

Gila River Indian Community Case Study 2013

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Summary: In this Case study that I have been working on the entire autumn quarter I will discuss the Economics, Political and Legal Issues, and culture that have faced or currently face the Gila River Indian Community and casinos today.

Economics

Background:

The Gila River Indian Community has an above par Economic situation for their tribe and Casino. The most successful Casino that Gila River Indian Community runs and operates is the Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Hotel and Casino. The Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Hotel and Resort is located in Chandler, Arizona. This hotel and casino has many different revenue streams within it to help create economic growth and sustainability for the Gila River Indian Tribe. Some of these different revenue streams that are in the casino are slot machines, poker, and blackjack. Another stream of revenue within the hotel and casino is their entertainment package. Which includes a showroom, lounge, and many different café and bars throughout the hotel. The Gila River Indian Community also supports movements and groups that support giving back, re-connecting, and re-uniting land of indigenous people. The Gila River Indians choose to give back to their communities and tribal members to help improve life, community buildings, surrounding areas, and other non-profit organization that benefits all people in the area's around Gila river Indian Community. While the Gila River Indian Community love to give back and help their own people they also are trying to make substantial gains in diversifying assets to increase revenues. Areas that the Gila River Indian people have taken a notice to and have started diversifying is in industrially, agriculturally, retail and recreational as well.

Findings:

My findings of the Gila River Indian Community are nothing short than what I expected. I found that Gila River Indian's casinos are all doing good and are not only sustaining themselves but making profit and sustaining communities, building improvements, outreach programs, and donating to local charities surrounding their tribe and casino area. The Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Hotel and Casino is located in Chandler, Arizona this facility was opened in 2009 and cost to build a little over 200 million dollars. After being built the Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Hotel and Casino became the biggest hotel and casino in the State of Arizona boasting a ten-story building with a 1,400-seat showroom to go along with the casino, bar/lounge, and cafes. The use of Revenue the tribe uses from the Casino goes to a multitude of areas for the tribe. For example earlier this year in November the Gila River Indian Community donated 168,000 dollars of gaming revenue to three distinct areas that help their community grow. The recipients of this money were Against Abuse who was given 100,000 dollars, The Casa Grande Valley Historical Society 15,000 dollars, and the city of Casa Grande for housing rehabilitation received 38,000 dollars. These revenues from diversified assets also have gone into building community buildings such as upgrading their tribal Government buildings into state of the art facilities. In 2011, all of the tribes contributed 22.6 million dollars to the state of Arizona to help fund and improve education, tourism, wildlife services, local emergency rooms, and hospitals. The Gila River Indian people are very business savvy

and have learned early in that the smartest thing to do is diversify your assets. They have multiple business including their own casinos, electric, water, gravel, restaurants, lounges, and bars.

Conclusion:

The Gila River Indian Community is a very unique tribal community. Throughout my researched I have found that this particular tribe loves to give back. They love to give back because they love their people they truly care about there people. They given hundreds of thousands of dollars to charities and organizations they feel help their community and communities surrounding them. I have also learned through this research that Gila River people are very intelligent business people themselves. They have many different areas that they collect revenue the casino obviously being the biggest one. The fact they have other business's on and off of tribal land speaks to their continuous effort to build self-reliance and self-sustainability. All the things that I have stated in my findings only help support my belief that the Gila River Indian Community is in great shape growing as a people, revenue will continue to increase, and their future is very bright.

Political and Legal Issues:

Background:

The Gila River Indian people have not been known to cause problems with the United States government. But do not get that confused with the Gila River Indian people not doing anything at all. The Gila River Indian people are truly invested in their lands through agriculture such as farming which is one of their most profitable business for them behind Casino's. The state of Arizona has a compact with all tribes for them to share their gaming revenue with the state. The state also has a strict set of guidelines that require the Indian Tribes in Arizona to follow on how they decide to distribute to their revenue after shared with the state. The state also allows the Gila River Indian people to have their own tax on non-tribal merchandise sold on their reservations or allotted land. Gila River Indian people are extremely peaceful for the most part. The state of Arizona also requires you have a gaming license. This is not unusual at all due to the fact that no matter where you go in the United States you must have a gaming license to legally own and operate a casino. The overall background of the Gila River Indian community when it comes to legal and policy issues, they just want to be treated fairly and given what they feel is theirs. They also feel that the state should be more environmental friendly and have tried to join groups and organizations to help push their ideas of a healthier world on to their states legislative desk.

Findings:

My findings of the Gila River Indian Community are not much different than what I expected to find when it came to policy and legal issues. What I found as I stated earlier in the background is the Gila River Indian people just want to be treated fairly and right. For example the State of Arizona were taking a large amount of their water from their reservations. Obviously that is problem because water is the most essential resource to human life. These aggressions against the Gila River Indian people by the state would not go unnoticed. This eventually landed up in court and was said by Assistant secretary Artmen “This is the biggest water settlement acts in the history in the United States of America. This settlement was due to the Gila people’s river the drying up. Now knowing they are a very strong agricultural community the loss of this river caused poverty throughout the reservations and a extremely harder life for the people that lived in the reservation. This water settlement assured the Gila River Indian people a allocated amount of water for them and another tribe at all times. My findings on regarding the use of revenues by the Gila River Indian Community were good to see. I found that they have serious investment in their people’s health care and education. The state requires they break the revenue into five separate categories, these categories being healthcare (45%), education (19%), public safety (17%), Economic Development (18%), Transportation (1%). An interesting piece of information that I found was tribal sales tax on Indian land. Earlier this year in April there was a large amount of newly opened outlet malls near Phoenix. What is so interesting about these premium outlet malls is that they happened to

be made and ran on tribal land. This is where it begins to get tricky for consumers because there were reports of some days with 8.8% sales tax and others days with 13.8% sales tax. Obviously as A consumer you would be worried why you are getting taxed at different rates at different stores on different days. It actually comes down to the federal government having the power to have retail sales tax on Indian land. Adding on to the federal government sales tax the Indian tribal sales tax can be included to which is six percent.

Conclusion:

The Gila River Indian Community is a very tight knit community. What I have found throughout my research is that they truly care about there people. It is evident throughout my research not just in the political and legal issues but it can be traced back all the way to economics. One example of the Gila River Indians taking their legal issues serious is the water act settlement I said earlier. The state of Arizona and the government of that state were unfairly taking the water from where the Gila River Indians lived which eventually caused poverty. When poverty occurs crime will go up as well, healthcare, and education will go down. Water may not seem like a serious policy or legal issue but it is because it is the basis of all life. When you strip that from any creature on this earth you are drastically decreasing its ability to live a good solid life. The Gila River Indian legal team did a phenomenal job showing the state what they were doing to there people. Because they did such a good job they were able to get a allocated amount of water for their people and only their people at all times. Another interesting fact I found was that

Gila River Indian Community is required to give 45% of revenue back into healthcare. This really shows how important the Gila River people view their elders, and young children. I say these specific groups because these are the groups most likely to use the healthcare system. This definitely shows a respect for the elders in their community and a certain amount of protection over the young Gila River people so they can continue to keep having generations of their people in the area. Overall what I have encountered with the Gila River people is that they don't want special treatment or anything of that nature. They just wanted to be treated fairly and right. When I say right I mean they have their entitled lands that their ancestors had as well not poisoning the water, air, or dirt that they live off of and feed their community with. The Gila River Indian Community has never been the offensive of the United States nor do I see that in the future, they just want their natural land, clean, healthy, and their people happy.

Culture:

Background:

The Gila River Indian Community was established in 1859 and was formally established by congress in 1939. The Gila River Community is located in the northwestern Pinal County, Arizona the Phoenix Metropolitan Area is located just a bit north of the reservation. This Reservation has 583.749 sq. miles an population just a little over 11,000. Their number one source of revenue for is Wild Horse Pass Hotel& Casino. This Hotel does a great job of incorporating Gila River culture into their hotel in many different aspects. The Wild Horse Pass Hotel& Casino is the largest casino in the state of Arizona, it is also was built in 2009 and cost over 200 million dollars. The Gila River people do not strongly associate themselves with the casino. In fact if you are in the Casino you won't be able to find anything with the Gila River logo or any sign saying this Casino is owned and ran by the Gila River Indian people. Wild Horse Pass Hotel & Resort does not really do a good job balancing the heritage of the Gila River Indian people within the hotel or Casino.

Findings:

My findings for the Gila River Indian Community are very interesting and somewhat surprising to me. What I found that there is not much really any inter-tribal conflict with the casino. The way the Gila River Indian people avoid this issues is to keep business and the tribe as spate as possible. If you step into any of their tribal owned casino's you will see very little most likely no symbols affiliating them back to their tribe. This helps I think the business aspect of their casinos because it strictly focuses on

the consumer gambling and continue to gamble. It keeps the consumer away from looking at history of their people and getting distracted from gambling. Like I stated before the culture doesn't affect the Indian gaming at all. If anything it sort of hurts the Gila River Indian communities gaming opportunities. This hurts their gaming opportunities because while they are making money from gambling games they could be making more if they included culture into their gaming. This would ensure not only the regular gambler would keep coming to their casino and spending money but it would also mean that they could collect serious tourism consumers with their culture. The key in my findings for the Gila River Indian Community is there ability to maintain and communicate native American cultures still in the present day. Their people still do ancestral ceremonies; still do pow wow's and many other things. The importance to the survival of their culture and people desperately depends on the current Gila River Indians to keep there people thriving and communicating and maintaining their culture, practices as native Americans. This is where in my findings I found that the Gila River Indian community fell short with balancing heritage vs. operating in the 21st century. Not saying it is easy to balance these both but I found that Gila River Indian Community is losing or sacrificing some of their heritage to run a 21st century business. The pro to sacrificing a little heritage to run this casino is that they are doing extremely well in revenue and in return their people are healthier, happier, and smarter. There is no substitute for that.

Conclusions:

My overall conclusion of the culture of the Gila River Indian Community is that their culture is slowly drifting away. Their heritage has been put down for the gain of money. I believe that the Gila River Indian people need to come together soon and figure what they want for their community culturally in the future. The most important aspect of native Americans is their tradition and heritage I am afraid after all my research has been done I fear that the Gila River Indians are losing but are gaining substantial amount of revenue. I would hate to be in this dilemma between choosing heritage or financial gain the Gila River community has tough choices hanging in the balance in the ever approaching future.

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