some

water around here. It was almost precisely where the scientific study said we would find water and where we were going to dig a well," Bendel says.

Not everyone, clearly, is convinced. Skeptic Stephen Barrett, who heads up Quackwatch, calls the idea "preposterous on its face."

He says the claims — which deal largely with intuition and feeling — can't be tested and, therefore, can't be verified. The skeptic says Trachta sells "her imagination," and he interprets the land cleansing as "giving reassurance to people who already have supernatural beliefs. If people are willing to pay for reassurance, they're free to do that."

Trachta counters by saying the information discovered

through imagination isn't invalid. And her clients say it's money well spent.

"I felt comfortable having someone come in and bless the land," Bendel says, adding that she doesn't see how Trachta's business varies too far from widely accepted feng shui.

Ellen Schneider, a feng shui specialist who works with Trachta, says she sees the work as "balancing." She thinks energy cleansing will enter the mainstream as feng shui or yoga have.

"It can be based on a business model, and there's going to be a time when these services are absolutely part of it."

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