



CARETAKERS OF THE LAND: A STORY OF FARMING AND COMMUNITY IN SAN XAVIER

BY JACELLE RAMON-SAUBERAN

EARLY LIFE OF O'ODHAM

- ❖ O'odham were river people, seminomadic and hunter/gatherers.
- ❖ All had to do with the terrain/land.
- ❖ In San Xavier we were considered river people (Akimel O'odham) since we lived by the Santa Cruz River (Ali Akimel) and we have been farming for time immemorial.
- ❖ Eastern end of Main Reservation: Seminomadic. O'odham generally spent summers in their "field villages" in the desert near water. Then during winter they would stay in "well villages," by mountain springs.
- ❖ Further West: Hunters and Gatherers.



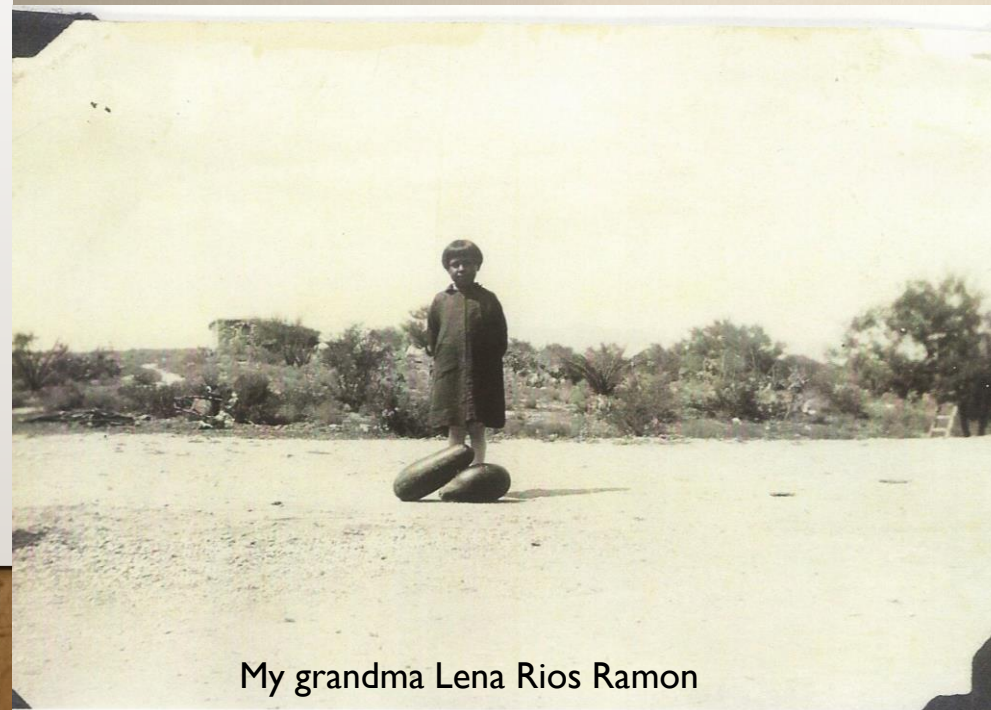
My great-great grandmother Martina Arnita



My great grandparents Frank & Anselma Rios with my grandma and her siblings



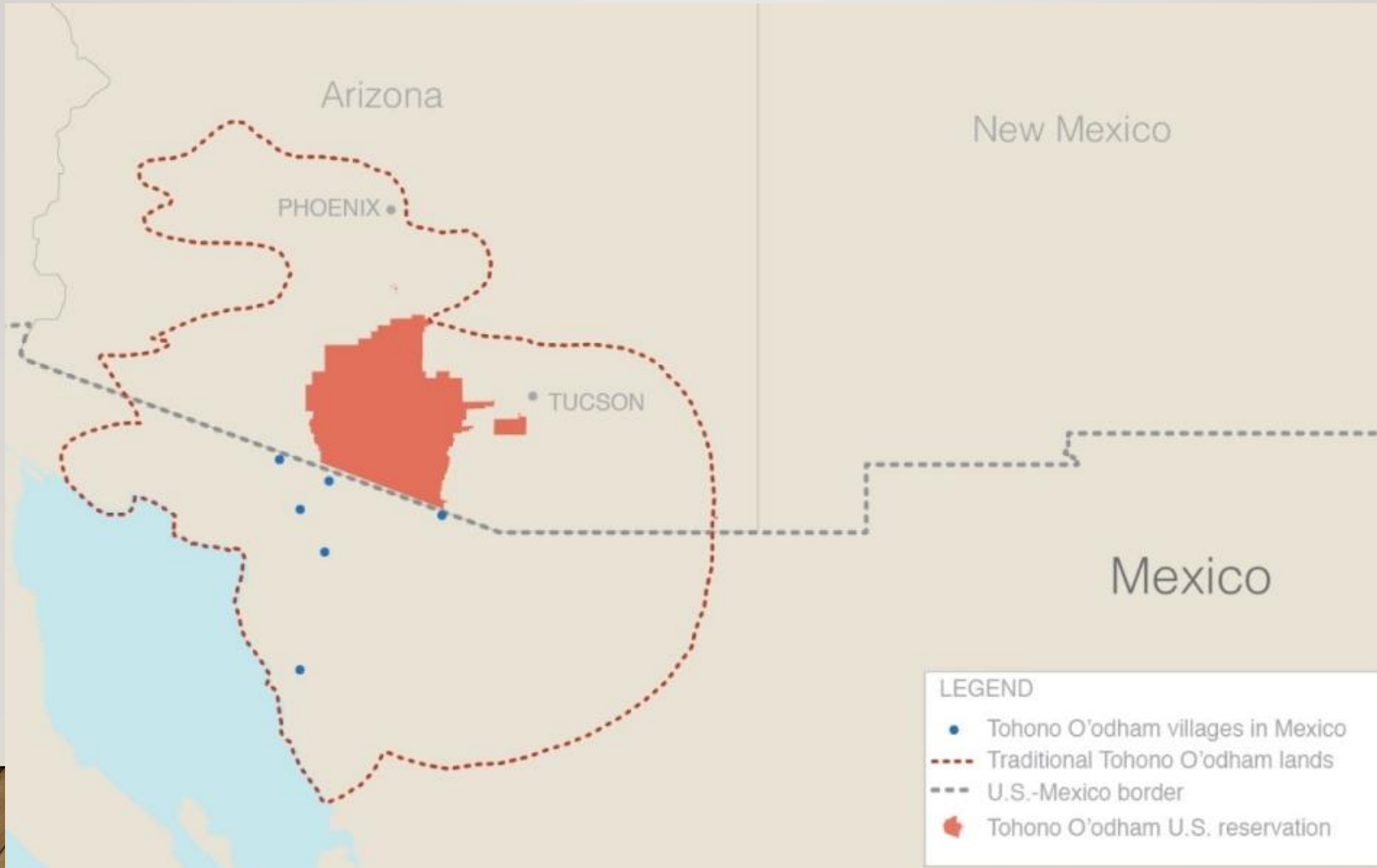
A Tohono O'odham farmer, Frank Rios (center) of San Xavier, discusses the methods he used in raising a profitable and healthy yield of Acala cotton with his neighbors. In an effort to establish an efficient and productive agricultural economy, both farmers and federal authorities monitored farm fields. Crops were tracked to determine successes or failures under different soil conditions, water needs, and amendments. (AHS C. B. Brown report.)



My grandma Lena Rios Ramon

ANCESTRAL LANDS OF THE O'ODHAM

- ❖ Pre-contact, O'odham inhabited an enormous area of land in the southwest, extending South to Sonora, Mexico, north to Central Arizona, west to the Gulf of California, and east to the San Pedro River.



DISSERTATION RESEARCH

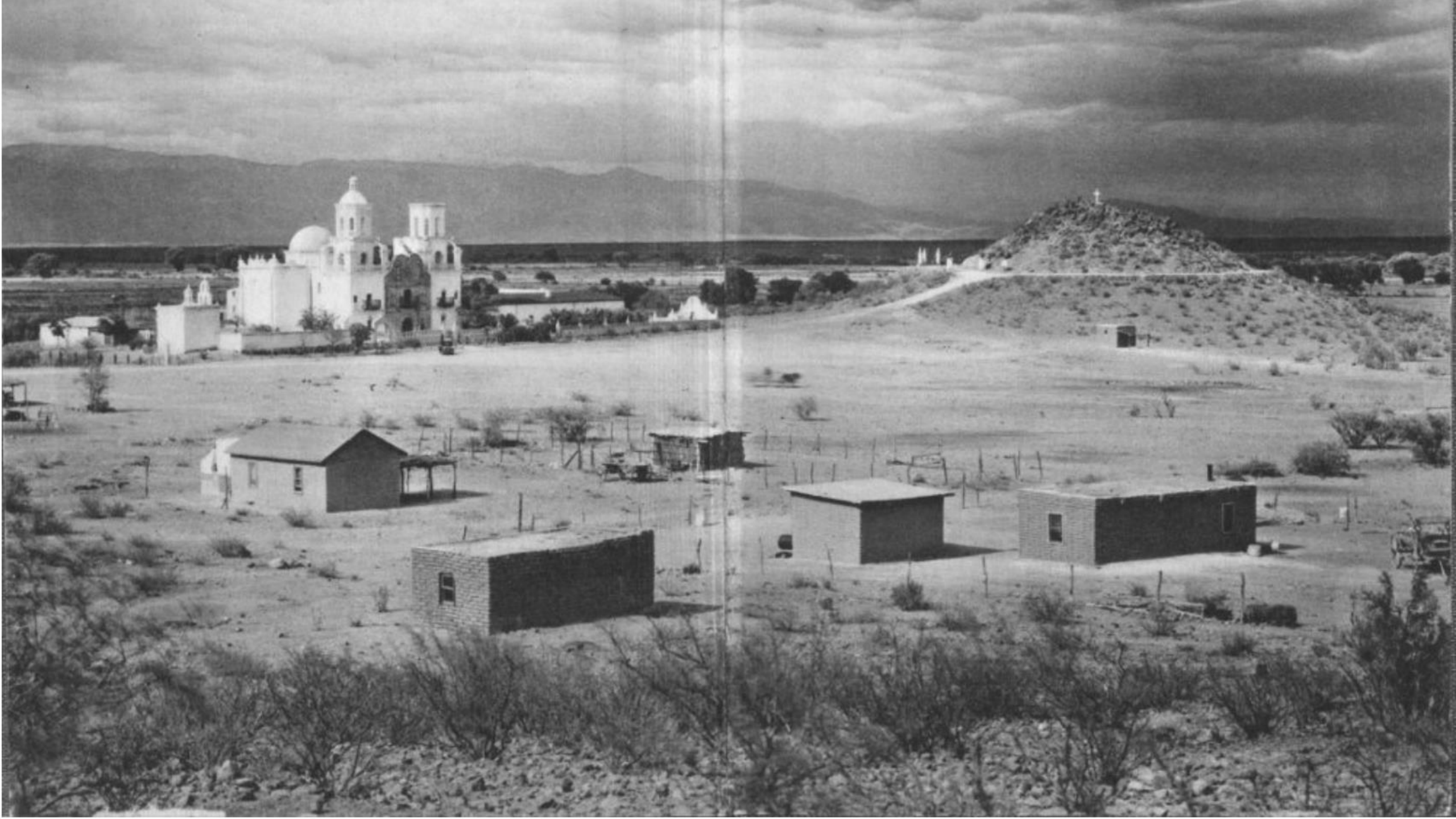
- ❖ **Dissertation research begins with allotment then explores the following times/eras within San Xavier history:**
 - San Xavier Cooperative Farm
 - Southern Arizona Water Rights Settlement Act (SAWRSA)
 - Defenders of O'odham Land Rights
 - San Xavier Allottees Association Inc.
- ❖ **The idea of my dissertation research topic began with my Auntie Julie and conversations we had.**
- ❖ **My dissertation is going to be a living document to be shared with my district, tribe and others to help educate.**
- ❖ **Structure of my dissertation is community-based research:** In the past, academic research within Indigenous communities have used little to no input from members of the community being studied and their research is published in the perspective of the researcher (outsider). Community-based research brings communities together and the participants work with the researcher to answer research questions. Participants will also help design the research, share knowledge with other community members, and contribute their knowledge to produce results that are beneficial to the community.

ALLOTMENT ERA 1887-1934

- ❖ In 1887, the General Allotment Act also known as the Dawes Act was created. The purpose of the act was to give each Native American person a piece of land of 40, 60, 80 or 160 acres, so they could farm, ranch or harvest timber on the lands.
- ❖ The U.S. Government believed that if Native Americans were given individual plots of land to harvest on, they would do well and become assimilated into American culture as middle-class farmers. O'odham in San Xavier were farmers already. This Act was the direct responsible for the loss of 90 million acres of Native American lands.
- ❖ In 1890, the San Xavier Indian Reservation lands were allotted.
- ❖ There were 292 allotments, which total 41,000 acres at that time.
- ❖ When Federal Government assigned allotments, you did not have to be from San Xavier. Allotments were given to any O'odham in San Xavier at that time.
- ❖ Currently, there are 1,800 allottees/landowners that have interest in these allotments.
- ❖ Allotments are passed from one generation to the next. Thus, land interests becomes fractionated, meaning that their ownership can be very small percentage.
- ❖ Following Allotment there was the Reorganization Era 1934-1953, ending allotment and when tribal governments were first established. Peter Blaine Sr. was the man at the forefront of this and helped create the first constitution for O'odham.



*San Xavier del Bac Mission around 1900.
(Photo credit: Arizona Historical Society)*



WATER ISSUES

- ❖ As noted, throughout time families in San Xavier farmed the land and they used an intricate canal system to irrigate fields designed by their ancestors the Huhugam (Erickson, 1994; Blaine, 1980; Ramon-Pierson, 2015).
- ❖ Also, the Santa Cruz River, was right at their backdoor and was the only place on the Tohono O’odham Nation where irrigation agriculture was possible (San Xavier Coop Farm website).
- ❖ Unfortunately, the water in the Santa Cruz River was taken and used up by settler colonial authorities such as the City of Tucson. This caused O’odham farming to become a thing of the past.
- ❖ O’odham did not want the traditional ecological knowledge of their people to die out. Plus the allotment era had introduced individualism to San Xavier, but O’odham had always been relational.
- ❖ In 1971, a group of Allottee members got together in San Xavier and “formed a cooperative of landowners in order to piece some of the lands back together and find a way to farm it as a whole,” (San Xavier Coop Farm website).



This picture taken on the San Xavier Reservation in April 1973 features a Tohono O’odham man irrigating fields for the local Tribal Farm Co-op.



ALLIANCE NO.	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	AREA IRRIGATED
1	Antonio Flores	June 17, 1890	36.0 ✓
4	Jose Dominguez	1893	13.0 ✓
5	Francisco Flores	February, 1898	39.6 ✓
9	Francisco Flores	November 4, 1930	19.5 ✓
12	Francisco Flores	May, 1927	19.6 ✓
16	Francisco Flores	about 1898	18.5 ✓
26	Francisco Flores	1910	17.0 ✓
30	Francisco Flores	September 11, 1955	19.0 ✓
37	Francisco Flores	1906	18.0 ✓
44	Francisco Flores	March, 1922	24.0 ✓
56	Francisco Flores	September 11, 1921	44/38.0 ✓
60	Francisco Flores	1930	30.0 ✓
67	Cristobal Corona	September, 1914	20.0 ✓
80	Jose Antonio	February 2, 1918	27.0 ✓
84	Pablo Gonzalez	1918	20.0 ✓
86	Cabino Gomez	about 1899	19.5 ✓
88	Jose Ruiz	March, 1930	18.0 ✓
94	Cristobal Corona	July, 1907	37.0 ✓
97	Schelo-kah-tum Graulin	Oct., 1912	20.0 ✓
101	Pancho Goh-O-geh-ld	1897	29.0 ✓
104	Martin Encinas	February 1930	20.0 ✓
109	Nunes Siembra	1916	32.0 ✓
113	Andres Castillo	Summer 1929	18.0 ✓
117	Luzana Gomez	1903	32.0 ✓
138	Miguel Guasco	February 13, 1939	20.0 ✓
152	Calixto Mayor	1908	28.0 ✓
169	Antonio Merced	1893	8.5 ✓
173	Doctores Garcia	1900	6.4 ✓
177	Gregorio Peralta	10/18/19	20.0 ✓
180	Antonio Berruel	1920	20.0 ✓
185	Francisco Ortega	1896	20.0 ✓
189	Jose Manuel	1920	20.0 ✓
198	Jose Ignacio	March, 1925	19.6 ✓
199	Pablo Solis	March 5, 1924	18.0 ✓
206	Jose Juan Cristobal	About 1895	15.0 ✓
207	Rafael Cristobal	about 1899	18.0 ✓
219	Jose Juan Ortiz	1924	27.5 ✓
224	Jose Antonio Ortiz	1912	10.0 ✓
236	Guillermo	1929	20.0 ✓
239	Roberto Sacanalla	1909	19.8 ✓
243	Antonio Spear	about 1899	18.0 ✓
246	Jose Lobo	1899	16.8 ✓
249	Francisco Nunez	1907	10.0 ✓
252	Jose Rios	February 5, 1920	14.0 ✓
255	Juan Pablo	1903	10.7 ✓
285	Francisco Alvarez	September 23, 1945	18.0 ✓

46 Allotments

San Xavier Cooperative Farm

Present Day



Photos courtesy of San Xavier Cooperative Farm





WATER ISSUES

- ❖ In 1975, the Tohono O'odham pressured the federal government to file suit against agribusiness owners, copper mines, and the city of Tucson, who were draining water from the aquifer beneath the San Xavier District (Ramon-Pierson, 2015). In the end Congress passed the H.R. 5118 - 97th Congress: **Southern Arizona Water Rights Settlement Act (SAWRSA)** in 1982, granting 50,000 acre-feet of water a year to San Xavier through the Central Arizona Project (CAP).
- ❖ This allowed for the farm to be productive for the community again. In 1991, the San Xavier Allottees Association, Inc. (SXAA) was formed to help educate and assist landowners of allotments or allottees on the San Xavier Indian Reservation.
- ❖ The SXAA assists allottees as a group and individually to manage land related concerns including water rights, economic development and environmental protection.
- ❖ In 2004, there were amendments made to SAWRSA.

Water dispute at San Xavier still not settled

Elders recall free-flowing Santa Cruz

By **Eric Volante**
The Arizona Daily Star

Tribal elders Lena Ramon and Sally Estrada were young girls when the Santa Cruz River flowed year-round through the San Xavier Indian Reservation.

Today's Santa Cruz is a bare, eroded scar that carries water through the reservation only during storms.

Half a century ago, the two women recalled last week, families enjoyed the cool shade of huge cottonwood trees and mesquite forests that lined river banks southwest of Tucson.

Women harvested willow branches to weave baskets. They picked wild spinach for salads and other plants for food and medicine. Cattlemen drove livestock to the river to drink.

Before the white man's dams and ground-water pumps strangled the Santa Cruz, they said, a small dam stretched across the shallow river.

It diverted water into ditches to soak the fields where most San Xa-



Sally Estrada, left, and Lena Ramon remember when the Santa Cruz flowed year-round

vier families grew squash, corn, beans and peas.

"And green chile," recalled Ramon, who is nearing 70. "My father used to raise chile. He had a truck and he used to load up many

sacks of green chile and sell them on the other reservations."

The river banks and irrigated fields were so lush that mosquitoes were a problem. People sleeping outdoors on summer nights burned

greasewood to smoke away the bugs.

Men worked day and night — and hand in hand with neighbors — to

See **ELDERS**, Page 4B

Individual tribal landowners continue to push a lawsuit

By **Eric Volante**
The Arizona Daily Star

Tohono O'odham landowners at San Xavier are trying to stop the federal government from dismissing their 15-year-old water-rights lawsuit against the city of Tucson.

If they succeed, the lawsuit could remain a cloud over water rights of the city, mines, farms and other non-Indian water users.

If the landowners fail, dismissal could forever extinguish water claims by more than 700 O'odham landowners, they say.

Most of those O'odham "do not know the details of what has been happening," said tribal member Rosanna Carlyle. "They do not know that the tribe and the United States are trying to dismiss the lawsuit."

Carlyle and several other San Xavier landowners commented during interviews last week and in sworn statements filed last month in U.S. District Court.

Court documents show more than 400 O'odham — many of them impoverished and lacking formal education — recently signed petitions objecting to dismissal of the complex federal case.

Their rights to pieces of the res-

ervation, known as allotments, date to the late 1800s, when the federal government assigned parcels to Indian families on reservations across the country, ostensibly to encourage farming and assimilate them into non-Indian society.

In 1975, the federal government and the Tohono O'odham Nation, then known as the Papago Tribe, sued the city of Tucson and most other major water users in the area.

The lawsuit charged non-Indians had pumped much of the water out from under the San Xavier Indian Reservation.

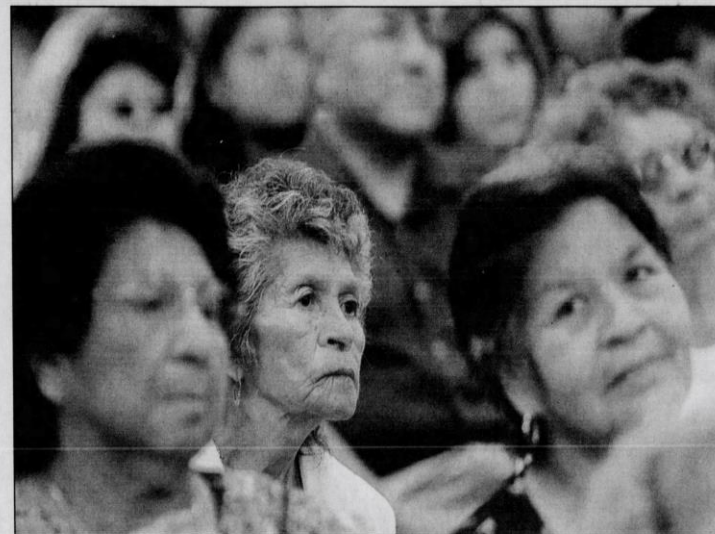
The parties reached an agreement in 1982 when then-President Ronald Reagan signed into law the Southern Arizona Water Rights Settlement Act.

The landmark law — reached after Reagan vetoed a more-generous settlement offered by Congress — promised the O'odham at San Xavier about 50,000 acre-feet of water a year to be delivered through the Central Arizona Project, which would bring Colorado River water to the Tucson area.

It also bound the federal government to pay millions of dollars in

See **WATER**, Page 4B

For O'odham, water will return



Rosanna Carlyle, center, one of two original plaintiffs in the 1975 lawsuit, says she never thought she'd live to see a deal on a water supply for the San Xavier District.

Tribe, Tucson, mine, farms reach accord on CAP flow, pumping

By **Tony Davis**
The Arizona Daily Star

As a child on the San Xavier Reservation south of Tucson, Rosanna Carlyle helped her family grow melons, corn, squash, chiles, tomatoes, barley, hay and beans. The water came from ditches fed by the Santa Cruz River.

Eventually, the river and the ditches dried up, the big cottonwood and mesquite trees along them died, and farming on the reservation was gone by the 1980s.

On Friday, however, Carlyle and dozens of other Tohono O'odham members celebrated at a ceremony that could harbor a return to some traditions from their past.

Tohono O'odham tribal leaders joined Gov. Janet Napolitano and Tucson officials in signing a water rights settlement that the tribe hopes will make some of its land bloom again.

How much water?

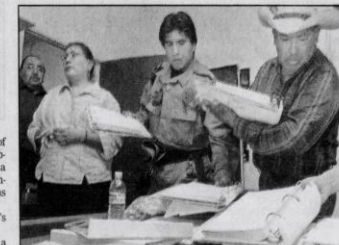
► The settlement assures the Tohono O'odham tribe 50,000 acre-feet a year of water, mainly from the CAP.

► One acre-foot supplies three typical Tucson families enough household water for a year.

The settlement will end 31 years of litigation that Carlyle and another tribal member had filed on behalf of a group of San Xavier landowners to limit Tucson's water pumping, which was one reason the river dried up.

The settlement doesn't stop the city's pumping, but it will:
► Assure the tribe 50,000 acre-feet a year of water, mainly from the Central Arizona Project. The water can be used

See **WATER** / 4A



Water allottees, from left, Felicia Nufiez, Rupert Lopez and Terry Encinas Sr. sign the agreement at the San Xavier District Center. Tribal members eventually plan to expand farming in the Santa Cruz basin, among other uses.

Jockey with Tucson ties outraces demons for Derby bid

By **Patrick Finley**
The Arizona Daily Star

Garrett Gomez is paid to be in control.

Thighs and legs squeezing against a saddle, hands clenching a horse's reins, Gomez made his bosses \$14.2 million last year alone by urging horses across the finish line first.

The Tucson-born jockey has a chance to become a legend today when he mounts trainer Bob Baffert's horse Bob and John in the Kentucky Derby.

There was a time when his edge became his hell. He didn't like to fly because he wasn't controlling the plane himself. He sought comfort in the solitary numbness of addiction, and almost died because of it.

Alcohol and cocaine addiction landed him in jail and then rehab, and out of horse racing for 21 months from the end of 2002 until September 2004.

"When you get out of control, it's a fear factor of not controlling your environment around you," he said. "But I don't really control my horse. My horse controls me."

The horses Gomez rides have been bred for racing, generations of sires and mares raised to charge through furlongs.

Gomez, 34, was bred to be a jockey. His father, Louie, rode horses for a living, moving his family to different stops around the Southwest.

More
Kentucky
Derby
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SPORTS

SEE JOCKEY / 4A

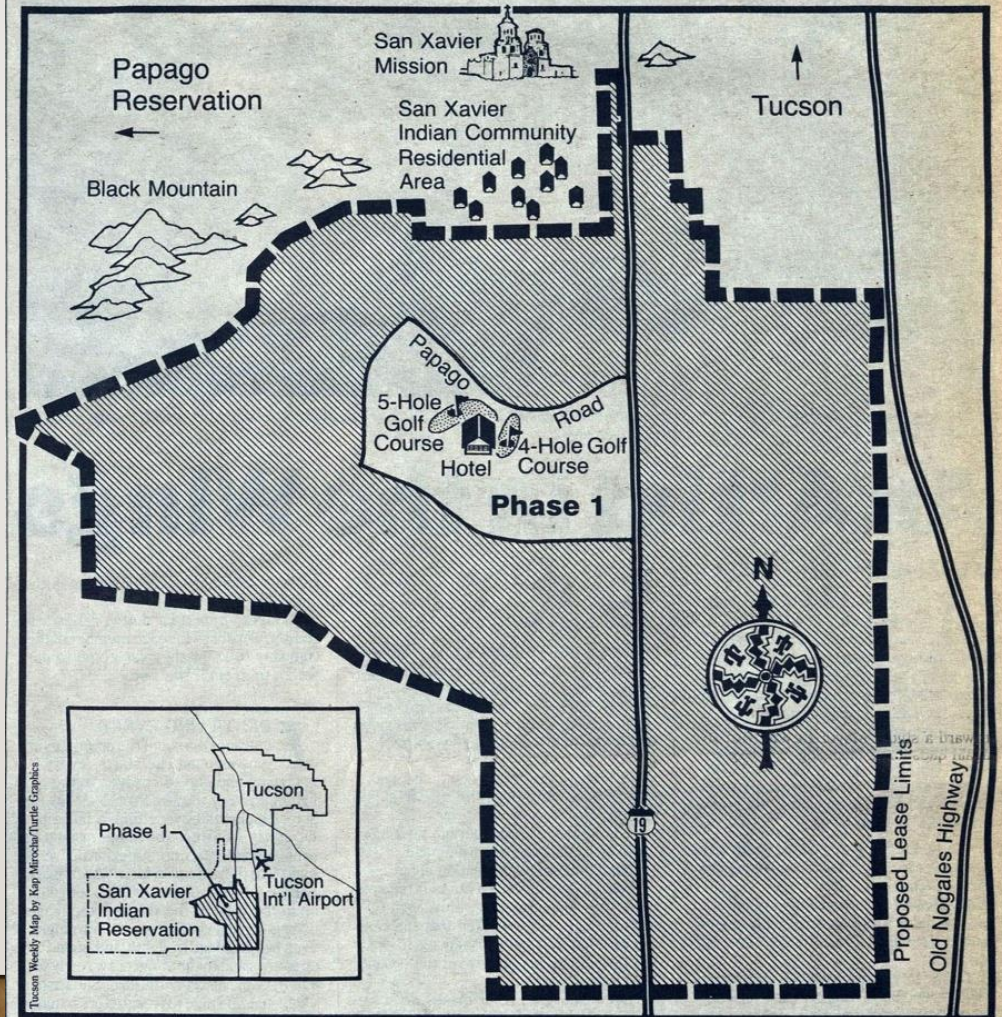
Embattled CIA director quits amid agency strife

Santa Cruz Properties Proposed Land Development

- ❖ In the late 1970s, a proposed land development was brought to San Xavier by a non-Native developer, James “Jim” Rothschild Jr., who was in charge of the operation, Santa Cruz Properties Inc.
- ❖ Rothschild gained approval from BIA, tribal attorneys, San Xavier District Chairman John Narcho, and the Papago Tribal Council Chairman Josiah Moore in 1983. At this time, the San Xavier Community nor Allottees had been consulted.
- ❖ The six-phase development proposed would have been a 90-year lease on 18,000 acres of uninhabited land – 16,000 acres belonging to allottees, and 2,000 acres tribally held by San Xavier District. It would have included “a resort hotel, two country clubs with golf courses, commercial and industrial zones, a government center and housing for 100,000 people,” (Zanger, 1985).

Living in San Xavier

Questions About Authority, Bureaucracy and the 48-page Lease



The shaded area of the map represents the more than 18,000 acres of uninhabited land on the San Xavier District of the Papago Reservation. Santa Cruz Properties Inc. (a California development firm) wants to build the planned city of San Xavier, population 100,000 on the site. The inset map to the left shows the size of the development relative to Tucson.

Santa Cruz Properties Proposed Land Development

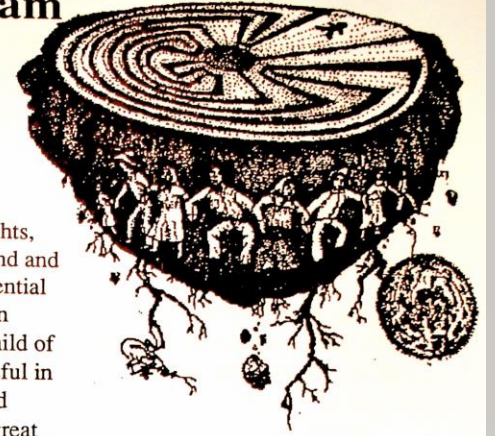
- ❖ By word of mouth the San Xavier Community found out about the proposed land development.
- ❖ Some were for the development while others were not.
- ❖ Tribal members against the development formed a group called Defenders of O'Odham Land Rights and took on Santa Cruz Properties.
- ❖ There were hearing and meeting held throughout the mid-1980s and it made newspaper headlines. The Tucson Weekly did a series of articles.
- ❖ The Defenders were able to stop the development from happening.
- ❖ This then led to the Sa Xavier District creating a General Land Use Plan, Vision Plan and Community Plan

Defenders of O'Odham Land Rights, Inc.

March, 1990

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

We are the Defenders of O'Odham Land Rights, who have fought for four long years, to defend and save our land from a major non-Indian residential development which was proposed here at San Xavier by non-Indian developer Jim Rothschild of Santa Cruz Properties, Inc. We were successful in defeating this proposal. We have all the good people to thank, who joined us and gave us great support in our fight. Some of the highlights of this fight were:



August 25, 1986 - The Pima County Board of Supervisors held the public hearing on the Santa Cruz Properties development. The Defenders presented their case on all aspects of the development lease terms. The Supervisors supported our cause and wrote letters to the tribe and B.I.A., requesting to disapprove the land lease and to stop the whole proposal.

August 27, 1986 - A Tohono O'Odham Legislative Standing Committee recommended to the Tribal Council, that the proposed development "was not in the best interest of the Tohono O'Odham Nation". The tribal council, by resolution, rejected the Santa Cruz Properties development.

September 11, 1986 - the Tribal Chairman signed the resolution on the rejection.

September 16, 1986 - the San Xavier District Council rescinded the former approval of the Santa Cruz Properties development which was done in 1983.

October 22, 1986 - A news release by the B.I.A. Area Director, Phoenix, AZ, stated that the land project and the Draft Environmental Impact Study of the development was dead. There was pressure to revive the proposal to the BIA and tribal council from a newly formed group called O'Odham Supporters for Progress and Prosperity — all working for Santa Cruz Properties.

November 6, 1986 - O'Odham Supporters met with the tribal council and introduced a resolution to revive the project. The "revival" never happened.

November 6, 1987 - The Chairman of the Tohono O'Odham Nation, Enos Francisco, Jr., delivered the death blow by officially notifying the Bureau of Indian Affairs that the Nation had rejected the proposed development.

Land awaits its destiny

Developer wants to share part of Papago reservation

By Ernie Heltsley
The Arizona Daily Star

An Indian prophecy has it that non-Indians will come and take the land.

It was told to 82-year-old Mary Dolores Rios by her elders as far back as she can remember, she said in her native Papago language from the shade of her ramada in the village of San Xavier.

"The Santa Cruz River already has been taken over by the non-Indians," Rios said this week when asked about a real estate development that could bring 100,000 new residents to her neighborhood within 35 years.

Santa Cruz Properties Inc. of Palm Springs, Calif., proposes to lease 18,000 acres of Papago reservation land in the San Xavier District, a few miles southwest of Tucson.

The lease would run for 65 years, and the developer could decide to extend it for another 25 years.

About 10 percent of the acreage is owned by the tribe; the rest is owned individually by Papagos.

The Papago Tribal Council has approved the agreement by a 16-1 vote, but it will not become effective unless a majority of the landowners, or allottees, approve it.

The first phase of the development would be a golf course, condominiums, a large resort, hotel and residential and commercial facilities on about 3,000 acres straddling Interstate 19 about 10 miles south of Tucson.

Rios said she is undecided on whether to commit her interest in part of the land for the development.

A widow and lifelong resident of San Xavier, she said that because she can't take the land with her when she dies, she is relying on her nephew and younger sister to help her make up her mind.

She said both of them, so far, oppose the project.

Her interpreter, Tony Felix, said Rios was reluctant to speak — as elderly Papagos often are.

See PAPAGOS, Page 2A



Joe Patronite, The Arizona Daily Star

Mary Dolores Rios hasn't decided whether to let her land be developed

GOP setting Oct. 3 debate on prisons

By Howard Fletcher
The Arizona Daily Star

PHOENIX — Republican legislative leaders tentatively have scheduled a special session for Oct. 3 to deal with overcrowding in the state prison system.

House Majority Leader Burton Barr said the first day of the session will be used to push through a plan to take care of the immediate problem of having 6,000 inmates in a system built for only 3,500.

He said the session then will be recessed while a special joint committee reviews options for a long-range solution to the fact that the number of inmates behind bars is expected to grow by 100 each month indefinitely.

Senate President Stan Turley said lawmakers then would be called back, probably around Dec. 5, to ratify the package.

GOP leaders in each house will take Gov. Bruce Babbitt's short-term solutions to their members in separate closed-door sessions Monday. Barr and Turley said they hope to get some sort of consensus then.

The governor asked for \$19.2 million immediately to set up various minimum-security centers around the state, including acquiring two

★ Merchants welcome Babbitt's plan to build a prison in Douglas, Page 3B.

merchants in Douglas to house those convicted of drunken driving, establishing a work camp at Picocho Peak and leasing 100 acres at Salsbee-Douglas International Airport to start work on a medium-security prison there.

One part of the governor's plan would be to expand an existing 100 beds to the state prison at Perryville, west of Phoenix. The three Republican lawmakers who represent that district said they will push colleagues to honor their commitment not to house more than 1,200 convicts there.

The Republicans, like Babbitt, said they did not know where they will get the money.

Barr said one possibility is funding the Arizona Department of Public Safety through the Highway User Revenue Fund. This would free \$13 million of general fund revenues for use in prison construction.

"Over my dead body," responded Anne Lindeman, assistant Senate GOP leader, who does not want to

See SPECIAL, Page 18A

Missile stand firm, Soviet official says

By Allison Smale

Papagos tell development fears

Friday, Sept. 16 - 1983

By Joe Watt
The Arizona Daily Star

Seated on a wooden plank near the gleaming facade of Mission San Xavier del Bac, three Papago Indians spoke out yesterday against a development plan that could attract 100,000 residents to their reservation.

Later, however, a Papago official said the plan offers landowners income and security for years to come.

Tony Felix, one of the Papagos who spoke out against development, said a California developer is trying to take advantage of the Papagos by offering them bottom dollar for leasing their land.

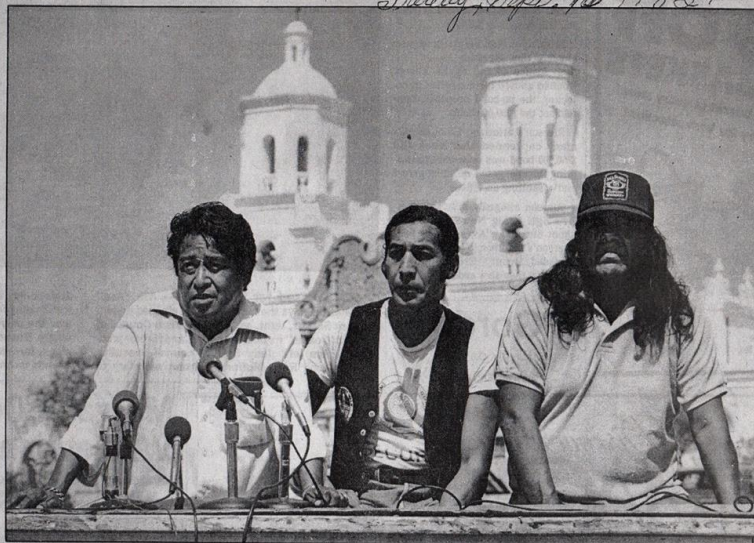
"Anytime a non-Indian looks at anything, he looks at dollar signs," Felix said.

Felix said Indians have a spiritual bond with the land and do not have the same attitudes as Anglos about development. But, he said, "If there's any development, I think that the tribe should do it itself."

Felix, Michael Rios and Bob Cruz, all Papagos, criticized the endorsement of the development plan by the tribe's San Xavier District Council.

Rios said opponents asked a tribal court in Sells yesterday for a restraining order seeking to delay development proceedings.

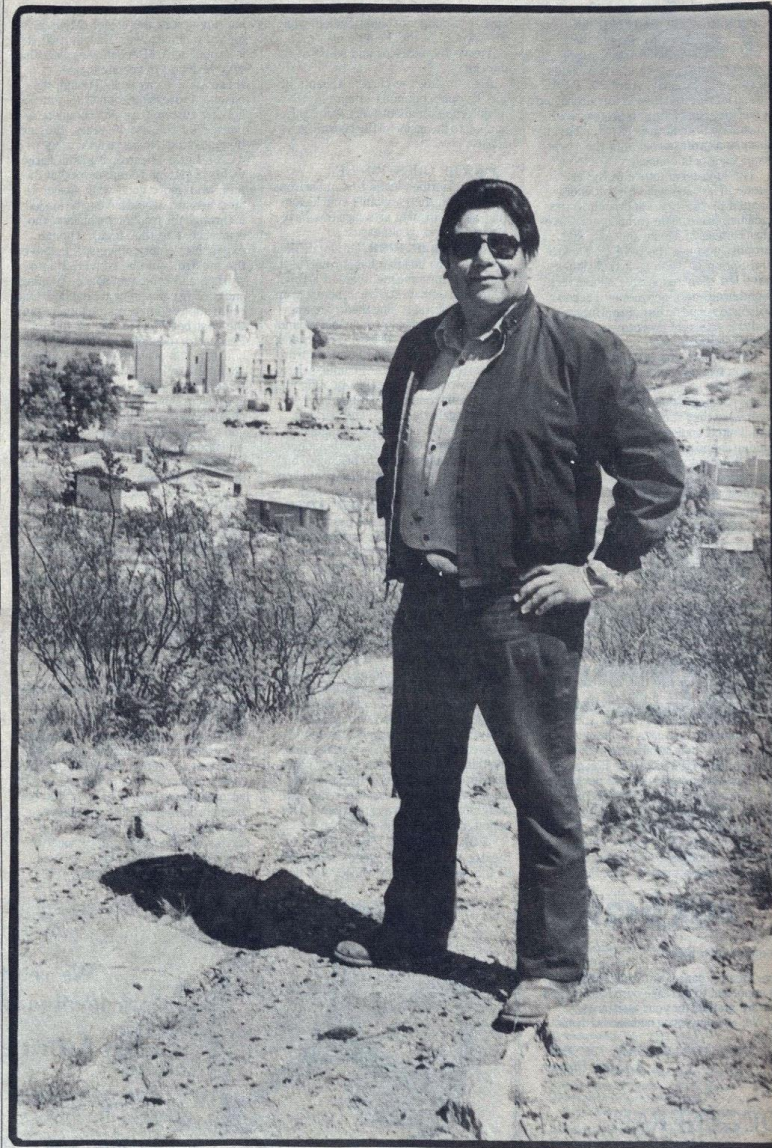
The developer, Santa Cruz Properties Inc. of Palm Springs, Calif., hopes to build a resort, hotel, a golf course, homes and condominiums on 18,000 acres along Interstate 19, about 10 miles south of Tucson.



Joe Patronite, The Arizona Daily Star

Opponents of the proposed land rental, from left, Michael Rios, Robert Cruz and Tony Felix, speak at the mission

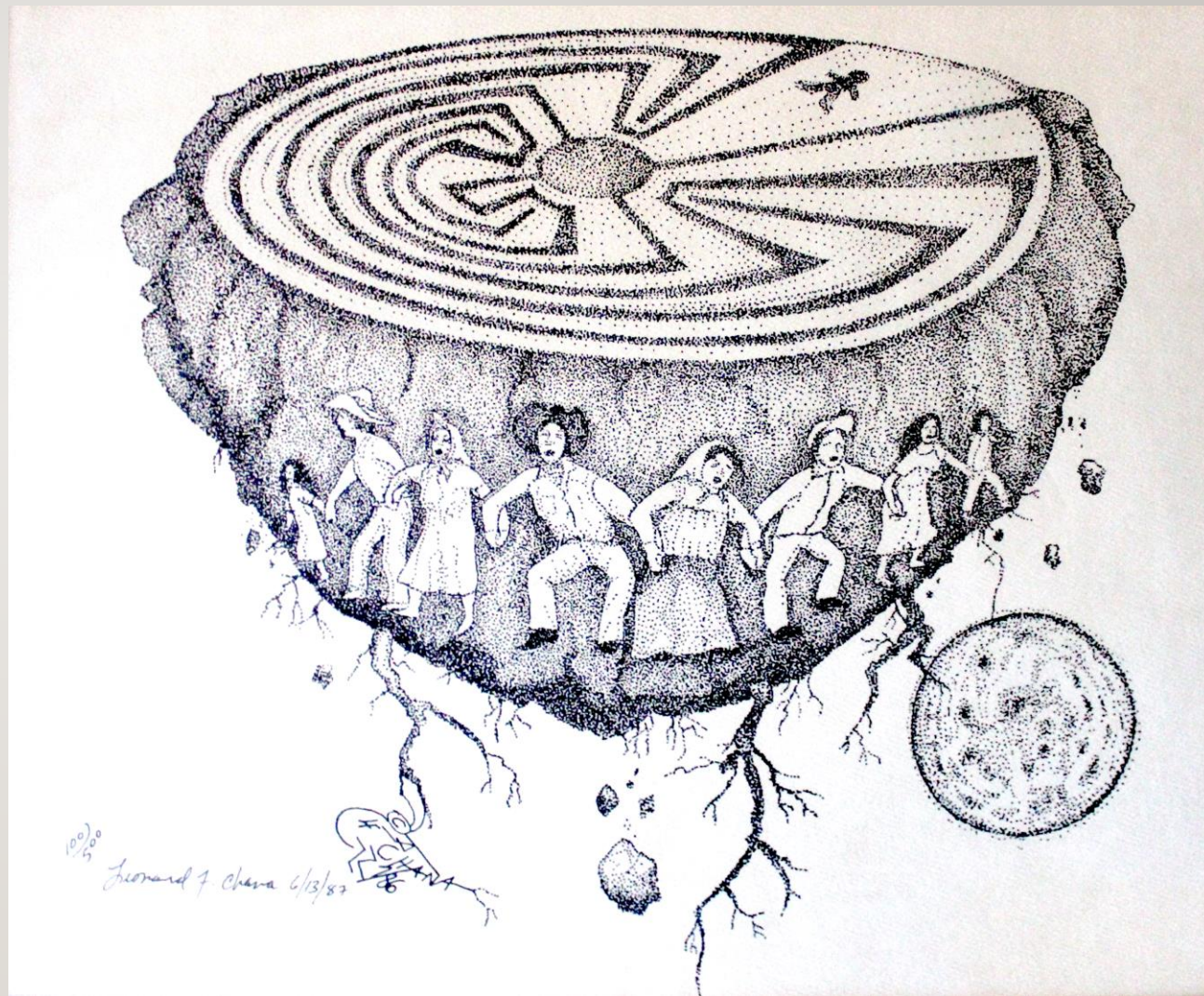
Coming Soon to Your Backyard: A New City of 100,000 People



With the San Xavier Mission and village behind him, Mike Enis, president of the Defenders of O'Odham, surveys the general area where the planned suburb of San Xavier may be developed.

Photo by John DeCinda

Questions?



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