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Gila River Indian Community Marks 21 Years Since Historic Water Settlement

**Miguel Sallard
Jeston Morris**
Gila River Indian News

CHANDLER, Ariz. — Nov. 10, 2025, The Gila River Indian Community celebrated the 21st anniversary of the landmark Water Settlement Act, a turning point in the tribe's long struggle to reclaim its river and restore sovereignty over its most vital resource.

More than 500 Community members gathered at Rawhide Event Center to celebrate the Gila River Indian Community's holiday known as GRIC Historic Water Settlement Day, a date that honors decades of struggle, perseverance, and the defense of the community's rightful access to water. Entire families, from young children to respected elders, came together to commemorate a defining chapter in the Community's history.

Throughout the ceremony, historical photographs were displayed, depicting the early rivers that once flowed through the Gila River when these lands were home to the ancestors of the tribe. In those times, agriculture, corn, beans, squash, and cotton, thrived thanks to the steady flow



Gov. Lewis, honored Chairwoman Amelia Flores with a custom-made O'odham water plaque award presented by Miss Gila River, Gabrielle Garcia and Jr. Miss Gila River Paige Thomas. J. Morris/GRIN

of water that nourished not only the fields but also the cultural and spiritual life of the people.

Passed in 2004 as part of the Arizona Water Settlements Act, the legislation secured 653,500 acre feet of water annually for the Community from the Gila, Salt, and Verde Rivers, the Central

Arizona Project, and groundwater. It resolved decades of litigation and negotiation, ending uncertainty for water users across central Arizona while restoring long denied rights to the Akimel O'otham-and Pee Posh peoples. "This is truly a great water rights day," said Gov. Lewis. "This is

one of my favorite days. The water rights day is so important because it is a rebirth for our community. This celebration honors all of our ancestors.

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Tribal Social Services' Christmas Party Brings Joy to GRIC Youth

Jeston Morris
Gila River Indian News

GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY — On Dec. 7, Gila River Tribal Social Services hosted its annual Christmas party at Wild Horse Pass Casino, bringing together more than 450 youth for a day of celebration, community and holiday cheer.

Teens and young adults, many accompanied by adults, signed in at the ballroom entrance before enjoying entertainment, games and information booths from Gila River departments. The event featured raffle prizes and festive decorations throughout the ballroom, lobby and breezeway.

Continued on Page 8



More than 450 youth gather for festivities, cultural traditions, encouragement and take pictures with Santa Claus. Jeston Morris/GRIN



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December 2025

- Family Planning
- Flu Clinics
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Reminder!

GILA RIVER HEALTH CARE'S
Upcoming December Closures

Christmas Day, December 25th

NORMAL BUSINESS HOURS WILL RESUME FRIDAY, 12/26/25.

New Year's Day, January 1st

NORMAL BUSINESS HOURS WILL RESUME FRIDAY, 1/2/26.

If you need immediate assistance, please call 911 or visit the Emergency Department at Hu Hu Kam Memorial Hospital. For any information on services open during the holiday, please call Gila River Health Care's main line (520) 562-3321.

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Four Tribes Meet in Tucson to Address Key Issues



Congresswoman Adelita Grijalva joins Tribal Leaders from Ak-Chin Indian Community, Gila River Indian Community, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community and Tohono O'odham Nation in Tucson for the Four Tribes Meeting. Emma Hughes/GRIN

Miguel Sallard
Managing Editor

TUCSON, Ariz. (Dec. 6) Leaders from four Tribal Nations gathered Saturday at the Desert Diamond Casino to discuss serious concerns affecting Indigenous communities across Arizona.

The meeting included Gabriel Lopez, chairman of the Ak-Chin Indian Community; Regina Antone, lieutenant governor of the Gila River Indian Community; Martin Harvier, president of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community; and Verlon M. Jose, chairman of the Tohono O'odham Nation.

Key topics

Gaming and predictive markets: Tribal leaders examined the future of casinos as online betting expands.

Congressional budget and appropriations activity:

Discussion centered on how federal decisions affect tribal sovereignty and funding.

Upcoming Legislation-Voting policy restrictions:

Leaders emphasized the need to increase voter participation, particularly among young people.

Border Matters:

Concerns were raised about the impact of U.S.-Mexico border policies on tribal members.

Gila River Indian Community: Banishment/Disenrollment:

The Ordinance is still under review, with final adoption dependent on council approval and member input.

Congresswoman Adelita Grijalva welcomed

Newly elected Congresswoman Adelita Grijalva attended the meeting, receiving congratulations from tribal leaders. Grijalva pledged to represent Tribal Nations in Congress and strengthen collaboration.



Congresswoman Adelita Grijalva stresses, unity, working together is the key. Emma Hughes/GRIN

"We must work together to find solutions to the challenges our communities face," Grijalva said.

Lt. Gov. Antone added: "We are here to support you, and we are thankful that you have advocated for us. Together we are stronger. Our 22 Tribal Nations in Arizona are powerful when we

Broader significance

The meeting underscored the growing importance of tribal unity in Arizona, where 22 federally recognized nations continue to face challenges ranging from federal policy shifts to economic pressures. Leaders emphasized that while each com-



Lt. Governor Regina Antone affirms the strength of Arizona's 22 Tribal Nations. Emma Hughes/GRIN

stand united."

Martin Harvier highlighted the need to protect members from Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids, citing a recent case in which a Tribal member was detained after agents failed to recognize tribal identification. Verlon M. Jose noted that Transportation Security Administration agents often do not recognize Tribal IDs at airports, despite their validity in federal offices.

Councilmember Joseph Manuel Jr. of Gila River said gaming remains strong: "Gaming will not disappear. It continues to grow, and our casinos will remain vital to our communities."

community faces unique challenges, shared concerns such as border enforcement, voting access, and recognition of tribal identification documents demand a united response

The presence of Congresswoman Adelita Grijalva was seen as a symbolic bridge between tribal governments and federal representation, offering hope for more responsive legislation. Attendees agreed that continued collaboration, both among tribes and with allies in Congress, will be vital to protecting cultural heritage, expanding economic opportunities, and ensuring that tribal nations remain central to Arizona's future.

Water Rights Day 2025 at Rawhide Event Center

From Front Page

The Colorado River Indian Tribe (CRIT) has formally acknowledged the Colorado River as a personhood. The Colorado River is a living being in CRIT cosmology," he added.

P-MIP Director David DeJong gave a historical presentation of Gila River water settlement day. After the event, Dr. DeJong gave a reflection, the 21st Annual Water Settlement was no different since its meaning and significance are deeply embedded in the collective Community



Gov. Stephen Roe Lewis with opening remarks. Emma Hughes/GRIN

honor those who dedicated their lives to bringing the water home.

This includes every Akimel O'odham and Pee Posh as well as the leadership. It is a time to honor those such as former governors Tommy White, Greg Mendoza, Donald Antone, Richard Narcia, and current governor Stephen Roe Lewis, as well as all the past governors, council leaders, water users, growers, and Community members and friends who fought hard to keep the vision alive and worked to bring a water settlement to reality. All the Community should celebrate this day and reflect on the goodness of Creator God and give Him the glory and honor.

CRIT Chairwoman Amelia Flores was an invited guest who gave a special remark. The Colorado River Indian Tribe is located on the banks of the Colorado River in Parker, Ariz. The tribe has a unique relationship with the river. She introduces herself in the Mojave language.

"Celebrate your water resources and your people in the community. I want to acknowledge the elders and thank them for passing down the native knowledge to the next generation. I would like to acknowledge Rodney Lewis, who championed the Gila River Water Settlement Act of 2004. He made this celebration a reality. He left a legacy for the Gila River Indian Community, Arizona tribes, and Indian Country," said Chairwoman Flores.

"All the tribal nations in the Colorado River basin found themselves at the critical crossroad. How we choose to

use this living resource will have lasting consequences for future generations," she added.

As a token of appreciation, Gov. Lewis honored Chairwoman Flores with a custom-made O'odham water plaque award designed by former Miss Gila River, Lisa Hendricks. Chairwoman Flores was honored with a bird dance by Sundust and Maricopa Birds. Mojave and Maricopa belong to the Yuman language family.



Gila River EMS Honor Guard. Jeston Morris/GRIN



The Community presented plaques to leaders whose work continues to protect and restore vital water resources. Emma Hughes/GRIN

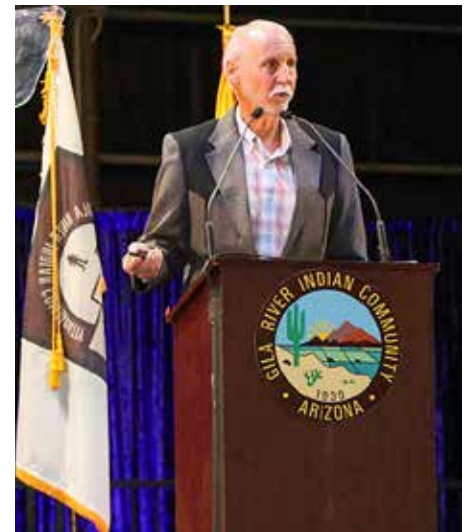
Dustin Sherer, Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science within the Department of Interior, gave a special remark. Gov. Lewis honored him with the O'odham water plaque award.

Several Arizona elected officials could not attend, but they appeared via video to deliver their remarks. U.S. Senators Mark Kelly and Ruben Gallego, District 2 Representative Eli Crane, Central Arizona Project CEO Brenda Burman, and several others were among those who appeared.

The water leaders who contributed to the Water Settlement Act of 2004 were honored with water plaques. The team includes former Gov. Dana R. Norris Sr., Gov. William R. Rhodes, Gov. Richard P. Narcia, and Rodney Lewis. Former Lt. Gov. Cecil Antone and former Gov. Donald Dewski's catered for the celebration.

Eagleheart provided live music entertainment. Council Representative Joseph Manuel, Jr., played the drums. They entertain the audience with the following music list: Heaven's Cumbia, Ty's Cumbia, Made in Japan, I Never Lie, Cover You in Kisses, Guitars in Cadillacs, Looking for Love, Wrapped, Seminole Wind, Aces Wild, Tennessee Whiskey, and Fire Road. Community members celebrated by dancing.

Community members celebrated by dancing.



P-MIP Director David DeJong gave a historical presentation of Gila River Water Settlement Day. J.Morris/GRIN



DGA Meeting Addresses Regional Challenges on Water, Economy, and the Environment

CPAO/GRIN

PHOENIX, Ariz. The Democratic Governors Association (DGA) held its annual meeting on December 5 and 6 at the Arizona Biltmore in Phoenix, where governors and regional leaders discussed the most pressing challenges facing Western states, with a particular focus on water, the economy, and environmental issues.



“Tribal, state, and federal cooperation is essential to ensuring a stable future for our communities.” Said Gov. Lewis.

Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs, Colorado Governor Jared Polis, and New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham participated in the event. The main panel included Gila River Indian Community Governor Stephen Roe Lewis; Bryan Greene, Vice President of the National Association of Realtors; Jim Shandalov, National Vice President of NextEra Energy Resources; and representatives from

Salt River Project. The discussion was moderated by Kiki McLean, Treasurer of the DGA.

One of the central topics was the water crisis affecting the entire region. Arizona relies on the Colorado River and groundwater wells to supply its communities, systems increasingly strained by drought and climate change.

“Water is not just a resource; it is the foundation of our economy, our culture, and our collective future,” said Governor Stephen Roe Lewis, emphasizing the importance of collaboration among states and tribal governments.

Governor Hobbs echoed the urgency of the issue. “If we don’t protect the Colorado River today, we won’t be able to sustain the growth of our states tomorrow,” she stated. Governor Jared Polis added that “droughts are no longer isolated events; they are a permanent reality that demands permanent solutions.”

Beyond water, the governors addressed the need to expand housing availability and strengthen economic infrastructure. Bryan Greene of the National Association of Realtors noted that “the lack of affordable housing is slowing economic development and affecting thousands of families.”

Jim Shandalov of NextEra Energy Resources added that “we cannot talk about economic growth without talking

about infrastructure, energy, and housing at the same time,” highlighting the interdependence of these sectors.

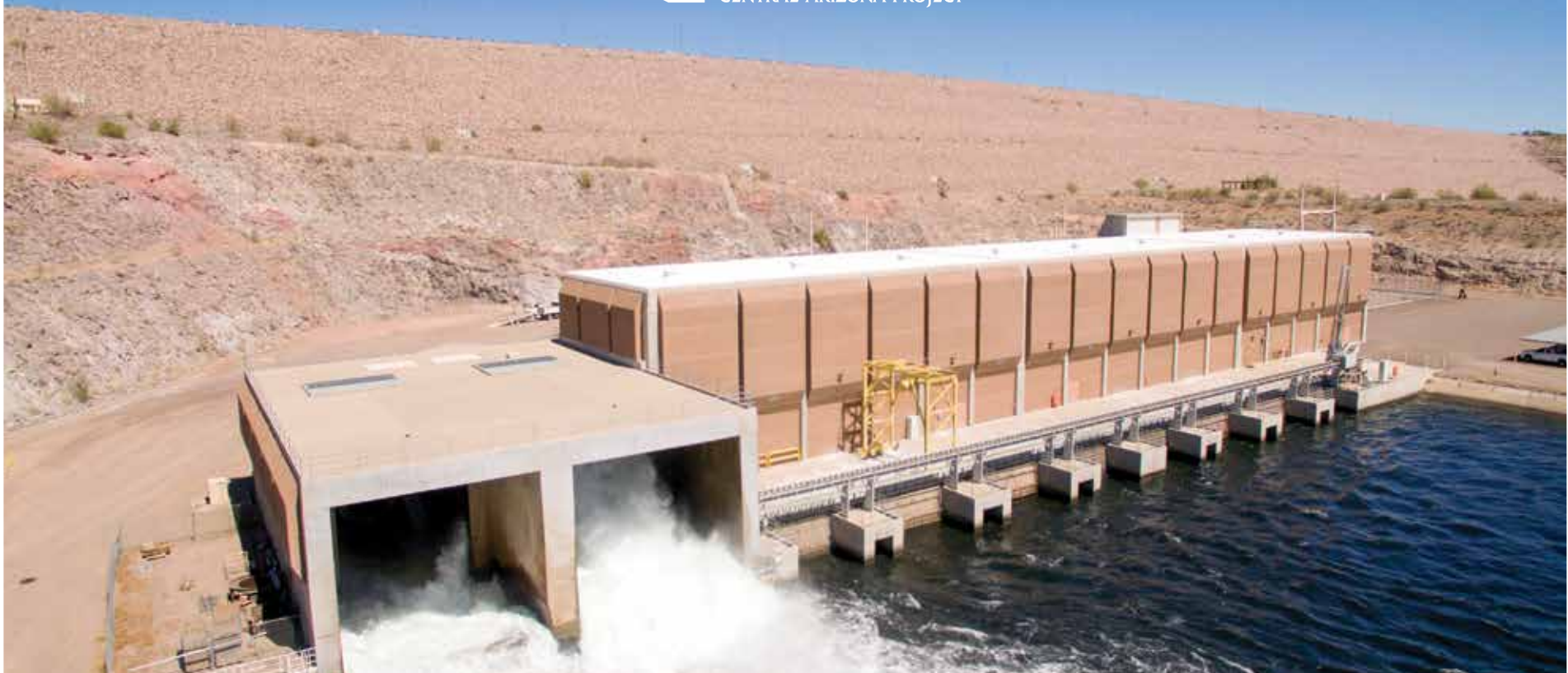
Panelists agreed that regional cooperation will be essential to confronting the challenges of the Southwest. “Western states share the same challenges; that’s why we must also share the solutions,” said Governor Hobbs. Moderator Kiki McLean added, “Politics can divide us, but water, energy, and housing require us

to work together.”

Looking ahead, the governors stressed the need for sustainable, long-term policies. “We are building policies that not only respond to the current crisis but prepare the next generation,” said Governor Polis. Governor Lujan Grisham reinforced the message, stating that “the future of the Southwest will depend on responsible decisions made today, not tomorrow.”



Gov. Stephen Roe Lewis meets with Governors Katie Hobbs and Michelle Lujan Grisham, N.M. during the Democratic Governors Association gathering, underscoring a deep commitment to intergovernmental and tribal partnership. R. Jackson/CPAO



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Skyline Girls and Boys Teams Dominate Home Opener



The Lady Mustangs powering through their second home game with confidence. Jeston Morris/GRIN

Jeston Morris Gila River Indian News

CHANDEL, Ariz. — The Lady Mustangs dominated Alta Vista High School on Dec. 2 at the Skyline Gila River gymnasium, rolling to a 74-4 victory before a hometown crowd.

The Mustangs wasted no time, racing to a 35-0 lead after the first quarter. Junior center Monica “Mo” Benally anchored the offense, scoring more than 20 points and grabbing double-digit rebounds. Freshman point guard Jazmyne Mendivil repeatedly drove into the paint, either finishing at the rim or setting up teammates. By halftime, the Mustangs led 50-0.

The second half brought more highlights. Kameryne Marion contributed with sharp passing, outside shooting and rebounding. Natalie Garcia added three-pointers and drives to the basket, while eighth-grader Maryanah Benally

broke through the defense for scores and rebounds. Alta Vista managed just four points as the Mustangs closed out the win.

Head coach Taylor praised her team’s defensive intensity. “The highlight was our defense. Players were everywhere on the court — we call it ‘controlled chaos,’” she said. “Quick breaks from our defense led to baskets, and Monica was outstanding.”

Players echoed the emphasis on communication and teamwork. “Today’s game went really well, but we could have talked more on the court,” Monica Benally said. Mendivil added, “Our goal from the beginning has been to win the state championship.”

The Mustangs, now 2-0, fell short of a title last season but are determined to finish the job this year. With defense and depth, they have set their sights firmly on the championship.



SKYLINE GILA RIVER SCHOOLS MUSTANGS

Varsity Girls Basketball • 2025-26

Schedule

| Date | Opponent | Result | Location | Caption |
|------------|------------------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| 11/24/2025 | vs A Plus Charter Schools Maricopa | 5:00 PM | Skyline Gila River Schools Gym | |
| 12/2/2025 | vs Alta Vista High School | 5:00 PM | Skyline Gila River Schools Gym | |
| 12/8/2025 | @ Thunderbird Adventist Academy | 4:30 PM | Thunderbird Adventist Academy Gym | |
| 12/9/2025 | @ Arizona Cultural Academy | 5:00 PM | Arizona Cultural Academy | |
| 12/11/2025 | vs Berean Academy | 5:30 PM | Skyline Gila River Schools Gym | Cancelled |
| 12/16/2025 | vs Tohono O'odham | 5:00 PM | Skyline Gila River Schools Gym | |
| 1/6/2026 | @ Skyline Prep Academy | 6:00 PM | Skyline Prep Gym | |
| 1/9/2026 | @ A Plus Charter Schools Maricopa | 3:00 PM | Leading Edge Academy Maricopa | |
| 1/9/2026 | @ A Plus Charter Schools Maricopa | 4:15 PM | Leading Edge Academy Maricopa | |
| 1/12/2026 | @ Ajo High School | 5:00 PM | Ajo High School Gym | |
| 1/14/2026 | vs South Ridge | 5:30 PM | Skyline Gila River Schools Gym | |
| 1/20/2026 | vs Arizona Cultural Academy | 5:30 PM | Skyline Gila River Schools Gym | |
| 1/22/2026 | vs Skyline Prep Academy | 5:30 PM | Skyline Gila River Schools Gym | |
| 1/27/2026 | vs Tri City Christian Academy | 5:00 PM | Skyline Gila River Schools Gym | |
| 1/29/2026 | @ Tohono O'odham | 7:00 PM | Tohono O'odham High School | |
| 2/3/2026 | @ Tri City Christian Academy | 5:00 PM | Tri City Christian Academy Gym | |



SKYLINE GILA RIVER SCHOOLS MUSTANGS

Varsity Boys Basketball • 2025-26

Schedule

| Date | Opponent | Result | Location | Caption |
|------------|-----------------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------|---------|
| 12/2/2025 | vs Ville de Marie | 7:00 PM | Skyline Gila River Schools Gym | |
| 12/4/2025 | @ Roosevelt Prep Academy | 5:30 PM | Roosevelt Prep Academy Gym | |
| 12/8/2025 | @ Thunderbird Adventist Academy | 6:00 PM | Thunderbird Adventist Academy Gym | |
| 12/9/2025 | @ Arizona Cultural Academy | 6:30 PM | Arizona Cultural Academy | |
| 12/11/2025 | vs Berean Academy | 7:00 PM | Skyline Gila River Schools Gym | |
| 12/15/2025 | @ BASIS Mesa | 6:30 PM | BASIS Mesa Gym | |
| 12/18/2025 | @ Telesis Prep Academy | 3:30 PM | Telesis Prep Academy Gym | |
| 1/12/2026 | @ Ajo High School | 6:30 PM | Ajo High School Gym | |
| 1/14/2026 | vs BASIS Mesa | 7:00 PM | Skyline Gila River Schools Gym | |
| 1/16/2026 | @ Psalms Learning Center | 4:00 PM | Psalms Learning Center | |
| 1/20/2026 | vs Arizona Cultural Academy | 7:00 PM | Skyline Gila River Schools Gym | |
| 1/22/2026 | vs Brighton Charter School | 7:00 PM | Skyline Gila River Schools Gym | |
| 1/23/2026 | @ A Plus Charter Schools Maricopa | 3:15 PM | Leading Edge Academy Maricopa | |
| 1/27/2026 | vs Ajo High School | 6:30 PM | Skyline Gila River Schools Gym | |
| 1/29/2026 | vs 91st Psalm Christian | 5:00 PM | Skyline Gila River Schools Gym | |
| 2/5/2026 | @ Berean Academy | 7:30 PM | Walter J Meyer School | |



Skyline Mustangs boys team sets the tone and teamwork in their home opener. Jeston Morris/GRIN

Jeston Morris Gila River Indian News

CHANDLER, Ariz. — Defending state champion Skyline Mustang boys’ varsity basketball opened its season with a 55-52 win over Ville de Marie on Dec. 2 at Skyline Gila River.

A packed gym watched as Adam Dixon, Darrell Brooks, Isaiah Fino, Blake Jackson and Nayvin Charles started for the Mustangs. Head coach Andre Murray and assistant coach Darius Turner returned to lead the team after last year’s state title run.

Brooks set the tone early, winning the opening tip and earning multiple trips to the free-throw line. Skyline led 16-8 after the first quarter and held a 26-23 advantage at halftime.

The third quarter remained tight, but freshman Grant Biarco’s defensive energy helped the Mustangs pull ahead. Jackson

also drew several fouls and capitalized at the line, extending Skyline’s lead to 45-36 entering the fourth. The Mustangs held off Ville de Marie’s late push to secure the three-point victory.

“Last year we won the state championship. We expect teams to play hard against us,” Murray said. “This year, we have a new group of players; they were feisty. It was a tough win for us today, but it was much earned. The kids played hard.”

Murray praised Biarco and Charles for their second-half contributions. “Biarco set the tone in the third quarter. This is his first year playing varsity as a ninth grader. I give him a lot of praise,” he said.

Jackson, the team’s center, said the win reflected Skyline’s teamwork. “Our team win feels good. We had a lot of energy on defense, plenty of good passes,” he said.

Charles, the point guard, added: “Our season opener was a good game.”

Winter Bird Count The Roadrunner's Cousin

Submitted by:
Alexander Greenwood

Department of Environmental Quality Wildlife and Ecosystems Management Program

Imagine this: You are driving down a desert road on a hot summer day when, out of nowhere, a lanky brown bird flashes across the road. It is the greater roadrunner, a recognizable symbol of the Southwest. Confident, curious, and quick, the roadrunner thrives in the desert and among the farmlands. For many in the Gila River Indian Community, thadai (greater roadrunner) is a familiar sight. What most people don't know is that the greater roadrunner has a cousin that also lives in the Community, the yellow-billed cuckoo, or Kathgam in O'odham. Despite being relatives, the two couldn't be more dissimilar. Where the greater roadrunner boldly paces around the environment, the yellow-billed cuckoo prefers to hide and quietly fly among the cool shade provided by the cottonwoods and willows.

On rare summer mornings, you may just be lucky enough to hear the "coos" of the yellow-billed cuckoo from the cottonwood trees. The cool, shaded conditions of a canopy of willow and cottonwood trees provide the right environment for cuckoos to forage and breed. These verdant corridors once lined much of the Gila River, offering refuge for birds, insects, and people alike. Upstream diversions of the river reduced this once connected corridor to small, interspersed tracts of habitat. Today, these vital habitats are disappearing. Water scarcity, drought, and overgrazing threaten these remaining refugia of riparian hab-



The yellow-billed cuckoo prefers to hide and quietly fly among the cool shade
Photo submitte by: Alexander Greenwood

itat. Unfortunately, the decline of riparian habitat has also led to reduced numbers of yellow-billed cuckoos, so much so that the United States Fish and Wildlife Service listed the western, yellow-billed cuckoo as threatened in 2014. The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Wildlife and Ecosystems Management Program

(WEMP) has studied the population of yellow-billed cuckoos in GRIC over the years. In the summer of 2025, WEMP completed Community-wide cuckoo surveys. Binoculars in hand, WEMP staff headed to the field to collect population data for yellow-billed cuckoos in various corners of the Community. Alexander

Greenwood, the wildlife biologist, was fortunate to be assisted by members of the Tribal Fuels and Restoration Crew as well as DEQ's summer intern, Cailinn Allen. While the fieldwork was challenging and daily temperatures regularly exceeded 100 degrees, we remained upbeat and positive even through infrequent success. Cailinn recounts, "After weeks of long drives across the community and dusty treks, it was all worth it finally seeing a kathgam."

Following the 2025 survey season, WEMP completed an evaluation of these surveys. Through these surveys, WEMP staff were able to identify various tracts of habitat in the Community that are inhabited by yellow-billed cuckoos. Several sites where cuckoos had previously been identified appeared to be experiencing decline. On the other hand, sites such as the MAR-5 Gila River Interpretive continue to offer promising habitat for yellow-billed cuckoos. The cottonwood and willow poles that were planted eight years ago have flourished under the steady supply of water. These trees now form a lush and vibrant canopy amidst the desert.

For many in the Community, these trees are more than habitat- they are part of a living memory. Cailinn's grandfather, Billy, remembers a time when cottonwoods lined farm fields throughout the Community. Billy recently paid a visit to the MAR-5 Gila River Interpretive Trail (GRIT) and was pleasantly surprised to be surrounded by the familiar aroma of cottonwood and willow trees. The GRIT serves as a reminder of what the Gila River once was and what it still has the potential to be. For the yellow-billed cuckoo, these green corridors offer refuge and hope for recovery.



S-ko:mag Mashath – Klishmas U'uvig (Christmas Birds)

Submitted By

Robert P. Johnson
Language Specialist
HHC Language Program

This month marks the ending of 2025 and the beginning of 2026 in the coming weeks ahead. Families will get together to celebrate Christmas and the New Year Holidays. This is also the time of year, when we observe the appearance of several winter birds, whom spend their winters on our community. Our Heki O'otham, named many birds according to how they behaved in the wilds, colorations and other characteristics. Some birds mentioned in the Story of Creation.

Sipuk is the name given to the Northern Cardinal. Sipuk refers to the bird's crest, which means "to be in a pile". It also designates a feathered headpiece worn by Chiefs, with feathers that

stood up prominently. Its prominent red coloration and kuk (Bird-call) easily identified. Females are slightly smaller and gray in coloration. In fact, most female birds are gray in coloration, which aids them in hiding from predators. Most important when incubating eggs inside the nests.

Ba:sho S-veg is the name given to the American Robin. This winter visitor arrives mid-November and departs in early spring. Our Heki O'otham believed that Ba:sho S-veg brought the cold winds along from up north. His red chest and bird call are not hard to miss.

Vakav is the name given to the Northern Harrier. This Raptor often observed gliding low over fields and the open plains. They emit a shriek-like call that flushes its prey from cover. They feed on rodents and rabbits. The white tuft-patch on backsides, make this Raptor easy to identify when in-flight. This is another winter bird

whom brings the cold from the north.

Thamthol is the name given to the White-crowned Sparrow. This year Thamthol's kuk (bird call) heard in early October. These are the easiest birds to attract into your yards by providing a bird feeder and an open container of water for morning baths. Their white-striped crowns and kuk are easy to identify. They often share spaces with other birds, especially when feeding.

Gikuch'tham is the name given to the Black Phoebe, their O'otham name means they are "the whistler." These wintering Song Birds easily identified, by their black upper-parts and white bellies. They are usually solitary and search for insects in pairs. They can be found near open water, especially running irrigation canals. Most active in early mornings and late evenings.

Chukmug is the name given to the European Starling. These

medium-sized Song Birds often observed in very large flocks. Chukmug means that they appear as if a "dark cloud in motion." They feed on insects over open agriculture fields. Their large group-flights are called murmurations, in which the flight constantly changes patterns, especially noticeable when chased by Raptors.

We encourage you to learn the O'otham bird names. Take some time and observe the birds in your areas. Speak with an El-

der or Speaker and learn to say the bird names. The bird names may be slightly different between the villages. This month's word match will test your identification skills of a few wintering birds.

A special Thank You to our Community Elders for sharing their knowledge of Klishmas U'uvig that made this article possible. Additional source related from Wings in the Desert, A Folk Ornithology of the Northern Pimans, Amadeo M. Rea, University of Arizona Press, 2008.

Klishmas U'uvig 2025 Word Match: Match the O'otham bird name with its Picture!

Vakav

Sipuk

Thamthol

Chukmug

Gikuch'tham

Basho S-veg



Photos: Allaboutbirds The Cornelllab

A Season of Safety and Joy Holiday Safety for All Ages

GRIN Staff
Gila River Indian News

Holidays bring happiness, gathering, and celebration, but also present risks—especially for vulnerable groups like the elderly and young. To keep the season joyful and accident-free, we must put safety first when decorating, celebrating traditions, and spending time with loved ones.

We all share responsibility for holiday safety. By looking out for each other, securing decorations, and making thoughtful adjustments at home, we help every generation enjoy a safe and joyful season.

For elders, holiday activities can bring unique challenges. Pay attention to the wiring. Secure all extension cords for holiday lights and decorations with cord covers or electrical tape to prevent electrical hazards. Avoid operating them in high-traffic areas, as they may pose a trip hazard. The path to the bathroom and kitchen should be clear of any gifts, extra decorations, or other things that might get in the way. Illuminate everything. Use bright, accessible lighting in hallways and outside walkways to enhance visibility. Overcrowded areas and wet or icy sidewalks are common dangers. The rush of people traveling also increases the likelihood that someone will trip or fall. Keeping walkways clear, providing adequate lighting, and offering transportation sup-

port are simple yet effective measures to prevent falls, which are one of the primary causes of injuries during the winter. Regular check-ins also matter.

Medication. The busy holiday schedule can sometimes disrupt routines. Ensure that medication schedules are followed and easily observable, especially if another family member is providing care. Along with physical safety, seniors benefit from having friends and family around, which reduces loneliness and strengthens community ties.

Youth, on the other hand, face different challenges. Excitement, energy, and curiosity can lead to accidents around decorations, candles, unfamiliar foods, or engaging in holiday activities without supervision. Parents and guardians can help by setting boundaries, supervising activities, and teaching safe habits. Making sure kids have safe places to play and celebrate lets them enjoy the season while also teaching them how to be responsible.

Safety during the holidays is a shared responsibility. Small actions, whether they involve assisting an elderly individual in crossing the street or assuring a child to exercise caution around open flames, have a significant impact.

To honor the spirit of the season and make sure that our holidays are remembered for joy, not accidents that could have been avoided, let's look out for each other.

Let's give each other safety this holiday season.

Stay Safe During Holiday Season

Boost Immunity
Include preventative vaccinations & stay hydrated

Practice Good Hygiene
Wash hands, sanitize, and stay home if feeling sick

Weather Readiness
Wear weather-appropriate clothing and keep warm indoors

Stay informed with weather events
Text GRIC to 520-485-5040

Tribal Social Services Christmas Party

From Front Page

Phillip Polk, CPS supervisor and master of ceremonies, welcomed attendees. The Wild Krew drum group, led by District 7 member Terrazas, opened the program with a northern-style song.

“This party gives our kids a chance to bond and encourage one another,” Polk said. “We want them to stay involved in the community, and they will receive gifts.”

Lt. Gov. Regina Antone served as a special guest speaker. Gov. Stephen Roe Lewis joined later in the afternoon, along with Council Representatives Donovan G. Kyyitan, Lalena Jackson, Duane Jackson Jr. and Nada Celaya, who offered remarks.

“It’s all about our GRIC children,” Kyyitan said. “They have to remember

where they came from and who they are. Even though they are in group homes, their ancestral home lies in the Gila River. These kids will be our leaders in the future.”

Jackson added, “Being here with the kids to celebrate Christmas is wonderful. The kids will remember this event in a good way. Everyone feels joy and happiness when they see the children having a good time.”

Terrazas said the invitation was an honor for the drum group. “Singing is a way for everyone to connect. It brings unity among toddlers, teens and elders. Singing lifts the spirit, especially during the holidays.”

Activity booths included spin-the-wheel, cone ring toss, badminton, beanbag toss and plastic axe throwing. GRHC’s



Youth gather at the annual Christmas party, where games and gifts help them bond and support one another. Jeston Morris/GRIN



Staff from Gila River Resorts & Casinos help distribute gifts and activities. Jeston Morris/GRIN

Elev8 Initiative offered a ball-in-the-bucket game, while Gila River TERO’s Jenga station proved popular with teens. Face painting and photos with Mr. and Mrs. Claus drew long lines.

Departments represented included CPAO, Digital Correct, GRPD, Gila River EMS, Forensic Department, Probation Department, Crime Victim Services, Gila River Student Services and Tribal Social

Services.

Sponsors included local businesses, nonprofits and organizations such as the Arizona Cardinals, Arizona Science Center, Children’s Museum of Phoenix, Gila River Resort & Casino, Scheels, SRP, Main Event, Musical Instrument Museum, Sheraton Grand, The Foster Alliance and Toys for Tots.



GRIC Models Shines at the 4th Annual Indigenous Fashion Show in Chandler



Group of the Indigenous models and fashion designers at the Unified School District's in the 4th Annual Indigenous Fashion event. Jeston Morris/GRIN

Jeston Morris Gila River Indian News

Chandler, Ariz. — The Chandler Unified School District (CUSD) Indigenous Education Program hosted the 4th Annual Indigenous Fashion Show on Nov. 25 at the Chandler Center for the Arts.

Lt. Gov. Regina Antone, Council Representative Nada Celaya, Native designer Tammy Histia, and several Gila River Indian Community (GRIC) models shined throughout the evening.

According to Antonette Shirley, student engagement specialist at CUSD, the fashion show celebrates Native American tribal heritage by giving K–12 students the opportunity to showcase their traditional regalia and share their unique fashion stories.

The event promotes cultural awareness, community connection and student achievement across the district. This year's show drew 32 student models and 172 attendees. Participants represented the 22 Arizona tribes as well as tribal nations from across the country. Students were eager to share their fashion with the Chandler community. The Indigenous

Education Program (IEP) supports Native American students across CUSD's 53 campuses. The program incorporates culture expression, including fashion, as tools for student engagement. The annual fashion show is free and open to the public.

Students described the show as a bridge between their ancestral homelands and their urban lives. The event is multi-generational, often involving grandparents, parents and children. Jewelry is passed down from mother to daughter or father to son, and many regalia pieces feature family designs carried through generations.

The purpose of the fashion show is to share Native fashion discourse with surrounding communities. Students perform as models, presenting their traditional regalia on the runway. The experience helps them build confidence, posture and leadership skills essential for the 21st century.

IEP partnered with three Native designers: Tammy Histia (Gila River Indian Community), Esther Nystrom (Navajo/Anglo) and Mary Allen Manuel (Apache).

Shirley delivered the welcome remarks, and Collin Melvin, a sophomore at Basha High School, served as master

of ceremonies. "I am honored to welcome you to the 4th Annual Chandler Unified School District Indigenous Fashion Show. Our student models range from kindergarten to 12th grade," Shirley said.

Melvin added, "The theme for Native American Heritage Month is revitalizing Indigenous connection and honoring culture and tradition. Reflect on Native American heritage and celebrate the strength of Indigenous cultures."

Hamilton High School's all-female Native American Color Guard presented the colors for the national anthem, followed by a Native land acknowledgment video.

The Wolf Pack Singers opened the show with an honor song. Members Ivan Peña and Patrick Dehose shared their reflections.

"It's an honor to be invited to the fashion show. Drumming and singing are good medicine. It's good to be part of the community and the school district," said Peña, a member of the Taino Tribe of the Dominican Republic.

"We sing intertribal songs. Drumming and singing show Native youth that our culture is alive and thriving," said Dehose, a member of the White Mountain

Apache Tribe.

GRIC Student Models

Cynniah Francisco, a kindergartner at San Tan Elementary, was the first GRIC contestant. She wore a purple ribbon skirt, a light blue-ribbon blouse and a seashell necklace. Her escort read her outfit description, noting that her sunflower design reflects her O'odham name and symbolizes strength from the rising sun.

Owen and Lucas Jackson introduced themselves in the O'odham language. Their ribbon shirts represented the cardinal directions and elements of nature.

Syndel Preston, Akimel O'odham and Hopi, wore a white ribbon shirt made by his grandmother. He said embracing culture is important because "it defines who I am at heart."

Sierra Preston, also GRIC, wore a maroon satin dress with a silver water-flow design. Her grandmother explained that water is central to O'odham identity, survival and sovereignty.

Models from many tribal nations participated, including Kiowa, Hopi, Navajo, Apache and Pueblo students.

Featured Designers

Histia, a GRIC and Pueblo designer, presented pieces ranging from traditional casual wear to executive formal attire. Her designs draw inspiration from desert landscapes, animals, water and sunrise and sunset. Her ten models ranged from toddlers to elders. Councilwoman Representative Nada Celaya modeled alongside two youth, and Lt. Gov. Antone modeled an executive-style outfit featuring the man-in-the-maze design.

"I see Native fashion changing rapidly due to social media," Histia said. "Our fashion evolved from simple Pima cotton dresses to vibrant satin dresses. I hope young designers revitalize O'odham designs in the future."

Apache designer Mary Allen Manuel showcased her two-tier camp dresses. "I enjoy making traditional camp dresses for ceremonies. For this show, I made five," she said.

Navajo/Anglo designer Esther S6Yazhi Nystrom of Bitter Water Design debuted three outfits, including a man-in-the-maze ribbon shirt and a masani gothic ensemble with arrowhead pockets.

"The future of Native American fashion is innovation—new styles and hybrid designs of traditional and contemporary," Nystrom said.

The evening concluded with a question and answer session with the designers and a closing song by the Wolf Pack Singers.



Syndel Preston is a member of GRIC. He is wearing a white/blue ribbon on white. Jeston Morris/GRIN



Group of the GRIC models, designer, Council Representative Nada Celaya and Lt. Gov. Regina Antone at the Fashion show. Jeston Morris/GRIN

I 10 Gila River Project Moves Forward to Ease Congestion and Replace Aging Bridges

GRIN Staff
Gila River Indian News

SACATON — The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) is advancing construction on the I 10 Wild Horse Pass Corridor Project, a 26 mile expansion through the Gila River Indian Community aimed at reducing congestion and improving safety along one of the state’s busiest highways.

The project will add three lanes to each direction of Interstate 10 between Loop 202 in Phoenix and State Route 387 near Casa Grande. According to officials, the corridor is essential for freight haulers and commuters, as it serves as a significant connection between Maricopa and Pinal counties.

The Gila River bridges, which were constructed in 1964 and have been subjected to decades of heavy use and repeated flooding, are a central component of the project. Crews are constructing new bridges in conjunction with the existing struc-

tures to ensure that traffic remains flowing throughout the duration of the project. There are restrictions on certain lanes at night to keep things as smooth as possible.

Furthermore, the plan proposes the construction of a new interchange at Seed Farm Road to enhance the accessibility of the Gila River Indian Community. Tribal leaders have stressed how important the interchange is for local transportation and economic growth, pointing out that better connections will make ties with nearby cities stronger.

According to ADOT representatives, the improvements will respect the cultural and historical significance of the areas the interstate crosses while preparing it for future expansion.

As the Gila River Project progresses, it serves as a symbol of collaboration between the Gila River Indian Community, contractors, and ADOT, as well as a technical challenge. Its completion is expected to reshape travel patterns in central Arizona, reinforcing the I 10’s role as a lifeline for the state’s economy and communities.



Crews placing concrete for the new bridge deck for the westbound I-10 Bridge Over the Gila River are adding something new. ADOT is using synthetic fibers in the concrete mix. These structural fibers help to reinforce the bridge deck, and increase resiliency against weather and traffic. The goal? Construct a longer-lasting bridge structure for Arizona motorists. The use of fiberglass in structural and pavement concrete is a technology that has been around for over 25 years. Photos Submitted by: ADOT



PUBLIC NOTICE

The Gila River Indian Community (GRIC) Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is announcing the 30-day public comment period for an air quality operating permit for the following facility:

| Facility Name | Facility Type | Permit Action | District | Significant Air Pollutants* |
|---|--|------------------------|----------|--|
| Gila River Sand & Gravel – Santan Plant | Crushing & Screening / Hot Mix Asphalt | Renewal / Modification | 4 | NOx, VOC, CO, SOx, PM, PM10, PM2.5, HAPs |

* "Significant" means the following air pollutants have the potential to be emitted at quantities greater than one ton per year: NOx = Nitrogen Oxides; VOC = Volatile Organic Compounds; CO = Carbon Monoxide (CO); SOx = Sulfur Oxides; PM = Particulate Matter; PM10 = PM <10 Microns; PM2.5 = PM <2.5 Microns; HAPs = Hazardous Air Pollutants

Public Notice Start Date: **December 12, 2025**
Public Notice End Date: **January 10, 2024**

Public comments will be accepted in writing until the public notice end date, after which staff will review and respond to all the comments received.

Any person may submit a written comment or a request to the DEQ to conduct a public hearing for the purpose of receiving oral or written comments on the proposed air quality operating permits. Such comments and requests must be received by the DEQ within 30 days of the date of the first publication notice. A written comment shall state the name and mailing address of the person, shall be signed by the person, his agent or his attorney and shall clearly set forth reasons why the permit should or should not be issued. Grounds for comment are limited to whether the proposed permit meets the criteria for issuance prescribed in the GRIC Code: Title 17, Chapter 9 of the Air Quality Management Plan. Only persons who submit written comments may appeal a permit decision.

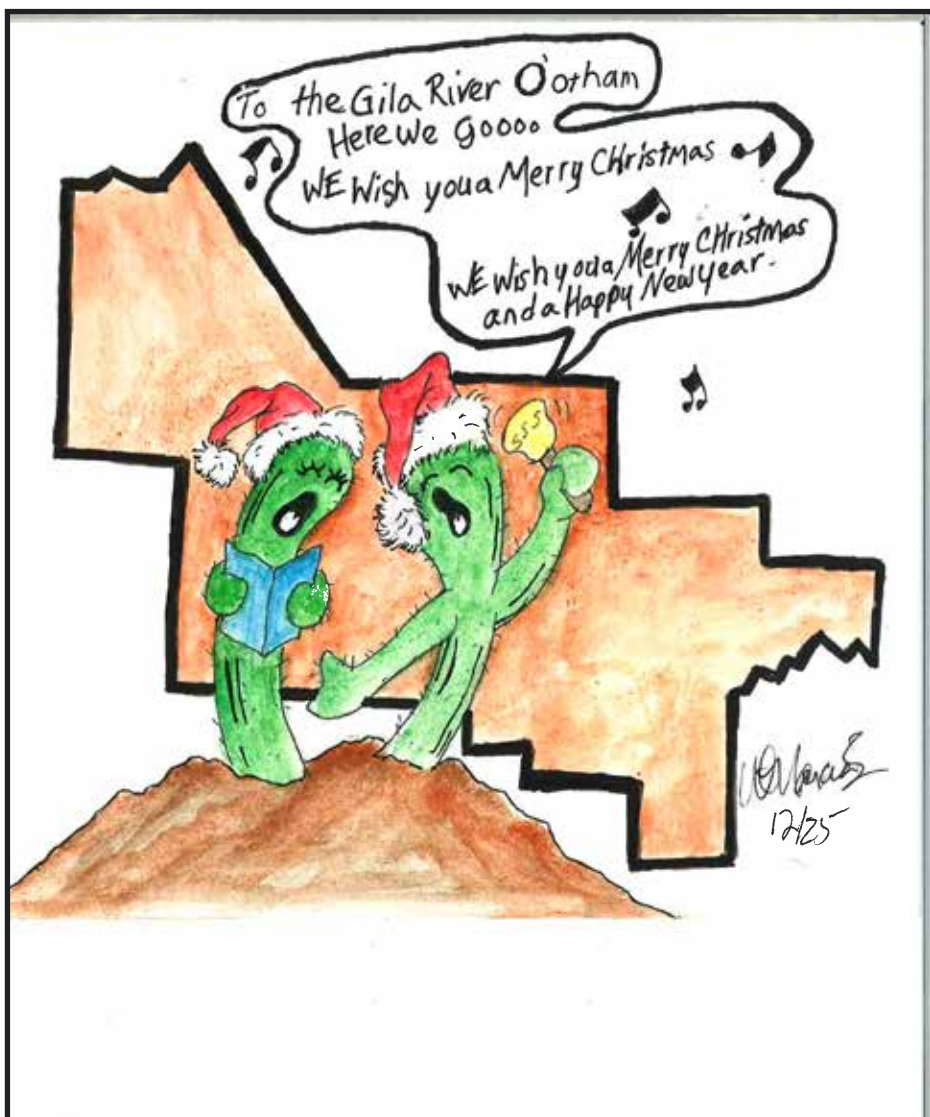
Copies of the permit application, the proposed permit, and relevant background material will be available for review on the AQP website at:

<http://www.gricdeq.org/index.php/education--outreach/public-notices>.

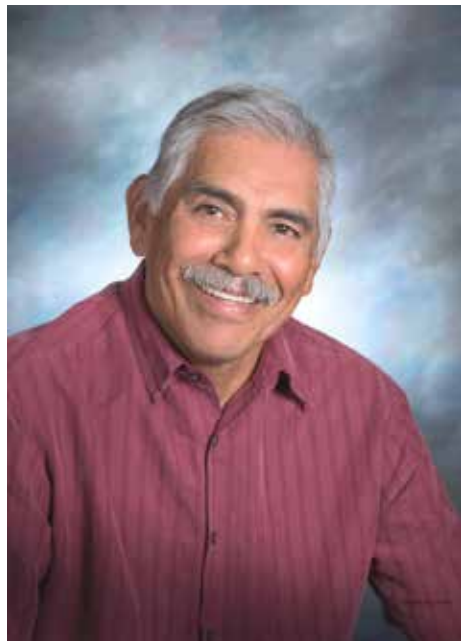
Requests and written comments may be delivered or mailed to:

Gila River Indian Community
Department of Environmental Quality
Attn: Ryan Eberle
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2139, Sacaton, AZ 85147
Delivery Address: 124 Skill Center Rd., Sacaton, AZ 85147 (M-F / 8a-5p)

For further information or to schedule an in-person review, please contact Ryan Eberle at (520) 796-3781 / air@gric.nsn.us.



A'AGA: Something to be Told or Talked About



Submitted By
Bill Allen

written back in the 1960s. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has data showing Native and Aboriginal languages having fewer and fewer fluent native speakers, who then have a hard time finding other people to talk with in that language. There are levels a language may go through before it becomes extinct. O'odham Niok is listed as vulnerable, and it seems that now more people are interested in learning and writing O'odham or O'otham Niok before it slips to the endangered level. Communication could be helped if we all used the same system or sentence structures. Writing Oh Oh dam now seems to have taken on an 'anything goes,' approach. Ask three different people, get three different answers.

When teaching Aw Aw Tham, some prefer to see the written word and ask for a spelling. More often than not, one sounds out an Aw Aw Tham word and writes it phonetically like they might have been taught in schools, but the English language and pronunciation rules don't always fit Niok very well.

In the 1960s, linguist Albert Alvarez, a Tohono O'odham trained in linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, partnered with MIT professor Ken Hale to try and clear up the confusion by developing a writing system for O'odham. As linguists, their writing included visual 'clues' how to pronounce O'odham words. This ' tells us a vowel is short, this: is for a long vowel, a breve \acute tells us certain letters need to be almost silent. A squiggly line on top of a letter, a tilde is used in the word añi--it's not pronounced "annie." Such visual clues are called diacritics. This system of writing became known as the Alvarez-Hale Or-

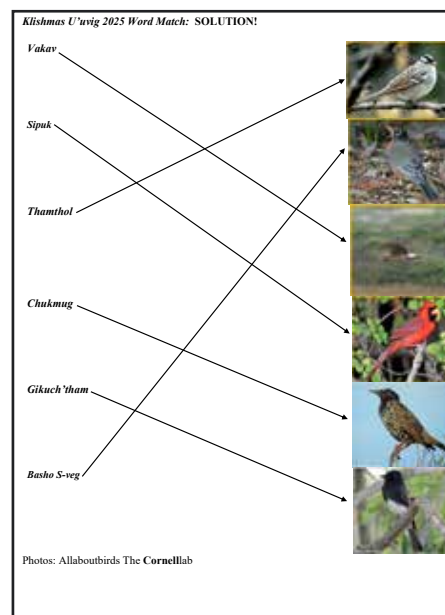
thography. The idea was this format would be used by all O'odham tribes so we could all understand written O'odham. In a sense, Alvarez-Hale created a language wheel. Education consultant Anthony D'Angelo tells teachers, "Don't reinvent the wheel, just realign it." Our brains realign all the time. We recognize symbols like logos, emojis, traffic signs, hand signals, even eye rolls. Musicians "read music." Visual 'clues' let their brains translate symbols for sharp or flat notes, beats, and rests. We cannot talk to John Phillip Sousa but we can hear and read his music today. His music was once a mainstay in government boarding school curriculums, became very popular with O'otham marching bands, and what's a parade without a marching band?

Back to the wheel: If different O'otham teachers disregard the Alvarez-Hale system and reinvent/replace with what they feel is right, students have multiple learning curves. Sure, it takes dedicated time to learn the Alvarez-Hale system, but it can be done. It's a darn good wheel to roll with. Alvarez and Hale laid the groundwork. Another O'odham linguist, Dr. Ofelia Zepeda, continued the drive to help us all communicate with each other. Her book, Tohono O'odham Grammar, is a landmark in teaching Native or Aboriginal languages. Several O'otham-centric people/organizations working to revitalize neok lean on her work. The Huhugam Heritage Center sponsors classes led by community members with the assistance of elders. One community member leading classes, H. Lopez, tells learners, "It is not your fault you haven't learned O'otham." (Elders felt English was needed to land jobs, a key to survival. Many, most, of our

ancestors were disciplined in school if they used their indigenous language. Maybe some GRIN readers experienced that.) Today tribes are addressing Native language survival. The Alvarez-Hale wheel would help unify language learning among our brother tribes. Today, many are curious, willing to learn. Keep in mind, if it was easy then everyone would be writing and speaking O'otham. O'odham have done difficult things in the past, why should we be any different today?

O'odham/O'otham has been spelled many ways throughout the years which can be confusing today. Same for ñeok which is speaking or Ñi'okī, referring to the written form.

You say sialik, I say sialim. You say si:l, I say puth. You say mi:stol, I say mi:tol — let's NOT call the whole thing off. Vup do hap e'ju. It will happen.



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MESA / TEMPE
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Country Club & University
480-835-0567



Federal Grand Jury Indicts Tucson Man in Alleged Theft and Trafficking of Tribal Artifacts

For Immediate Release: CPAO
Friday, December 12, 2025.

TUCSON, Ariz. – On December 3, 2025, a federal grand jury in Tucson returned a two count indictment against Leo Reynoso, 46, of Tucson, alleging violations of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act stemming from the unauthorized excavation and sale of cultural items belonging to the Gila River Indian Community.

According to the indictment, Reynoso is accused of excavating and removing protected archaeological resources from known sites located on tribal lands without permission. Prosecutors allege he unearthed and damaged multiple locations before taking numerous artifacts, including Indian Trader tokens, coins, buttons, crucifixes, jewelry, and other culturally significant items.

The indictment further alleges that Reynoso trafficked some of the illegally obtained artifacts by selling them without the required federal permits. An archaeological damage assessment estimates the commercial value of the items at approximately \$5,700, the archaeological value at roughly \$29,000, and the cost to restore and repair the damaged sites at about \$23,000.

Each count, Unauthorized Excavation of Archaeological Resources and Trafficking in Archaeological Resources,

carries a maximum penalty of two years in federal prison and a \$20,000 fine.

The case was investigated by the U.S. Forest Service and the Gila River Indian Community Police Department. The United States Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona, Tucson, is overseeing the prosecution.

Officials emphasize that an indictment is only a formal accusation. All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

"The recent indictment handed down by a federal grand jury in Tucson is a step in the right direction for an incident that deeply hurt the Gila River Indian Community," said Governor Stephen Roe Lewis "Unauthorized excavation and trafficking of archaeological artifacts taken from tribal lands is a pain that no tribe should have to endure. The excavation and removal of items taken from protected sites without permission is a violation of the highest order," he added. "I want to thank the U.S. Forest Service, the Gila River Police Department, our Tribal Historic Preservation Office, and the Cultural Resource Management Program for their hard work in enforcing the Archaeological Resources Protection Act. Although the damage has been done, we hope that justice will be served for these horrendous crimes."

An Act of Repair: Ireichō Tour in Arizona Culminates in Ceremony at Gila River

Submitted by: **By Bill Staples, Jr, JACL-AZ Board President**

The national tour of the Ireichō: The Book of Names concluded its powerful Arizona engagement earlier this month, drawing hundreds of participants to a weekend of public acknowledgment followed by a solemn, private ceremony at the site of the former Gila River incarceration camp.

The three-day event, spanning November 1st through 3rd, centered on the Ireichō—a monumental book containing the first comprehensive list of all 125,284 individuals of Japanese ancestry incarcerated during World War II. Its presence in Arizona, home to the Gila River and Poston camps, served as an essential stop in the book's national tour to honor and acknowledge every name.

The Public Engagement: Honoring Names, Rectifying History

The Phoenix-area segment began with two days of public engagement, offering the community the chance to participate in the project's central mission: the intimate act of stamping a personal Japanese seal, or hanko, beneath a name in the book.

On Saturday, November 1st, the Chandler Museum, currently hosting the exhibit "Gaman: Enduring Japanese American



Rev. Williams leads the Ireicho Ceremony, while members of the Ira Hayes Post 84 reflect in the background.
Photo by: Billy Staples Jr.

cerned citizens participated in the simple, yet profound, gesture that activates the book as a living memorial. As Reverend Duncan Ryuken Williams, Director of the Irei Project, often emphasizes, "Each individual act of stamping a name in the Ireichō becomes part of this ever-growing monument." A Private Return to Gila River. The Arizona leg culminated on Monday, November 3rd,

and the Native American Community whose ancestral lands were used to build the camp.

The core of the day was the Ireichō Ceremony, officiated by Rev. Williams, which included the reading of select names, the stamping of unstamped names by descendants of incarcerated and members of the GRIC.

A deeply moving element was the military honor provided by Commander Bill Dixon and Tony McDaniel of the Ira Hayes Post 84, who performed the 21-Gun Salute and Taps in remembrance of the deceased incarcerated. Rev. Williams concluded the program with his Closing remarks.

Following the formal ceremony, attendees gathered for a moment of reflection at the monument before moving to the Huhugam Heritage Center for a communal reception, featuring a traditional lunch of fry bread tacos. A Gathering of Memory and Community

The private ceremony at Gila River was attended by a deeply personal and geographically diverse group of over 130 guests. The attendance list reflected the nationwide impact of the incarceration, with representatives traveling from as far as Japan and Ireland, and across the United States from New Hampshire to Seattle, Washington, with the largest contingent arriving from California. The local presence was also significant, including multiple JACL-AZ members and approximately 28 officials and community leaders from the GRIC.

Most importantly, the gathering included nine confirmed Camp Survivors, many of whom were incarcerated at Gila River itself. Three of these individuals—Dean Umemoto (Block 24-1-C), Donna Ishimine Sill (Block 20-11-A), and Hajime Dan Yamashita (Block 24-13-B)—were specifically noted as having been born within the barbed wire of the Gila

River camp during WWII. Their presence, alongside a large group of descendants who participated to honor their family members, transformed the historic site into a powerful space of lived memory and intergenerational healing.

The three-day tour was a powerful demonstration of the collective commitment to memorialize and restore the human dignity denied to 125,284 people during one of the darkest chapters of American history. It was

an honor to participate in the historic event. In addition to meeting wonderful people, it provided an opportunity for me to honor three important figures in my life: Kenichi Zenimura, the "Father of Japanese American Baseball"; Kenso, his son; and Mas Inoshita, a mentor and friend – and the man whose legacy was celebrated by both members of the Japanese American community and the Gila River Indian Community.



The Ireicho on display for the ceremony held at the base of the Nisei Soldiers Honor Roll Monument, dedicated in April 1944.
Photo By: Bill Staples Jr.

Internment at Gila River," welcomed a diverse audience. The day featured cultural performances, including stirring Taiko drumming by Ken Koshio, and educational lectures, such as Dr. Adrian Mulligan's look at the Gila River landscape as a story of hope and resilience, and Dr. Kathy Nakagawa's presentation on the history of the Japanese American flower farms of Phoenix and the Baseline Flower Growers.

The opportunity for public stamping continued on Sunday, November 2nd, at the Arizona Buddhist Temple in Phoenix. Across both days, descendants, community members, and con-

with a private, ceremonial gathering held in partnership with the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC) at the site of the former camp. This segment of the tour was crucial, marking the return of the names to the physical ground where 13,348 individuals were unjustly incarcerated.

The ceremony was officially opened by Rev. Duncan Ryuken Williams who provided the Welcome and Agenda. Bill Staples, Jr. shared the program logistics, followed by a powerful Blessing offered by Tony Enos of the GRIC, emphasizing the deep historical connection between the Japanese American incarcerated



Kyra Staples stamps the Ireicho at the Huhugam Heritage Center.
Photo By: Bill Staples Jr.



Those who stamp the Ireicho are asked to write the names of incarcerated who were stamped on this commemorative card. The Ireicho team takes a photo of the card for record keeping, and then gives it as a keepsake to participants.
Photo by: Billy Staples Jr.



SAVE THE DATE

MARCH
13-15
2026



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Announcements & Notices

IN THE COURT OF THE
GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY
IN THE STATE OF ARIZONA

COURT DATE NOTICE

In Re Case: *Joshua Spencer Mejia vs. Alicia Quintero*

Docket Number: *FM-2025-0067-PT*

This case has been scheduled and YOU ARE ORDERED TO APPEAR on the date, time and place designated below. IF YOU FAIL TO APPEAR your hearing may be held in absentia and a warrant may be issued for your arrest, forfeiture of your bond, judgment in favor of the other party, or jail time may be ordered.

Answer/Response Hearing

**AKIMEL O'OTHAM LODITHA KUD KI,
721 West Seed Farm Road,
Sacaton, AZ 85147**

15th day of December, 2025 at 10:00 AM
in Courtroom 1 before the Honorable Gwendolyn Morago*

Issued by: Williams Date: Tuesday, October 21, 2025

Case
AMENDED FILE COPY

IN THE GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY COURT
STATE OF ARIZONA

| | |
|---|------------------------------|
| FRANCES STEVENS, Petitioner/Plaintiff | CASE Number: FM-2025-0080-PT |
| VS. | CIVIL NOTICE OF HEARING |
| RENE EVERETTE MESA, Respondent/Defendant | |

Please take notice that a(n) **Answer/Response Hearing** has been scheduled in the Gila River Indian Community Court.

This matter has been scheduled at the place and time set forth below:

Tuesday, January 20, 2026
at 9:00 AM in Courtroom 1,
AKIMEL O'OTHAM LODITHA KUD KI,
721 West Seed Farm Road, Sacaton, AZ.

GIVEN under my hand and the seal of the Gila River Indian Community in the State of Arizona.

DATED this 8th day of December, 2025

/s/ Katherine Search
Clerk of the Gila River Indian Community Court

Copy of the foregoing served by
 1st Class Mail Certified Mail
This 8th day of December, 2025 to:

Rene Everette Mesa
4890 W Bighorn Dr
Laveen, AZ, 85339

IN THE COURT OF THE
GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY
IN THE STATE OF ARIZONA

COURT DATE NOTICE

In Re Case: *Marla D. Dixon vs. Luis Antonio Lopez*

Docket Number: *CV-2025-0241-RO*

This case has been scheduled and YOU ARE ORDERED TO APPEAR on the date, time and place designated below. IF YOU FAIL TO APPEAR your hearing may be held in absentia and a warrant may be issued for your arrest, forfeiture of your bond, judgment in favor of the other party, or jail time may be ordered.

Restraining Order Hearing

**AKIMEL O'OTHAM LODITHA KUD KI,
721 West Seed Farm Road,
Sacaton, AZ 85147**

*9th day of January, 2026 at 9:00 AM
in Courtroom 1 before the Honorable Sheri L Cassa*

Issued by: Williams Date: Friday, November 14, 2025

Case
FILE COPY

GILA RIVER POLICE DEPARTMENT: Crime Analysis Unit (CAU)

Crimes by Type

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| FAMILY OFFENSE | 1 |
| ROBBERY | 1 |
| ARSON | 1 |
| MURDER | 1 |
| BURGLARY | 2 |
| SEX OFFENSE | 3 |
| RAPE | 3 |
| DRUNKENNESS | 4 |
| MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT | 5 |
| LIQUOR LAW VIOLATION | 7 |
| TRESPASSING | 11 |
| RUNAWAY | 12 |
| AGGRAVATED ASSAULT | 16 |
| WEAPONS OFFENSE | 18 |
| DUI | 22 |
| THEFT | 26 |
| DISORDERLY CONDUCT | 27 |
| DRUG VIOLATION | 28 |
| VANDALISM | 42 |
| SIMPLE ASSAULT | 46 |

November 2025

This Crime Data Report summarizes crime and calls for service reported to the Gila River Police Department (GRPD) through 911 calls, administrative calls, and Flock Safety equipment.

The metrics included in this report are categorized by crimes by type, "Shots Fired" calls for service, and crimes by district.

This report includes data from **November 1, 2025 to November 30, 2025.**

Industrial Complex: Businesses and casinos in Districts 4 and 6.

**Data is subject to change*

Crimes by Location

| | |
|--------------------|----|
| District 1 | 25 |
| District 2 | 15 |
| District 3 | 69 |
| District 4 | 43 |
| District 5 | 39 |
| District 6 | 36 |
| District 7 | 11 |
| Industrial Complex | 45 |

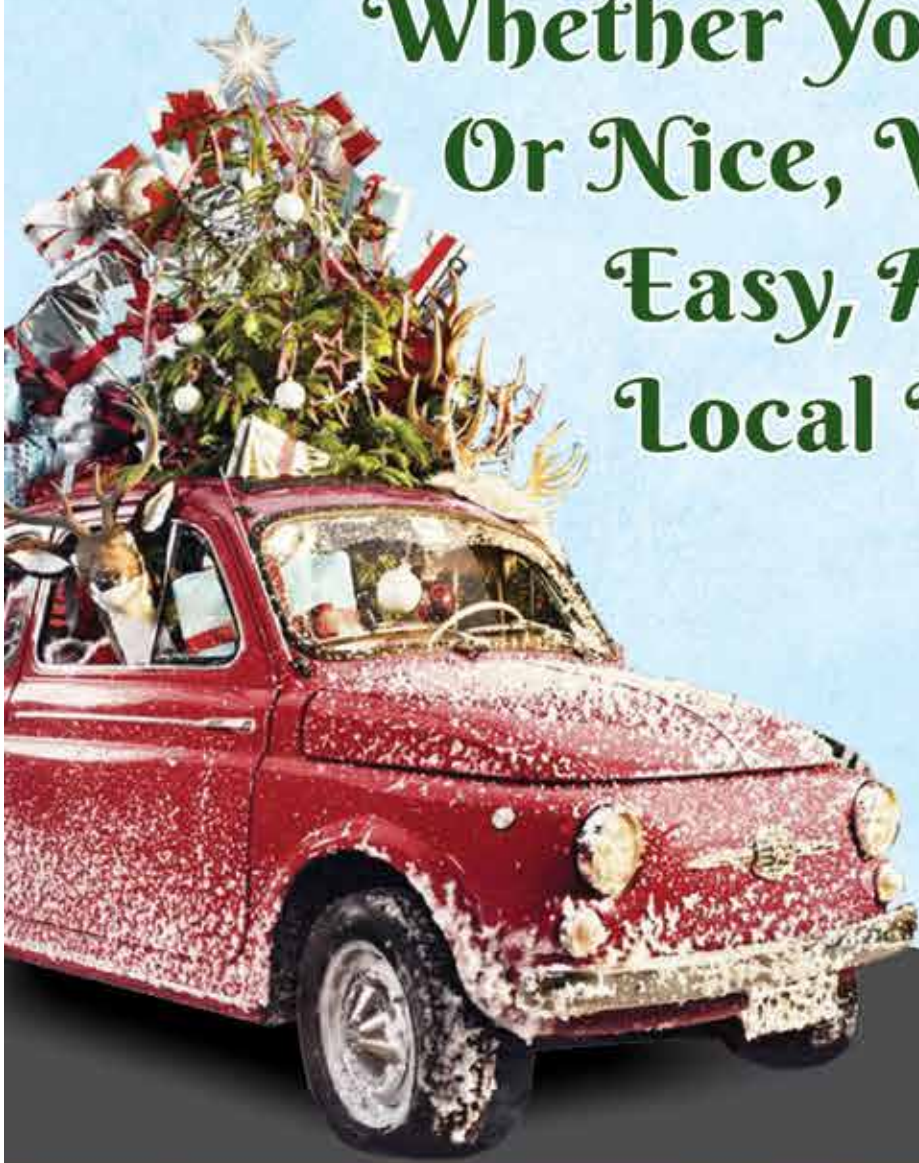
"Shots Fired" by District

| | |
|------------|----|
| District 1 | 9 |
| District 2 | 5 |
| District 3 | 11 |
| District 4 | 10 |
| District 5 | 15 |
| District 6 | 24 |
| District 7 | 24 |

December 3, 2025
Gila River Police Department
Crime Analysis Unit

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