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61st Annual Mul-Chu-Tha Fair & Rodeo Returns, Kicks Off with Community Day

GRIN Staff
Gila River Indian News

SACATON, Ariz. — The 61st Annual Mul-Chu-Tha Fair & Rodeo made its return to the Gila River Indian Community March 13-15, with the theme “Celebrating Traditional Artistry Across Generations”. It featured many events including carnival, parade, rodeo, pow-wow, cultural games, sports, car show, chicken scratch battle of the bands, arts & crafts, food vendors, and musical entertainment.

The sunrise on March 13 felt different from any other in the Gila River Indian Community. It was the kind of heat that usually waited until late spring, but this year it arrived early, felt more like midsummer than the doorstep of spring, almost as if the desert itself had been waiting for Mul-Chu-Tha Fair & Rodeo to return. The fair was back, and that mattered more than the temperature.

The cancellation of the 2025 MCT had left a quiet emptiness



Matt Kisto Jr., Male Elder of the Year, waves to the crowd alongside his daughter Sheryl, during the Mul-Chu-Tha Parade on March 14. Apphia Shirley/CPAO

in the Community. The elders had made the decision out of concern for safety, and though everyone respected it, the absence of the MCT festivities felt like a missing piece of the year. Mul-Chu-Tha wasn't just a celebration; it was a

gathering of hearts, a reminder of shared roots.

Mul-Chu-Tha was back this year and despite the heat, no one stayed home and that meant more than the temperature ever could.

From the first light of Fri-



Joyce Nish (left), Female Elder of the Year, also joins the Mul-Chu-Tha Parade. Apphia Shirley/CPAO

day morning, the rodeo grounds were alive. It began early each morning, before the heat grew too heavy. It was one of the most beloved parts of MCT and this year it felt even more special. Children, teenagers, and adults all took part; each category brings its

kind of pride. Barrel racing, roping, and riding with a determination that showed how deeply the tradition lived in them. Their skill wasn't just talent; it was memory, heritage, and years of practice.

Continued on Page 3

Komatke Boys & Girls Club, Fiesta Sports Foundation Unveil New Playground



Volunteers from Fiesta Sports Foundation and Salt River Project build new playground for the Boys & Girls Club of the Gila River Indian Community - Komatke Branch. Photo Courtesy of Fiesta Sports Foundation

Jeston Morris
Gila River Indian News

KOMATKE, Ariz. — The Boys & Girls Club of the Gila River Indian Community -

Komatke Branch, Fiesta Sports Foundation, and Salt River Project (SRP) partnered to build a new playground, with SRP volunteers completing the structure in four to six hours. A ribbon-cut-

ting ceremony followed later that day on March 6.

Children ran onto the playground with excitement, climbed the nets, sliding down the slide and testing out the bars. An early

teen jumped onto the hopscotch, eager to try it out. Youth embraced the new space with excitement.

Mark Clavell, chief operating officer for Boys & Girls Club, said the Komatke branch applied for a new playground and was selected. A crew came in last week and removed the old playground, and more than 70 SRP volunteers arrived in the morning to install and set up the playground and beautify the area with mural paintings and games.

“We’re excited and honored for Fiesta Sports Foundation selecting Komatke Boys & Girls

Club for a new playground,” Cavell said. Erik Moses, executive director for Fiesta Sports Foundation, said the youth now have access to a 1,400-square-foot playground after the previous one had been closed for four years due to safety concerns.

“There was certainly a need here at Komatke Boys & Girls

Continued on Page 10

MCT Elder Chair Volleyball Tournament



Page 5

Coolidge Bears Cap Off Emotional Postseason Run



Page 7

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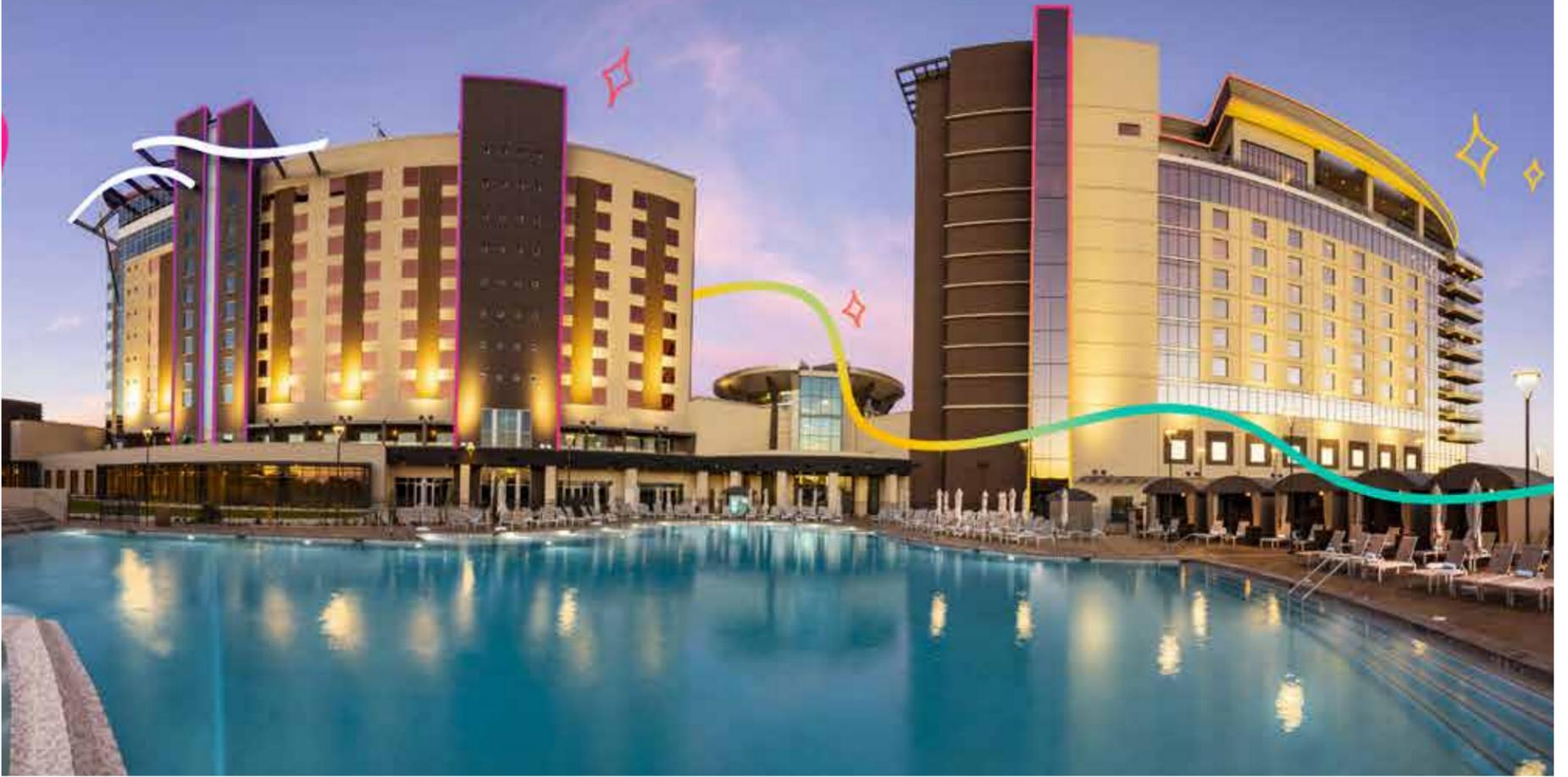
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2026-2027 Gila River Royalty Crowned

Emma Hughes
Gila River Indian News

The stage was set for an evening of confidence, culture, and community pride as contestants gathered for this year's Gila River Royalty Pageant, where four young women competed for the honor of representing their Community – Aubrey Gaitan, Eliana Rhodes, Ivory Soke, and Julia Parra.

Eliana Rhodes, District 6, was crowned Miss Gila River. Rhodes previously served as Jr. Miss Gila River 2022-2023.

"I want to thank you all of you for attending and coming out to support us, but most of all I want to thank my grandparents and my dad for always supporting me and for always pushing me out of my comfort zone," Rhodes said. "I hope to represent you all well this year and thank you for letting me have this opportunity."

Aubrey Gaitan, District 6, took the title of Jr. Miss Gila River, with Ivory Soke, District 6, serving as First Attendant and Julia Parra, District 7, as Second Attendant.

"Thank you to so many peo-



Aubrey Gaitan, District 6, is crowned 2026-2027 Jr. Miss Gila River. Emma Hughes/GRIN



L-R: Community Council Rep. Duane Jackson Jr., Lt. Gov. Regina Antone, Miss Gila River Eliana Rhodes, Jr. Miss Gila River Aubrey Gaitan, Jr. Miss First Attendant Ivory Soke, Jr. Miss Second Attendant Julia Parra, Community Council Rep. Jeanette Blasingim and Gov. Stephen Roe Lewis. Emma Hughes/GRIN

ple who helped me on this journey, especially on the pageant," said Gaitan. "I'm very proud of each contestant, you guys put yourselves out there and I'm so proud of you guys."

Family, friends, and supporters filled the gymnasium of the Casa Blanca Community School, cheering on participants as they took part in multiple segments, including introductions, traditional attire, business wear, talent presentations, and impromptu questions. Each portion of the competition highlighted not only poise and presentation, but also the individuality and dedication of each contestant.

Judged by a panel of distinguished guest judges, the competition emphasized leadership,

communication skills, and community involvement. Contestants shared personal goals, displayed their talents, and demonstrated a strong commitment to making a positive impact locally.

At the conclusion of the event, the highly anticipated crowning moment brought excitement and celebration as new titleholders were announced. Winners were recognized for their confidence, authenticity, and ability to serve as role models for others in the Community.

As the newly crowned royalty begin their year of service, they are expected to represent the Community at events, promote local initiatives, and inspire oth-



Eliana Rhodes, District 6, is crowned 2026-2027 Miss Gila River. Emma Hughes/GRIN

ers through their example.

The evening concluded with applause, photos, and heartfelt congratulations, marking not just the end of a competition, but the beginning of a new chapter for the titleholders and all who participated.

From Front Page

Even as the temperature climbed to unseasonable heights, the stands stayed packed with families cheering through the dust.

At the fairgrounds, the heat rose quickly. By midmorning, people were fanning themselves with programs, laughing about how the weather had decided to join the celebration. Volunteers set out coolers filled with ice water, and people arrived with hats, umbrellas, and wide smiles. The excitement was stronger than the sun; children didn't seem to mind. Attendees were treated to a free dinner and carnival rides for the 'Community Day' festivities that also included the Tribal Education Department's art and essay contest winners, Elders and Veteran of the Year Award presentation, followed by a coronation



Irving Johns (center) is recognized as Veteran of the Year during an award presentation during Community Day at the Mul-Chu-Tha Fairgrounds. Apphia Shirley/CPAO

dance for the newly crowned Gila River Royalty court with music provided by Eagleheart.

By Saturday morning, the

MCT parade had turned the streets into a wave of colors. There's something special about seeing the Community line the route, families sitting in the shade of pop-up tents. Seeing them there, after the long wait and the worries of the previous year, made the sweat and the sun feel like a secondary thought with over 50 parade floats and entries.

Making all three days free of charge for admission changed the energy of the whole weekend. It wasn't about tickets or gates; it was

about open doors, more like a family reunion where everyone was invited. Several events continued at the fairgrounds and concluded with musical entertainment by AntoineX, an Oglala Lakota/Umonhon rapper, singer, and song-writer.

Traditional games of Toka and Shoñgivil were held Sunday morning just outside the fairgrounds, while the rodeo, powwow, battle of the bands, cultural circle, carnival and entertainment continued. A car show was also held at the Ira H. Hayes Veterans Memorial Park which also included musical performances, arts & crafts, food vendors, and raffles. As the sun finally began to dip on the third day, turning a deep orange, the kind of color that only appears after a hot day in the desert. The smell of the fry bread drifted through the air, and people gathered in long lines, sharing stories about the carnival rides and other food around the fairgrounds.

The Mul-Chu-Tha proved once again that while the weather might be unpredictable, the spirit of the Gila River Indian Community is rock solid.

More MCT Photos on Pages 8-9



Eagleheart performs for the Gila River Royalty coronation dance. Apphia Shirley/CPAO

Elderly Chair Volleyball League Tournament Kicks Off 2026

Jeston Morris
Gila River Indian News

SANTAN, Ariz. — The Tribal Recreation & Wellness Department (TRW) hosted the Elderly Chair Volleyball League tournament at the District 4 Multi-Purpose Facility on Feb. 10. Gila River teams ‘Unwanted’ defended their title and won the championship. ‘Jack Rabbits I’ placed second, and ‘Hashan Kehk II’ placed third.

According to Cael Bennett, sport coordinator, the Elderly Chair Volleyball League has a dozen teams playing. There were over 130 participants in the annual tournament. The players are all elders, 55 years plus. The Mul-Chu-Tha tournament will be in the last week of February, with 32 teams participating. The Akimel O’odham Pee Posh Invitation (AOPPI) will be in July.

“Today’s event is the conclusion of the elderly chair volleyball league that has been going on for the last couple of weeks. This event determines the winner of the league. Tribal recreation and well-

ness hosted a lot of round ribbon games throughout the season, and the tournament seating bracket is based on it,” said Ryan Brown, lead fitness instructor for TRW.

“We are excited and elated to defend our title and win the championship. It’s always against Jackrabbit. I give them a lot of credit. They’re an excellent competitive team,” said Rodney Jackson, team captain for Unwanted. “Our team goal for 2026 is to win Avi,” he added.

“We won the championship game. We defended our title. We feel good,” said Loren Jackson, player for Unwanted.

“We are the Jackrabbits from Blackwater. The team has been around for a while. Allen Blackwater started the team. Unfortunately, we lost him in January. I have been playing on the team for five years,” said Gene Coppedge, team captain. “It was a good game, good competition. That’s what we need as a team.” Second place is okay, but we’ll get them next year, he added.

The Elderly Chair Volleyball League



Gila River Unwanted won the championship for the Elder Chair Volleyball League Tournament. Jeston Morris/GRIN

Tournament was a success. Over 130 players participated in the event. Two courts were set up inside the gymnasium.



Jackrabbits I placed second in the Elder Chair Volleyball League Tournament. Jeston Morris/GRIN



Hashan-Kehk II placed third in the Elder Chair Volleyball League Tournament. Jeston Morris/GRIN

Whirlwind Golf Club Welcomes the LPGA Ford Championship Once Again

Community leaders, Ford partners, and the LPGA launch the tournament’s second year at Gila River, highlighting its growing impact on youth and local development.

Miguel Sallard
Gila River Indian News



L-R: Governor Stephen Roe Lewis with last year’s LPGA winner Hyo Joo Kim and Lt. Governor Regina Antone. Photo By: Gila River Development

The LPGA Ford Championship will return for the second time to Whirlwind Golf Club, reaffirming the Gila River Indian Community as host of one of the premier events in professional women’s golf. On Feb. 17, representatives from the LPGA, Ford sponsors, and Community leadership gathered to officially announce the tournament’s return, emphasizing the success of last year’s event and the shared commitment to expanding this partnership.

The 2026 LPGA Tour season began earlier this year in Thailand, where more than 70 players competed in the opening tournament. That international start set an energetic tone

for the season, and now the momentum shifts to Whirlwind Golf Club, where organizers expect the Ford Championship to surpass last year’s experience in both competition and community engagement.

For the Gila River Indian Community, the tournament’s impact extends beyond the fairways. Hosting an event of this scale supports the local economy, elevates the visibility of Whirlwind Golf Club, and provides opportunities for young women in GRIC to be inspired by world class athletes. Community

leaders noted that events like this help promote golf among girls and teens, encouraging healthy lifestyles, discipline, and new pathways for future careers.

With continued support from Ford and the growing prominence of the tournament, Whirlwind is poised to strengthen its role as a key destination on the LPGA Tour. For the Community, the championship represents an investment in youth, culture, and long term development—an opportunity to build a stronger future through sport.

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O’otham Distances Near and Far 2026



Ever wonder why O’otham point with their heads, and lips? For that possibility, we will have to take a giant leap backward in time, before modern conveniences. Imagine mom sitting under the va’tho weaving her basket. She instructed her daughter to bring more cattail for her weaving. “Him ko ‘e bekai heg u’vak vu’da, thoakam amai.” (Go bring another bundle of cattail and set it down there.) As she instructed her daughter, she did not want to release tension from her hands in weaving the basket to point, so she had used her head and lips to point. She most likely, held a splint of devil’s claw in her mouth, in preparation for the next stitch.

If we examine the distance more closely, we see that she said “amai” (there) away from her. If she wanted the bundle of cattail close to her would have said “i:ya” (close by). So, now we read that “i:ya” means (close by)

and “amai” means (there), away from an O’otham at a distance. Another form of close is “mia” (near, next to). If mom had wanted the bundle of cattail right next to her, she would have instructed her daughter “Pt ‘o ñmiabithk thaiwañ.” (Set it down next to me.)

These are three examples of (there, close by and next to) and can still be spoken today. Now, we will come back forward to our present time. Did you ever have to ‘dispatch’ an intrusive ‘critter’ in your house? Back in the day, when we lived in our sandwich style home, it was not uncommon to find certain ‘critters’ inside our home. After we had dispatched a large scorpion, we were instructed by mom, “M gu hu bekai heg nakshel koli thap!” (Take the scorpion over there to the fence!). We read that “gu hu” means (at a greater distance) away from a place. In that case “gu hu” was the distance from the house to the fence, which

was about fifty-yards.

Another time, a ko’i (rattlesnake) had crawled behind our firewood box. Once again, we had dispatched ko’i, before we removed the carcass from the house. Grandma had instructed us, “Gam g hu ‘ia’wua ko’i shai thap!” (Throw away the rattler way over there into the bushes!) In that case, we had left our yard entirely and took the dispatched ko’i into the desert at a great distance from our house. We read that “gam g hu” means far away. In that instance “gam g hu” meant a quarter-mile walk into the desert.

In this last example of “at a great distance,” one of our cousins had attended boarding school at Sherman near Riverside, California. The grownups often spoke of him and said. Gad hu mamshchamtham Wesley, Mondelai thap.” (Far away, out of sight, Wesley is attending school in California). We have read about distances that separates an

Distances in O’otham, match the phrases with their picture!

I ‘va:k!, thaiwañ i:ya!

Viappoi gam g hu haichu ñeidakud hekaj.

Vachvi heg ‘e shoiga mia vakonakud!

Huai am oimed gm hu thoa’ag thap.

Sap ha thoa:in heg huasa’a amai gegosthakud tha:m.

Manth ‘o me: gam g hu nolavthakud wui.

Clip Art Courtesy Robert Johnson



O’otham from objects and persons from near, far, and far away in the distance out of sight. These are only a few examples of distances.

Practice saying these phrases in your everyday

lives. Speak with an Elder or Speaker and see what other phrases for distances are possible. Phrases may be slightly different between the villages. The word search will challenge

your memory of distances in O’otham.

A special Thank You to Community Elders for sharing their knowledge of O’otham Neo’ok which made this article possible.

MCT Elder Chair Volleyball Tournament Shines in District 4

Jeston Morris
Gila River Indian News

SANTAN, Ariz. — The Tribal Recreation & Wellness Department (TRW) hosted the Mul-Chu-Tha (MCT) Elderly Chair Volleyball tournament at District 4 Multi-Purpose Facility on Feb. 27-28. Thirty-two teams participated, with 16 teams from Gila River and 16 teams from other tribes.

Paula Turtles from California won the Gold Division Championship, and Jack Rabbits I from District 1 were the runner-up. Soboba from California won the Silver Division Championship, and Hashan Kehk II from District 2 was the runner-up.

Several hundred people attended the Mul-Chu-Tha Volleyball Tournament. On the final day, Lt. Gov. Regina Antone gave the luncheon blessing.



Silver Championship game Hashan Kehk II player hitting the ball over the net Jeston Morris/GRIN

Gov. Stephen Roe Lewis gave the championship remark.

“Let’s give the Gold and Silver Champions a round of applause. Give the TRW staff and volunteers a round of applause as well. They did an outstanding job,” said Gov. Lewis. “This volleyball tournament kicks off the 2026 Mul-Chu-Tha,” he added.

“The championship game was a battle. Our op-

ponent played very well. We came from behind to win,” said Richard Lavado, team captain for Paula Turtles. “Blackwater is a good team,” he added.

“We usually win, but today we didn’t have enough. Paula Turtles is the team to beat. They were really determined today,” said Lynelle Blackwater, assistant coach and player for Jack Rabbits I. “Chair volleyball really brings us together to exercise and socialize.”

“The tournament result is good. We won the Silver Division Championship,” said Charles, team captain for Soboba I.

“We did good this time. We’re the runner-up in the Silver Division Championship,” said Greg Lewis, team captain for Hashan Kehk II. “It was a good game. We were there to play. We had a good time,” he added.



Mul-Chu-Tha Elders Chair Volleyball Tournament Gold Champions Paula Turtles with Gov. Lewis and Lt. Gov. Antone. Jeston Morris/GRIN

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Casa Blanca Community School Sets the Gold Standard for Mass Evacuation Drill



Students and teachers board the buses after completing the safety drill, ensuring everyone knows the procedures for future emergencies. Jeston Morris/GRIN

Jeston Morris Gila River Indian News

CASA BLANCA, Ariz. — Casa Blanca Community School (CBCS) partnered with several agencies for a mass evacuation drill on March 5. The drill began at 9 a.m. at CBCS, and the students were transported to the District 5 Service Center.

Casa Blanca Community School sets the gold standard for mass evacuation for schools. They are the only school in the Gila River Indian Community that does drill. Representatives from Blackwater Community School and Gila Crossing Community School observed the drill. Both schools are considering implementing the mass evacuation drill at their schools.

The initial drill team from CBCS arrived before the school buses. The teams set up the stations. They include student care, student

pick-up, student request and ID verification, release gate, and check-in booths. The participating agencies include the Office of Emergency Management, Emergency Medical Services, the Gila River Police Department (GRPD) and Fire Department.

GRPD escorted the school buses from CBCS to the District 5 Service Center. Upon arrival, the students got off, and their teachers led them into the gymnasium. Students were organized according to grade levels. Principal Kim Franklin instructed her teachers to confirm the “accountability check” of all the students by holding up a sign.

Parents volunteered and were instructed and given a pick-up form for their student. Each form had a unique scenario, such as no identification card. If a parent did not have their ID on them, the school had a verification technician.

The principal or vice principal verifies the parent or guardian of the student in case there is no ID card. O’otham and Pee Posh speakers were also present in case an interpreter was needed.

The teachers were with their students the entire drill. They had pre-arranged assignments for their students. After completing the assignment, the student watched the movie ‘Shrek’ on the big screen. The School Resource Officer (SRO) spoke to the students and assured them that this is only a drill and everything will be okay and gave students high-fives. The students were happy with the reassurance from the SRO, who is part of the GRPD.

“We have been doing this drill for three years now. The drill is a preparation for a mass evacuation of our campus. We created a lesson plan for the drill so the students have assign-

NOTICE OF COMPLETED LEGISLATION

TITLE 8

CIVIL CODE

Chapter 2. CIVIL TRESPASS

8.201. Authority; Findings; Purpose; No Implied Right of Entry.

A. Authority. The Gila River Indian Community Constitution and Bylaws (March 17, 1960) were formed pursuant to the Indian Reorganization Act (25 U.S.C. § 461 et seq.) and were adopted for the common welfare of the Community and provide structure for the Community to enact ordinances governing conduct within the exterior boundaries of the Reservation (25 U.S.C. § 476). The Community enacts this ordinance under its inherent civil, legislative, adjudicative and regulatory authority.

B. Findings. Recognizing that the well-being and general welfare of members of the Community is a concern of the highest priority for the Community Council, the Community Council finds:

1. That the Community has inherent sovereignty to exercise civil authority and jurisdiction over the conduct of Community members and all other persons on all lands within the exterior boundaries of the Reservation to maintain the environment, natural resources, public health, safety, welfare, political integrity and economic security of the Community;
2. That the Community has inherent sovereignty that includes the right to occupy and exclude non-members from lands within the exterior boundaries of the Reservation;
3. That trespasses onto Community lands in the past have caused serious damages to the Community, its members' lands and its natural and cultural resources and caused an intrusion on the privacy of Community members and legal residents;
4. Trespassing onto Community lands continues to be a serious problem and poses an imminent threat to the health, safety and welfare of the Community, its members and preservation of its lands and resources; and
5. Effective public safety requires coordination among law enforcement agencies and respect for jurisdictional boundaries. This ordinance establishes a uniform requirement that all law enforcement officers provide advance notice to the Gila River Police Department prior to conducting enforcement activities within the exterior boundaries of the Reservation, except in narrowly defined exigent circumstances; and
6. Transparency and accountability in public law enforcement, civil law enforcement, and immigration enforcement are essential to maintaining public trust and upholding constitutional tribal governance; and

A copy of this ordinance in its entirety is on file and available for review at all District Service Centers coordinators' offices and the Community Council Secretary's office.

ments. The drill includes a structured student release program. Certain protocols need to be met for student release during emergencies,” said Ronald Stiffarm, 4th grade teacher.

“Mass school evacuation drills are important for several reasons. For exam-

ple, we believe practicing the drill is good for students’ safety. Drill helps our school and the Community prepare for an emergency. Protecting the school children is paramount,” said Principal Franklin.

“Our sister schools, Blackwater and Gila

Cross[ing], observed our drill. They may choose to implement it in their schools. I want to thank the Office of Emergency Management and other agencies that contribute to this drill,” she added.

A’AGA: Something to be Told or Talked About

Submitted By
Bill Allen

In February we honor a photograph that caught the moment a second, bigger flag was raised on Mt. Suri-bachi. Hope and courage to be looked at forever. It also showed an O’otham following himdag. Ira Hamilton Hayes was raised in Bapchule, a village which still retains a setting ideal for the telling of O’otham stories. Young boys were taught to sit straight and listen—behave respectfully.

When the Gila or Akimel flowed through our jeved, not just during heavy rains, O’otham raised a bounty of food crops. Indians who lived up in the mountains weren’t so lucky. This time of the year, food was scarce or gone, too early for food to be gathered or planted. Therefore, a common practice was for these mountain Indians to come to our Akimel and

take what they could. Hunger and cold made them aggressive. O’otham protected their food, livestock, and people. We became soldiers, defenders.

The Akimel O’otham recorded history by making marks/notches on a long stick. By touching and seeing the marks on the stick, old men told vivid details of past events. A translation of a Casa Blanca calendar stick had over 25 encounters within 32 years against the enemy, the last conflict in 1874.

The season of sitting and listening to O’otham creation stories has passed. The stories tell of the consequences of too much pride, greed, wrath, sloth, and so on. This was O’otham culture/himdag surrounding this future marine.

A change took place around 1900 when the river/Akimel was diverted. Ira Hayes’ life also changed after his military service. Was

he genetically prone to alcohol, depression, or what is now called PTSD? The trappings of praise, bond tours, and being singled out, so common in today’s “look at me” attitude, were like a runaway horse. It was not O’otham.

Indian/Native American and American history have been intertwined since—and before—the Revolution. The same with O’otham history; the US wanted California during the Mexican American War. The Army of the West marched along the Gila and experienced our hospitality in 1846. It would take 7 years before land north of the Gila River became part of the United States. (173 years ago we would be in Mexico.)

On September 1, 1857, Yuma, Mohave, Tonto, and Yavapai warriors attacked a Maricopa/Piipaash village near al Aji/Pima Butte. O’otham helped. In 1865,

about 192 Akimel O’otham and Maricopa/Piipaash scouts were mustered into military service for 1 year. Then the US Army decided to hire or enlist O’otham, Maricopa/Piipaash, and Mexicans to pursue the mountain O’otham or o:b. In 1910, regional conflicts in Mexico marked the beginning of the Mexican Revolution. Arizona did not have a standing national guard. Quickly, the Arizona National Guard formed Company F in 1912. Company F was an all-Indian unit of current and former students from the Phoenix Indian School, mostly O’otham and Maricopa/Piipaash.

When World War I was declared, the O’otham were sent to the Western Front. O’otham learned French to buy food; they liked the long loaves of bread and got used to the strong smell of garlic and wine in restaurants. Joshua Morris’ lungs were burned badly by mustard gas, and he died shortly after returning home. Matthew B. Juan was cut down by enemy machine gun

fire at the Battle of Cantigny, and as Wallace Anton reached the Western Front, he said, “Pegi ne’e. A’at hegai t-gaghi.” ‘Well, look. We have reached what we have been looking for.’ He was killed 2 days BEFORE the Armistice.

When the US entered World War II, 24,000 Indians from reservations and 20,000 Indians living off reservations enlisted, including about 800 Indian women. Akimel O’otham 1LT Sam Thomas earned a battlefield commission in France but was denied the promotion. Gen. Patton learned of the oversight, and Sam Thomas was now a CPT. Jay Morago, Jr., became a sergeant with the Bushmasters. After the war, Captain Thomas and Sgt. Morago began Gila River Farms, made it profitable, and employed over 150 tribal members. The Alamo Scouts were a reconnaissance unit with O’otham, Sgt. Theodore T. Largo, and Joshua Sunn. SSG David Milda was killed in action in New Guinea in January of 1945.

When my mother took my grandmother to visit relatives, so did I. We often visited the home of Joe and Nancy, Ira’s parents. While the ladies talked, I was told not to go near a white building in the big yard. Ira’s mother was a devout Presbyterian and refurbished the white building as a church. (A memorial flagpole stands at the Va’aki Church.) Later, I learned it was a barrack from the Japanese Relocation Camp, located south of Bapchule.

If Akimel water had not been diverted, Ira may have been a farmer growing wheat, alfalfa, or cotton. He may not have fallen into the ‘wino culture.’

Natives defend our way of life/himdag. Knowing this, Ira enlisted when he was 19 years old.

March 19, 2025: A page celebrating Pfc. Ira Hayes hoisting a U.S. flag on Iwo Jima in 1945 was erased. It has been restored.

Thank you for your service, men and women—past, present, and future.

Coolidge Boys Basketball Advanced to State Finals Before Title Loss



Preston Dees, No. 50 on the tip off named First Team All 3A Central for the second consecutive year. Jeston Morris/GRIN

Bears' starting lineup vs. Snowflake Lobos consisted of Turner Armstrong, Corbyn Downs, Shane Enos, Preston Dees, and Porter Dees.

The game opened with Dees (50) tipping the ball to his teammate and immediately scoring. They led the game for its entirety. They pulled away in the fourth quarter and won 62 to 48.

"Today's win felt good," said Enos, a forward from Gila River. "Some people were saying we are going to lose and we are not supposed to be here. We proved them wrong, our team chemistry is good. Our team is there for each other," said Enos.

Gov. Stephen Roe Lewis commented on the team's journey, noting, "The whole week was an emotional roller coaster. We did not know if the Coolidge basketball team was going to win their appeal. They made the most of the opportunity".

"They're the resilience team. All the coaching staff and players came together to pull off a convincing victory," said Gov. Lewis.

"Tough one, our boys fought hard. They just made a few more buckets than we did. Proud of the boys. We didn't have enough today," said Coach Matthew Smith of the Snowflake Lobos.

Jeston Morris Gila River Indian News

PHOENIX, Ariz. — The Coolidge Bears defeated Snowflake Lobos in the state semifinals after a Pinal County judge reinstated Coolidge to the 3A playoff tournament at Arizona Veterans Memorial Coliseum on Feb. 28. While the team advanced to the state championship, the Bears ultimately lost 52-41 to the Palo Verde Magnet Titans on March 5.

"We are a tough, gritty, close-knit team that played in the best region in 3A, the 3A Central," said coach Dave Glasgow. "No one in 3A played a tougher schedule after Jan.1 than we have. We have more than earned the right to be here". Glasgow added that the team's goal has been to win the 3A state championship since the first day of fall work in August.

Preston Dees (Senior): Named First Team All 3A Central for the second consecutive year. He averaged 17.7 points and 10.7 rebounds per game while shooting 64% from the floor. Dees is the school's all-time leading rebounder (736) and one

of only 10 players in the school's history to score over 1,000 career points, finishing with 1,052.

Turner Armstrong (Freshman): Earned a rare freshman selection for First Team All 3A Central. He averaged 13.6 points and 6.9 assists per game. He recorded 81 3-point goals, shooting 38% from beyond the arc, and averaged 20.6 points in five post-season games.

Porter Dees (Junior): Selected for the Second Team All 3A Central, averaging 8.2 points and 6.7 rebounds per game.

Shane Enos (Junior): Received an Honorable Mention All 3A Central selection. He averaged 6.4 points and 4.2 rebounds per game and is considered one of the team's top defensive players.

Enos wears jersey No.42, a number previously worn by injured teammate Adarius Miguel, Adarius' father Kyle Miguel, Tim Siqueros, and Tim's brother Drew. All are from the Gila River. Siqueros played on state championship teams in 1998 and 1999. Miguel was the point guard and First Team All-State for the undefeated 2002 state championship team.

During the Feb. 28 semifinal, the



Shane Enos averaged 6.4 points and 4.2 rebounds per game Jeston Morris/GRIN



Shane Enos, an Honorable Mention All 3A Central selection, one of the team's top defensive players. Enos Carries the GRIC Tradition. Jeston Morris/GRIN

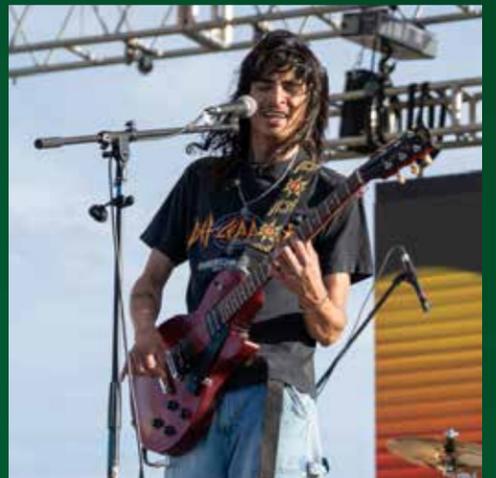


With the championship pressure rising, the coaching staff leans in on the bench for guidance to keep a season's dreams alive. Jeston Morris/GRIN

61st Annual Mul-Chu-Tha



Fair & Rodeo Memories





Youth enjoy the new playground at the Komatke Branch Boys & Girls Club. Photo Courtesy of Fiesta Sports Foundation

From Front Page

Club. We contributed to meeting that need,” Moses said. “Kids can now go outside and play on a new and safe playground,” Gov. Stephen Row Lewis reflected on the improvements, noting that the old steel playground would get hot during the summer. The structure is colorful, shaded by a large canopy,

and surrounded by mulch. The sidewalk features hopscotch and other games. “This is a beautiful playground for the youth. The playground is unique because it has O’tham and Pee Posh language signage. It’s very important for the youth to see their language; it’s part of their heritage,” Gov. Lewis said. “The Komatke Boys & Girls Club, Fiesta Sports Foundation, and SRP

did an outstanding job in building and unveiling this new playground.” Terrence Peters, cultural director for the Komatke Boys & Girls Club, worked with elders who are native speakers of O’tham and Pee Posh to provide the translation for playground signage. The signs include English, O’tham, and Pee Posh.



Youth enjoy hopscotch on the newly painted sidewalk. Jeston Morris/GRIN



Thanks to the dedication of more than 70 SRP employee volunteers helped bring this new playground to life. Jeston Morris/GRIN

Community Health Nutrition Presents

TOKA EVENT

To register call 520-562-5100 or scan the QR code

Breakfast & Incentives for first 50 participants

Open to all women who are GRIC enrolled members and residents. Toka players are invited to scrimmage and share the cultural significance of Toka, highlighting its powerful role in tradition, strength, and community.

April 4, 2026
8AM to 11AM
Sacaton Fairgrounds
158 S Bluebird Rd.
Sacaton, AZ 85147

Sacaton Market Now Offers ITCA WIC

Expanding Nutrition Services for Local Families

Submitted By Gila River Development

The Gila River Indian Community has a new Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program vendor. On Feb. 11, Gila River Development (GRD) announced that ITCA WIC is now available at the Sacaton Market, bringing healthy nutrition options to WIC participants on the reservation.

This announcement follows the closure of the GRIC Market on Jan. 27 as the Sacaton Market prepared to transition WIC services to the new store.

In addition to WIC, the Sacaton Market accepts Electronic Benefit Transfer

(EBT), the card system Arizona uses to distribute the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

With these additions, the Sacaton Market now provides critical services to residents.

“Since opening the Sacaton Market in 2025, we made it a priority to expand nutrition services for families. We established EBT/SNAP in January, and now we’re excited to offer ITCA WIC as well,” said Duncan Wiston, Gila River Development General Manager.

Gila River Development is now moving forward with the State of Arizona (ADHS) WIC application to finalize authorization for both WIC programs and expand service access across the Community.

Although the State-ad-



ministered WIC and ITCA WIC differ in who oversees them, participants receive the same benefits under either program. This ensures that all WIC participants in the region can be served, regardless of which program they are enrolled in.

“If you’re enrolled in ITCA WIC or are new to the program, you can now visit the Sacaton Market for all your nutritious foods,” said Wiston.

Distances in O’tham, match the phrases with their picture! SOLUTION!

I ‘va:k!, thaiwañ i:ya!

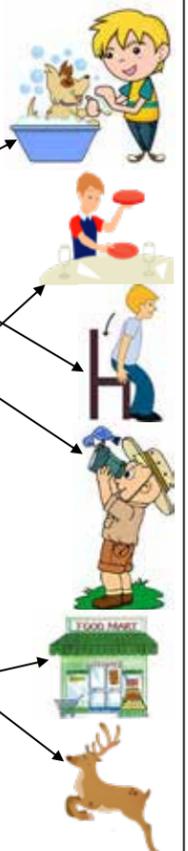
Viappoi gam g hu haichu ñeidakuđ hekaj.

Vachvi heg ‘e shoiga mia vakonakuđ!

Huai am oimeđ gm hu thoa’ag thap.

Sap ha thoa:in heg huasa’a amai gegosthakuđ tha:m.

Manth ‘o me: gam g hu nolavthakuđ wui.



Clip Art Courtesy Robert Johnson



Department of Transportation Public Notice & Public Comment Request

Project Name: The Community’s Tribal Transportation Improvement Program (TTIP).
Project Process: GRICDOT is in the process of updating the required Community Tribal Transportation Improvement Program (TTIP) for the fiscal years FY26 - FY31.
Project Summary: See list below of the project names, districts and associated Federal dollars for each TTIP project.
Location: Districts 2 – 7
Public Comment: Your input is greatly appreciated. Please provide any comments you may have on the projects listed and submit to:

Steven Johnson, P.E.
 Senior Civil Engineer, GRICDOT
 PO box 97, Sacaton, AZ 85147
 Steven.Johnson@gric.nsn.us
 Office 520-562-0952 Cell 520-610-1720

GRIC DOT IRR FY 26 - FY 31 TTIP Summary

DIST.	FY 2026 PROJECTS	COST
3	Sacaton Local Roads Paving Project - Crowfoot, Pima, Church, Main	\$1,700,000.00
3,5	Seedfarm Road Reconstruction	\$3,000,000.00
5	Orchard Road Improvements	\$940,000.00
5	FY26 Chip Seal - Ruins, Wetcamp, Snakehill, Orchard	\$390,000.00
5	Old Highway 93 (Farms Road) Bridge Replacement	\$1,274,235.00
6	Tashquith Road Bridge Replacement	\$2,334,302.00
6	Santa Cruz Road - South Bridge Replacement	\$11,811,158.00
6	Santa Cruz Road - North Bridge Replacement	\$12,914,004.00
3, 4, 5, 7	Sign Replacement Project	\$1,247,578.00
2, 4, 5, 6	Turn Lane Warrant Study SR87, SR187, and Maricopa Road	\$50,000.00
GRICDOT	FHWA Planning Cost	\$300,000.00
GRICDOT	FHWA Maintenance Dollars for Salaries, Materials, and Repairs	\$282,761.00
GRICDOT	Heavy Equipment Purchase - Paver, Sign Truck, Service and Dump Trucks	\$1,360,582.00
Total		\$37,004,680.00

DIST.	FY 2027 PROJECTS	COST
2	Olberg Road Bridge Replacement Project	\$38,975,505.00
3	Cholla Road Sidewalk Project	\$1,640,000.00
3 & 4	FY24 Chip Seal - Bluebird and Gilbert Road	\$500,000.00
4	Consolidated District 4 Paving - Upper Santan, Pear, Moffit, Shuttle, Lower Santan, Aspen	\$1,560,000.00
4	Imperial Road Double Chip Seal	\$450,000.00
4	Cotton Road Double Chip Seal	\$290,000.00
4	Maize Road Double Chip Seal	\$450,000.00
5	Casa Blanca Canal Box Culvert Extension	\$500,000.00
6	Maricopa Road Chip Seal	\$559,959.00
GRICDOT	FHWA Administrative Cost	\$300,000.00
GRICDOT	FHWA Planning Cost	\$282,761.00
GRICDOT	FHWA Maintenance Dollars for Salaries, Materials, and Repairs	\$760,642.00
Total		\$42,268,867.00

DIST.	FY 2028 PROJECTS	COST
3	Casa Grande Highway Widening Project	\$720,000.00
3 & 4	Sacaton Road (Route 7) Widening	\$600,000.00
GRICDOT	FHWA Administrative Cost	\$300,000.00
GRICDOT	FHWA Planning Cost	\$282,761.00
GRICDOT	FHWA Maintenance Dollars for Salaries, Materials, and Repairs	\$760,642.00
Total		\$2,663,403.00

DIST.	FY 2029 PROJECTS	COST
4	Gilbert Road Reconstruction	\$11,330,000.00
5	Filed Road Double Chip Seal	\$150,000.00
6	Elliot Road Double Chip Seal	\$285,000.00
GRICDOT	FHWA Administrative Cost	\$300,000.00
GRICDOT	FHWA Planning Cost	\$282,761.00
GRICDOT	FHWA Maintenance Dollars for Salaries, Materials, and Repairs	\$760,642.00
Total		\$13,108,403.00

COMMUNITY COUNCIL ACTION SHEETS

Courtesy of the Community Council Secretary's Office • February 18, 2026

ACTION SHEET

Community Council; P.O. Box 2138; Sacaton, Arizona 85147; Phone (520) 562-9720; Fax (520) 562-9729

CALL TO ORDER

The Second Regular Monthly Meeting of the Community Council held Wednesday, February 18, 2026, in the Community Council Chambers at the Governance Center in Sacaton, Arizona was called to order by Governor Stephen R. Lewis at 9:04 a.m.

INVOCATION

Provided by Councilwoman Nada Celaya

ROLL CALL

Council Secretary Shannon White called the roll

Executive Officers Present:

Governor Stephen R. Lewis

Lt. Governor Regina Antone

Council Members Present:

D1- Joey Whitman; D2- Ann Lucas; D3- Joseph Manuel, Jr., Kristina Morago; D4- Leah Williams, Nada Celaya, Lalena Jackson; D5- James De La Rosa(9:10), Donovan Kyitian, Franklin Pablo, Sr., Gordon Santos, Jr.; D6- Anthony Villareal, Sr., Charles Goldtooth(9:14), Terrance Evans; D7- Jeanette Blasingim

Council Members Absent:

D1- Duane Jackson, Jr. (Travel)

D4- Jennifer Allison (Travel)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION MADE AND SECOND TO TABLE RESOLUTION

#21 FOR NON-SUBMITTAL OF MATERIAL

MOTION MADE AND SECOND TO ACCEPT REPORTS #1

THROUGH #8, ACCEPT AND APPROVE RESOLUTIONS

#1 THROUGH #20 AND #22, #23, #24 ON THE CONSENT

AGENDA

MOTION MADE AND SECOND TO APPROVE THE

REGULAR AGENDA AS AMENDED

PRESENTATIONS/INTRODUCTIONS

REPORTS

*1. Community Technology Center FY2025/2026 1st Quarter Report

Presenter: Connie Jackson

ACCEPTED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>2. Supplemental Grant Presentation

Presenter: Fr. Antony Tinker

ACCEPTED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>3. Pee-Posh Veterans' Association 3rd Quarter Budget Report

Presenter: Arnie Bread, Sr., Veronica Kinsel

ACCEPTED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>4. Pee-Posh Veterans' Association 4th Quarter Budget Report

Presenter: Arnie Bread, Sr., Veronica Kinsel

ACCEPTED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>5. Pee-Posh Veterans' Association Annual Budget Report

Presenter: Arnie Bread, Sr., Veronica Kinsel

ACCEPTED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>6. Gila River Telecommunications, Inc. Subsidiaries

FY2025 Fourth Quarter Report

Presenters: Clarice Chiago-Jones, Craig Baumgartner, GRTI Board of Directors

ACCEPTED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>7. FY2025 Executive Travel Report September 30, 2025

Presenter: Treasurer Gary T. Mix

ACCEPTED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>8. Gila River Farms FY25 End of Year Report

Presenters: Gila River Farms Board, Benito Alvarez, Jr.

ACCEPTED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

9. Head Start Program Appeal Update

Presenters: Michelle Tohtsoni, Sherilyn Analla, Lance Reyna

REPORT HEARD

MOTION MADE AND SECOND TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE

SESSION

10. Gila River Gaming Commission Department Report to the Community Council December 2025 (Executive Session)

Presenters: Gila River Gaming Commission, Jerry Higginson

HEARD IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

11. Gila River Gaming Enterprises, Inc. Monthly Report December 2025 (Executive Session)

Presenters: Kenneth Manuel, Dominic Orozco, Blake Katsnelson, Tony DeMark, Majdi Kayyali, Interim Oversight & Planning Committee

HEARD IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

12. FY26 Schedule of Investments ending December 31, 2025 (Executive Session) Presenter: Treasurer Gary T. Mix

HEARD IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

13. Financial Activity Report ending January 31, 2026 (Executive Session)

Presenter: Treasurer Gary T. Mix

HEARD IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION MADE AND SECOND TO EXIT EXECUTIVE

SESSION

RESOLUTIONS

>1. A Resolution Approving An Older Americans Act Title III Funding Agreement And Limited Waiver Of Sovereign Immunity For The Purpose Of Enforcement Of The Agreement Between The Inter Tribal Council Of Arizona – Area Agency On Aging, Region 8 And The Gila River Indian Community Through The Community Services Department (H&SSC forwards to the February 18, 2026 Community Council Meeting with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda; G&MSC concurs)

Presenters: Mary Dixon, Laurie Thomas, Joanne Brewer
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>2. A Resolution Authorizing Gila River Development To Enter A Subscription Agreement With Docusign For Software With Its Master Service Agreement Terms And Conditions Which Includes Consenting To Jurisdiction Of Any Federal Or State Court In San Francisco California For Claims And Disputes (EDSC forwards to the February 18, 2026 Community Council Meeting and placement on the consent agenda; G&MSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda)

Presenters: Bartley Harris, Duncan Wiston
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>3. A Resolution Of Consent To Grant A Temporary Special Event Liquor License To Chandler Chamber Of Commerce For Use At The Rawhide Western Town, The Event Center The Sonoran Lawn And The Riverwalk Lawn From March 13, 2026 Through March 15, 2026 And March 20, 2026 Through March 22, 2026 (G&MSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval with corrections and placement on the consent agenda)

Presenters: Bartley Harris, Kaleb Lester, Duncan Wiston
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>4. A Resolution Approving A Memorandum Of Agreement Between The Tribal Education Department Of The Gila River Indian Community And Imagine Prep Coolidge (ESC forwards to the February 18, 2026 Council meeting with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda; G&MSC concurs)

Presenters: Sherilyn Analla, Lance Reyna
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>5. A Resolution Approving A Data Sharing Agreement Between The Arizona Department Of Education And The Gila River Indian Community (ESC forwards to the February 18, 2026 Council meeting with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda; G&MSC concurs)

Presenters: Sherilyn Analla, Lance Reyna
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>6. A Resolution Approving Tribal Education Allocation Funds For Schools Located Within The Exterior Boundaries Of The Gila River Indian Community Reservation (G&MSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda; ESC concurs)

Presenters: Sherilyn Analla, Lance Reyna
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>7. A Resolution Approving The Programmatic Agreement Among The Bureau Of Indian Affairs, Pima Agency; The Gila River Indian Community; The Gila River Indian Irrigation And Drainage District; The Natural Resources Conservation Service; The Tribal Historic Preservation Office; And The Advisory Council On Historic Preservation, Regarding Compliance With Section 106 Of The National Historic Preservation Act For Agricultural Leases And The Gila River Indian Community's Agricultural Development Program (G&MSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda; NRSC & CRSC concur)

Presenters: Reylynne Williams, Darius Enos, Larry Benallie, Jr.
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>8. A Resolution Authorizing Gila River Telecommunications, Inc. To Waive Sovereign Immunity Solely For The Purpose Of Enforcing The Provisions Of The Joint Project Agreement Between The State Of Arizona And Gila River Telecommunications, Inc. And For Enforcing Any Arbitration Award Under The Agreement And For No Other Purpose (G&MSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda; NRSC, LSC & EDSC concur)

Presenters: Clarice Chiago-Jones, Michael Staples, Joan Burke, GRTI Board of Directors
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>9. A Resolution Of Consent To Grant A Temporary Special Event Liquor License To Warriors Code, Inc. For Use At The Whirlwind Golf Club From March 25, 2026 To March 29, 2026 (G&MSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda)

Presenters: Kaleb Lester, Bartley Harris, Duncan Wiston
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>10. A Resolution Of Consent To Grant A Temporary Special Event Liquor License To Tempe Diablos Charities, Inc. For Use At The Rawhide Western Town On March 28, 2026 (G&MSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda)

Presenters: Kaleb Lester, Bartley Harris
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>11. A Resolution Of Consent To Grant A Temporary Special Event Liquor License To Active Family Development Foundation For Use At Rawhide Event Center And Sonoran Lawn On May 9, 2026 (G&MSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda)

Presenters: Kaleb Lester, Bartley Harris
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>12. A Resolution Approving The 2025 Gila River Indian

Community San Carlos Irrigation And Drainage Agreement (G&MSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda; NRSC concurs)

Presenters: Jason T. Hauter, Javier G. Ramos, Michael Carter

ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>13. A Resolution Approving The Lease Agreement For CAP Water Between Central Arizona Water Conservation District And The Gila River Indian Community (G&MSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda; NRSC concurs)

Presenters: Jason T. Hauter, Javier G. Ramos, Michael Carter
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>14. A Resolution Approving The Purchase And Sale Agreement For Long-Term Storage Credits The Gila River Indian Community And The Central Arizona Water Conservation District (G&MSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda; NRSC concurs)

Presenters: Jason T. Hauter, Javier G. Ramos, Michael Carter
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>15. A Resolution Approving The Petition For Membership For Gracie Cianna Flores Into The Gila River Indian Community (LSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda)

Presenter: Sara Duenez
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>16. A Resolution Approving The Petition For Membership For Sunrise Louise Emery Into The Gila River Indian Community (LSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda) Presenter: Sara Duenez

ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>17. A Resolution Approving The Petition For Membership For Francisco Xavier Yucupicio Into The Gila River Indian Community (LSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda)

Presenter: Sara Duenez
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>18. A Resolution Approving The Petition For Membership For Anela Simonne Joaquin Into The Gila River Indian Community (LSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda)

Presenter: Sara Duenez
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>19. A Resolution Approving The Petition For Membership For Catherine Quinn Jackson Into The Gila River Indian Community (LSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda)

Presenter: Sara Duenez
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>20. A Resolution Approving The Petition For Membership For Kymani Shadi Ismael Tawil Into The Gila River Indian Community (LSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda)

Presenter: Sara Duenez
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>21. A Resolution Approving The Petition For Membership For Zaidist Bruce Darrell Into The Gila River Indian Community (LSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda)

Presenter: Sara Duenez
TABLED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>22. A Resolution Approving The Petition For Membership For Lightningsky Bravehawk Darrell Tawil Into The Gila River Indian Community (LSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda)

Presenter: Sara Duenez
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>23. A Resolution Approving The Petition For Membership For Wilford Dayton Marrietta Into The Gila River Indian Community (LSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda)

Presenter: Sara Duenez
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>24. A Resolution Approving The Petition For Membership For Jennifer Delores Marrietta Into The Gila River Indian Community (LSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda)

Presenter: Sara Duenez
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

ORDINANCES

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Town Hall Extension Request (LSC forwards to Council with a recommendation to extend the deadline by 30 days)
Presenters: Governor Stephen R. Lewis, Lt. Governor Regina Antone, Suzanne Jones
MOTION MADE AND SECOND TO EXTEND THE DEADLINE TO 60 DAYS DUE TO THE DEATHS OCCURRING IN THE DISTRICTS

NEW BUSINESS

1. Community Mission and Vision Artwork (G&MSC forwards to Council under New Business for discussion and action with additional material to include the updated artwork with wording and graphics; NRSC, H&SSC, LSC, ESC, EDSC, and CRSC concur)

Presenters: Treasurer Gary T. Mix, Laurie Post, Shima Arab, Steve Olkewicz

MOTION MADE AND SECOND TO SEND THIS ITEM BACK TO THE JURISDICTION OF THE CULTURAL RESOURCE STANDING COMMITTEE TO DECIDE ON BEHALF OF THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

2. Human Resources Recruitment Report – Statistical Data and Recruitment Updates as of January 16, 2026 (G&MSC forwards to Council under New Business with a recommendation to set a date for a Council Work Session)

Presenter: TeriLynne Kisto
MOTION MADE AND SECOND TO HAVE THE COUNCIL SECRETARY SCHEDULE A TWO DAY OFF-SITE COUNCIL WORK SESSION DURING THE FREE WEEK IN APRIL USING DUES & DELEGATIONS

3. Rx & Illicit Drug Summit – Nashville, TN April 6-9, 2026 (H&SSC motions to forward to Council for any interested Council Member to attend utilizing Dues & Delegations)

Presenter: Duane Jackson, Jr.
MOTION MADE AND SECOND TO ALLOW ANY INTERESTED COUNCIL MEMBERS TO ATTEND UTILIZING DUES & DELEGATIONS

4. Law Enforcement Citizens Advisory Board Appointment For District 7 (LSC forwards to Council with a recommendation to appoint Verna Parker to the Law Enforcement Citizens Advisory Board for District 7)

Presenter: Shannon White
MOTION MADE AND SECOND TO APPOINT MS. VERNA PARKER TO THE LAW ENFORCEMENT CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD APPOINTMENT FOR DISTRICT 7

5. Gila River Resorts & Casino Lone Butte Casino Special Audit (Executive Session) (G&MSC releases the audit to the Gila River Resorts & Casino and forwards to Council under New Business in Executive Session with a recommendation to accept)

Presenters: Dena Thomas, Kyromi Martinez-Pablo, Laura Ryan
MOTION MADE AND SECOND TO ACCEPT NEW BUSINESS #5 AND #6

6. FY2026 Internal Audit Department 1st Quarter Report (Executive Session) (G&MSC forwards to Council under New Business in Executive Session with a recommendation to accept)

Presenters: Dena Thomas, Kyromi Martinez-Pablo, Laura Ryan
ACCEPTED AT NEW BUSINESS #5

MINUTES

1. December 11, 2025 (Special)

APPROVED

2. January 7, 2026 (Regular)

APPROVED

3. February 4, 2026 (Regular)

APPROVED

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- PRAYERS WERE REQUESTED FOR THE FAMILIES OF NATHAN NARCIA, ANGELICA ANTONE, AND VALENTINE DE LOWE

- PRAYERS WERE REQUESTED FOR THE FAMILY OF DAWN BURNETTE

- A MEETING WILL BE HELD ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2026 WITH BILLY KIRKLAND, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF INDIAN AFFAIRS AT THE WILD HORSE PASS RESORT & CASINO REGARDING THE BACKLOG OF LEASES AND WATER THROUGH PIMA AGENCY

- THE CONSULTATION WITH THE BUREAU OF RECLAMATION WILL BE HELD AT 1:00 P.M. ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2026

- DISTRICT 7 COMMUNITY THANKED THE OFFICE ON THE COMMUNITY MANAGER FOR COORDINATING THE GILA RIVER POLICE DEPARTMENT AND GILA RIVER FIRE DEPARTMENT FOR ATTENDING THEIR COMMUNITY MEETING AND HEARING THEIR CONCERNS REGARDING TRADITIONAL SERVICES BEING HELD

- PRAYERS WERE REQUESTED FOR THE FAMILY OF CONNIE JOAQUIN

- THE FOUR SOUTHERN TRIBES CULTURAL RESOURCE WORKING GROUP MEETING WILL BE HELD ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2026 AT 9:00 A.M. AT THE WATER TREATMENT FACILITY IN AK-CHIN

- IWO JIMA FLAG RAISING EVENT WILL BE HELD ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2026 AND SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2026

- THE GILA RIVER BOYS & GIRLS CLUB YOUTH OF THE YEAR BANQUET WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2026 AT WILD HORSE PASS

ADJOURNMENT

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 11:31 A.M.

* Denotes TABLED from previous meeting(s)

> Denotes a CONSENT AGENDA ITEM

COMMUNITY COUNCIL ACTION SHEETS

Courtesy of the Community Council Secretary's Office • March 04, 2026

ACTION SHEET

Community Council; P.O. Box 2138; Sacaton, Arizona 85147; Phone (520) 562-9720; Fax (520) 562-9729
CALL TO ORDER

The First Regular Monthly Meeting of the Community Council held Wednesday, March 4, 2026, in the Community Council Chambers at the Governance Center in Sacaton, Arizona was called to order by Lt. Governor Regina Antone at 9:24 a.m.

INVOCATION

Provided by Councilwoman Ann Lucas

ROLL CALL

Council Secretary Shannon White called the roll
Executive Officers Present:
Governor Stephen R. Lewis (9:24)
Lt. Governor Regina Antone
Council Members Present:

D1- Joey Whitman, Duane Jackson, Jr.; D2- Ann Lucas; D3- Joseph Manuel, Jr.(9:09); Kristina Morago; D4- Leah Williams, Jennifer Allison, Nada Celaya, Lalena Jackson; D5- James De La Rosa, Donovan Kyyitan, Franklin Pablo, Sr., Gordon Santos, Jr.; D6- Anthony Villareal, Sr., Charles Goldtooth, Terrance Evans; D7- Jeanette Blasingim

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION MADE AND SECOND TO TABLE REPORT #4 AND NEW BUSINESS #7 FOR NON-SUBMITTAL OF MATERIAL

MOTION MADE AND SECOND TO ACCEPT REPORTS #1, #2, AND #3; ACCEPT AND APPROVE RESOLUTIONS #1 AND #2; AND ACCEPT AND APPROVE NEW BUSINESS #9 ON THE CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION MADE AND SECOND TO APPROVE THE REGULAR AGENDA AS AMENDED

PRESENTATIONS/INTRODUCTIONS

1. Council Presentation – Southwest Shakespeare Company
Presenter: Cheryl Pablo

MR. CLAUDE JACKSON AND MS. CINDY ORNSTEIN BOARD MEMBERS OF THE SOUTHWEST SHAKESPEARE COMPANY AND RECIPIENTS OF THE STATE SHARED GAMING DISTRIBUTION THANKED THE COUNCIL FOR THE CONTRIBUTION TO THEIR COMPANY THROUGH THE CITY OF MESA. MR. JACKSON AND MS. ORNSTEIN EXPRESSED THEIR GRATITUDE AND SHARED INFORMATION ON BENEFITS AND IMPACTS THIS GRANT WILL MAKE FOR STUDENTS IN THE CITY OF MESA AND BEYOND. VARIOUS COUNCIL MEMBERS WERE APPRECIATIVE OF THE GESTURE AND SHARED WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT.
[LT. GOVERNOR ANTONE TURNED THE MEETING

OVER TO GOVERNOR LEWIS AT 9:24 AM]

REPORTS

>1. Four Rivers Indian Legal Services Quarterly Report for the First Quarter of Fiscal Year 2026

Presenter: Sarah Youngblood
ACCEPTED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>2. Gila River Health Care Tobacco Tax Grant FY26 First Quarter Report (October 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025)
Presenters: GRHC Board Directors, Deborah Tinsley, GRHC Executive Leadership Team, Max Haake, Owen Ayres
ACCEPTED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>3. GRSG FY2026 Q1 Report
Presenters: Michael H. Morago, Donna Stowell
ACCEPTED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

4. Project Updates and Planned Projects
Presenter: Leonard Bruce
TABLED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION MADE AND SECOND TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION

5. Gila River Gaming Commission Department Report to the Community Council January 2026 (Executive Session)
Presenters: Gila River Gaming Commission, Jerry Higginson
HEARD IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

6. Gila River Gaming Enterprises, Inc. Monthly Report January 2026 (Executive Session)

Presenters: Kenneth Manuel, Dominic Orozco, Blake Katsnelson, Tony DeMark, Majdi Kayyali, Interim Oversight & Planning Committee
HEARD IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

7. Schedule of Investment – January 31, 2026 (Executive Session)

Presenter: Treasurer Gary T. Mix
HEARD IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

8. Gila River Health Care Dialysis Update – January 2026 (Executive Session)

Presenters: GRHC Board of Directors, Gema Ledesma, Dr. Thomas Rowe, Dr. Anthony Santiago
HEARD IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

9. GRHC Thwajik Ki Update – January 2026 (Executive Session)

Presenters: GRHC Board of Directors, Dan Wheeler, Kerry Van Volkinburgh, Dr. Anthony Santiago
HEARD IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION MADE AND SECOND TO EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION MADE AND SECOND TO TAKE A 15 MINUTE BREAK; THE MEETING RECONVENED AT 11:12 AM

RESOLUTIONS

*1. A Resolution Approving The Petition For Membership For Zadist Bruce Darrell Into The Gila River Indian Community (LSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for

approval and placement on the consent agenda)

Presenter: Sara Dunez
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

>2. A Resolution Approving The Re-Zoning Of The Lone Butte Solar Facility As Shown In Drawing No. 40421-0274-TP From "A-1 Agricultural District" And "A-2 Agricultural And Open Space District" To "1-2 Intensive Industrial District" For The Development And Construction Of A "Solar Electric Generation Facility (NRSC forwards to Council with a recommendation for approval and placement on the consent agenda)

Presenters: Planning Development Team, Ken Stock, Christopher Miller
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

ORDINANCES

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

1. Community Council Secretary Declaration of Vacancy (Advertise for 60 days; subject to a background check)

Presenters: Community Council
MOTION MADE AND SECOND TO ADVERTISE FOR 60 DAYS SUBJECT TO A BACKGROUND CHECK

2. Community Treasurer Declaration of Vacancy (Advertise for 60 days; subject to a background check)

Presenters: Community Council
MOTION MADE AND SECOND TO ADVERTISE FOR 60 DAYS SUBJECT TO A BACKGROUND CHECK

3. Request for Joint Committee Work Session to Review Residential Housing Improvement Program (RHIP)

Policy, Asset Management Policy and Temporary Rental Assistance Program (G&MSC forwards to Council under New Business for any interested Council member to attend utilizing Dues & Delegations; NRSC and LSC concur)

Presenter: Wayne M. Allison
MOTION MADE AND SECOND FOR ANY INTERESTED COUNCIL MEMBER TO ATTEND UTILIZING DUES & DELEGATIONS

4. Indian Gaming Tradeshow & Convention March 30-April 2, 2026 – San Diego, CA (G&MSC forwards to Council under New Business for any interested Council member to attend utilizing Dues & Delegations)

Presenters: Government & Management Standing Committee
MOTION MADE AND SECOND FOR ANY INTERESTED COUNCIL MEMBER TO ATTEND UTILIZING DUES & DELEGATIONS

5. 2026 Tribal Self-Governance Conference April 7-9, 2026 – Wild Horse Pass Resort & Casino, AZ (G&MSC forwards to Council under New Business for any interested Council member to attend utilizing Dues & Delegations)

Presenters: Government & Management Standing Committee

MOTION MADE AND SECOND TO FOR ANY INTERESTED COUNCIL MEMBER TO ATTEND UTILIZING DUES & DELEGATIONS

6. NAFOA Conference April 27-28, 2026 – Reno, NV (G&MSC forwards to Council under New Business for any interested

Council member to attend utilizing Dues & Delegations)
Presenters: Government & Management Standing Committee

MOTION MADE AND SECOND FOR ANY INTERESTED COUNCIL MEMBER TO ATTEND UTILIZING DUES & DELEGATIONS

7. Request For Council Work Session For U.S. Attorney Briefing (LSC forwards to Council with a recommendation to schedule a Council work session in coordination between CCSO, OGC and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona and request that the Office of the Prosecutor, Executive Office, Police Department, Office of the Community Manager, and Office of the General Counsel attend)
Presenter: Alfred Urbina
TABLED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

8. Reservation Economic Summit March 23-26, 2026, Las Vegas, Nevada (EDSC forwards to Council for any interested

Council Member to attend utilizing Dues & Delegations)
Presenters: Economic Development Standing Committee

MOTION MADE AND SECOND FOR ANY INTERESTED COUNCIL MEMBER TO ATTEND UTILIZING DUES & DELEGATIONS

>9. GRGE FY 2025 Final Audit Reports (Executive Session) (G&MSC forwards to Council under New Business in Executive Session with a recommendation to accept and placement on the consent agenda)

Presenters: Tony DeMark, Kenneth Manuel
ACCEPTED AND APPROVED AT APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MINUTES

1. February 18, 2026 (Regular)
APPROVED

ANNOUNCEMENTS

• THE PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 7, 2026 IN DISTRICT 4 HAS BEEN CANCELED DUE TO A FUNERAL BEING HELD IN THE DISTRICT

• CONCERNS REGARDING THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST; AFFECTS AND PREPARATIONS FROM LEADERSHIP WAS DISCUSSED

ADJOURNMENT

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 11:22 A.M.

* Denotes TABLED from previous meeting(s)

> Denotes a CONSENT AGENDA ITEM

IN THE CHILDREN'S COURT OF THE GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY IN THE STATE OF ARIZONA

IN THE MATTER OF:

G.C.
DOB: 07/16/2017

Minor Child(ren).

Case No. JC-2026-0020-GU,

NOTICE OF HEARING

TO: Rebecca Isabel Cardenas

Last known address: 5242 W. Vatho Street, Laveen, AZ 85339

Please take notice that a hearing has been scheduled in the Gila River Indian Children's Court. If you fail to appear a judgment may be issued in favor of the other party.

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

Answer/Response Hearing

DATE: May 13, 2026 **TIME:** 10:00 AM

LOCATION:

Westend Judicial Center
4751 West Pecos Road
Laveen, AZ 85339

GIVEN under my hand and the seal of the Gila River Indian Community Children's Court, in the State of Arizona.

DATED: March 11, 2026

/s/ Raquel Lujan

Raquel Lujan
Clerk of the Children's Court

Notified By: Process Services Regular Mail Certified Mail Inner-Office Mail GRIN PUB

INTERSTATE 10
I-10 | LOOP 202 TO SR-387
WILD HORSE PASS CORRIDOR

DIG & BUILD Freeway Builders Day

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY TRIBAL EDUCATION

Join us to learn how freeways are constructed, meet the people who construct them and see some of the big machines that are used to build freeways in your community.

FRIDAY, APRIL 24
9 A.M TO 11 A.M.

CASA BLANCA COMMUNITY SCHOOL
5297 W. Nelson Road,
Bapchule, AZ 85121

THE GRD BULLETIN



MESSAGE FROM **GENERAL MANAGER DUNCAN WISTON**



At Gila River Development, our goal is to foster economic growth and create opportunities for the entire Community. The future is bright for Wild Horse Pass, and we're excited to share all the great things ahead. From District 1 to District 7—and for all our urban members—we remain committed to the Community's shared vision of prosperity and strategic planning.

That's why we're proud to introduce *The GRD Bulletin*, a newsletter designed for Community members and partners to receive the latest updates directly from our office. *The GRD Bulletin* delivers news tailored specifically for you. Inside, you'll find updates, announcements, and helpful information about our properties, including the Sacaton Market.

Thank you for your continued support and keep an eye out for every edition of *The GRD Bulletin*.

COMMUNITY NOTES



Did you hear that the Sacaton Market now accepts SNAP/EBT & ITCA WIC?

SNAP went into effect January 27, 2026, and as of February 11, WIC is live as well. If you're enrolled in both programs, you can now visit the Sacaton Market for all your nutritious foods.



We're No. 1! Whirlwind Golf Club – Cattail Course was named the number 1 public golf course in Arizona by GolfPass, a leading golf travel website. Devil's Claw made the same list at number 4. This list was based solely on feedback from guests who experienced these great courses firsthand. Congrats Whirlwind!



The LPGA Returns to Wild Horse Pass! After a stellar tournament last year, the 2026 Ford Championship presented by Wild Horse Pass returns to the Whirlwind Golf Club, March 26 – 29. The world's best golfers are coming to Gila River once again. Free tickets will be available for GRIC members! Show your valid Tribal ID at the box office entrance or pick up your ticket at your local service center. Stay tuned for more information.



The Chandler Chamber Ostrich Festival Presented by Gila River Resorts & Casinos has a new home at Rawhide! Enjoy Chandler's favorite festival now in a new location. GRIC MEMBERS get FREE ENTRY on March 20! More information coming soon.

GRIC COMMUNITY DAYS & DISCOUNTS AT WILD HORSE PASS EVENTS



🐾 March 14–18 Second Saturdays Rodeo
Location: Buck-N Rodeo Grounds
GRIC/Military/First Responder Discount Available
Ticket Information: Rawhide.com



🏌️ March 26–29 Ford LPGA Championship
Location: Whirlwind Golf Club
GRIC Community Days: March 26 -29.
Show GRIC Tribal ID at the entrance or pick up tickets at your local service center. More information coming soon.



🏁 March 20–22 FMP NHRA Arizona Nationals presented by NGK Spark Plugs
Location: Firebird Motorsports Park
GRIC Discount 50% GA TICKET: In person at box office or Firebird Office. Open M-F, 9am-3pm.



🐃 March 27–28 PRCA Xtreme Bulls
Location: Buck-N Rodeo Grounds
GRIC/Military/First Responder Discount Available at Rawhide.com

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BEAUTIFUL TRUCK**

**2018 Ford
F-150 XLT**



**4X4 • 3.5L
ECOBOOST WOW!**

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LT 4x4**

2023 Chevy Traverse LT

**2023 Ford F-150 XLT
4x4**

2023 Kia Forte GT

2020 Nissan Altima

2024 Nissan Kicks

2022 Ram 1500

Big Horn 4x4

2023 Chevy Malibu LT

2023 Chrysler Pacifica

2024 Kia Sportage

2018 Mazda CX-5

2023 Nissan Murano SL

2016 Ram 1500 4x4

(2) Toyota Camrys

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Sorento S**



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APRIL IS SEXUAL ASSAULT

— AWARENESS MONTH —

Sexual assault is when someone touches your body when they don't have your permission.



Community Awareness Event

Join us for an outdoor evening of awareness at the Mul-Chu-Tha fairgrounds. The event will begin with a run/walk, followed by raffles and refreshments. *T-Shirts and refreshments for first 200 participants

**WEDNESDAY
APRIL 1st - 5 - 7 pm**

TEAL TUESDAYS

On Teal Tuesday, April 7th, and each Tuesday throughout the month, wear teal to show support for survivors and promote awareness. Look for our Gila River Health Care Forensic Nursing team's awareness tables throughout the month:

April 7th

Hu Hu Kam Memorial Hospital

April 14th

Komatke Health Center

April 21st

Hau'pal (Red Tail Hawk) Health Center

April 28th

Hu Hu Kam Memorial Hospital



COLORING PAGE WITH RAFFLE

PICK UP YOUR COLORING PAGE at any district service center. To enter into raffle, send a photo of your colored page to 520-610-0496.



DENIM DAY IS APRIL 29th

Wear jeans or denim on this day as a visible sign of support for survivors of sexual assault.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY.

Please reach out to the following resources if you have been a victim of sexual assault.

You don't have to report your assault to Law Enforcement to receive services.

Crime Victim Services 520-562-4106
 OEW DV Shelter 855-203-5849
 GRIC Crisis Line 520-562-2740
 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline 988 (text/call)

GRHC SANE Forensic Nursing 520-562-5151
 GRIC Police Department 520-562-4511/911
 GRIC Silent Witness 520-562-7144

