

## NATION'S REPOSE TO TRUMP ADMINISTRATION EXECUTIVE ORDERS

The entire country has been flooded with a series of ill-advised, dangerous and potentially illegal Executive Orders from President Trump's first month in office. The Nation's Executive Office and our legal, lobbying and communications team have been reviewing these chaotic policy updates to identify how they may impact our Nation and our people.

We strongly feel that President Trump's actions, including the freezing of federal funding and mass layoffs of federal workers, are unacceptable and we will not allow his administration to ignore the federal government's trust responsibility to the Nation and other tribes.

In response, we have initiated a robust plan that ensures we do three things: 1) Maintain an under-

standing of the latest updates through our lobbying team; 2) Keep our districts and tribal citizens informed and engaged through regular PSAs; and 3) Advocate for our Nation through meetings and visits with high-profile federal officials and elected leaders.

At the same time, those Departments that are, or potentially will be impacted by federal cuts are doing in-depth reviews and identifying possible impacts to their of their programs. With regard to Indian Health Service (IHS) the Nation oversees its own health care services through the Tohono O'odham Nation Health Care. As a result, we do not see any reduction in TONHC services at this time.

We encourage all tribal citizens to read and share our updates. We are in this together.

### Meetings with Arizona Officials

The annual Indigenous Nations and Tribes Legislative Day brought together tribal leaders, the Arizona Governor's Office, and members of the state legislature together on Jan. 15, 2025. The Nation's leaders met with multiple key policymakers at the state level to advocate for the interests of the O'odham.

### Restoration of BIA Reserve Land

Nation leaders and staff have secured the largest restoration of our lands from the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs in nearly 100 years. Working with BIA, the Nation secured the return of approximately 160 acres and continues to work toward the restoration of remaining lands held in reserve by the BIA.

### Acquiring Traditional Lands on the Border

Since the current international border was put in place over 170 years ago, our traditional lands in Mexico have been out of the Nation's control. Now, the Nation has taken the step of acquiring more than 6,000 acres in Sonora, Mexico, just south of the border. This purchase provides essential access for O'odham on both sides of the border.

### Baboquivari Mountains Co-Stewardship Agreement with BLM

In a historic agreement, the Nation will now be co-stewards with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management in protecting our sacred sites and resources on the eastern slopes of the Baboquivari Mountains. The Nation's long-term goal is to provide the strongest protection to this deeply significant part of our ancestral lands.



*Signing ceremony for co-stewardship agreement, with BLM Field Manager Colleen Dinman, Chairman Jose, members of Council, Baboquivari District leaders, and staff.*



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TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER

# NEWSLETTER

TOHONO O'ODHAM NATION

Feb. 2025

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRWOMAN

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Coming into 2025, our Nation is in a strong position. We are expanding economic opportunities, improving access to higher education, building out our infrastructure for long-term success, and taking concrete steps to protect our sacred sites and cultural resources. We honor our Himdag and who we are.

These principles are more crucial than ever, given the changing political landscape in the U.S., which is already testing our positions in key areas. As you will read on Page 4, the Nation is taking determined action to ensure that the new administration's radical efforts to defund and dismantle federal programs do not impact its responsibilities to the Nation. We are working with tribes across the country to present a united voice in protecting the interests of our tribal members.

I know that there is a great deal of concern and confusion about what the Trump administration is doing. Which is why we are providing regular updates through radio and social media so that tribal members are kept up to date on what is happening, how it might affect the Nation, and what leadership is doing to safeguard you from any impacts.

As we move deeper into 2025 and all the challenges and opportunities it brings, the Nation continues to press ahead with major construction projects, as you can read about on Page 2. I am particularly excited about the construction of new basketball courts at South Komelik Community and Hodai Son Wo'o (Charco 27) Community, which are on

track for completion by the end of March. The site of these courts was selected in a public contest in 2022 and are being built in partnership with the Hunt / Penta Joint Venture.

By the time you read this, the concrete at both courts will be poured and we will just be waiting for the finishing touches once the concrete cures. Having these basketball courts in place will enhance the quality of life for these communities. Not just as places for tribal members to shoot hoops, but also as gathering sites for all sorts of events and activities.

We also recently celebrated our largest annual community gathering as a Nation, the 86th Annual Tohono O'odham Nation Rodeo and Fair. You can read a recap of the event, which featured free admission for the very first time, on Page 3. This year was the biggest and best yet.

My congratulations to all the participants in the rodeo and other events. I hope that everyone who attended the rodeo and fair had a wonderful time and had the opportunity to catch up with family and friends from all over. It is a reminder that even in times of uncertainty, we draw strength from coming together as a Nation.

--Verlon M. Jose, Chairman





## Update on Construction Projects

The Tohono O'odham Nation is moving forward with multiple construction projects across different departments in order to improve working environments and enhance services for tribal members. Many of these projects require Council approval in order to finalize, including Education, Membership Services, Fire/Police, Administration, and the new hospital. We look forward to working with the Council on these critical projects.

- **Education Building:** This project will put a new, state-of-the-art, two-story Education Building in the center of Sells to benefit our youth. The design phase is nearing completion, with construction plans ready to move forward at Council's direction.
- **Membership Services:** Temporary fencing is going up around the Membership Services project site, with utilities installation taking place throughout January. The first of eight modular buildings should arrive by month's end.
- **Fire/Police Substations:** The North Komelik Fire/Police Substation project is making significant progress, with design and engineering phase nearly complete. The project is on track for completion by December 2025. A Westside Fire/Police substation is in the design phase and will be built southeast of the Traveling Eagle Convenience store once approved by Council.



Artist's rendering of North Komelik substation

- **Administration:** The Tribal Administrative Building has been demolished to make way for a new Legislative Council Chamber and Legislative Offices. The Tribal Administrative Building project will be moving forward in a separate location near the Livestock grounds. This exciting transformation will provide modern facilities to better serve the needs of our Nation.
- **Sells Hospital:** The Nation is working on hiring a design firm to design a modern hospital that will replace the outdated healthcare campus and serve the Tohono O'odham for many years to come. Having a modern healthcare facility will require community as well as Council support.
- **Menagers Dam:** Ground was broken on a project to replace the dam to provide improved safety and flood protection. Funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.



Pouring concrete for the Charco basketball court.

- **Basketball Courts:** Construction of two new basketball courts is nearing completion at South Komelik Community and Hodai Son Wo'ó (Charco 27) Community. Both sites received their gooseneck basketball poles, their concrete slab, and accessories in February 2025. South Komelik is on track for completion by mid-March, and Charco by the end of March. This was a project donated by the Hunt/Penta Joint Venture, who have been a longtime partner of the Nation - they also constructed the Nation's last two casinos.

## Meet the New HR Executive Director Angelina Lewis



We are excited to introduce Angelina Lewis from the Sells District, as the new Executive Director of the Human Resources Department. Director Lewis has dedicated 13 years of service to the Nation's HR Department, where she has held various roles that have significantly contributed to her outstanding growth and expertise. With her extensive experience and leadership skills, Director Lewis is poised to bring innovative strategies and a strong vision to our HR team.

We look forward to the positive impact she will have in fostering a supportive and thriving workplace for all. Please join us in welcoming her to this important role!

## The First FREE Tohono O'odham Nation Rodeo and Fair Was a Spectacular Success

For the first time ever, the 86th Annual Tohono O'odham Nation Rodeo and Fair was free for all attendees, with free admissions, free carnival rides, and free parking including free shuttle service on Friday and Saturday. The Legislative Council supported the Executive Office's initiative to make this exciting event free to the public. Additional funding from sponsors such as Desert Diamond Casino, the Hunt/Penta Joint Venture, CKP Insurance, Dentons, and others supplemented other components of the Rodeo and Fair.

We want to thank the incredible rodeo talent who competed, particularly All Around Champion Cowboy Hiyo Yazzie of Coyote Canyon, NM on the Navajo Nation and All Around Champion Cowgirl Martina Monroe, from Topawa in the Nation's Baboquivari District. Mr. Yazzie also took first place in Steer Wrestling, Calf Roping, and Team Roping. Ms. Monroe took first place in Ladies Breakaway.

Ms. Monroe, age 39, said "I was riding horses at two years old and remember falling asleep on the horse while riding. I started roping and picked up breakaway in the 8th grade at 14 years old."

She went on to say "It was a proud moment for me, being from Topawa community, Baboquivari District, to win the All Around title to represent the Tohono O'odham Nation at the hometown rodeo. Just winning the breakaway roping itself was awesome."

We also want to recognize the participants in all the traditional games and activities, the "O'odham Super Heroes" and others who took part in the parade, the wonderful bands and performers, the vendors, the sponsors, and of course all of the volunteers and staff who made this event possible.

Most of all we want to thank you, our Tohono O'odham Nation community, for coming together for this great celebration! That's what this event is always about, bringing our people together to have fun, celebrate our heritage, meet old friends, and make new ones. We had an incredible turnout this year, and we are already looking forward to an even better 87th Annual Rodeo and Fair next year. See you there!

