

The background of the cover features a young child with dark hair, wearing a light-colored shirt, focused on working on the internal components of a computer. The child's hands are visible, manipulating a part of the hardware. Overlaid on this image is a complex network of white dots connected by thin white lines, resembling a digital or neural network. The bottom left corner has a solid blue background with a white network graphic. The title '2024 Annual Report' is prominently displayed in the lower right area.

2024 Annual Report

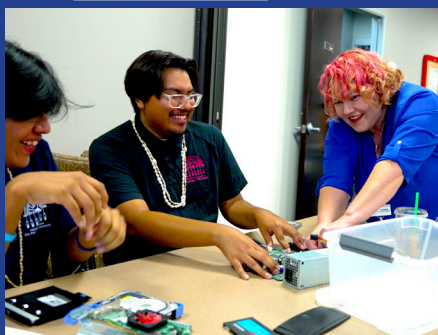


**DIGITAL
CONNECT**

"The Staff at DCI was great! They presented the material professionally and were prepared to address our concerns and questions. Great job and thank you for coming out to meet us and share critical information."



"Digital Connect Initiative will help you in understanding how to get around using apps, the internet and the basics on how to use the computer. Thank you, DCI!"



"Thank you to the DCI team for offering technology-based classes to promote professional development in a convenient learning environment."

"DCI is informative, patient and cares immensely about Elders. Thank you so much for bringing the tech classes to the Districts."





The DCI Team (left to right):

Reuben Ringlero, Multimedia Specialist; Carmen Baldwin-Ortega, Community Liaison; Mikhail Sundust, Executive Director; Tyler Smith, Digital Navigator; Amanda MacDonald, Program Manager

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A Message from Our Executive Director

The Digital Connect Initiative (DCI) achieved many important milestones in 2024 and expanded the foundation of our digital skills training programs with three primary services: **Digital Navigator Services, Tech 4 Elders, and Pro Skills.**

As I reflect on the past year, I am amazed by the progress DCI has made and I feel incredibly grateful to my DCI teammates who make our work valuable – Amanda, Carmen, Reuben, and Tyler. I am honored to work with such a creative and passionate team.

I am grateful to the Community and the individuals who have participated in our classes, who have welcomed us into their gathering spaces and provided feedback on how we can do better.

I am grateful to our colleagues at Gila River Telecommunications, Inc., our parent company, and at our affiliate companies – Alluvion Communications, Gila River Broadcasting Corporation, and Native Technology Solutions – for your continued support.

And I am grateful to our sponsors and partners (see page 6), who keep us moving forward and empower us to do our best for our people.

As always, it is an honor and a privilege to serve our beautiful Community. As we look to the future, I am inspired by the potential inherent in our people and the connections we are building with you all. I am pleased to present this 2024 Annual Report, and I look forward to more adventures in 2025.



Mikhail Sundust
Executive Director



2024 Highlights

Digital Inclusion Study

DCI launched the Digital Inclusion Study in the summer of 2024 and began collecting data through a community member survey, a survey of GRIC departments, and a series of roundtable discussions with GRIC members and residents.



Thank you to everyone who took the time to provide your feedback! We are looking forward to presenting the results in 2025.

Community Outreach

DCI participated in 22 Community outreach events in 2024, including the D7 Housing Committee's DIY Day, Casa Blanca Community School STEM and Coding Night, Gila Crossing Community School College and Career Fair, Sacaton Middle School Family Math and Literacy Night, the Ira H. Hayes Memorial Library Summer Reading Program, the Mul-Chu-Tha Parade and Wi-Fi Lounge, the District 3 Recreation Spring Break Program, and GRICUA STEAAAM day.



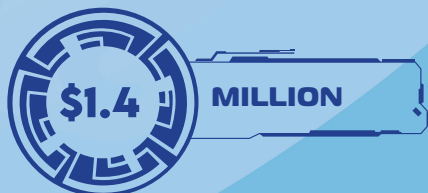
Pro Skills Inaugural Class

The inaugural class of our Pro Skills program kicked off in September, many were Gila River Indian Community employees seeking to improve their workplace computer skills.



Recommended for Grant Award

In December, DCI was recommended for a five-year \$1.4 million federal grant to expand its digital navigator program as part of a national coalition led by NDIA. Read all about it at www.digitalconnect.org/news



Partners

Digital Connect is fortunate to work with many incredible partners that enhance the positive impact of our work.



We have worked closely with the Gila River Indian Community administration on a variety of projects, including bringing Wi-Fi to public spaces and conducting a Digital Inclusion Study.



The National Digital Inclusion Alliance is the most influential digital inclusion organization in the country. NDIA provides resources, advocacy, funding, and a community of practitioners we grow with.



Digital Connect is licensed by Older Adults Technology Services (OATS) to provide Senior Planet classes. OATS provides us with no-cost curriculum and ongoing technical support.



DCI has partnered with Arizona Students Recycling Used Technology (AZ StRUT) to provide Techie Camps and electronic waste (e-waste) collection.



Gila River Telecommunications, Inc. is our parent company and our greatest supporter. Our board of directors provides direction, encouragement, and crucial Community insights.

Digital Navigator Services

Our Digital Navigator (DN), Tyler Smith, helps Community members achieve their goals learning about and using modern technology. He is available to meet one-on-one with Community members and residents at each service center once-per-week on a rotating schedule.



**NEW
CLIENTS**



**CLIENT
SESSIONS**

More than 50 individuals now have better access to the online world thanks to DCI's Device Distribution Program, which launched in August and allows DN clients to apply for a free laptop with the creation of a digital skills learning plan.

Among the many clients we've helped, some are district committee members, individuals enrolled in or seeking to enroll in online education, elders who want to manage their virtual data, and residents who had questions about their home Wi-Fi networks. Some of the most common requests for assistance the DN handles are about using email on mobile devices, online job searches, printing documents, and Microsoft applications.

More information about our Digital Navigator Services and a schedule of availability are available on our website at

digitalconnect.org



Tech 4 Elders

Our Tech 4 Elders program provides an opportunity for elders in our Community to learn about technology and feel more confident engaging in the online world. We use a combination of proprietary content and curriculum licensed by AARP's Older Adults Technology Services (OATS) called Senior Planet.



In 2024, DCI utilized Senior Planet curriculum to teach elders the following topics: Staying Safe Online; Digital Coupon Tools; Emojis, GIFs, & More; Getting Started with Canva; and Everyday Uses of Artificial Intelligence.



In the “Everyday Uses of AI” class, participants were asked to say whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement:

“I can recognize examples of AI in my everyday life.”



“The computer class I signed up has been very much interesting and helpful; I would recommend the class they offer to the community. The DCI Service Staff are very knowledgeable of the computer programs and helpful in teaching.”

Pro Skills

With Pro Skills, DCI helps people enhance their proficiency with essential workplace computer applications and productivity software. We offer comprehensive courses in many Microsoft Office and Google Workplace programs. For example, the Microsoft Outlook course teaches effective management of email communication, calendar appointments, tasks, and contacts, while emphasizing key features for productivity and professional email etiquette.



"There was so much more to Outlook that I didn't know about. I learned new techniques to help make my workday more efficient. I am looking forward to taking more useful classes with DCI."

DCI works closely with GRIC departments and programs to identify employee digital skills training needs and goals. Former participants have indicated a high level of satisfaction with the Pro Skills classes and tangible improvements in their professional skills and productivity. Participants typically see a 49 percent improvement in their digital skills after taking our class.



PARTICIPANTS



**AVERAGE
IMPROVEMENT***

*change in learning between
pre- and post-assessment per skill

"I really enjoyed this class. I like the work at your own pace. Easy to follow along. Plenty of opportunities to get help."

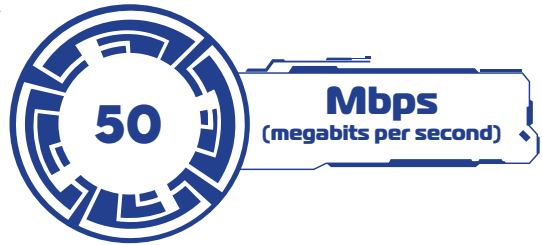
Public Wi-Fi Project

DCI was thrilled to see the completion of the Public Wi-Fi Project. Thanks to our sister company, Native Technology Solutions, all seven district service centers are now connected and providing service throughout the facilities. GRTI provides Wi-Fi in the service centers that is fast, secure, and reliable. Best of all, it is now free to the public thanks to grant funding facilitated by the Gila River Indian Community.

How to Connect

Connecting is easy:

1. Open your device's Wi-Fi settings.
2. From the list of available networks, select "GRTI Free Public Wi-Fi".
3. On the login page, scroll down to review the Acceptable Use Policy.
4. At the bottom of the page, click the "Continue to the internet" button.
5. Enjoy internet access!



**FREE
WiFi**



Enjoy Free WiFi at all
District Service Centers

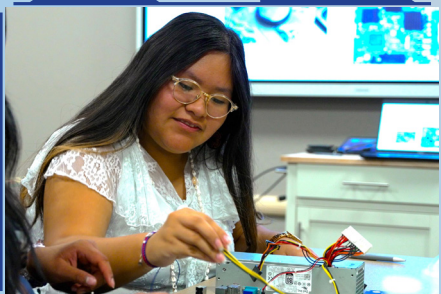


Techie Camps

DCI is investing in the future with a new program for GRIC youth. In each Techie Camp, students get hands-on experience taking apart computers, seeing how the components connect, and putting them together again. After disassembling and re-assembling a computer, it is incredibly rewarding for young people to see the computer they built turn on – screens flicker to life and students' faces light up with joy. The best part is, at the conclusion of every camp, each student receives a free laptop that is theirs to keep!

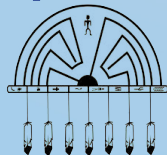


We are extremely grateful to our partner, Arizona Students Recycling Used Technology (AZ StRUT), who provide the curriculum, materials, and instruction for the Techie Camps. They also provide the refurbished laptops participants receive as an incentive. We look forward to hosting many more camps for GRIC youth in the future.



57 PARTICIPANTS!

Techie Camp partners in 2024



Akimel O'Odham
Pee-Posh Youth Council





DIGITAL CONNECT

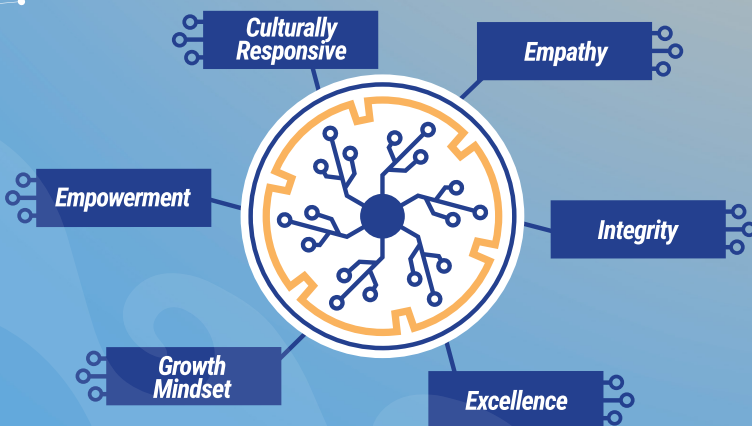
Mission

To help people improve their quality of life using modern technology.

Vision

We envision a flourishing, self-sufficient Indigenous community that is in command of technological advancements and uses current and emerging technologies to achieve wholistic prosperity that is consistent with our heritage of innovation and industriousness and in keeping with our culture and traditional values.

Values



digitalconnect.org
@digitalconnectinitiative