

# THE COLORADO RIVER INDIAN TRIBES RESERVATION (C.R.I.T.) QUICK FACTS



The Colorado River Indian Tribes (C.R.I.T.) Reservation includes almost 300,000 acres of land in Arizona and California and includes 90 miles of river shoreline along the Colorado River. The C.R.I.T. Reservation, the second Indian Reservation in Arizona, was established in 1865 for the “Indians of said River and its Tributaries.” Initially, this included the Mohave, whose ties to the land date from prehistoric time and the Chemehuevi who, for generations, have also resided along the Colorado River from present-day Nevada south into Mexico. In 1945, a portion of the Reservation was reserved for colonization by Indians from other tribes, specifically the Hopis and Navajos. Today, the Colorado River Indian Tribes includes four distinct Tribes - the Mohave, Chemehuevi, Hopi and Navajo. There are currently about 3,500 active Tribal members made up of individuals from all four Tribes. The primary community on the C.R.I.T. Reservation is Parker, Arizona, which is located on a combination of Tribal land, leased land owned by C.R.I.T. and private land owned by non-Native individuals and companies. Poston is another, smaller community located approximately 12 miles south of Parker on the reservation. During World War II, Poston was the site of one of the United States’ largest Japanese internment camps, where thousands of Japanese Americans were held over a three year period.

The Parker Unified School District is part of the State of Arizona School System and includes the Blake, Wallace and Le Pera Elementary schools, Wallace Junior High School, Parker High School and Parker Alternative School. The district currently includes 734 tribal students at the primary and secondary levels.

At the Arizona Western College Parker Campus, adult Tribal members constituted 2% of the total enrolled students between 2004 and 2007. In addition, the C.R.I.T. Tribal Education Center provides resources for students to obtain online degrees in Computer Information systems and Health Education. The Center also provides support in the form of a computer lab, after-school programs for grades K-12 and assistance in obtaining a GED. The Colorado River Indian Tribes (C.R.I.T.) Library is recognized as the first tribally funded library in the United States. The collections boast unique archival materials on Native Americans and some Japanese internment camp collections. In addition to library materials, educational programs are provided by the staff for tribal members as well as to the general public. Computer classes are offered at the library for all ages.

The C.R.I.T. Reservation lies wholly within the Lower Colorado River Valley which is the largest, hottest, and driest subdivision of the Sonora and Mohave Deserts. Summer highs may exceed 120°F (48.5°C), with surface temperatures approaching 180°F (82°C). The valleys are dominated by low shrubs, primarily creosote bush (*Larrea divaricata*) and white bursage (*Ambrosia dumosa*).

The Colorado River serves as the focal point and lifeblood of the Reservation providing much needed water in an extremely arid environment for agriculture, recreation, and tourism. C.R.I.T. has senior water rights to 717,000 acre feet of the Colorado River, which is almost one third of the total allotment from the Colorado River for the state of Arizona. The water is diverted for irrigation use on farms throughout the

Parker Valley. The primary economic activity on the C.R.I.T. Reservation has always been agriculture, going back to the days when mesquite trees were plentiful along the banks of the river and native peoples relied upon them for everything from food to cooking to Tribal traditions and ceremonies. C.R.I.T. continues to have a strong farming and agricultural industry, including growing alfalfa, grains, cotton, seed crops, guayule (pronounced 'why-YOU-lee') and melons. Approximately 84,500 acres are now under cultivation and another 50,000 acres are available for development.

In recent years the Tribal economy has greatly diversified and now includes businesses in several different fields including; sand and gravel, real estate development, and retail stores. Over the past decade, emphasis has turned toward tourism. In 1995, C.R.I.T. opened the Blue Water Resort and Casino, and has endeavored to attract both cultural and recreational tourists to the area. The Casino has a variety of restaurants, a conference center, and a multi-screen movie theater. The resort has a 160-dock marina, and is just one of dozens of locations where those interested in river recreation can enjoy the Colorado River. Fishing for trout, striped bass, bass, catfish, crappie, and bluegill is excellent in the river and in the canal system. Dove, quail, waterfowl, rabbit, and predator hunting is also excellent. Reservation hunting and fishing permits are required. Camping permits are also available.

The Ahakhav Tribal Preserve was established in 1995 and currently consists of 1,253 acres of wilderness area, about 250 acres of aquatic habitat and a 3.5 acre park. The preserve serves many purposes. One is to provide recreational and learning opportunities and another is to serve as a re-vegetated area for endangered and threatened plants and animals native to the Lower Colorado River Basin. The Ahakhav Preserve also has a landscaped picnic area and a spur trail planted with native mesquite, cottonwood and willow.

The Extension Indian Reservation Program (EIRP) started in 1994 on the C.R.I.T. Reservation. This U.S.D.A. program funds a University of Arizona Faculty position to provide Extension Programming on the Reservation. The current agent, Linda Masters, started on the Reservation in June of 2002. She has continued the efforts of previous agents to provide information to the Tribe regarding alternative crops, natural resource management alternatives, youth development programming, and nutrition and healthy lifestyle education and activities. In 2006, the EIRP program underwent a name change to the Federally Recognized Tribal Extension Program (FRTEP).

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**This information has been reviewed by university faculty.**  
[cals.arizona.edu/pubs/natresources/az1462.pdf](http://cals.arizona.edu/pubs/natresources/az1462.pdf)

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