



Maricopa, Arizona

Volume XXXIX, Issue 24

December 19, 2025 - January 1, 2026



Ak-Chin Council and AR Mays Construction, officially break ground on the new dialysis center, west of Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino, on December 15.

Groundbreaking for New Dialysis Center

Story and photos by Robert Miguel

As the 2025 year comes to an end, the Ak-Chin Indian Community has to be thankful for a number of things.

In particular the venture in providing a Wellness Center with an award from the Indian Health Services (IHS) to move forward with a tribal health facility; and now, a groundbreaking for a new dialysis center.

Ak-Chin Council, along with AR Mays construction personnel, Ak-Chin members and invited guests gathered Monday morning on December 15th, behind Harrah's

Ak-Chin Casino and Resort on Sudagi Avenue to gather for the Ground-breaking Ceremony.

After a blessing from Spiritual Healer, Joseph Enos of Tohono O'odham Nation, everyone gathered and watched, as Ak-Chin Council and AR Mays turned over dirt to officially begin the project of building the dialysis center.

Ak-Chin Chairman, Gabriel Lopez gave a welcome and acknowledged guests and dignitaries from the community and the city of

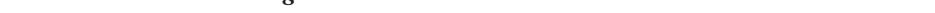
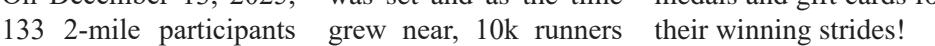
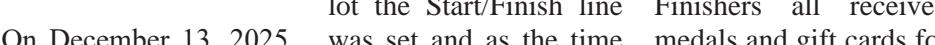
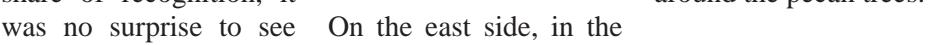
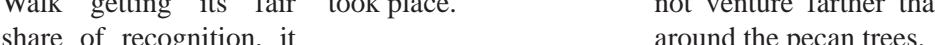
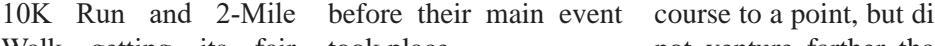
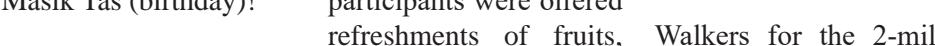
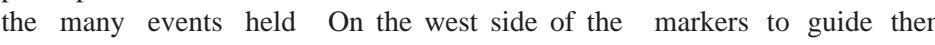
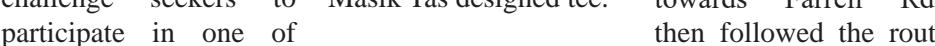
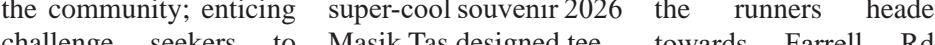
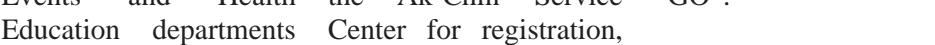
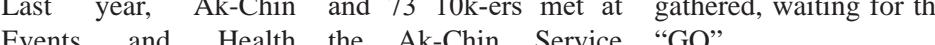
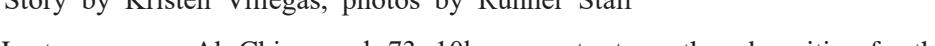
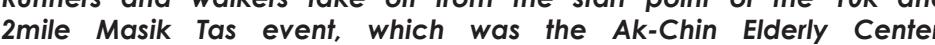
Maricopa.

Chairman Lopez also expressed the importance of a much-needed facility for membership.

"As we break ground on a medical office suites shell building, today represents the beginning of improved access to life-saving care and strengthening healthcare access for Ak-Chin and also the entire surrounding Maricopa community."

"Dialysis is not optional care; it is essential ongoing treatment that patients rely on multiple times each week.

Dialysis Center continues to Page 6a



Ak-Chin Elders receive December Distribution and Holiday Gifts



Maria Hernandez and Sylvia Gutierrez pick up their community distribution checks a day prior to the release of checks to all membership, as elders were designated their own day for distribution.



Jesus Corella (Language), Waylon Antone (Museum) and Marissa Antone (Elderly) give gift cards and other goods to elders; Adella Zabawa, Evelina Lopez and Jeannette Peters during a drive through at the Elder Center.



Masik Tas Elder Chair Volleyball Tournament Champions Pala #1 (green shirts) from San Diego battle against Yavapai during placement games.

San Diego's Pala #1 takes Elder Chair Tourny

Story by Robert Miguel, photos by Raychel Peters

Thirty-two elder chair volleyball teams made the journey onto the floor of the Ak-Chin Recreation department gymnasium on Tuesday, December 9th, and Wednesday, December 10th, to participate in the Ak-Chin Indian Community's Masik Tas Elder Chair Volleyball Tournament.

For two days, teams throughout Arizona and

even California, put their volleyball and teamwork skills to the test, serving, bumping and setting in hopes of scoring points up to eleven for a win.

This year's two-day tournament format was new, with the first day designated for pool play, with a 3-game schedule set between all teams.

At the end of day one, all teams were respectively

placed in either the gold or silver brackets, for a single-elimination tournament.

Day two provided the opportunity for all teams to climb to the top of their brackets. Two teams from San Diego, California, were able to make their five plus hour trip to Ak-Chin, worth their while, as they made it to the final four to earn the gold title and a silver

second-place finish.

In the gold bracket, Pala #1 sported a 5-0 record for the championship, while Onk Akimel Tadai placed second and Nyaa Thosh nabbed third.

In the silver bracket, the Firebirds went 5-0 and a tourney title, Pala #2 finished second and the Quails finished third.

Three Ak-Chin teams were able to represent the community; S-ve:pek U'uhig, Sunflower Ladies and Fighting Turtles; while additional members played with other teams.

Of the Ak-Chin teams, the Fighting Turtles were

able to make a mini-run in the tournament, advancing to the Elite Eight.

During the tournament there were plenty of close games as teams battled point for point, with some winning by a mere point to move on.

Despite some games being lop-sided, teams were happy to be around friends and family, enjoying the atmosphere of fun, food and music.

Overall, everyone seemed to enjoy the tournament and offerings, which also included a souvenir Masik Tas blanket, gifted to all players for their

participation from Ak-Chin Parks & Rec.

Community Events also sponsored a choice lunch on day one from Honey Baked Hams, with veggie, turkey and ham options.

Congratulations to all who made it out to this year's tournament and a HUGE round of applause to the Ak-Chin Parks & Recreation for setting up another successful event.

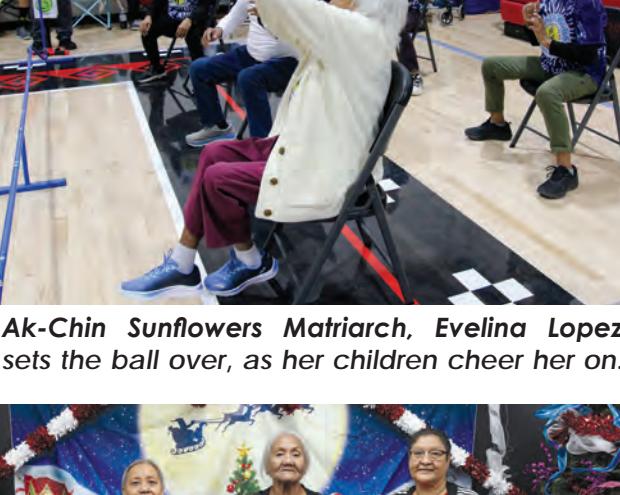
Kudos also goes to department staff and volunteers who offered their assistance with the tough decision making and close calls!



Masik Tas Elder Chair Volleyball Gold Bracket Champions - Pala #1



Masik Tas Elder Chair Volleyball Silver Bracket Champions - Firebirds



Ak-Chin Sunflowers Matriarch, Evelina Lopez sets the ball over, as her children cheer her on.



Community Elder, George Lewis takes the ball over the net.



Ak-Chin Team S-ve:pek U'uhig - Top I to r: Lerline Peters, Lena Santiago and Polly Antone. Bottom I to r: Janice Miguel, Norman Vincent and Carole Lopez.



Ak-Chin's Glenna Francisco (bottom right) and Ak-Chin employee, Virginia Zepeda (bottom middle) with their team.



The Ak-Chin Fighting Turtles were elated to make it to the elite 8 in the Silver bracket. Also wanted to share a HUGE shout-out to Renee Boehm and whatyouneed@zabawacattle.com for the quality rush job and getting us our new holiday team shirts so quickly.



Join us to Celebrate our Newly Renovated Building with Food & Dancing!

Call the Elder Center to RSVP. Deadline January 19, 2026

If you have any questions, please give us a call at 520-568-1760.

Elder Center OPEN - Sort Of 😊

Greetings, Elders!

The Elder Center is currently open from 9:30am to 1:00pm.

We are not serving breakfast at this time. We are serving lunch only.

Please note that the kitchen is still undergoing repairs following our recent move.

The activity room is available for crafting, puzzles, diamond painting, and any other activities you would like to enjoy.

Transportation for pick-up begins daily at 9:00 AM.

Lunch is served in the new dining room from 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM.

For more information or to schedule transportation, please call the Elder Center at 520-568-1760.

Elders, we hope to see you! You are missed!

The Elder Center Staff

OFFICE HOURS

8:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.
MONDAY - FRIDAY
PHONE: 520•568•1375
FAX: 520•568•1376
E-MAIL:
runnernews@ak-chin.nsn.us

Ak-Chin O'odham Runner

Editor: Raychel Peters
Photojournalists:
Kristen Villegas and
Robert Miguel
Graphic Artists:
Eliza Santiago and
Diana Carlyle
News Assistant:
Kathleen Miguel

Ak-Chin Tribal Council

Chairman: Gabriel Lopez
Vice Chair: Delia Carlyle
Council Members:
Dennis Antone, Lisa
Garcia, and Cecil Peters

Regular Contributors:
Ak-Chin: Education, Elders,
EPD, Health Education, Him-
Dak, Library and Recreation

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ANNOUNCEMENTS
Announcements and wishes
may be phoned in, faxed
or e-mailed.

**ARTWORK, LETTERS,
STORIES**
The Ak-Chin O'odham Runner
is a Community Newspaper
and encourages Community
involvement.

If you have artwork, photos,
poems or a great story that
you would like to share,
please contact us so we
can include it in "YOUR"
newspaper. If you have
suggestions or comments
about "YOUR" newspaper,
please let the Runner Staff
know that too.

All submitted letters MUST be
signed by the author and are
limited to 200 words.

Authors must also include
their name, address, and
phone number. Names
can be omitted by request.
Anonymous submissions
will not be accepted.

We reserve the right to edit
all submitted material for
clarity, grammar and good
taste. All submissions should
be received as typed or non-
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or formatted paragraphs.

Submitted pictures need a
return address and brief
description. Pictures with no
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Allow 2 weeks for return.

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**AK-CHIN INDIAN
COMMUNITY**

NEXT DEADLINE

Don't forget the
DEADLINE for the
December 19, 2025 -

January 1, 2026
issue is due by

WEDNESDAY,

DECEMBER 24TH

Please submit all
announcements, wishes,
etc. no later than

WEDNESDAY,

DECEMBER 24TH

Material submitted after the
DECEMBER 24TH DEADLINE

cannot be guaranteed
placement. If appropriate
and relevant, it will be
included in the next issue.

Ak-Chin Recreation hosts Holiday House Decorating Contest

MERRY AND BRIGHT LIGHTS



1st - Georgia Corella



2nd - Steven Ruelas



3rd - Marla Antone

HOLIDAY SPIRIT



1st - Deanna Justin



2nd - Candi Chavez



3rd - Bijagozhone Talkalai

As the Ak-Chin Parks & Recreation department cruised around the community to judge the annual House Decoration Contest on December 17, 2025.

Anticipation and excitement began to build, as they wondered which homes had the brightest and merriest theme.

Fifteen homes were registered with Ak-Chin Recreation for the contest.

The route started from the Ak-Chin Farm's subdivision to the Fire Department subdivision, then through the Desert

Willow subdivision and finally down the main village area.

Judges had to admit that this year was a tough one, as the community homes were all decked out with lights, giant inflatables and over the top holiday cheer. Once all judging was completed, Rec staff made their way back to the gym to tally up the scores.

At the end of the tallying task, nine community homes would be cheerfully rewarded; first place through 3rd place winners from three categories; Merry & Bright, Holiday Spirit and Incredible

Inflatables.

"We have made our decisions and the winners have been chosen!" Ak-Chin Rec shared. "First, we would like to thank all who participated! Everyone did great and it was definitely a difficult decision to make."

Following are the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners in each category.

Each winner will be awarded cash and a certificate. 1st - place is \$500, 2nd place is \$300 and 3rd place is \$175!

Congratulations to all the winners!

INCREDIBLE INFLATABLES



1st - Alicia Gomez



2nd - Eric Chavez



3rd - Ame Stephens

Trash to Treasure Craft – Water Bottle Gnomes

Turn your recycling into something adorable! These tiny yarn gnomes are made using plastic rings cut from a water bottle or cardboard tubes, plus leftover yarn or scraps from other projects. They're a perfect way to reduce waste out of the landfill and to decorate.

Materials

- 1 empty plastic water bottle or cardboard tube from toilet paper or paper towel
- Scissors (sharp enough to cut plastic)
- Leftover yarn:
 - Fun color for the hat
 - Brown, black, white or different shades of grey color for the beard
- 1 small bead or button (for the nose), check those junk drawers
- Hot glue or tacky craft glue
- Optional: scrap fabric or felt for accents

sticking out (like in the photo).

- Trim if needed for shape.

3. Make the Beard

- Cut yarn strands for the beard 6-7 inches long.
- Add them to the other half of the ring using the same lark's head knot method.
- Fill until the bottom half looks full and fluffy.
- Trim to shape rounded, pointy, or scruffy depending on the look you want.



4. Add the Nose

- Part the beard strands slightly in the center.
- Glue a small bead, button, or pom-pom just under the hat line.
- Hold in place until secure.

5. Finishing Touches

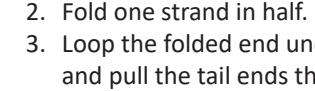
- Fluff the beard with your fingers.
- Trim stray strands.
- Add a loop of yarn to the top if you want to hang the gnome as an ornament.
- Add fabric patches, tiny bells, or ribbon scraps for extra personality.
- Try different



Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Prepare the Water Bottle Rings

- Rinse and dry the bottle.
- Cut off the smooth middle section of the bottle (if using cardboard tube, cut tube into rings).
- Slice this section into rings about 1/2 inch wide.
 - Each ring forms the base that the gnome hat and beard attach to.
- Trim any sharp edges.



2. Create the Hat

- Cut yarn strands in your hat color 8-10 inches long.
- Fold one strand in half.
- Loop the folded end under the plastic ring and pull the tail ends through, this is a lark's head knot.
- Repeat, placing knots close together, until half the ring is completely covered.
- Gather the loose yarn ends above the ring to form a hat shape.
- Tie tightly with another strand of yarn to create the top of the hat, leaving the tassel.



sizes of yarn for the hats and beards to give a unique and different look to each gnome.

Why It's a Great "Trash to Treasure" Project?

- Reuses plastic otherwise destined for the trash.
- Works with leftover yarn pieces too short for most craft projects.
- Quick, easy, and kid-friendly.
- Each gnome is unique and costs almost nothing to make.

Complete this project? Please email photos to **Brandy Nelson** at BNelson@ak-chin.nsn.us at Environmental Programs.

ITEMS WITH EMBEDDED (NON-REMOVABLE) BATTERIES

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KNOW?

EMBEDDED BATTERIES CAN CAUSE FIRES IN TRASH TRUCKS, LANDFILLS, AND RECYCLING FACILITIES (ESPECIALLY LITHIUM BATTERIES)

| | |
|---|---|
| HOUSEHOLD ELECTRONICS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMARTPHONES TABLETS & E-READERS SMARTWATCHES & FITNESS TRACKERS LAPTOPS WIRELESS EARBUDS & HEADPHONES BLUETOOTH SPEAKERS DIGITAL CAMERAS & GOPROS HANDHELD GAMING DEVICES (NINTENDO SWITCH LITE, ETC.) TV REMOTES & STREAMING DEVICE REMOTES (APPLE TV, ROKU, FIRESTICK REMOTES) SMART HOME DEVICES (DOORBELLS, THERMOSTATS, SECURITY CAMERAS, TRACKERS) | HOLIDAY & SEASONAL ITEMS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LIGHT-UP DECORATIONS (LED CANDLES, ORNAMENTS, WREATHS) MUSICAL GREETING CARDS BATTERY-POWERED GIFT BOXES OR DÉCOR RECHARGEABLE HOLIDAY FIGURINES OR NOVELTY TOYS |
| SMALL HOUSEHOLD TOOLS & GADGETS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ELECTRIC TOOTHBRUSHES HAIR TRIMMERS & GROOMING TOOLS FLASHLIGHTS & HEADLAMPS RECHARGEABLE SCREWDRIVERS, DRILLS, OR SMALL TOOLS POWER BANKS & PORTABLE CHARGERS VAPE PENS / E-CIGARETTES WIRELESS COMPUTER MICE & KEYBOARDS | TOYS & KIDS' ELECTRONICS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> REMOTE-CONTROL CARS, DRONES, AND HELICOPTERS HOVERBOARDS / BALANCE BOARDS LIGHT-UP OR SOUND-ACTIVATED STUFFED TOYS INTERACTIVE LEARNING TABLETS MOTORIZED RIDE-ON TOYS ELECTRONIC MUSICAL TOYS (KEYBOARDS, DANCING ROBOTS, ETC.) RECHARGEABLE WALKIE-TALKIES ELECTRONIC BUILDING SETS (LEGO ROBOTICS KITS) WEARABLE KID TRACKERS & KID SMARTWATCHES |

General Rules (Simple & Universal)

Do NOT throw in trash or curbside recycling. Bring to an e-waste drop-off (city, tribe, county, transfer station, or special event). Keep items separate in a plastic or clear bag. If battery casing is damaged, tape with clear tape and inform staff. Don't stockpile old electronics after unwrapping gifts. Set up a collection bin in the home. Recycle old items before setting up new ones. Remove data from phones/tablets and factory reset before drop-off. Store used electronics away from heat and off porch areas. Never place lithium items near wrapping paper or trash bags.

Legacy & MHS Christmas Programs

Story Robert Miguel
Photos by Diana Carlyle & Victor Moreno Photography

"Immerse yourself in a world of emotions through dance" was the theme, as Maricopa High School presented the "Emotion in Motion" dance event at the school's Performing Arts auditorium on Friday, November 14th.

Ak-Chin's Stella Miguel, who is a sophomore at MHS, performed in three different dance routines during the show. The three routines Stella participated in involved hip hop.

Throughout the evening, family, friends and guests were able to experience sequences of ballet, hip hop, folklore and techno dancing through various types of music. Another show was presented the following day on Saturday, November 15th.

Stella is the daughter of Robert and Connie Miguel.

On Thursday, December 4th, Ak-Chin community member, Kylee Carlyle, a 7th grade student at Maricopa Legacy Traditional Middle



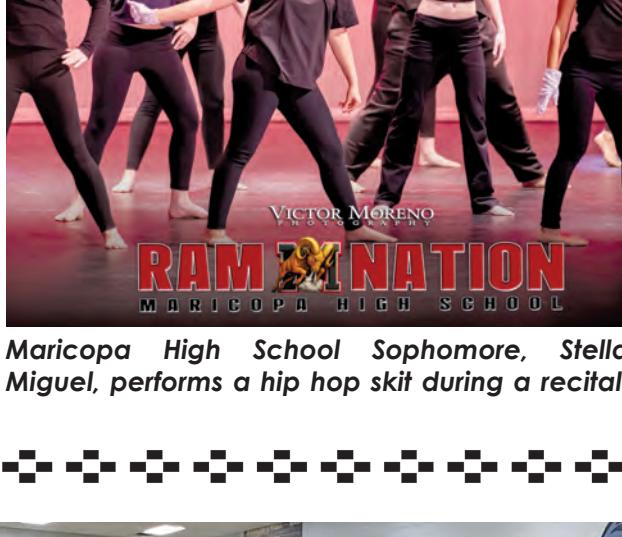
7th grader, Kylee Carlyle, plays flute during the Legacy Traditional School Holiday Concert.

School played the flute in the school's band during "A Holiday Concert Review" Winter Concert.

Throughout the whole show, the band played

a variety of Christmas music.

Kylee is the daughter of Carlton Sr. and Diana Carlyle.



Maricopa High School Sophomore, Stella Miguel, performs a hip hop skit during a recital.



A design of Ka:lo The Young Quail and his buddies by Dwayne Antone.

Ka:los The Young Quail

Submitted by Dr. Mario Molina, Ak-Chin Education Director

In the coming weeks, the Ak-Chin Language Department will introduce a second book highlighting a young quail, Ka:los (Carlos).

developing a book took more than two months to formulate and took several discussions and meetings within the Language Program.

they would provide feedback.

The main character, Ka:los, was introduced some time ago in the first book titled "Ka:los Greets The Storm" and was written and produced by the Language program with the assistance of a local artist, Dwayne Antone.

Following the development of the story, the Language team then developed a very rough draft of a storyboard, giving the team an idea of what they would like to see illustrated in the book.

There were several other steps such as the identification of a publisher, correcting the wording for proper spelling, and ensuring the story and illustrations were authentic to the Ak-Chin Community.

The book is almost finished, and the Language Program will host a book launch sometime in January.

Many individuals came together to make this book a reality and the Education Department and Language Program look forward to future publications that focus on Ka:los and how he can help teach our language to the young members of our community.

The second book is titled, "Ka:los Meets His Friends," and takes the young quail on a short adventure where he meets his friends.

The idea to develop a book starts with an open discussion to identify what the story will tell in the book; this part of

The team then reached out to a local artist who illustrated the first book and provided him with a description and understanding of the vision the team had for the book.

From there, Dwayne took the vision and provided renderings for the Language staff where



A design of Ka:lo The Young Quail A copy of the booklet was on display in the beautiful desert scenery. at the Education Department.



The San Juan Kwaliaya Dancers from the Ak-Chin Community, perform the "kwaliaya" dance during the Cultural Festival at Maricopa Wells.

Maricopa Wells hosts Cultural Festival

Story and photos by Robert Miguel

To help celebrate diverse traditions and cultures at Maricopa Wells Middle School, the school hosted a Cultural Festival that featured entertainment from Ak-Chin's San Juan Kwaliaya dancers, dancers from the Philippines, as well as a Hispanic group from Mexico.

The performances were enjoyed by middle school students and guests on Friday, December

12th in the multi-purpose room at Wells. Throughout the evening, booths were set up for all to get information and familiarize themselves of Native American, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Italy and South African backgrounds.

Maricopa Wells Middle School has celebrated this event for three years now and staff are excited that they are able to schedule events such as

sharing traditions and culture.

"It is a great tradition we have here at Wells, and we will continue this as long as I am here," said Maricopa Wells Middle School Principal, Thad Miller. "The community loves it! Celebrating our various cultures is one of our biggest strengths at Maricopa Wells Middle School. We are very proud of that!"

Alma Farrell Innovation Academy Officially Named as the First MUSD K-8 School

MARICOPA, AZ, December 10, 2025 – The Maricopa Unified School District Governing Board has officially approved the name of the district's newest K-8 school: Alma Farrell Innovation Academy, opening July 2026.

Alma Farrell Innovation Academy's Next Generation Workforce and work-based learning model features:

- Kindergarten Discovery House, providing individualized, developmentally responsive instruction.
- Dynamic multi-age learning houses for grades 1-8, allowing students to remain with the same teachers and peers for up to two years.
- Middle School Academies, where students in grades 5-8 engage in hands-on, career-connected learning and explore diverse career pathways such as Public Safety, Hospitality and Tourism, Financial Services, Digital Technology, Construction, etc.
- A work-based learning

pathway beginning in kindergarten and growing through middle school to help students understand, explore, and experience real-world careers.

Principal Allison is actively seeking industry partners to collaborate with students through mentorships, career simulations, internships, and classroom experiences, connecting learning to real-world opportunities.

Alma Farrell Innovation Academy will open in July 2026, with student registration beginning February 2026, priority open enrollment available now until January 9, 2026.



Folklore Dancing was displayed during the Festival. Dancing from the Philippines, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Italy and South Africa cultures was shared.

Ak-Chin Youth get to go “Shop with a Cop”

Story by Runner Staff, photos by Lucy Antone

The dialysis center will total approximately 6,500 sq. ft. and will be located in a building with other medical service providers. Dialysis services will be open to Ak-Chin members and the general public. Davita Incorporation will provide the services needed for the facility.

“We’re honored to be part of expanding access to essential kidney care services for the Ak-Chin Tribal members through this collaboration with the Ak-Chin Community Council and the Southwest Kidney Institute,” said JD Sprague, Divisional Vice President overseeing the Southwest Region for Davita, through a shared press release.

“For people living with kidney failure, life-sustaining treatment is essential. We look forward to serving the community with personalized, compassionate care.”

Facility construction is expected to be completed by fall 2026, with the dialysis center opening just under a year from now.

During the ceremony, a moment of silence and acknowledgement of the late Bartholomew “Bart”



Ak-Chin Chairman, Gabriel Lopez, addresses the crowd gathered during the groundbreaking.

Smith was held. Bart was the Community Operations Manager, who dedicated countless hours, expertise, and commitment to this project.

“His leadership and care helped lay the foundation for what we are building here. Although, Bart is not with us today, his contributions will always be a part of this facility and the people it will serve.” Chairman Lopez added.

Saturday, December 13, six young community members from Ak-Chin were selected to participate in the “Shop with a Cop” program.

The event began with a breakfast with Santa and Mrs. Claus at a local church. After breakfast, the children drove with police officers in police vehicles with lights and sirens to Wal-Mart, where they were able to select gifts for themselves and family members.

Once the children selected all their presents, they were gift wrapped prior to being escorted home by the Ak-Chin Police Department.

“Shop with a cop is always an amazing experience for everyone involved.” Sgt. Perez shared.

“It’s an event I look forward to being a part of yearly. Some kids don’t say much as they are picking toys out, but you can tell they are having the time of their life when you see their facial expressions.”



Ak-Chin Police Sergeant, Diana Perez, and Kyla-Jae Antone enjoy a moment shopping for toys during the “Shop With A Cop” program.

The event was set up by the Maricopa Police Foundation, Maricopa Police Department, and the Maricopa Lions Club.

“Shop with a Cop” is a holiday program where local law enforcement officers take children shopping for holiday gifts. The goal is to foster positive interactions, build trust and provide a happy holiday experience for children who might otherwise miss out.



Community children get to shop with Ak-Chin PD, l-r: Criminal Investigator Gonzalez, Daniel Thomas, Matthew Miranda, Kyla-Jae Antone, Sgt. Perez, Sgt. Garcia, Ranger Grizzle, Adriel Jimenez, Ofc. Sandoval, Yondell Antone, Ofc. Coronado and Jacob Santiago.



A rendering of the new Dialysis Center was on display during the ground breaking ceremony in the designated grounds near the Waste Water Facility.



Ak-Chin Police Officers and Staff help Santa with the “Toys for Tots” toy distribution held for community children at the Old Fire Department, Saturday December 13.

Ak-Chin PD Hosts “Toys For Tots”

Story by Runner Staff, photos by Brianna Peters

On Saturday, December 13th, officers and staff from the Ak-Chin Police Department hosted their annual “Toys for Tots” for community children. For tots ages 0-18, a gift of items such as Legos, basketballs, books, and a variety of toys were given out.

The old fire department on Farrell Road, was the headquarters for children to come and get their gifts. For those that were unable to physically make their way to the fire department, officers and staff made home deliveries.

Children were able to make it to the old fire department, were able to see and take a photo with Santa.

The Toys for Tots program, is run by the United States Marine Corps Reserve since 1947, they collect and distribute new, unwrapped toys, books, and other gifts to give to less fortunate children at Christmas, bring them joy and a message of hope while building community spirit.

The Program operates through local campaigns, relying on



KEY
WB = West Bound
EB = East Bound
SB = South Bound
NB = North Bound

Yes at bus shelter indicates the stop is at the bus shelter

TO SCHEDULE A RIDE:

CALL: 520-568-1630

TEXT: 520-340-0382

AK-CHIN TRIBAL TRANSIT
SERVING THE AK-CHIN INDIAN COMMUNITY



Santa and all his helpers from the Ak-Chin PD enjoy a beautiful day greeting families and handing out Christmas gifts to Ak-Chin children, through the “Toys for Tots” Program.

toy donations and volunteers to sort and distribute items through community agencies to children in need, and also has year-round literacy and Native American programs.

Ak-Chin Police Sergeant Davis

“Skip” Garcia and Evidence Technician Michell Granados spearheaded Ak-Chin’s Toys for Tot distribution.

Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino's SALUTE Business Impact Group Honors Veterans and Allies with Acts of Gratitude and Service

Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino's SALUTE Business Impact Group continued its long-standing commitment to honoring and supporting veterans, their families, and the organizations that serve them by hosting a series of meaningful events throughout November.

During the month, SALUTE volunteers joined forces with Diana Gregory Outreach Services for the "Veggies for Veterans" initiative, distributing fresh, healthy fruits and vegetables to more than 700 veterans.

The effort served as a simple, yet powerful reminder of

the respect, dignity, and appreciation owed to those who have served.

"We firmly believe in lifting up the people who have given so much in service to our country," said Samantha Gulick, director of Marketing and Operations and executive sponsor of the SALUTE Business Impact Group.

"Our veterans have devoted their lives to safeguarding our freedoms, and it's an honor to support them when they need us most. By showing our appreciation and encouraging others in our community to do the same, we help spark a wave



of meaningful, positive change in veterans' lives."

Continuing a proud tradition of corporate giving and community engagement, Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino team members also supported the Maricopa Veterans Day Parade



on Nov. 8.

The culinary team prepared 300 box lunches, which SALUTE members served to veterans attending the event, offering nourishment and gratitude to those who participated.

The SALUTE Business Impact Group at Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino is dedicated to fostering a culture rooted in duty, honor, and selfless service.

By bringing together veteran team members and their allies, the group champions diversity, inclusion, and community impact through grassroots initiatives such as fundraisers, donation drives, and volunteer programs. SALUTE's ongoing efforts underscore its unwavering commitment to empowering veterans and strengthening the community it proudly serves.

MOVIES • RESTAURANTS • BOWLING • ARCADE • LASER TAG • GROUP EVENTS



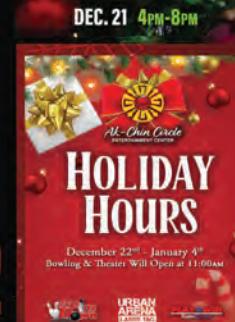
DECEMBER EVENTS

Ak-ChinCircle.com



MOVIE RELEASES

12/05 Five Nights at Freddy's 2
12/05 Fackham Hall
12/05 Jujutsu Kaisen: Execution
12/05 Kill Bill: The Whole Bloody Affair
12/12 Silent Night, Deadly Night
12/12 Hamnet
12/19 The Housmaid
12/19 Is This Thing On?
12/19 David
12/25 Anaconda
12/25 Marty Supreme



LUXE LOUNGE PRESENTS

DJ BATTLE NYE



ARROYO GRILLE

520.426.6832 | ARROYOGRILLE.COM
48456 WEST HWY 238 IN MARICOPA

DECEMBER FREE APPETIZER

TRY THE PHILLY EGG ROLLS! W/ANY TWO ENTREE PURCHASES



Must present coupon to server. Not valid with daily or Happy Hour specials. Cannot be combined with other specials, offers or Harrah's Rewards. Does not include alcohol. One coupon per table, no split checks. Valid for one visit daily. Non-transferable. Offer expires 12/31/25.

Proudly owned by the Ak-Chin Indian Community 

SATURDAY DECEMBER 20TH
THE OFFICIAL

TRACY LAWRENCE AFTERPARTY

IN LUXE LOUNGE



Harrahs AK-CHIN CASINO

DECEMBER 2025

CAESARS REWARDS

SUNDAY

MONDAY

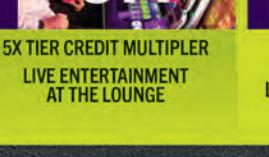
TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY



ROCK THE CLOCK

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2025
TIER CREDIT MULTIPLIER
FREE SLOT PLAY DRAWING
LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Valid only at Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino and must have a Caesars Rewards card and valid photo ID to participate. Management reserves the right to change or cancel these promotions at any time without prior notice. Must be 21 or older to gamble and take advantage of these offers. Know When To Stop® Gambling Problem? Call 1-800-NEXT STEP or text "NEXTSTEP" to 5342. ©2025 Caesars License Company, LLC. See official rules at the Caesars Rewards Center for complete details.

Ak-Chin Youth Council

Masik Tas Celebration

Story by Kristen Villegas, Photos by Runner Staff

Sunday, December 14, 2025 many were in attendance for the Ak-Chin Youth Council's Masik Tas Celebration which began at 1 PM at the "Old Vaila Site" in the main village.

Open for registration was the wood chopping, popover making, chumuth making, and youth/ adult dance contests.

The crowd was also treated to the musical styles of The Juanios Boys throughout the day.

Vendors stationed at the dance grounds serving popovers and more included; Marla and Family and Josie's Frybread.

Raffle prizes were up for grabs during the Community Day; prizes included a variety of Masik Tas swag.

Wood Chopping was the first contest to take place with 5 contestants, all Ak-Chin members, giving it their best shot. Ultimately it was Davis "Skip" Garcia who took first place, with Cecily Peters placing 2nd, and Chizzum Justin earning 3rd place.

Next was the Popover Making contest, with 5 contestants entered, ready to show their skills with the dough and cast iron.

Once the wood from the chopping contest was stoked hot enough, the frying of the Popovers began. Winners for the Popover Contest included: Manfred Jose winning 1st, Alena Makil placing 2nd, and Ak-Chin's Mary Anne Diaz earning 3rd. Following the Popover

making contest was the Chumuth making, with 5 ladies taking to the tables to dish out their best dough.

By the end of the night, best Chumuth Makers were announced; 1st place winner was Alex Carlyle from Ak-Chin, Alena Makil won 2nd, and Mavis Thomas took home 3rd.

After the cooking contests were over, everyone focused on the dance floor, where couples in the youth and adult Dance contests were owning the dance floor for a chance to place in the three categories; Chote, Vaila and Cumbia.

Ak-Chin brother-sister team, Abraham and Harlee Jose won 1st place for Vaila, 2nd in Cumbia and 1st in the Chote. Emilio Gomez and Francisco Kisto placed 1st in the Cumbia, and earned 2nd in the Chote and Vaila. Another brother-sister duo from Ak-Chin, Mylaunah and Marquan Robles took 3rd in all categories.

To end the contests, four groups headed to the dance floor for the Adult Dance contest.

When the dust settled, the following winners were; Ak-Chin members Mylauni Antone and Baya Olivas who placed 1st in all three categories; Chote, Vaila and Cumbia.

Evelyn Enos and Zyana Flores placed 2nd in Chote, and 3rd in the Vaila and Cumbia.

Gila River Royalty, Virginia Rossel and Mavis Antone placed 2nd

in Cumbia and Vaila and 3rd in Chote.

"On behalf of the Ak-Chin Youth Council, I want to express our sincere appreciation for your participation in the 2025 Masik Tas Community Event on December 14." Sheila Pablo-Bandin shared.

"It was a memorable day filled with exciting contests like wood chopping and dancing that highlighted our community's talent and spirit."

Sheila gave thanks to: the judges for the Popover and Chumuth contests; Carol Lopez, Velacita Lopez and Kathleen Miguel, as well as for the Dance Contest judges; Gabriel Lopez, Doria Garcia and Carole Lopez; "for their commitment to fairness and integrity throughout the event(s)."

"Thank you to our community vendors who dedicated their day to serving delicious food made with authentic traditional food that made our day the best."

Thank you to the Ak-Chin Indian Community and youth and the visiting sibling tribes who were also invited to join our festivities and made their way down to help us celebrate our Ak-Chin Indian Community 2025 Masik Tas Celebration hosted (by) our Ak-Chin Youth Council."

"Congratulations to all winners and great job to all who joined in and did awesome!" Sheila concluded.



Wood-chopping crew from Ak-Chin; l-r: Davis "Skip" Garcia, Chizzum Justin, Dreyvn Soliz, Conner Martinez, and Cecily Peters.



Chumuth Contest winners, l-r: 1st Place - Alex Carlyle with son Amari, 2nd Place - Alena Makil, 3rd Place - Mavis Thomas..



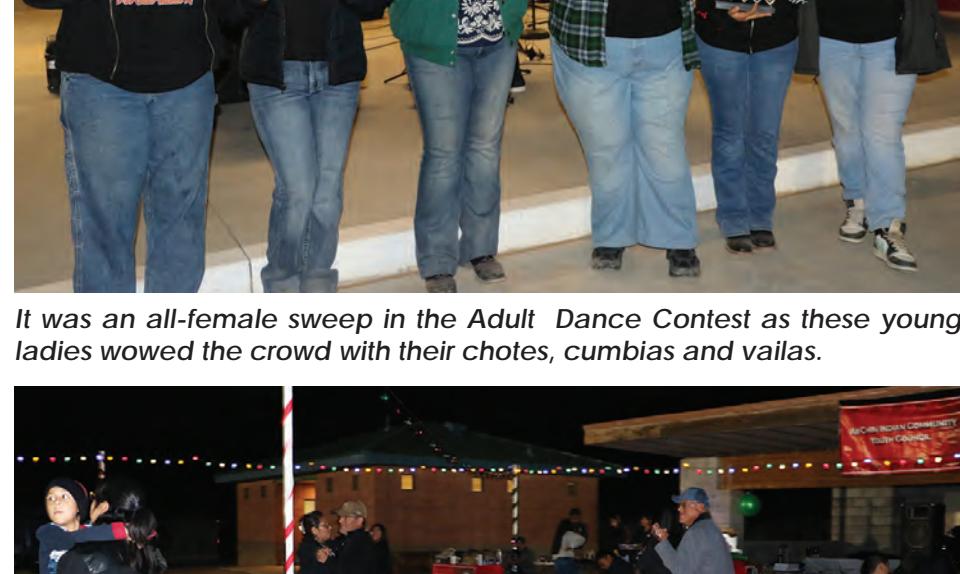
Siblings; Abraham and Harlee Jose were youth dance contest winners.



Emilio Gomez and Francisco Kisto also took home trophies from the dance contest.



Ak-Chin, siblings Mylaunah (left) and Marquan (right) Robles took 3rd in the youth dance contest.



It was an all-female sweep in the Adult Dance Contest as these young ladies wowed the crowd with their chotes, cumbias and vailas.



Couples glide across the floor as Juanios Boys play some chickenscratch.

Sanitation Holiday Schedule

December 2025

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---------------------|---------|---|-----------------------------|--|
| 15 Trash Pick Up | 16 | | 17 | 18 Trash Pick Up Recycling Pick Up Ak-Chin's Masik Tas Holiday |
| 22 Trash Pick Up | 23 | 24 | | 25 Christmas Day Holiday Community Holiday Trash Pick Up Recycling Pick Up |
| 29 Trash Pick Up | 30 | 31 (January) New Year's Day Holiday | 1 New Year's Day Holiday | 2 Community Holiday Trash Pick Up Recycling Pick Up |

Ak-Chin Indian Community Environmental Programs

Burn Permit Do's and Don'ts

DO

- Obtain a Burn Permit from the Ak-Chin Environmental Programs before any open burning.
- Confirm approved burn days and weather conditions with Environmental Programs, burning is only allowed when air quality and wind conditions are safe.
- Use only approved materials, such as:
 - Natural vegetation (brush, leaves, tree trimmings)
 - Agricultural debris generated on-site
- Keep water, shovels, or a fire extinguisher nearby at all times.
- Maintain constant supervision of the fire until it is completely extinguished.
- Burn in cleared areas, removing surrounding dry grass or debris to prevent spread.
- Follow all permit limitations, including start/end times, burn pile size, and required setbacks from structures and roads.

DON'T

- Do NOT burn without a permit.
- Do NOT burn prohibited materials, including:
 - Household trash
 - Plastics, tires, rubber, treated/painted wood
 - Chemicals, fuels, or hazardous waste
 - Construction & demolition debris
 - Appliances, furniture, or metals
- Do NOT burn on windy, high-risk, or no-burn days.
- Do NOT leave a fire unattended, even briefly.
- Do NOT allow smoke to impact neighbors, roadways, or sensitive individuals, including elders or those with respiratory conditions.
- Do NOT ignite oversized piles that exceed permit limits (burn smaller, manageable piles).
- Do NOT assume agricultural exemptions apply without confirming with Environmental Programs.
- Do NOT attempt to burn if you are unsure about the rules call Environmental Programs first.

Burn Permits are not needed for:

- Outdoor cooking
- Outdoor ceremony
- Outdoor warmth

If you have any questions, contact Ralph "Manny" Gomez at 520-568-1162 or rgomez@ak-chin.nsn.us

Overall Male:
1st - William Gundrum
1st - Marcel Nosie
3rd - Garrett Burnett

37-42
Artie Cassa III, Lyn Hargis
43-48
Arnold Cosen, Cecelia English
49-54
Ben Notah, Deej Honyumpetwa
55+
David Thompson, Virginia Slim

hope you will be in Ak-Chin again next year for this yearly celebration!"

Ak-Chin Health Education would also like to thank the various community departments and individuals.

"Without your help, leadership, and partnership we could not host this event without you.

Thank you to Ak-Chin Community Council, Ak-Chin Community Events, Ak-Chin Sanitation & Public Works, Ak-Chin Farms, Ak-Chin Fire Department, Ak-Chin Police Department, Ak-Chin Youth Council, Runner, Purchasing, Vekol Market, Chairman Gabriel Lopez, Waylon Antone, Clayton Antone, and all the volunteers & temp workers. We thank you so much for all your help!"

18 & under
Marcel Nosie, Adikiss Romero

19-24
Tayshaun Nosie, Female
(NO PLACEMENT)

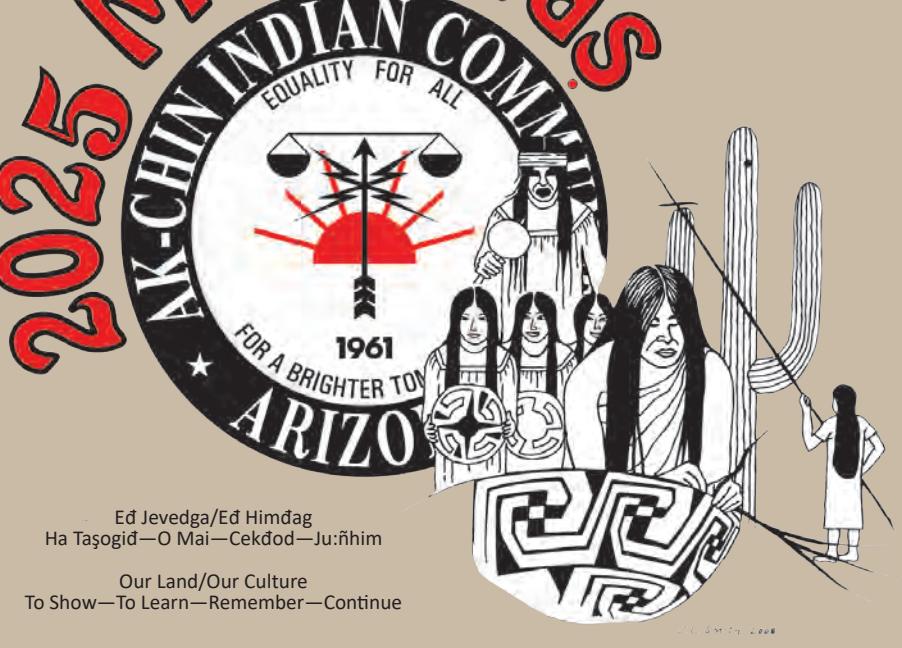
25-30
Garrett Burnett, Brandi Selestewa

31-36
William Gundrum, Alyssa Voels

We hope you had a great time and



2025 Masik Tas



Ed Jevedga/Ed Himdag
Ha Taşogid—O Mai—Cekdod—Ju:ihim
Our Land/Our Culture
To Show—To Learn—Remember—Continue

including Snoopy's house and the tiny pine less tree, followed by the Ak-Chin Community Library with their featured Grinch theme.

Meanwhile, Ak-Chin Early Childhood Education showcased a classic, National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation, complete with a version of Griswold's iconic station wagon and Christmas tree.

Ak-Chin Sanitation/Public Works sported two floats, with their name/ logos and a grip of Gingerbread.

The Harrah's Development Systems (HDS) Program had a trailer full of Lego-themed characters, "building Christmas memories... One Lego at a time."

The parade got a double dose of marching bands as both the Maricopa High School Marching Band and Desert Sunrise High School Marching Band strutted down the road, with sparkling lights and flaggers, while playing merry holiday songs, along with their respective "fight songs".

One of the more melodious floats, was the "Akimel/Walia Band" that consisted of Gila River, Ak-Chin and other surrounding community musicians who all came out "to share some good ol' "waila music" to help spread the Holiday Spirit."

Rounding out the entrants, were Ak-Chin Tribal Council's Three Wisemen, Chairman Gabriel Lopez and Councilmembers Dennis Antone and Cecil Peters. A last-minute entry

that managed to scramble together a sentimental float was the Justin Y-O family float.

And, the finale float in the parade, was from none other than the Ak-Chin Fire Department, with special guest Santa and his special elf in the ladder truck, along with a gaggle of Griswolds along Uncle Eddie's RV, wishing all a "Good ol' Family Christmas... Isn't it a beaut Clark!"

Be sure to come out and celebrate Ak-Chin Indian Community 2025 Masik Tas, at Ak-Chin Circle this weekend.

You will be able to enjoy all the fun and excitement, with a FREE CARNIVAL, FREE CONCERTS AND FREE RODEO EVENTS – EVERYONE WELCOME!!

10Kers show they're still with it, everyone had great energy when it came to cheering peers on.

Many community members came out to help Health Ed celebrate Masik Tas with the 2 Mi.

Masik Tas All-Indian Men's Basketball Tournament

Story and photos by Robert Miguel

Saturday, December 13th, and Sunday, December 14th, twelve teams took to the courts at the Ak-Chin Parks & Recreation gymnasium as they vied to see who would come out on top in the annual Masik Tas All-Indian Men's Basketball tournament.

For spectators, the tournament was an opportunity to see the "run and gun" style of play, which is also called "rez ball" up close, as the majority of game point tallies were never under fifty points.

The Arizona Warriors, a group representing the Salt River Community in Scottsdale, finished with an unblemished mark, taking the title against a tough, Those Guys squad in the championship game.

The championship game was a good one as both Warriors and Those Guys battled to a stand-still in the first and second quarters, with both teams racing up and down the court making layups and then stopping and popping from three-point range.

In the third quarter, the Warriors were able to take their lead to double digits. The game stayed the same in the fourth quarter as a fatigued Those Guys squad succumbed to the Warriors and a second-place finish.

Third place went to an OTF squad who battled back from the loser's bracket to place. Each placement team was awarded shirts, sweaters, and other goods from the Recreation Department.

Ak-Chin was well represented in the tournament as two teams participated, Ak-Chin #1 and Ak-Chin #2. Two other Ak-Chin members were able to play with teams from the Gila River and the San Lucy communities.



AK-CHIN INDIAN COMMUNITY
Ak-Chin Circle // 16000 N. Maricopa Rd. Maricopa, AZ 85139

FREE
CONCERT
SAT DEC 20



CLEAR
BAG
POLICY



Below right, who won? It's a tie as Layla Santiago races Richard Perry to the finish line. Below left, it's a photo finish to see who came in first place.



Ak-Chin Indian Community

2025 MASIK TAS CELEBRATION

RODEO EVENTS

Ak-Chin Circle Arena | 16000 N. Maricopa Rd.

JR. RODEO

Friday, December 19th @ 9am

BULLS, BRONCS & DONKS

Friday, December 19th @ 4pm

OPEN WILD HORSE RACE

December 20th & 21st

OPEN RODEO

December 20th & 21st



MASIK TAS HAY RAFFLE

64 Bales

1 ticket for \$10

3 tickets for \$20

20 tickets for \$100

ON-SITE RAFFLE SALES: December 18th-21st
at the Masik Tas Rodeo Secretary's Office

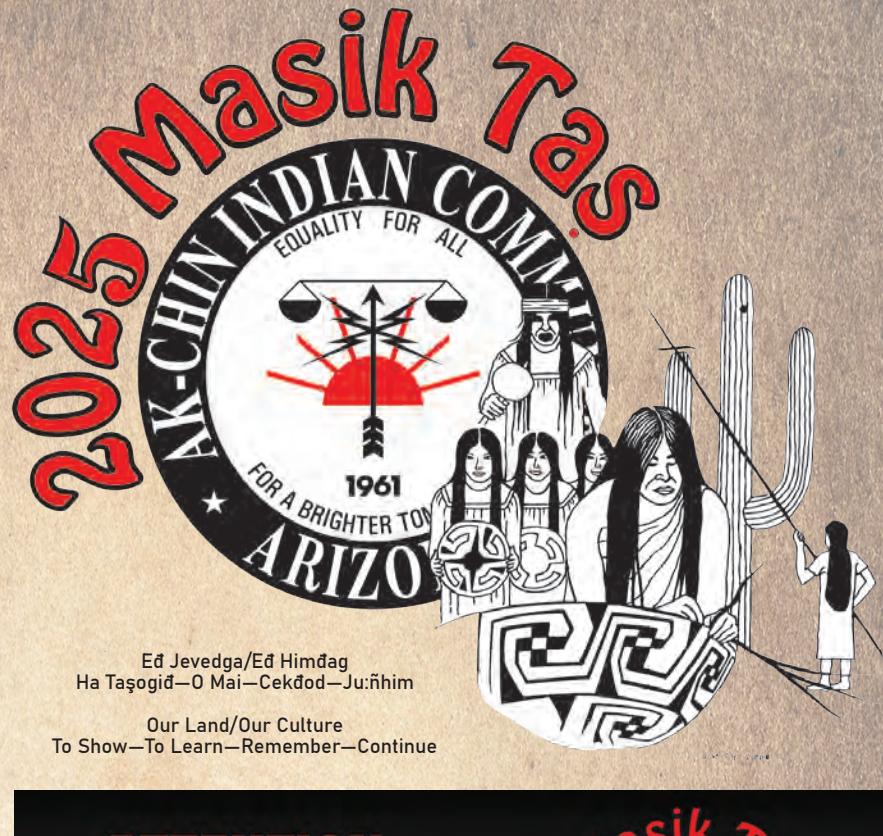
****CASH OR MONEY ORDER ONLY****

WINNER NEED NOT BE PRESENT TO WIN.
Drawing will be held after last rodeo event
on December 21st

masiktas.ak-chin.nsn.us

Everyone Welcome

For information on Rodeo Events, please contact:
Delbert White: dwhite@ak-chin.nsn.us | 520-414-5515



Ed Jevedga / Ed Himdag
Ha Taşogid - O Mai - Cekdod - Ju:ñhim

Our Land/Our Culture
To Show - To Learn - Remember - Continue

ATTENTION

To ensure the safety of our guests
and expedite Masik Tas entry, a
Clear Bag Policy will be in place.

CLEAR BAG POLICY

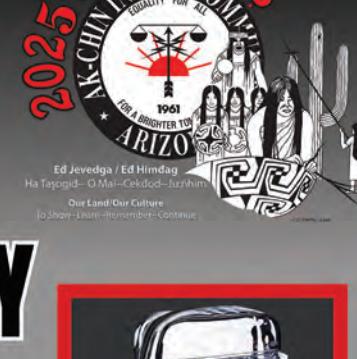
All bags must be made of clear
materials, with minimal logo(s),
NOT color or tinted.

Size must not exceed
12" x 6" x 12".

Medical bags, diaper bags, lawn
chairs, strollers, wagons &
blankets will be permitted upon
inspection.

NON-APPROVED

Non-approved bags/items
must be returned to vehicle
or discarded.



FREE CONCERT DECEMBER 19th 2025

2:00 P.M. PAPAGO WARRIOR

4:30 P.M. LOS SOCIALES

6:00 P.M. CHAKA & FRIENDS

8:00 P.M. LOS HERMANOS CUATRO



GATES
OPEN
12 P.M.



2:30 P.M. ARAVAIPA
3:15 P.M. DOGYARD
4:15 P.M. SALIVA
5:30 P.M. QUIET RIOT
7:00 P.M. LIT
8:30 P.M. FUEL

GATES OPEN
2:30 P.M.

alleventsstaff@ak-chin.nsn.us

520-568-1000

Ak-Chin Indian Community and Stock Contractor are not responsible for accidents, injury, loss or theft during this event.