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GILA CROSSING COMMUNITY SCHOOL PROJECT AWARDED NAFOA'S DEAL OF THE YEAR

(Sacaton, Arizona) – Last week, the Gila River Indian Community received the “Deal of the Year Award” during the Native American Finance Officer’s (“NAFOA”) virtual Fall Conference. The award is given to tribal governments for those projects that are innovative and utilize financing and governmental resourcefulness to address longstanding issues in Indian Country.

The award was given to the Community for the Gila Crossing Community School construction/leaseback program. The school was constructed and financed utilizing the section 105(l) leasing program that is part of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act. The Gila Crossing Community School was the first project to utilize this leasing program and now serves as a model for infrastructure development for Indian Country.

Utilizing this program, the new Gila Crossing Community School opened in August of 2019. Since then, the Community has moved forward to use this program for the existing Casa Blanca Community School by entering into a lease for the existing school facility last week. Payments from that lease will help fund the new construction of the Casa Blanca School. A virtual groundbreaking for the Casa Blanca Community School occurred on Monday, October 12th with a recording of the groundbreaking available shortly.

Governor Stephen Roe Lewis accepted the award on behalf of the Community along with Lt. Governor Robert Stone and Treasurer Bob Keller. In the pre-recorded video, Governor Lewis acknowledged the commitment of Councilman Villareal who was Chair of the Owner’s Team, Councilman Charles Goldtooth and Councilman Terrance Evans from District 6 and Councilman Devin Redbird from District 7, along with the entire Community Council.

In discussing the award, Governor Lewis stated “I am proud to accept this award on behalf of the entire Gila River Indian Community. This project came about like so many other projects in the Community– out of an unaddressed need. So we entered into the first school construction leaseback with the Department of the Interior to make sure our students have the state-of-the-art, culturally-centered school that they deserve.”

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The NAFOA Deal of the Year Award ceremony was part of NAFOA's virtual Fall Conference. You can view the recorded video here.

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Gila River Indian Community, located on 372,000 acres in south-central Arizona and home to the indigenous people of O'odham (Pima) and Pee Posh (Maricopa). The people are known for their farms, deep traditions, basket weaving and pottery. 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.

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