

Pima-Maricopa Irrigation Project
Education Initiative



Restoring water to ensure the continuity of the Akimel O’otham and Pee Posh tradition of agriculture

Report of a Council held by the Chiefs and Headmen of the Pima and Maricopa Indians, 1872

Part 7

In the spring of 1872, Special Indian Agent John H. Stout reported a council held with Akimel O’otham Head Chief Antonio Azul and thirteen other Akimel O’otham and Pee Posh chiefs. The council was held at the Pima Agency in Sacaton, on May 11, 1872. Missionary-teacher Charles H. Cook signed the report as a witness. Stout prefaced his comments on the council report as follows: “In reply to my question as to what they wanted to say, the Council, through Antonio Azul, their head chief, said:

“We have come to talk with you about some of us going to see a new country [Indian Territory]. You have often told us that there was a place where the Great Father [President] wanted to send all the Indians. A good land where there is always plenty of water, and where bad men will not be allowed to come among us. A few days ago, the Father with one hand [General Oliver Otis Howard] told us that when he got to Washington he would try to get us permission to go with you to see the new country. Some of us were not here then, but we come today to talk about it.

“We [the Captains] all would like to go with you and see this place, how we like it, but some of us are too old to travel far. But some of us have sons, grown up, who will be Chiefs when we die. We want a few of them to go. It is better for some old ones and some young ones to go. We want to know all about the new country. You say this new country is a good place and you say you have not been there. Now, how do you know it is a good place, if there is plenty of water there? We want water here very much. We used to have plenty of it. Before the Americans and Mexicans settled on our river above us, we always had plenty of water; only once, about ten years ago, it did not rain any, or snow up in the mountains, and it was a dry year.

“We always raised two crops a year, one of wheat and one of corn. Now, since the Americans and Mexicans have moved on the land above us and taken the water from our river [the Gila River] to water their grain, we never raise but one crop (wheat). Some of us who live on the lower part of the land which you say is ours [the reservation] do not get even enough water to water our wheat, and much of it is now lying down on the ground, dead. We cannot raise any beans or pumpkins or melons or corn down there any more because there is no water.

“Some of our families there will suffer this year if your captain [Superintendent] does not give us something to eat. He promised us that if we would stay on the land [the reservation] and not leave it, he would not let us suffer for things to eat. Some of us will stay as we promised him. Some of our men have gone to the Salt River Valley where they are getting ready to plant corn. About three hundred of them have gone over there. We asked them not to go but they said they had nothing to eat at home. We now hear that the white men living at Salt River say that our cattle and horses are eating up their grain, and they have killed some of our cattle and sold some of our horses.

“We have fields, too, and their cattle and horses come and eat our wheat and when we ask them to pay for what their cattle and horses eat, they tell us to go home and mind our own business. It is not right for our cows or horses to eat their wheat and if they will take them when they find them in their fields, and pen them up until we pay for the damage, that will be right. But some of them have our cows that have been taken straight from our own land, and did not eat their wheat. But when we go and ask them to give them up, they say that they did eat the wheat and they will not let them go until we pay for it. If we had plenty of water here, our men would never go off from this land to plant. Eight hundred of our men are now living outside of this land above us on the river.

“We learn that after their crops are got in, the Americans are going to drive them back into this land. You say that land outside does not belong to us. We think it does. We have had farms there for many years. If we are driven back from there we do not know what we can do here, for there is not enough water for those of us who are living here now. If we were living where no bad people could get us, it would be good for us. Both Americans and Mexicans are selling our men whiskey. Many of our young men are getting to drink it very much, and some of us old ones, too. We know that it is bad for us, but somehow it seems that some of our men cannot keep from drinking it. When they get drunk they act badly with our women, so do the other people.

“We would like to be where there are no bad Americans or Mexicans or Apaches. The Apaches have been at war with us for many years. We are afraid they will not make a good peace. A good peace would be a good thing, but if we were so far apart that we could never see each other it would be better. The Father with one hand [Howard] told us that when Antonito and Louis came back, we might go and see the new country. If it is as you say, we think we would like to live there. We would like to go and see it in time to get back before cold weather. We could go any time after harvest. We want to go with you and we want you to be sure and bring us back, so that we can tell our people all about what we have seen. We want you to take Mr. Walker with us. He has lived near us for many years. He is a farmer and knows good land. We want him to interpret for us, and to see the land.

“There are a good many Captains here today. Maybe more of us than you can take along with you to see the new country. If you cannot take us all, some of us will stay here and let the others go. When you want us to go, send us word and we will come here and go with you. You say you are going to send what we say to the Great Father [President] on that paper. That is right. If he could come here, he would see what we need. We would like to see him and tell him ourselves. But, if he cannot come here, ask him to let us go and see the new country.”

	Antonio Azul (his X mark)	- Head Chief
	Ki-O Chin-Kinn (his X mark)	- Chief
	Juan Mano (his X mark)	- Chief
	Wy-No-Mi-Vi-A-Kum (his X mark)	- Chief
Witness	Pach-E-Ko-Cha-E-Kum (his X mark)	- Chief
C. H. Cook	Sua-Mas-Kor-Li (his X mark)	- Chief
Teacher	Ki-O-Sot (his X mark)	- Chief
	Sa-Pise (his X mark)	- Chief
	Skonk taw Tan-K (his X mark)	- Chief
	Ku-vit-Ki-Chin Kum (his X mark)	- Chief
	So-O-Ketch (his X mark)	- Chief
	Kan-Chil (his X mark)	- Chief
	Chis-Kum (his X mark)	- Chief
	Pat-i-vi-A-Poy (his X mark)	- Chief

The above is a true account in substance of the proceedings of the Council, and as far as practicable I have given it in the same words employed by the head chief.

Very respectfully,
 J. H. Stout
 U.S. Special Indian Agent

(Source: *J.H. Stout Letterbook*, University of Arizona Library, Special Collections)

Teacher Plan for “Report of a Council, 1872”

Terms to know and understand

- Great Father
- Indian Territory
- Reservation
- “Bad men”

Critical Thinking:

- If you were a village captain (chief) what advice would you have given head chief Antonio Azul?
- What dietary changes might result from the loss of traditional Akimel O’otham and Pee Posh foods? Could this have contributed to the diabetes and other health concerns affecting the people today?

Activities

- Tell the students that this council was held in the midst of the water crisis they have been reading about and was a direct result of the diminishing flow of water. The idea of removing the Akimel O’otham and Pee Posh to a “place inside or outside of Arizona” had already been discussed. In fact, the “Report of a Council” was a meeting requested by the Akimel O’otham and Pee Posh chiefs to convey a message to the President of the United States, referred to as the “Great Father” by 19th century American Indians. Antonio Azul considered the “new country” (Indian Territory) as but one option. It was in time of great distress that Azul, as head chief—and only after the counsel of the village chiefs, considered emigrating from the land of his forefathers. The fact that he considered emigrating illustrates the severity of the crisis and, perhaps, the extent of the pressure placed on him by the United States.
- Discuss with students how Antonio Azul referred to the Gila River. His choice of words is indicative of how the Akimel O’otham saw the river. Point students to how Azul describes the “reservation.” What clue suggests that the head chief claimed more land (water) than the United States was prepared to recognize. Discuss with students what these word choices mean.
- Have students role-play the council. Have students represent village chiefs and provide the head chief with the pros and cons of removing to the Indian Territory or of remaining in Arizona.

About P-MIP

The Pima-Maricopa Irrigation Project is authorized by the Gila River Indian Community to construct all irrigation systems for the Community. When fully completed, P-MIP will provide irrigation for 146,330 acres of farmland. P-MIP is dedicated to three long-range goals:

- Restoring water to the Akimel O’otham and Pee Posh.
- Putting Akimel O’otham and Pee Posh rights to the use of water to beneficial use.
- Demonstrating and exercising sound management to ensure continuity of the Community’s traditional economy of agriculture.

Students will be able to: 1. Analyze Antonio Azul’s choice of words in describing the Gila River and Akimel O’otham lands. 2. Theorize why the Akimel O’otham and Pee Posh chiefs considered removing to “the new country.”	Objectives
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Report of a Council Word Search

Find the words listed below. When you are done, the unused letters in the grid will spell out a hidden message. Pick them out from left to right, top line to bottom line. Hidden words can go horizontally, vertically and diagonally in all eight directions. You will not use the letters underlined in **bold**.

P I M N E W C O U N T R Y A M A R
 I C O P A I R R I W G A T I O N H
 P M R O J L R E C T A M I S S S I
 O A N E U F E F I C I T E N O T U
 S H E Z O F H L A N D A E P N D W
 A T A T N E T R W R E S E R O C U
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 E A P O R E V I R T L A S S H P C
 E O G I L A R I V E R P L E **L** **N** **Q**

Akimel O'otham
 Cook
 New Country
 Water

Azul
 Corn
 Pee Posh
 Wheat

Bad men
 Gila River
 Pima Agency

Captains
 Great Father
 Salt River

Fill in the hidden message below:

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