17th Annual

Native American Human Resources CONFERENCE

January 28th - 29th, 2027

Gila River Resorts & Casinos Wild Horse Pass
Chandler, AZ

Your Path to HR Recertification Starts Here

This program is HRCI-accredited, offering participants the opportunity to earn recertification credits while gaining valuable, up-to-date HR knowledge recognized by industry professionals.

Native Nation Events is recognized by SHRM to offer professional development credits (PDCs) for SHRM-CP® or SHRM-SCP® recertification activities.

HRCI

SHRM RECERTIFICATION PROVIDER SHRM-CP | SHRM-SCP

Wednesday, January 27

10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Pre-Conference Certificate Workshop (Separate Registration Required)

Pre-Conference Registration begins at 10:00 AM and includes a working lunch

From Resume to Retention: Leading Across Generations in Tribal Human Resources

The sharpest friction in today's tribal workforce isn't old versus young — it's the Gen X and Millennial leaders doing the hiring and the Gen Z talent walking through the door speaking a different language entirely. This certificate course tackles that gap directly: how to interview through it, communicate across it, and retain in spite of it.

Key areas of focus include:

- Behavioral interviewing and Indian Preference.
- Bridging Gen Z, Gen X, and Millennial communication gaps.
- Tribal workforce case-study roundtables.
- Using leadership development to strengthen employee retention.
- Action planning to improve your next hiring cycle.



David Miller
Founder
Red Earth Strategy Group

David Miller is the founder of Red Earth Strategy Group and has decades of experience working with tribal governments and Indigenous organizations. He helps tribes strengthen leadership, governance, and long-term planning while supporting tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

Thursday, January 28

7:30 - 8:30 AM | **Registration and Networking Breakfast - Palo Verde Foyer**

8:30 - 8:45 AM | **Welcoming & Conference Co-Chair Remarks - Palo Verde AB**



Dan O'Connor
Director of Sales
Native Nation Events



Jason Richmond
Chief Executive Officer
Dale Carnegie Orange County

Prayer led by:

Donovan G. Kyyitan
District 5 Council Representative
Gila River Indian Community

8:45 - 9:30 AM | **Keynote Speaker - Palo Verde AB**



David Miller
Founder
Red Earth Strategy Group

The Human Side of Leadership: What Our Ancestors Knew About Building Strong People, Strong Teams, and Strong Nations

Today's HR professionals are expected to solve workforce challenges, build culture, develop leaders, navigate conflict, support employees, and somehow keep everything moving forward. It's not easy work, and most days it feels like everyone needs something from you.

This presentation is a reminder that behind every policy, process, strategic plan, and organizational chart is a human being trying to do meaningful work and live a meaningful life. Drawing from what our ancestors understood about relationships, responsibility, accountability, and community and why those lessons matter now more than ever, prepare to be challenged to rethink leadership, culture, and the role they play in helping people and organizations thrive.

Because strong teams don't happen by accident. Strong cultures don't come from slogans. And strong nations are still built one relationship at a time.

Thursday, January 28

9:30 - 10:30 AM

Human Resources Executive Roundtable: Strategies for Attracting Top Talent to Join Your Team - Palo Verde AB

In this discussion, Human Resources executives will discuss their strategies and success stories in attracting the most qualified candidates. While some ideas will touch on traditional strategies, such as competitive pay and benefits, panelists will also share unique ways executives are using to attract exceptional candidates.

MODERATOR:

SPEAKERS:



Sidney Tuttle
Human Resources Director
Santee Sioux Nation



Laura Laitinen-Warren
Chief Human Resources Officer
Oneida Nation

10:30 - 11:00 AM

Morning Networking Break - Palo Verde C

Thursday, January 28

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Creating a Workplace Culture That Aligns With Employee Retainment - Palo Verde AB

Employees stay where they feel supported, connected, and able to grow. Panelists will discuss workforce trends affecting today's labor market. Attendees will learn strategies to retain employees, such as recognition, incentives, and consistent employee evaluations. The session will cover approaches to effective onboarding and career development. Attendees will also learn how these practices help employees see clear opportunities for growth and advancement. Panelists will also highlight the role supervisors play in building trust, strengthening workplace relationships, and creating an environment where employees feel valued.

MODERATOR:



Taryn Reynolds
Human Resources Service Director
BlueStone Strategy Partners

SPEAKERS:



Tania Tafoya
Training & Employee Relations Manager
Cache Creek Casino Resort



Jessie Wilson
Partner, Business Development
Dale Carnegie



Charles Walters
Chief Human Resources Officer
Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians



Brandon Santangelo
Vice President of Business Development
Perfect Gift

12:00 - 1:00 PM

Networking Lunch - Palo Verde C

Thursday, January 28

1:00 - 2:00 PM

Employment Law Update: Recent & Pending Legislation That Will Affect Your Organization - Palo Verde AB

Employment laws and workplace regulations continue to change, creating new compliance responsibilities for Tribal governments and their enterprises. This session will provide an overview of recent and proposed legislative, regulatory, and policy developments affecting employers, with a focus on the issues most relevant to HR professionals. Panelists will share key changes related to FMLA, leave and accommodation requirements, workplace policies, employee relations, wage-and-hour compliance, and pre-employment screening regulations, including FCRA compliance, adverse action requirements, employment verification standards, and evolving hiring laws.

Attendees will gain practical insights into navigating evolving employment regulations, reducing risk, strengthening compliance, and updating hiring, screening, and workplace practices.

MODERATOR:



Kevin Prendergast
President
Thuro AI

SPEAKERS:



Sandra James
CEO
Private Eyes Screening Corp

Rebecca A. Loudbear
Attorney General
Colorado River Indian Tribes

2:00 - 2:30 PM

Afternoon Networking Break - Palo Verde C

Thursday, January 28

2:30 - 3:30 PM

Health Benefits: Curbing Rising Costs for Your Organization & Employees - Palo Verde AB

Rising healthcare costs continue to challenge employers and employees alike. This session will cover key cost drivers, including medical inflation, prescription drug spending, chronic health conditions, and high-cost claims. Panelists will share practical approaches to managing costs through plan design, pharmacy benefit strategies, preventive care, and employee engagement. Are there other options, other than traditional health insurance, that an organization can look into to reduce costs and provide quality care? Attendees will leave with ideas for controlling benefits expenses, improving access to quality care, and maintaining competitive health benefits that support both organizational goals and employee well-being.

MODERATOR:



Kyle Johnson
Vice President of Sales
ClearScript

SPEAKERS:



Jake Seltzer
Vice President/Treasurer
Summit Inc.



Pamela Trotter
Human Resources Director
Fort Mojave Indian Tribe

Thursday, January 28

3:30 - 4:45 PM

Human Resources Directors Roundtable: The Importance of Succession Planning - Palo Verde AB

Leadership transitions can shape the future of an organization for years to come. This roundtable will focus on why succession planning matters, the risks of being unprepared, and the steps organizations can take to ensure continuity during changes in leadership, ownership, or key staff positions. Participants will discuss different succession planning approaches, including developing internal talent, recruiting external leaders, preparing for retirements, and managing organizational transitions. Attendees will leave with practical ideas for preserving institutional knowledge, maintaining stability during leadership changes, and preparing their organizations for future opportunities and challenges.

MODERATOR:



Taryn Reynolds
Human Resources Service Director
BlueStone Strategy Partners

SPEAKERS:



Elise Campbell
Director of Human Resources
Muckleshoot Casino Resort



Robert Silverang
Vice President of Human Resources
Cabazon Band of Cahuilla Indians & Fantasy Springs Resort Casino



Kara Velazquez
Human Resources Director
Pueblo of Jemez

4:45 PM

Day One Concludes

Friday, January 29

7:30 - 8:30 AM

Registration and Networking Breakfast - Palo Verde Foyer

8:30 - 9:30 AM

Growing Talent from Within: Preparing the Next Generation of Managers & Leaders - Palo Verde AB

Developing future leaders is critical to the long-term success of Tribal governments and their enterprises. This session will feature different ways current leadership and executives are using to identify employees for future leadership roles. Topics will include effective mentorship & management training programs. Panelists will discuss what makes these programs successful, keeps tribal values alive, and supports retention and internal advancement.

MODERATOR:



Desi Rosenfield
President
Lapin International

SPEAKERS:



Travis Daniel
President/Owner
Dale Carnegie
Washington State and Idaho



Claudette Grinage
Human Resources
Manager
Pueblo de San Ildefonso



Maribel Venegas
Learning & Organizational
Development Manager
Twenty-Nine Palms Band of
Mission Indians



John Rivera
Chief Human Resources
Officer
Poarch Band of Creek
Indians

Friday, January 29

9:30 - 10:30 AM

Voluntary Benefits Strategies for Today's Workforce - Palo Verde AB

Employee benefits are a key part of recruiting and retaining talent. This session will focus on how Tribal governments and their enterprises are enhancing benefits programs by providing resources related to mental health and caregiving support. Many organizations are adopting voluntary benefits such as life, accident, critical illness, and hospital indemnity insurance. Panelists will discuss which benefits employees value most. They will also share how employers are balancing costs, workforce needs, and emerging trends.

MODERATOR:



Derek Talley
Vice President / Chief Operating Officer
GITW Benefits

SPEAKERS:



Amanda Hegnes
Executive Director of Human Resources
The Tulalip Tribes

10:30 - 11:00 AM

Morning Networking Break - Palo Verde C

Friday, January 29

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Building a Strong Retirement Plan That Engages Your Employees - Palo Verde AB

Retirement benefits can support both employee retention and long-term financial security. This session will highlight strategies for increasing retirement plan participation across workforce generations through financial education, employer contributions, and targeted communication. Attendees will learn about some of the new and effective tools to communicate. Panelists will discuss ways to improve engagement with retirement programs, manage benefit costs, and meet the needs of employees at different career stages while supporting organizational workforce goals.

MODERATOR:

SPEAKERS:



Cole Iyotte
Human Resources Director
Sicaŋǧu Co

12:00 - 1:00 PM

Networking Lunch - Palo Verde C

Friday, January 29

1:00 - 1:45 PM

One Nation, Many Entities: Navigating Multi-Entity Benefits Administration - Palo Verde AB

Managing employee benefits across a Tribal Nation presents unique challenges. Tribal governments, healthcare programs, gaming enterprises, and schools may operate under different eligibility rules, benefit offerings, and administrative requirements while sharing a broader organizational strategy.

How can Tribal Nations balance the needs of individual entities while maintaining a consistent and efficient benefits experience?
This session will explore practical strategies for simplifying multi-entity benefits administration through configurable technology, streamlined enrollment, and effective carrier coordination. Using real-world examples, attendees will gain insight into managing complex organizational structures, accommodating entity-specific requirements, and delivering a more consistent benefits experience across their Nation.

SPEAKER:



Derek Talley
Vice President / Chief Operating Officer
GITW Benefits

Friday, January 29

1:45 - 2:45 PM

How Artificial Intelligence Is Improving & Streamlining Processes in Human Resources - Palo Verde AB

AI is becoming an increasingly valued tool for HR departments. This session will cover how they are using AI to streamline recruiting, onboarding, workforce planning, policy development, and other HR functions. Panelists will share practical applications that support HR directors and managers while advancing organizational goals. Attendees will leave with better knowledge of how AI can enhance HR workflow processes.

MODERATOR:

SPEAKERS:



Kacey Peloso
Corporate Vice President of
Human Resources
Gila River Resorts & Casinos

Friday, January 29

2:45 - 3:45 PM

Artificial Intelligence in Human Resources: Managing Risks & Avoiding Legal Issues - Palo Verde AB

As AI becomes more common in Human Resources, Tribal governments and their enterprises must establish clear guidelines for its use. This session will cover how AI is being applied in recruiting, hiring, and other HR functions. It will also address the steps organizations can take to support fair, consistent, and ethical employment practices. Panelists will discuss internal policies, oversight, documentation, and human review processes that help reduce legal risk and support responsible decision-making. Attendees will leave with practical considerations for implementing AI in a way that protects employee trust, strengthens accountability, and helps organizations avoid costly compliance and employment challenges.

MODERATOR:



Rob Tiernan
Chief Revenue Officer
Thuro AI

SPEAKERS:



Joshua Buck
Human Resources Manager
Cherokee Nation

Friday, January 29

3:45 - 4:15 PM

EXHIBIT RAFFLE DRAWING - Palo Verde AB

- **Winners Must Be Present To Win**

4:15 PM

17th Annual Native American Human Resources Conference Concludes