Biden’s plan affects many which is a broad-sweeping American Families Plan, President Biden’s proposed possibly, could be done through and how it can be enhanced.lege offers the community, - handful of students about Dr. Paul Robertson and a heard from TOCC President and Grijalva headed a round- tour of the tribal college. College administrators and no O’odham Community met with Tohono O’odham U.S. Education Secretary from pre-school to tribal education-related programs, federal support could be on Sells, AZ - An official vis- nal funding process, the same go through the congressio- a proposed plan, and it must must move on to Biden’s hu- man infrastructure bill that is the American Families Plan. A fact sheet for the Amer- Indian tribes. TOC’s Robertson said to his knowledge, the Nation’s college is the only one out of 35 tribal colleges throughout the U.S. that Cardona visited, and the tour appears to have been arranged by Congress- man Grijalva. During the roundtable dis- cussion Robertson informed Cardona about TOCC’s histo- ry, and its current role in the Tohono O’odham community. Several current and former TOCC students talked about their experiences at the col- lege, and about the foundation it laid for their pursuit of bach- elor’s degrees, master’s de- grees, and doctorate degrees. Tohono O’odham Nation Chairman Ned Norris Jr. wel- comed the education secretary and informed him about the geographical history of the Tohono O’odham. He also ex- pressed the benefits of tribal members working to achieve higher education. Robertson said the American Families Plan at this point is a proposed plan, and it must go through the congressio- nal funding process, the same as Biden’s other spending plans that have seen much adversarial maneuvering by Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. Congress. He said it appears that Congress is first tackling an infrastructure bill that will impact the aging infrastruc- ture in the U.S., and then it may move on to Biden’s hu- man infrastructure bill that is the American Families Plan. A fact sheet for the Amer- ican Families Plan outlines the impact it can have on Native American communi- ties. In an effort to create op- portunities for Native Amer- ican the plans proposes free community college tuition for first-time students, in- creased limit on Pell Grants for Native students, and two years of subsidized tuition for low-income students attending a four-year tribal university. The plan also provides for tribal teacher education and help to earn teaching credentials. And, Biden’s plan calls for free, high-quality, accessi- ble, and inclusive preschool for all three-and-four-year- old children. The Runner photo.

Tribal leaders and educators meet with U.S. Education Secretary Miguel Cardona

Sells, AZ- The Tohono O’odham Nation’s government and the local public school district have joined to do what tribal families have struggled to do—pass on the O’odham language to their children. The Tohono O’odham Legis- lative Council, at a July 14 meeting, agreed to fund a pilot project in Baboquivari Unified School District 40 that will take on the task of providing O’odham culture and language instruction to its students. BUSD submitted its Toho- no O’odham Culture and Lan- guage Program proposal to the Legislative Council as part of the school district’s overall effort to revitalize the Tohono O’odham language. The council, in its resolu- tion addressing the proposal, includes some revealing in- formation: “Despite the fact that over a period of several decades, the Tohono O’odham Nation and members and enti- ties of the Nation have taken steps to support the O’odham language, including documen- tation of O’odham speech and historical records, establish- ment of the Himdag Ki:, de- velopment of an O’odham dic- tionary, adoption of a standard orthography (Hale-Alvarez), design and implementation of a certification process for O’odham language teaching, creation of curriculum, and delivery of O’odham language courses in the K-12 system, those important efforts have not been sufficient to revitalize the O’odham language.” The resolution also notes that Tohono O’odham families are not passing the O’odham lan- guage from generation to gen- eration, and the tribal language is now listed as an endangered language by the United Na- tions Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. For its part, BUSD says in its proposal that its annual enrollment averages about 1,200 students in grades kin- dergarten through 12th grade, and 99.7 percent are Tohono O’odham. The Nation agreed to fund the BUSD proposal in two phases, the first of which is a pilot year at a cost of $261,787.50. This includes the hiring of two cer- tified Tohono O’odham lan- guage teachers and a program director. If that effort proves successful, the Nation says it will pro- ceed to a second phase, which involves the school district taking on the salaries of the two teachers and the program director, and the tribe’s gov- ernment providing $421,200 to hire six more Tohono O’odham language teachers.

Tribe joins BUSD effort to revitalize tribal language

The announcement of the language center by TOCC notes that many adults on the Nation speak O’odham, few young people are grow- ing up speaking the language fluently, and it calls the trend a “critical state,” adding that the center’s mission is to ad- dress this critical situation by preserving and revitalizing the O’odham language. At the time of the announce- ment Ron Geromito and Les- lie Luna were named co-direct- tors. They said the center is the culmination of years of hard work and collaboration by nu- merous people on the Tohono O’odham Nation. Though the new Center is funded by To- hono O’odham Community College, they emphasized that the O’odham Language Cen- ter belongs to all on the Na- tion and will serve the greater O’odham community. TOCC President Paul Rob- ertson acknowledged that the college is grateful to the Toho- no O’odham Legislative Council for the funds that it appropriated for the Language Center’s operations.