

# CELEBRATE

## Nation celebrates Indian Week September 21-25



(All photos by Don Decker except where otherwise noted)



(Photo by Trapper Moore)



### GRAPES

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of environment. It's such a strong plant."

Rocha is looking at a potential 100-acre field of grapes and the standard rate of growth takes approximately three years to begin producing grapes and in about five years to reach full crop levels based on Rocha's plan of operations.

Preliminary studies of climate and soil for the area that Rocha is pointing out this day has already been conducted by Nicole Check, Director of Yavapai College's Viticulture and Enology Department, well-recognized in the field, which shows that this specific piece of land is very well suited for fine wine grape production.

Yavapai-College also has a degree program in the field of viticulture and enology studies that encompasses knowledge in grow-

ing grapes for commercial winemaking.

#### Land Clearing

Once the site is cleared for planting of the vines, Rocha expects to start with 25 acres at first and continue to add fields in stages up to 100 acres. This is to "assure proper plant and infrastructure development" according to Rocha. "When this is finally completed, it will be the largest vineyard in Arizona," adds Rocha.

Presently, contracts are being drafted for NAUHRRC's and other contractors that would be conducting the soil sampling and other testing necessary to ascertain the soil's compatibility to grow grapes. This written agreement will be finalized by October 1 of this year to proceed with the initial tests and feasibility studies that includes a comprehensive business plan.

Rocha says wine grapes have always been a part of

the Apache and Yavapai culture.

"Winemaking has been around for thousands of years. It's been accepted in every society. It's nothing new and a lot of Indian tribes in California are doing the vineyards and wine making," says Rocha about Indian related activities with commercial wine making elsewhere.

Rocha has consulted with the Nation's culture department about grape growing. "We grew up with grapes. They would go up the canyons and pull out the roots (of grape vines) and replant them and --grow wild grapes," he says about the historical background of grapes in Verde Valley.

"We're in a prime location to develop it (grape growing industry) and it could make thousands (of dollars) and would be revenue streaming coming in (to the Nation)," says Rocha confidently.

Within the first year, the

Nation expects to create about 20 full-time jobs associated with the vineyard during the set up phase and planting. By the second year, 10 more positions will be created and finally, at the end of the third year, a total of 40 people will be employed with the vineyard. A typical vineyard sells grapes at between \$2,000 and \$2500 per ton and red grapes such as those grown and sold in Napa Valley, California normally sells for \$6,000 a ton.

With the Nation's 100-acre start up, it would have a potential to produce \$1 million per year or more in bulk sales according to Rocha.

Rocha talks about cultural demographics, which points to a bright future with potential customers who will buy a bottle of wine at \$25 should the Nation decide to establish a winery in the future. If the Nation was to get into the winery business sometime in the future, one ton of grapes would convert

to 800 bottles of wine and moderately-priced wines in the Verde Valley retail for \$25-\$30 per bottle and wholesaling for \$11-\$15 per bottle.

Therefore, a ton of grapes produces \$20,000 to \$24,000 at retail, such as in tasting rooms presumably in connection with the Nation's other hospitality operations such as the RV Park, the Casino and hotel. According to NAUHRRC as demand for wine drapes currently exceeds supply in the region, local wineries have indicated that the Nation could easily sell 100 percent of their grape production should they chose to just grow the grapes and sell them.

Rocha has the confidence of a business man and to back up his rationale for the Nation to build a vineyard, he cites a study done in 2011 entitled "The Arizona Wine Tourism Industry" which shows wine tour-

ists who came to visit tasting rooms, wineries, and vineyards were spending over \$30 million a year in Verde Valley and that the average income of a wine tourists is \$88,000 per year with half earning over \$100,000 a year, with 30 percent earning over \$120,000 per year. This same group spent \$64 on wine, \$44 on food and \$32 on merchandise per winery visit.

Rocha is self-assured and clearly knows the full ramification of starting a new vineyard.

Rocha takes one last look to his left at the fields covered with the various desert trees.

"I can see the rows of grapes out here. It shows strength that we are a developing area," he says. "The Nation is in a great position to be a major resource — in which there has been a tremendous growth of wineries and vineyards in the state and particularly in Verde Valley."

### WATHOGOMA

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lage of Dak To June 9, 1966.

On September 23, 1966 Wathogoma received the U.S. Army Commendation Medal for Heroism and the Purple Heart due to his injuries from this firefight.

Wathogoma's award states that, "Unable to effectively assault the well-dug in enemy positions, the company then moved to a prominent piece of terrain in the valley and set up a defensive perimeter. For the next 24 hours, Private Wathogoma

maintained accurate fire on the enemy and several times exposed himself to hostile mortar and small arms fire in order to aid wounded comrades. Only through his determination and courage, was his greatly outnumbered unit able to hold off the repeated enemy assaults until friendly elements arrived."

Wathogoma witnessed the loss of many friends in this battle in this 17 day battle.

Shortly after this incident, Wathogoma was airlifted to one of the major military hospitals in Vietnam and subsequently was returned to the battlefield after recov-

ery.

Wathogoma tells a story about the last few months in the military when he was transferred to Ft. Bliss, Texas from a New Jersey U.S. Army base by default at a moment's notice as the U.S. Army had learned of his ordeal in Vietnam. He arrived in Ft. Bliss within days from New Jersey where he was awarded the commendation medal and the Purple Heart.

Wathogoma said that the morning of his award day, everyone on the base was saluting him as he walked on his way to the Army headquarters because they all knew Wathogoma was

a Vietnam Veteran as evidenced by his highly polished boots and his shoulder patches and combat infantry medals that he wore on his uniform.

The best part was that Wathogoma came home closer to his fiance' Delores who was still in Ajo at the time until he was discharged in June of 1967.

Wathogoma and his wife, Delores live in Tunlilii after having returned to the Nation 5 years ago from California where Wathogoma retired from the Northrup-Grumman aircraft company in Redondo Beach after working there for 30

years.

They have 2 daughters that live in California.

The Indian Week committee was honored to have Wathogoma as Grand Marshal of this year's National Indian Day commemoration parade.

After the parade on Friday Wathogoma was honored with a Chief's Pendleton blanket that was personally picked by Chris Coder, the nation's archeologist.

Members of the Nation came up one by one to personally welcome home Wathogoma and his wife, Delores, as Delmondo Cypress sang an Apache honor

song assisted by Nathan Ibarra and Darin Smith.

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As a special gift, the Wathogoma's were honored with a gift certificate to dine at the Nation's Triple A evening restaurant, The Storyteller located at the Casino and a golden eagle honor feather from the Nation's Apache Culture department that was given to him on October 9.