



T-WE:M 'O BA'IC E S-GE:WPK
TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER

NEWSLETTER

Nov 2024

TOHONO O'ODHAM NATION

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRWOMAN

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Welcome to the first issue of our Executive Office newsletter! We have launched this publication to better share what our office is up to and how our activities are impacting the lives of tribal members.

In this very first issue of the newsletter, you will learn more about the \$750 one-time payment to tribal members and what our Office is doing to help you apply for it. We will also share an update on the relocation of Executive branch offices.

We will also share information on our meetings with other jurisdictions, how the Nation is preparing for the new U.S. administration, and winter public safety reminders.

You will also hear about major capital projects on the Nation, including the recently completed O'odham N'i'ok'i Ki, a language center at TOCC that will help us preserve and revitalize the O'odham language. Important updates are also provided on the Dec. 18 opening of Desert Diamond Casino White Tanks at San Lucy and the special grand opening ceremony for tribal members.

There is too much going on for a single newsletter, which is why we will be providing regular updates to keep tribal members informed about the Executive Office. This newsletter reflects the belief that has always guided me in my years of public service – it's not about me, or other elected leaders, it is



about all of us working together to serve the people. We are here to serve the people, and that is always our highest priority.

It is a reminder of what our O'odham Himdag teaches us, that we are stronger when we work together. Let's carry that wisdom forward and continue to work with each other to build a better future for our Nation, especially as we enter the holiday season. As you gather with family, we hope all our tribal members find comfort and peace. As you come together with neighbors, we hope you find inspiration to do even more for your community.

On behalf of Vice Chairwoman Johnson and myself, we wish you a joyful holiday season.

--Verlon M. Jose,
Tohono O'odham Nation Chairman

Member Economic Impact Payment II for Tohono O’odham Members

The Executive Office, together with the Legislative Council, has announced a one-time payment of \$750 each to all eligible members, under the COVID-19 Member Economic Impact Payment II General Welfare Program. To receive these funds, tribal members must complete an application and submit a copy of a Tribal Enrollment ID or certificate no later than 5:00 p.m. on December 13, 2024.

Applications can be done online at www.tonation-nsn.gov or mailed to “Tohono O’odham Nation, Attn: ARPA, PO Box 837, Sells, AZ 85634”. The Executive Office is also taking steps to assist tribal members with the process, including organizing a series of “pop-up” application events where staff can receive and assist with applications. More details can be found on the Nation’s website.

To be eligible for the \$750 payment, individuals must be enrolled members of the Tohono O’odham Nation

and must be at least 18 years old as of October 31, 2024.

With the support of the Executive Office, the Legislative Council passed a resolution approving the distribution of all remaining American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds directly to tribal members. The funds needed to be utilized by the end of this year, and it was recognized that they would be best spent directly assisting members with the continued financial instability from the COVID-19 pandemic and its lingering impacts. The \$750 payment to tribal members will help alleviate some of the financial burden O'odham families face during these uncertain times.

For additional information on this program, please visit the Nation's website www.tonation-nsn.gov or email CRFASSISTANCE@tonation-nsn.gov.

Executive Branch Office Renovations

The Tohono O'odham Legislative Council has entered the early stages of reconstructing a new TONLC building, this includes demolishing the current TONLC building. In preparation for this project, all offices that resided within the "White House" in Sells, including Executive Branch offices, have been vacated as of late July. During this process, the following Executive Branch offices have temporarily been relocated to alternate facilities.

Executive Office of the Chairman and Vice Chairwoman	Tohono O’odham Agency - Sells	(520) 383-2028
Executive Administrative Office	Tohono Plaza Suite #211 - Sells	(520) 383-2028
Tohono O'odham Nation Accounting (Sells)	TODHHS Complex S.E. - Sells	(520) 383-6600
Tohono O'odham Nation Accounting (Tucson)	Tucson Office	(520) 383-6600
Property & Supply	TODHHS Complex S.E. - Sells	(520) 383-6600
Tribal Department Mailboxes	TODHHS Complex S.E. -Sells	(520) 383-6600

This relocation activity is not disrupting services for Tohono O’odham Nation members. The Executive Branch continues to operate at its normal capacity to assist tribal members. If you have any challenges finding the alternative office locations during this time, please contact our offices by phone for assistance. A full directory can be found on the Nation’s website at www.tonation-nsn.gov/directory.

We look forward to reopening our main offices with a new facility and a greater ability to serve the people of the Tohono O’odham Nation.



Looking Ahead After the 2024 Election

The 2024 General Election has come and gone. The Nation experienced strong voter turnout. Based on unofficial numbers, 63% of eligible Nation voters cast their ballots, one of the strongest turnouts in years. This is consistent with strong turnout from across Arizona tribes.

Thank you to everyone who studied the issues, cast your vote, and made your voice heard. Thank you as well to all the volunteers and election workers who helped encourage O'odham voter turnout and assisted with voter questions. In a democracy, we are stronger together.

And yet, the O'odham and other indigenous people continue to face significant challenges in exercising our right to vote. The high turnout this year was in spite of these obstacles. The Nation will continue to fight for stronger protections of our voting rights and work to remove the obstacles that continue to disproportionately impact native voters.

As the United States moves forward with the transition to a new administration, the Tohono O'odham Nation is preparing for government-to-government relations with the incoming president. Setting aside politics, the Nation is committed to seeking opportunities to work together for mutual benefit.

However, Chairman Jose and Vice Chairwoman Johnson are also prepared to stand up for the Nation's rights and sovereignty. The Nation has stood firm against misguided policies before, and it is prepared to do so again.

Tribal members are encouraged to stay engaged in the issues so that elected leaders at all levels can be held accountable and our democracy kept strong. Each and every member's voice is important in building a better future for the O'odham.

Building Bridges, Not Walls

In recent months, Chairman Jose, Vice Chairwoman Johnson, and others have met with a wide range of federal officials to discuss issues and opportunities facing the Nation. This includes Senator-Elect Ruben Gallego, who has been a longtime ally of the Nation in Congress and will be an even more significant supporter in the U.S. Senate.

Additionally, meetings were held with President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, Senator Mark Kelly, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Xochitl Torres Small and Congressman Joe Morelle and others.

Earlier this year we also welcomed Chief Lynn Malerba, the first Native American to serve as Treasurer of the United States, to the Nation to learn more about our communities and the programs implemented with the support of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding.

Executive Office leadership and staff have also had extensive meetings with Tucson Mayor Regina Romero and key city staff members to discuss potential areas of partnership.

At every meeting, Chairman Jose and Vice Chairwoman Johnson continue to build bridges and advocate for the Nation. This welcoming approach is rooted in O'odham tradition and continues to pay dividends for our Nation.



Vice Chairwoman Johnson meeting President Biden ahead of his historic remarks formally apologizing for the U.S. government's role in Indian boarding schools.

Winter Safety PSA

The beauty of the land of the Tohono O'odham Nation can at times overshadow the real threats that our people face in the winter months. As the days get colder, always remember the 4 P's: People, Pets, Plants, and Pipes.

- People: Keep warm, dress in layers, and check on elderly family or neighbors.
- Pets: Bring pets inside to keep them safe and warm.
- Plants: Bring potted plants inside and cover outdoor plants with cloth.
- Pipes: Cover pipes and let faucets slowly drip to keep them from freezing.

For the latest updates, visit [www.facebook.com/
TON.Emergency.Management](https://www.facebook.com/TON.Emergency.Management)

Desert Diamond Casino White Tanks Grand Opening Dec. 18

Nation members ages 21 and older are invited to attend a special ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Desert Diamond Casino White Tanks at San Lucy, the Nation's fifth gaming facility. It is located at 8200 N. Sarival Ave. west of Glendale near Loop 303 and Northern Parkway.

The festivities start at 10:00am on Wednesday, Dec. 18, with live music, refreshments, and a brief program.

After the ribbon is cut, Nation members will be the first to experience this beautiful facility. This is a free event for tribal members, but you MUST be 21 or older to attend.

For questions, contact Michelle Smith at the Gaming Enterprise, 520-342-2900.

New Building Construction: Children's Home and O'odham Language Center

In October, the Nation broke ground on a permanent Children's Home. This facility will one day serve as a home for 45 children, most of whom are currently residing outside our lands, and provide care and education that reflects O'odham values, language, and Himdag. This is a great undertaking that has spanned multiple administrations and required the collaboration of the Legislative Council, multiple Nation departments, and Congressman Raúl Grijalva's office and staff. The Children's Home is expected to be completed in summer 2026.

The Nation also recently held a grand opening celebration for O'odham Ñi'okí Ki:, the O'odham Language Center at Tohono O'odham Community College. All O'odham are encouraged to visit this new facility and engage with the plentiful resources that have been made available to help individuals on their language journeys.

These are just two examples of several major construction projects throughout the Nation that Chairman Jose's administration has undertaken for the benefit of all members. Additional updates on these exciting new projects for the Tohono O'odham Nation will be shared in future issues of this newsletter. Stay tuned!



Artist's rendering of permanent Children's Home