CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Gary Williams.

MR. WILLIAMS: Madam Chairman and Commission members, welcome and fellow Arizonans -- well, first let me say thanks to all of you that have supported Indian gaming in this great land. My name is Gary Arnold Williams and I am from the Gila River indigenous community. I have recently received by bachelor's degree in fine arts. The procedures institute that I attended was the Disney School of Animation, formerly known as the California Institute of the Arts. Many hopeful applicants worldwide apply here every year to the prestigious school of higher learning and many are turned away.

In my history of the application process 2,000 were in competition for acceptance, only 67 were picked. After acceptance I later learned I was the only Native America to have ever been accepted in this program of character animation. Since then I have seen many other applicants start the program but later leave the program due to funding. I use the word "competition" because life is and always will be a competition. From what I've learned thus far in my life, education is the best source of protection to compete and without this my journey would definitely be different. Without the financial assistance of the Gila River Indian casino and the Gila River Education Committee this achievement would not have been possible.

I was raised by the state, Department of Economic Security to be more specific, that covers eight foster homes, shelters and even an institution. All along not once was I allowed to be placed with my Native American Nation of Arizona. I stand before you today as a recipient of child abuse, denial of
heritage and culture and denial of self. I remember being labeled as a problem child, a slow learner and an outsider. These titles are not easy to forget as a child and one thing I must mention that kept me going through all of this is being humble.

I knew that as long as they didn't kill me, it was okay. As long as I could eat tomorrow, it was okay. As long as the medication would cease, it would be okay. Many days I have spent in my life crying, trying to keep focused, trying to keep moving and knowing that some day I would be an adult so that my choices in my life would be mine alone. As I look around me today I'm trying to reconnect with my people, the very same people that I was once denied. As an adult, I see my people given an opportunity of change.

This change has brought many good things and a change that will bring many more. I ask you today, do not deny us this opportunity, do not deny our children their opportunity in life and do not deny this great nation of ours an opportunity of positive history, history we call can be proud of, one that we all may write about and share, one that out societies may share and talk about. There are issues of heath, education and water, the very essence to exist that this opportunity is holding in my future. Let me be selfish for once. Do not deny me my future. Some day I have hopes of returning for my master's degree. Some day I have hopes of having my own family.

One of the most important memories in my life is returning to my community with a bachelor's degree and seeing the changes that have taken place there. The wheels of change are
turning and I'm especially glad to see them. So, please, I ask you to let the change continue, let us all make a positive history together, may all your steps be positive and your relations be ones of enjoyment. Thank you, very much.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you. Alexis Johnson.