



Tribal Leadership Conference
June 1-4, 2026
Gila River Resorts & Casinos – Wild
Horse Pass Chandler, AZ

Conference Agenda

MONDAY JUNE 1, 2026

Golf Tournament Registration & Breakfast

Time: 6:00 AM

Location: Whirlwind Golf Course

Golf Tournament Shotgun Start

Time: 7:00 AM

Location: Whirlwind Golf Course

Golf Tournament Lunch and Awards

Time: After the Conclusion of the Round

Location: Whirlwind Golf Course

Early Registration

Time: 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM

Location: Acacia Foyer

Conference Welcome Reception/Registration (badges required)

Time: 9:00 PM to 11:00 PM

Location: Prime

Theme: All White Clothing

Sponsored by: ROI Promotions, GGHM, and Rock & Brews

TUESDAY JUNE 2, 2026

Registration

Time: 7:15 am

Location: Acacia Foyer

Breakfast

Time: 7:15 am to 8:30 am

Location: Acacia Ballroom

Sponsored by: UNLV Indian Nations Gaming & Governance Program

Opening Ceremonies

Time: 8:30 am to 8:45 am

Location: Showroom

Opening Prayer by William Lowe – National Council Representative, Muscogee Nation

Tribal Leadership Council Welcome

Tribal Presentation

Time: 8:45 am to 9:00 am

Location: Showroom

General Session

The Digital Gaming Ecosystem: Opportunities and Risks for Tribal Nations

Time: 9:00 am to 10:00 am

Location: Showroom

Moderator: Valerie Spicer – President, Trilogy Group

Speakers: Anna Bruty, JD – Partner, Peebles Bergin

Missy Stanisz – Senior Director of Product, IGT

Richard Sagman – SVP Product Management, IGT

Break

Time: 10:00 am to 10:30 am

Sponsored by: Authhive, Inc

Certifications/Workshops

Time: 10:00 am to 11:30 am

Tribal Administration Certification: Part I

Location: Cholla

Presenters: Ernest Vargas Jr., TGP – Founding Director, KOSO Strategies
Armida Vargas, MA, TGP, SHRM-CP, PHR – Founding Director, KOSO Strategies

Breakout Sessions

Time: 10:30 am to 11:30 am

Building for the Future: Strategic Planning, Structure, and Sustainability

Location: Showroom

Moderator: Michael Kim – Managing Partner, GGHM

Speakers: Erica Pinto – Chairwoman, Jamul Indian Village of California
Ernest Vargas, Jr., TGP – Founding Director, KOSO Strategies
Steven Orihuela, MBA – Board Member, Tribal Leadership Council
Douglas Paget – Tribal Nations Executive Team Leader, Euna Solutions

Overcoming Challenges in Leadership: A Year in Review

Location: Palo Verde A

Moderator: James Siva – Vice Chairman, Morongo Band of Mission Indians

Speakers: Isaiah Vivanco – Chairman, Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians
Marcy LaFerr – Treasurer, Tribal Leadership Council
Prez Redeye – Board Member, Tribal Leadership Council

Strategic Investment of Third-Party Fund Balances to Prepare for IHS Funding Cuts

Location: Palo Verde B

Moderator: Justin Lepscier, MBA – Lead Institutional Advisor, KeyBank

Speakers: Joseph Blanchard – Treasurer, Absentee Shawnee Tribe
Billy Nicholson – CFO, The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
Danica Zawieja – Corporate Counsel, Indigenous Pact

Managing Data Center Opportunities by Optimizing Water, Energy, and Natural Resources

Location: Palo Verde C

Moderators: Kelly Gomez – Client Relations, Carollo Engineers
Stephanie Moreno – Tribal Affairs, South 32

Speakers: Elijah Baca – CEO, Santa Clara Development Corporation
Dave Sobeck – Executive Director & Board Member, Carollo Engineers
Simon Charter – External Affairs Manager, South 32
Chase Velasquez – Director of Economic Development & Native Partnerships, Willmeng

Lunch

Time: 11:30 am to 1:00 pm

Location: Acacia Ballroom

Sponsored by: Aambe and Marsh

Keynote**The Power of Development**

Time: 1:00 pm to 1:30 pm

Location: Showroom

Speaker: Paula Allen – Owner & CEO, Allen Academy

Break

Time: 1:30 pm to 1:45 pm

Breakout Sessions

Time: 1:45 pm to 2:45 pm

Preparing Tribal Youth and Emerging Leaders for Executive Roles

Location: Showroom

Moderator: Justin Barrett, TMP, TGP – President, Tribal Leadership Council

Speakers: Marcy LaFerr, TGP – Treasurer, Tribal Leadership Council

Elizabeth Pico Rogers, MBA – FNEDCO Treasurer, Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians

Caleb Grimmatt-Smith – Secretary, United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians

Unlocking Economic Opportunity: Foreign Trade Zones for Tribal Nations

Location: Palo Verde A

Moderator: Anna Bruty, JD – Partner, Peebles Bergin

Speakers: Cindy Smith – Tribal Secretary, Enterprise Rancheria

Bennae Calac – President, Onoo Po Strategies

Vedrana Milakovic, MBA, CCS, CES, CZS – Director of Planning & Economic Development, Citizen Potawatomi Nation

Developing a Tribal Workforce

Location: Palo Verde B

Moderator: John David Gooden, CLCS – Business Insurance Consultant, Marsh

Speakers: Anne Defot-Sido, MBA – CEO, Makwa Global

Mauricia J. Chavarria, MBA, TMP – Board Member, Santa Clara Development Corporation

Certifications/Workshops

Time: 1:45 pm to 2:45 pm

From Vision to Facility: A Blueprint for Planning and Financing Tribal Health Infrastructure: Part I

Location: Palo Verde C

Presenters: Caitlin Caldwell – Director, KeyBanc Capital Markets
Ming Lam – Managing Director, KeyBanc Capital Markets
Dr. Kurt Tamaru – Chief Medical Officer, Indigenous Pact
Brook Herbel – Principal Advisor, Indigenous Pact

Tribal Administration Certification: Part II

Location: Cholla

Presenters: Ernest Vargas Jr., TGP – Founding Director, KOSO Strategies
Armida Vargas, MA, TGP, SHRM-CP, PHR – Founding Director, KOSO Strategies

Break

Time: 2:45 pm to 3:15 pm

Breakout Sessions

Time: 3:15 pm to 4:30 pm

Women in Leadership & Finance

Location: Showroom

Moderator: Geneva Mojado – Vice Chairwoman, Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians
Speakers: Cyndi Lemke – Business Development Officer, Legacy Bank
Elizabeth Pico Rogers, MBA – FNEDCO Treasurer, Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians
Antoinette Del Rio – Chairwoman, California Valley Miwok Tribe

Marquee Value: Turning Entertainment into Your Brand's Most Powerful Acquisition & Loyalty Engine

Location: Palo Verde A

Moderator: Kara Fox-LaRose – President & General Manager, ilani

Speakers: Michael Guinan – Principal, 360 Marketing & Events

Thomas O'Sullivan – Regional Director of Marketing, Choctaw Casinos & Resorts
Adam Goldberg – CEO, Rock & Brews

Cultural Tourism

Location: Palo Verde B

Moderator: Jesse Downs, MPA – CEO, Cowlitz Economic Authority & Board Member, Tribal Leadership Council

Speakers: Todd Howell, CPA – CEO, Grand Canyon Resort Corporation
Longfeather Fox – Operations Manager – Tourism Professional, Grand Canyon West – Hualapai Tribe
William Lowe, MBA – National Council Representative, Muscogee Nation

Developing Tribal Constitutions

Location: Cholla

Speakers: Dr. Crystal Miller – CEO, Sovereignty First Native Consulting Firm
Robert Miller, JD – Professor, ASU College of Law

Certifications/Workshops

Time: 3:15 pm to 4:30 pm

From Vision to Facility: A Blueprint for Planning and Financing Tribal Health Infrastructure: Part II

Location: Palo Verde C

Presenters: Caitlin Caldwell – Director, KeyBanc Capital Markets
Ming Lam – Managing Director, KeyBanc Capital Markets
Dr. Kurt Tamaru – Chief Medical Officer, Indigenous Pact
Brook Herbel – Principal Advisor, Indigenous Pact

EDC Networking Mixer (badges required)

Time: 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM

Location: Night Cap Lounge (2nd Floor of the Hotel Lobby)

Sponsored by: Aambe Media

WEDNESDAY JUNE 3, 2026

Registration

Time: 7:30 am

Location: Acacia Foyer

Breakfast

Time: 7:30 am to 8:45 am

Location: Acacia Ballroom

Sponsored by: FS Advisors

Certifications/Workshops

Time: 8:30 am to 10:00 am

Tribal Administration Certification: Part III

Location: Cholla

Presenters: Ernest Vargas Jr., TGP – Founding Director, KOSO Strategies
Armida Vargas, MA, TGP, SHRM-CP, PHR – Founding Director, KOSO
Strategies

General Session

Sovereign Advantage: Expanding Tribal Enterprise Contracting Beyond the Federal Marketplace

Location: Showroom

Time: 9:00 am to 10:00 am

Moderator: Marcus Stevens, CPA – Senior Vice President, Marsh

Speakers: Judy Reagan – COO, Eastern Shawnee Companies
Michael Mitchell, TGP – Chief Tribal Liaison Officer, Chickasaw Nation
Industries

Break

Time: 10:00 am to 10:30 am

Sponsored by: Willmeng

Certifications/Workshops

Time: 10:15 am to 11:45 am

Tribal Administration Certification: Part IV

Location: Cholla

Presenters: Ernest Vargas Jr., TGP – Founding Director, KOSO Strategies
Armida Vargas, MA, TGP, SHRM-CP, PHR – Founding Director, KOSO
Strategies

Breakout Sessions

Time: 10:30 am to 11:30 am

Modern Tools to Empower Leadership – Data Visualization, Dashboarding, and Asset Management

Location: Showroom

Moderator: Michael Kim – Managing Partner, GGHM

Speakers: Dr. Eric Trevan – President & CEO, aLocal.ai
Kara Fox-LaRose – President & General Manager, ilani
Tom Thorton – Principal, Technology Solutions, REDW

Sacred Waters: Tribal Water Rights and the Fight for Sovereignty and Sustainability

Location: Palo Verde A

Moderator: Danielle Finn, JD – Professor & Director of the Indian Nations Gaming and Governance Program, University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) William S. Boyd School of Law

Speakers: Anecita Agustinez – Executive Director, Office of Tribal Affairs, California Department Water Resources
Steven Orihuela, MBA – Board Member, Tribal Leadership Council
Tanya Lewis – Former Chairwoman, Yavapai-Apache Nation

Successful Tribal Cannabis Operations

Location: Palo Verde B

Moderator: Prez Redeye – Board Member, Tribal Leadership Council

Speakers: Seth Pearman, JD – Partner, Peebles Bergin
Brian Wandal, CPA – Audit Senior Manager, REDW
Dr. Alex Wesaw – Treasurer, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi

Two Paths, One Purpose: Tribal Growth Through Partnership

Location: Palo Verde C

Moderator: Marcus Diaz – Director of Organizational Development, Casino Del Sol

Speakers: Sylvia Lopez-Zurflueh – Director of Tribal Development, Casino Del Sol
Dena Parvello – Tribal Outreach & Development Coordinator, Desert Diamond Casino & Entertainment
Abyzinnia A. Bell – Director of Tribal Members Development & Advocacy, Desert Diamond Casino & Entertainment

Where Sovereignty Meets the Workplace: Law, Policy, People, and Practice

Location: Agave

Speakers: Dr. Crystal Miller – CEO, Sovereignty First Native Consulting Firm
Taryn Reynolds, MSL, THRP II – Senior Human Resources Consultant, REDW

Lunch

Time: 11:30 am to 1:00 pm
Location: Acacia Ballroom
Sponsored by: Tribal Grant Writing

General Session

Time: 1:00 pm to 1:45 pm

Leading with Purpose: Building Strong Leaders, Strong Teams, and a Lasting Legacy

Location: Showroom
Speaker: Cindy Rowe

Break

Time: 1:45 pm to 2:15 pm

Breakout Sessions

2:15 pm to 3:15 pm

Developing Tribal Economies and Tribal Business Structures

Location: Showroom
Moderator: Justin Barrett, TMP, TGP – President, Tribal Leadership Council
Speakers: Dr. Eric Trevan – President & CEO, aLocal.ai
Leslie Jerden – CEO, Teton Trade Cloth by Lenape
Michael Kim – Managing Partner, GGHM
Ryan Lolar, JD, MBA – Attorney, Drummond Woodsum

Leading with Equity: Establishing Fair Compensation Frameworks for Elected Officials and Enterprise Board of Directors

Location: Palo Verde A
Moderator: Judith Wright – President, National Native American Human Resources Association
Speakers: William Lowe, MBA – National Council Representative, Muscogee Nation
Rachel Overmier, SHRM-SCP, CCP – Compensation Consulting Manager, REDW
Jason Carrizosa, MBA – Chief Administrative Officer, Morongo Band of Mission Indians

Karla Bylund, MS, SHRM-SCP – Principal, Tribal HR Support, REDW

Redefining Tribal Funding: Insights from the Experts

Location: Palo Verde B

Moderator: Mauricia J. Chavarria, MBA, TMP – Board Member, Tribal Leadership Council

Speakers: Jeremy Zahn – Founder & CEO, Tribal Grant Writing
Onawa L. Haynes – Founder & CEO, Tribal Funding Registry

Breaking Ground: A Tribal Leader's Guide to Managing Construction Projects from Vision to Ribbon Cutting

Location: Palo Verde C

Moderator: Kari McCormick – Director of Client Services, Native American, Willmeng

Speakers: Eric Shepherd – Market Leader, Native American, Willmeng
Brock Eubanks – Managing Partner, Connect Advisors
Michael Carter – Vice President Client Relations, TBE Architects

Certifications/Workshops

Time: 2:15 pm to 3:15 pm

Micro-credential – AI for Tribal Leadership: Part I

Location: Agave

Presenter: Dr. Matthew Yates – Tribal Services Coordinator, College of the Muscogee Nation

Empowering Leadership Through Development Programs: Part I

Location: Cholla

Presenter: Dr. Sabrina Renteria – Partner, FSA Advisory Group

Break

Time: 3:15 pm to 3:30 pm

Breakout Sessions

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

From Candidate to Councilor: Navigating the First 100 Days

Location: Showroom

Moderator: David Sullivan, MPA, TGP – Chairman, Kiowa Tribe

Speakers: Dustin Klatush – Chairman, Chehalis Tribe
Christian Reiller – Tribal Councilor, Seneca Nation of Indians

Caleb Grimmatt-Smith – Secretary, United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians

Protecting Tribal Sovereignty in the Digital Age: Why Your Cyber Plan Matters Now

Location: Palo Verde A

Moderator: Jerad Swimmer – Regional Sales Director, Continent 8 Technologies

Speakers: Craig Johanns – Global VP of Sales, Autnhive
Robin Villareal – Chief Information Officer, Gila River Resorts & Casinos
Preston Soke – Cybersecurity Manager, Gila River Indian Community

Enterprises – Building Beyond

Location: Palo Verde B

Moderator: Nicole Johnny, MBA – Founder & CEO, 1st Sovereign Capital

Speakers: Eugenia Charles-Newton, JD – Council Delegate, 25th Navajo Nation Council
Marcus Benally, MBA – CAAS Senior Manager, REDW & Board Manager, Quivera Enterprises
Kristina Haskell – CEO, Avalon Accounting

Building the Foundation: Strategic Infrastructure Planning for Tribal Economic Growth

Location: Palo Verde C

Moderator: Edith Baker – Partner, Swift Creek

Speakers: Amber Williams, MS – Founder & CEO, Circa81 Design
Michael Stopp – Partner, Swift Creek
Johnie Johnson – Co-Founder & CEO, coreNOC
Zechariah Harjo, MLS – Secretary of the Nation, Muscogee Nation

Certifications/Workshops

Time: 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Micro-credential – AI for Tribal Leadership: Part II

Location: Agave

Presenter: Dr. Matthew Yates – Tribal Services Coordinator, College of the Muscogee Nation

Empowering Leadership Through Development Programs: Part II

Location: Cholla

Presenter: Dr. Sabrina Renteria – Partner, FSA Advisory Group

Awards Reception (Badges Required)

Time: 8:00 PM to 11:00 PM

Location: Showroom

Reception Sponsored by: Muscogee Nation
Awards Sponsored by: Global Medical Response

THURSDAY JUNE 4, 2026

Breakfast

Time: 7:30 am to 8:45 am
Location: Acacia Ballroom
Sponsored by: Synergy Information Solutions

General Sessions

How AI Integration is Affecting Tribal Governments and Their Business Enterprises

Time: 9:00 am to 9:45 am
Location: Palo Verde A
Moderator: Jonathan Eaton – CEO, Synergy Information Solutions
Speakers: Patrick Tinklenberg – VP of IT, Sycuan Casino
Danielle Finn, JD – Professor & Director of the Indian Nations Gaming and Governance Program, University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) William. S Boyd School of Law
Titu Asghar – CEO, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe

We Were Never Waiting on Washington: The Rise of Native-Lead Nonprofits in an Era of Federal Retreat

Time: 9:45 am to 10:30 am
Location: Palo Verde A
Moderator: Jacquie Van Huss – Director of Strategic Growth, Native Services, Boys & Girls Clubs of America
Speakers: Carly Griffith Hotvedt, JD, MPA – Executive Director, Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative
Danielle Finn, JD – Board of Directors, Cheyenne River Youth Project & Board of Directors, American Indigenous Business Leaders
Tasha Mousseau, JD – Vice President, Wichita and Affiliated Tribes

Break

Time: 10:30 am to 11:00 am

Breakout Sessions

Time: 11:00 am to 11:45 am

Funding the Future: How Tribes Can Leverage Venture Capital on Their Own Terms

Location: Palo Verde A

Moderator: Nicole Johnny, MBA – Founder & CEO, 1st Sovereign Capital

Speakers: Richard Ciesco, MS – Managing Partner, Aambe Ventures

Jerry Yen, MS – Managing Partner, Aambe Ventures

Delmar Blackhorse, MBA – Chairman, Naat'aanii Development Corporation

Establishing Endowments

Location: Palo Verde B

Speakers: Skyler Erbin, CAIA, CFP – Director of Portfolio Solutions, FSA Investment Group

Robert Elzholz, CFP, AIF – Senior Vice President, Institutional Wealth, BOK Financial

Lunch

Time: 11:45 am to 1:00 pm

Location: Acacia Ballroom

Sponsored by: Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians/Legacy Bank

Breakout Sessions

Time: 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm

Capital: Investing in Ourselves

Location: Palo Verde A

Speaker: Nicole Johnny, MBA – Founder & CEO, 1st Sovereign Capital

New Rules, New Revenue: Navigating Energy Tax Credit in Indian Country

Location: Palo Verde B

Moderator: Todd Halvorsen – VP, Energy Finance & Structuring, Alliance for Tribal Clean Energy

Speakers: Daniel Hunter – Director of Business Development, Willmeng

Doug Kolker – Partner, Wipfli

Break

Time: 2:00 pm to 2:15 pm

Breakout Sessions

Time: 2:15 pm to 3:15 pm

Sacred Ground Under Siege: Defending Cultural Resources in an Era of Rollbacks

Location: Palo Verde A

Moderator: Thomas Lozano – Treasurer, Enterprise Rancheria

Speakers: A. Joseph Sarcinella, JD – Attorney, Drummond Woodsum
Stewart Koyiyumptewa – Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, The Hopi Tribe

Developing Tribal Philanthropy and Charitable Giving Programs

Location: Palo Verde B

Moderator: Natori Naylor – Operations Coordinator, Tribal Leadership Council

Speakers: Cindy Smith – Tribal Secretary, Enterprise Rancheria
Crystal Chalk – Tribal Council Member, Enterprise Rancheria
Stephanie Hicks – Director of Philanthropy, Yurok Tribe | Yurok Tribal Fund

Break

Time: 3:15 pm to 3:30 pm

General Session

Time: 3:30 pm to 4:15 pm

Aligned Leadership: Systems that Strengthen Sovereignty

Location: Palo Verde A

Speaker: Paula Allen – Owner & CEO, Allen Academy

Closing Ceremonies

Time: 4:15 pm to 4:30 pm

Location: Palo Verde A

Closing Reception

Time: 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM

Location: Acacia Ballroom

Sponsored by: KOSO Strategies and Wipfli