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GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY HOUSES PHOENIX REGION COLD CASE OFFICE

SACATON, AZ – Today, a Cold Case Office was opened for the Western Region as part the Operation Lady Justice Taskforce. The Office, located on the Gila River Indian Reservation, is one of seven planned nationwide to investigate cold cases and those cases involving missing and murdered Native Americans. The Code Case Office will serve Tribal Nations located in the states of Arizona, Utah, and Nevada. The office will be the first Cold Case Office located within a tribal reservation and co-located with a tribal police force. Two federal agents will be located within the Gila River Police Department and will work alongside the cold case unit that the Gila River Police Department created last month.

Governor Stephen Roe Lewis of the Gila River Indian Community commented, “The Community is pleased to be the site of the Western Region’s Cold Case Office. The plague of missing and murdered Native Americans has been unaddressed for too long. This office is a first step toward prioritizing those Native Americans who have gone missing and leave irreplaceable holes in their families and Communities.” Chief Chavez of the Gila River Police Department stated, “I am looking forward to having the Gila River Police Department’s officer’s work alongside the Cold Case Officers so we can share resources and work together to combat the crisis of Missing and Murdered Native Americans within the Gila River Indian Community and throughout the Region.”

The Cold Case Office is part of the Operation Lady Justice Taskforce which was created to address the number of missing and murdered Native Americans in the United States. The Taskforce brings together federal officials from agencies across the federal government to work together to develop strategies to address the Missing and Murdered crisis in Indian Country. The strategies include data sharing, improving investigative cooperation across governmental agencies, and bring new investigative techniques to open cases.

Governor Lewis remarked that “The Community is looking forward to this first step leading to even more action to address this longstanding crisis in Indian Country. As we continue this effort, it will be important to bring in other key voices in this battle and we look forward to working with all those who have dedicated their voices to combatting this pervasive crisis in Indian Country.”

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Gila River Indian Community located on 372,000 acres in south-central Arizona and home to the indigenous O’odham (Pima) and Pee Posh (Maricopa) people. The Tribe is comprised of seven districts, the administrative offices and departments are located in Sacaton, and serve the people throughout these seven community districts. 100% of its profits from gaming and 17 other Enterprises are utilized by the community providing services and opportunities to achieve the highest quality of life.