

DESERT X

Gerald Clarke
“Immersion” – Installation Proposal
Submitted September 2022

Desert X 2023
March 4 – May 7, 2023
Coachella Valley, CA

GERALD CLARKE

Gerald Clarke (b. 1967, Hemet, CA, USA) is a visual artist, educator, tribal leader, and cultural practitioner whose family has lived in the Anza Valley for time immemorial. As an enrolled citizen of the Cahuilla Band of Indians, Gerald lives in the home his grandfather built (c.1940) on the Cahuilla Indian Reservation and currently oversees the Clarke family cattle ranch. He is a Professor of Ethnic Studies at the University of California Riverside where he teaches classes in Native American art, history, and culture.



IMMERSION

“Immersion” is a large-scale sculptural work in the form of a traditional Cahuilla coiled basket tray “chi-pat-mal.” This work seeks to validate and pay respect to the area’s Indigenous history, as well as remind and challenge viewers to re-consider their understanding of local, national and international Indigenous cultures and their history.



VIEWER EXPERIENCE

Viewers will be invited to enter the work through four "paths" as provided by raised steel walkways. Each pathway will feature 8 gates that will pose questions examining historic or cultural themes. Pathway question themes will include Agua Caliente Culture, Cahuilla Culture, Native American Cultures, and Global Indigenous Cultures.

Viewers will be allowed to proceed on their path (honor system) until they are able to complete the path and enter the center of the work. Viewers will be "rewarded" with stories and songs at the center of the work through the use of audio recordings. (Possibly through QR codes.)



SCUPTURAL FORM

This work will be composed to two major parts: the "basket" and the "platform". The "basket" is represented by the yellow-tan portions of the image above. The "platform" is represented by the black areas in the image above.

The "basket" will be created by laying out 25' long rice straw wattles in a circular coiled manner directly on the ground. Starting in the center, the 9" thick wattles can be laid out until the desired diameter is achieved.

The "platform" will be a raised platform created with a steel beam frame with either expanded steel or diamond plate sheathing. The "platform" will be raised slightly above the wattles and be wide enough to allow for adequate accessibility for viewers. The "platform" will also include the circular area centrally located within the work.

Additionally, the "platform" will include a series of small, spring-loaded gates that viewers will navigate as they enter the work and work their way toward the center of the work. Each gate will include a small question/answer "door" or a QR code.



PROJECT MATERIALS



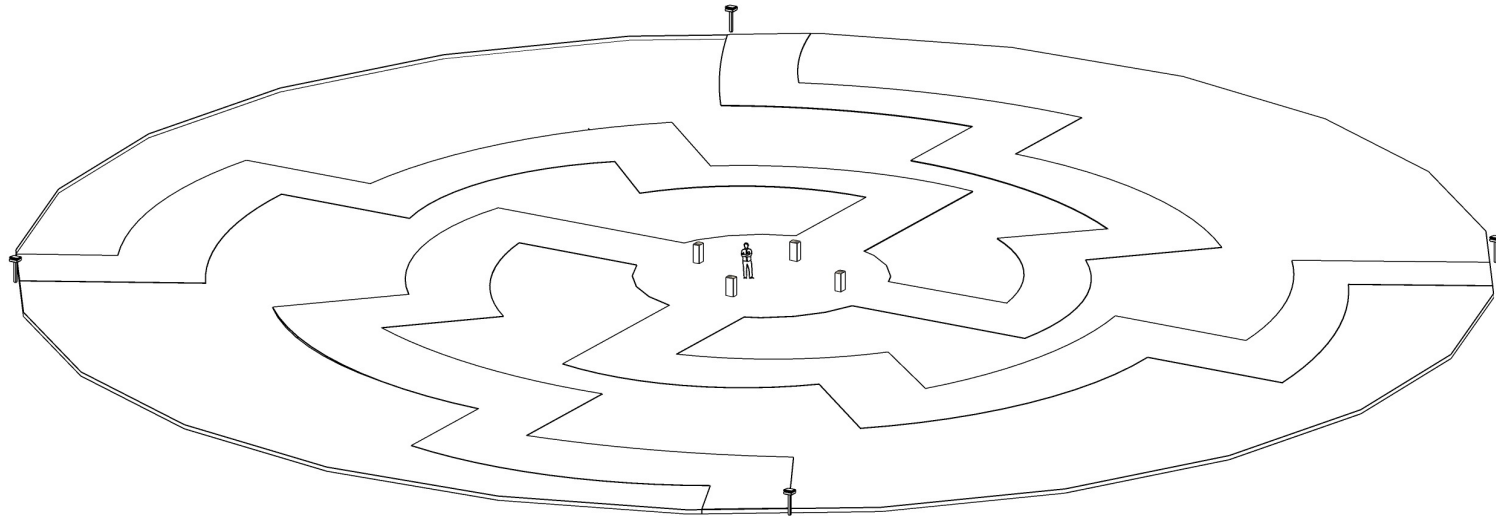
BASE OF INSTALLATION TO BE COMPOSED OF ~8" STRAW WATTLE

PROJECT MATERIALS



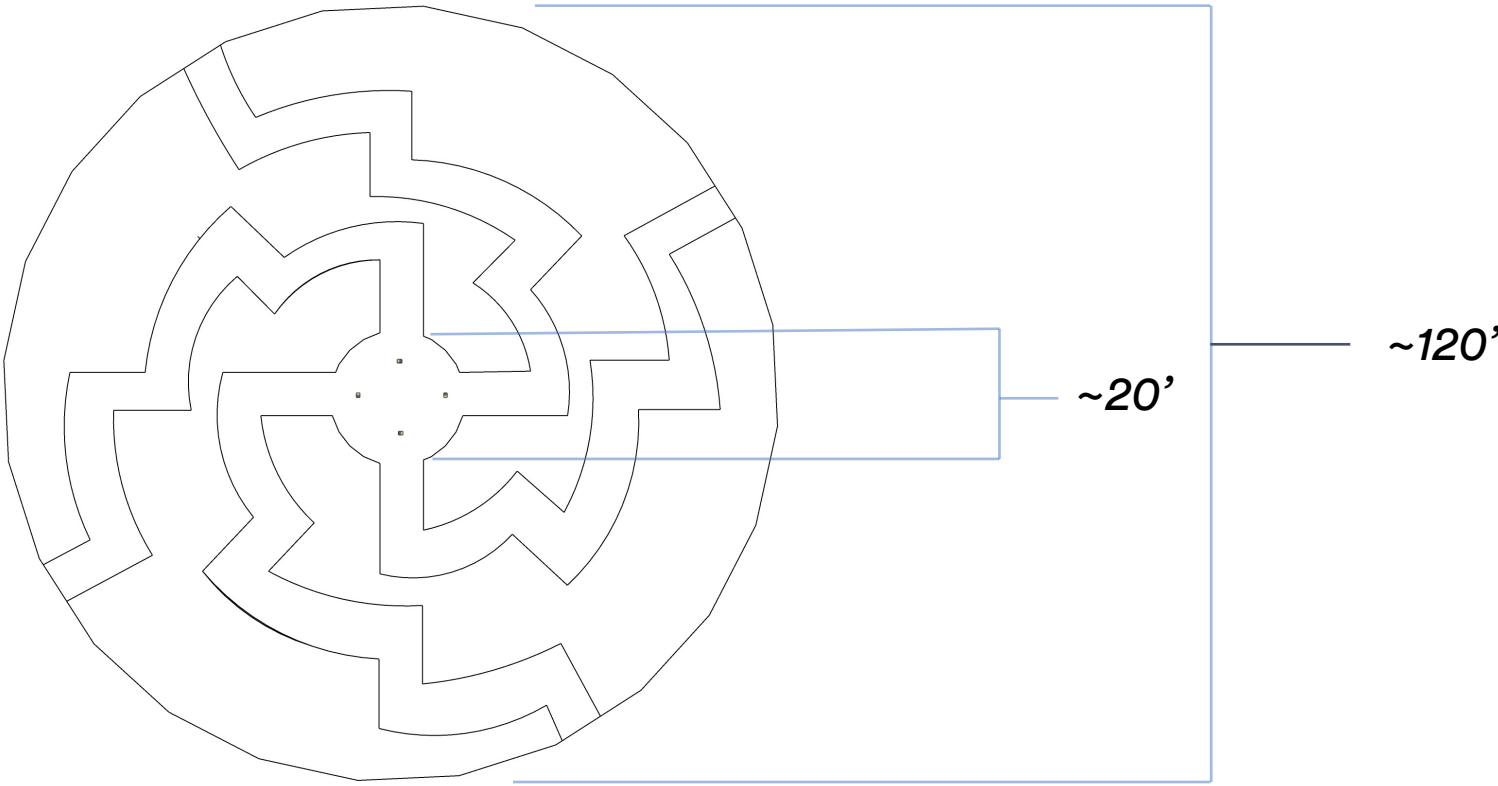
WALKWAY OF INSTALLATION TO BE COMPOSED OF PAINTED/STAINED 3/4" PLYWOOD.

ISOMETRIC



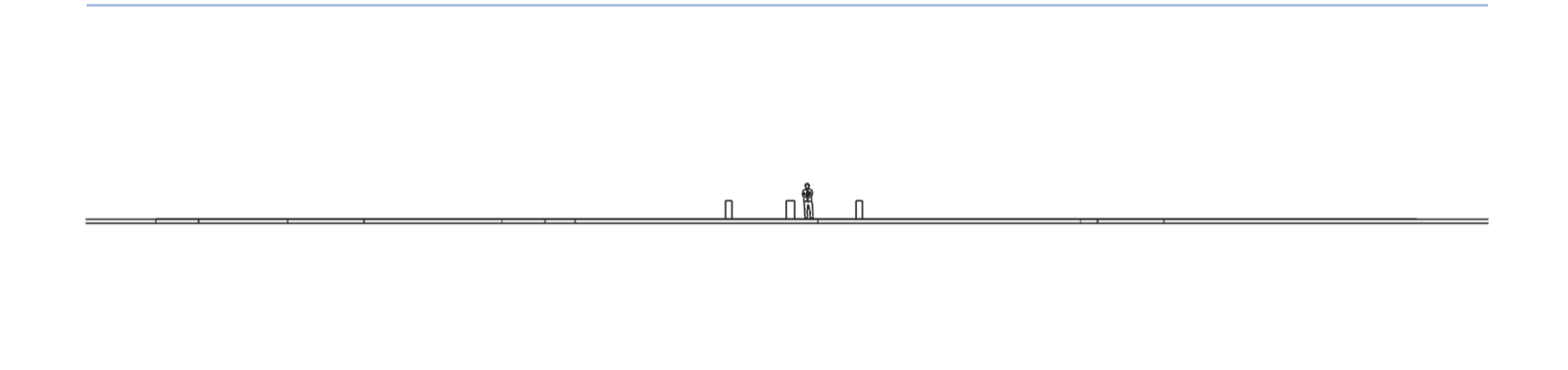
DIRECTIONAL SPEAKERS + POWER TO BE INTEGRATED INTO CENTER PLATFORM.

TOP

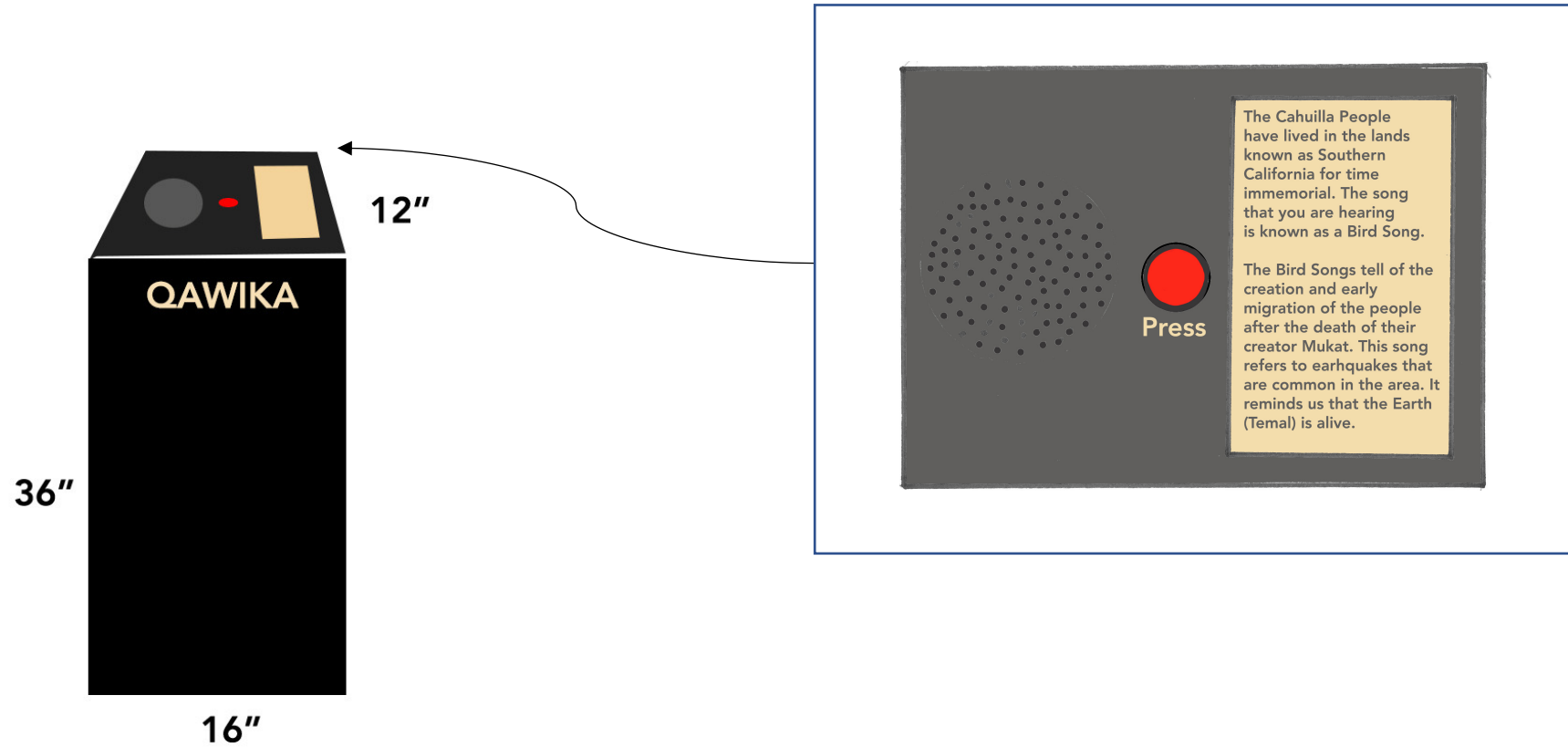


SIDE

~120'

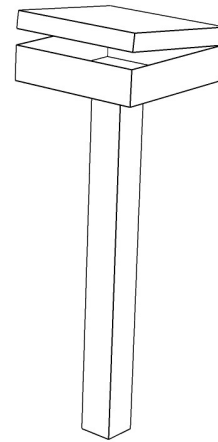


REFERENCE COMPONENTS



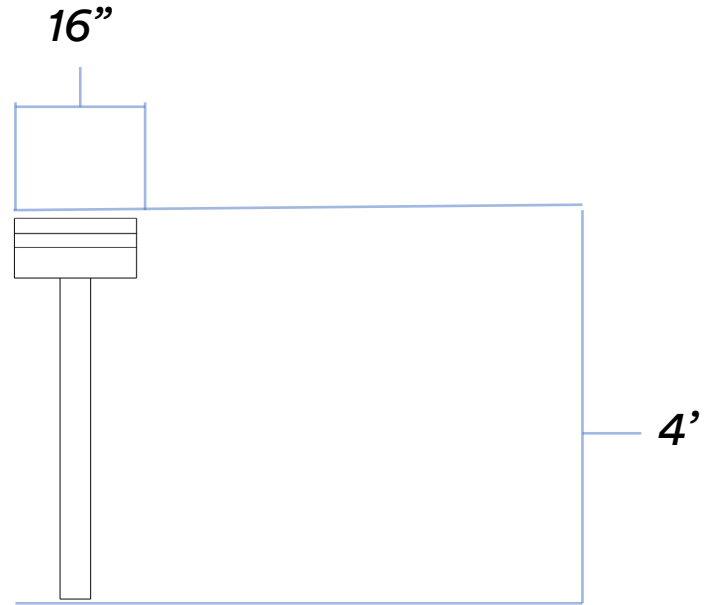
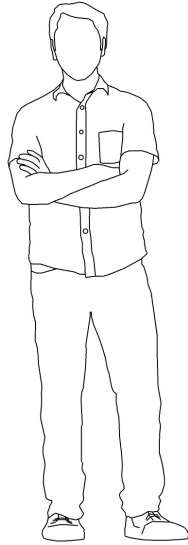
FOUR (4) INTERACTIVE PODIUMS WITH SOUND WILL BE PLACED AT THE CENTER OF THE SCULPTURE.

CARD BOX



FOUR (4) FREESTANDING CONTAINER BOXES MADE FROM WOOD MATERIAL.

CARD BOX



FREESTANDING. BOX TO CONTAIN ARTIST PLAYING CARDS.

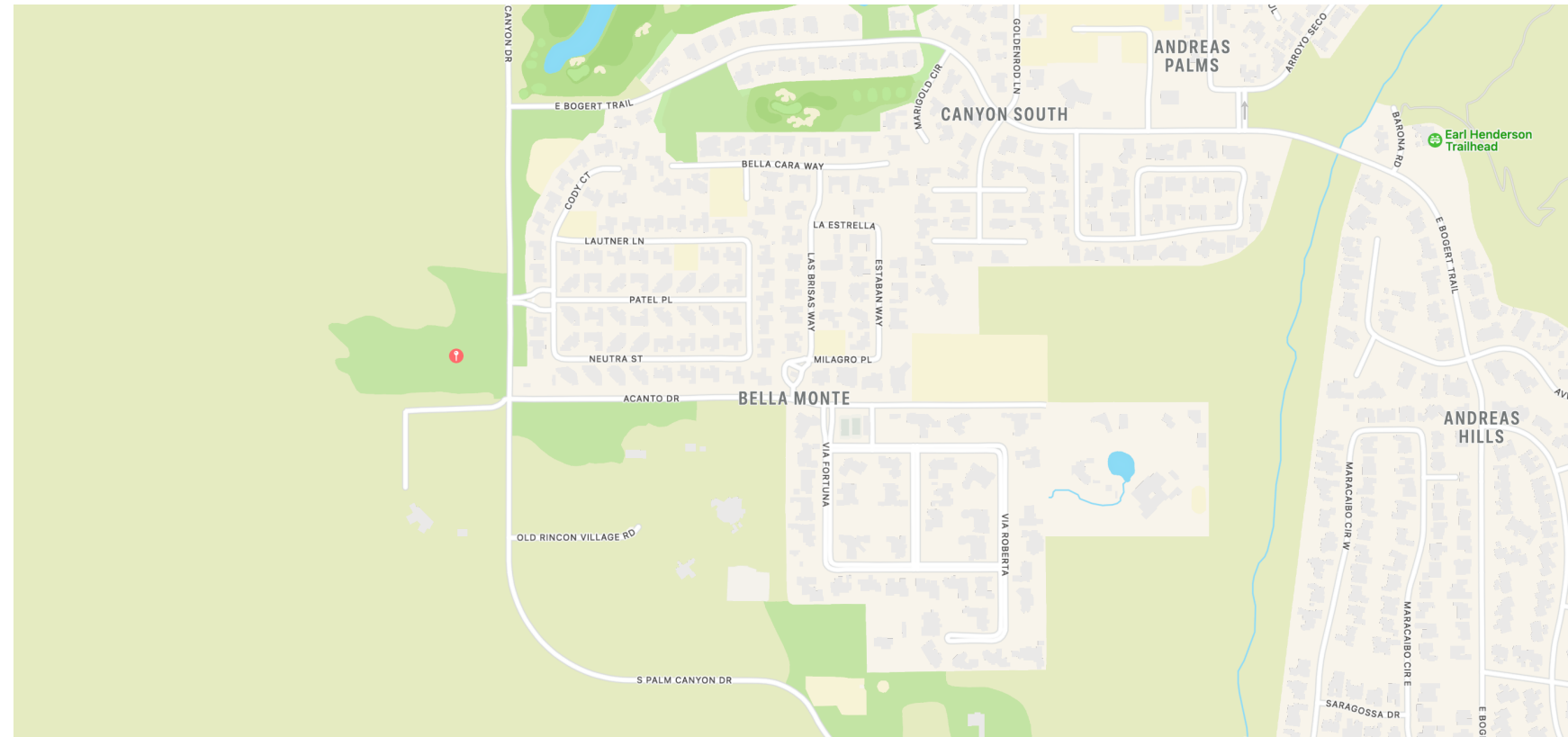
INSTALLATION SITE

A site located within the Coachella Valley is preferred with particular interest in situating the work upon Agua Caliente Tribal lands.

Additionally, the possibility of viewers to be able to view the work from above would also be desirable.

Possible location:

[Acanto Dr.](#)
[Palm Springs, CA 92262](#)
[United States](#)



ABOUT THE CAHUILLA

The Cahuilla people live in Southern California. Their original territory stretched between the San Bernardino Mountain Range and the Chocolate Mountains in the North to Borrego Springs in the South and from Palomar Mountains in the West to the Colorado River to the East. This area included many varied geographical formations such as mountain ranges, canyons, valley sand the desert floor. This area is very harsh in both the summer and the winter. On the desert floor in the summer temperatures can reach 125° F, while winter temperatures can remain below freezing for weeks at a time. Water sources in the area were highly variable and could change between areas, seasons and from year to year.

The 24,000 square mile area that the Cahuilla occupied was divided up into ten or twelve smaller pieces. Each piece was claimed by a sib or family lineage. Within the sib areas there were multiple villages. Houses in a village were generally situated around a water source. Anthropological accounts suggest between 25 to 50 houses could be spread out over a three-to-five mile area.

The ceremonial house was also centrally located. The lineage leader, or "net" lived in this house. The house had a section that was a sacred sanctuary where the ceremonial bundle, "maiswat", was kept. The ceremonial house also had a dancing area and seating room, a cooking area and a dancing area in front of the house.



CAHUILLA BASKETRY

Historically, basketry for the Cahuilla was a gendered art and only the women did the weaving. The Cahuilla used materials native to the desert they lived in to make their baskets. Cahuilla only made coiled baskets that coiled out in a counterclockwise manner when looking at the bottom of the basket. The basket consisted of filler, the bundle, and the material used to sew the filler to the basket with, the splint. The bundle was usually deer grass while the splint was juncus or sumac. Juncus has a naturally red portion near the root and is overall darker than sumac. Sumac is very light and uniform in color.

For the Cahuilla there were three basic basket forms. The flat round basket that looked like a tray was called "chi-pat-mal." These trays were used to hold food and to gamble with. Additionally, there are three classes of designs in Cahuilla culture. The first class contains designs with obvious imagery: snakes, people, animals, mountains, stars, lightning, etc. The second class of designs was patterns or objects that have certain meaning to the maker and the tribe. For example the swastika is seen on many Cahuilla baskets. It is the symbol for good luck and it symbolizes the circle of life: birth, growth, parent and death. The eagle was also the symbol for power or knowledge. The third class of designs had no interpretation. They were simply patterns that looked attractive to the weaver or perhaps the buyer.



Top: Lupe Alberras, Cahuilla, Santa Rose Reservation, Rain and Sun Eagle Basket, ca. 1910. Palm Springs Art Museum.
Bottom: Dolores Saneva Patencio, Cahuilla/Cupeño, Agua Caliente Reservation, Large Olla Storage Basket, ca. 1910. Palm Springs Art Museum.



WHAT WE DO

Desert X creates contemporary art exhibitions that engage with desert environments through site-specific installations by acclaimed and emerging artists from around the world.

Non-prescriptive and exploratory, Desert X encourages discovery, reflection, and connection. Art becomes the road map which gives voice to social, historical, and cultural issues of desert communities.

Contrary to the archetype, a desert is not defined by the absence of water. The desert landscape is formed by the memory of water.

DIANA CAMPBELL

CO-CURATOR, DESERT X 2023

Diana Campbell is a Princeton-educated American curator who has been working in South and Southeast Asia since 2010, primarily in India, Bangladesh, and the Philippines. She is committed to fostering a transnational art world, and her plural and long-range vision addresses the concerns of underrepresented regions and artists alongside the more established in manifold forums. While she was born in Los Angeles, her maternal family being indigenous CHamoru from the island of Guam, her heritage inspires her curatorial practice which seeks to amplify the reach of indigenous voices. Since 2013, she has served as the Founding Artistic Director of Dhaka-based Samdani Art Foundation, Bangladesh and Chief Curator of the Dhaka Art Summit, leading the critically acclaimed 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020 editions and envisioning the upcoming 2023 edition.



NEVILLE WAKEFIELD

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, DESERT X

Neville Wakefield is a modern curator interested in exploring the ways in which art behaves outside of institutional contexts. This interest led him to co-found Elevation1049, a site-specific biennial in Gstaad, Switzerland, while his role as artistic director of Desert X has been instrumental in shaping the recurring exhibition that attracted over 400,000 visitors to the Coachella Valley region of Southern California. With Saudi curators Raneem Farsi and Aya Alireza he is co-curator of Desert X AlUla 2020, a site-specific exhibition of international artists, taking place in AlUla, northwest Saudi Arabia, home to the country's first UNESCO World Heritage Site, Hegra. As senior curatorial advisor for PS1 MoMA and curator of Frieze Projects, he gained a reputation for challenging the conditions that shape art in both commercial and noncommercial contexts.



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge and honor the Cahuilla people, who are the traditional custodians of the land where Desert X takes place.

We respect the Cahuilla culture and identity which has been bound up for generations with the land upon which we live, learn and create.





**THANK YOU.
GRACIAS.**

Jenny Gil
Executive Director

+1 760 567 3284
jenny@desertx.org

The Palm Springs Swim Center: Where are we going?



A presentation by the PSSC Watchdogs
To the Palm Springs Parks & Recreation Commission
February 27, 2023

Our Group includes:

Jeff Nelson



Rick Mignault



Donna Newton



And **many** other concerned Swim Center users

What is our Purpose?

We would like to speak on behalf of the community of users of the Swim Center. The facility is in a state of disrepair and is operating in an ever-declining/reduced manner. The result is that what was once a unique and world-class public asset in the Coachella Valley does not reliably meet diverse community needs.

Immediate and sustained action is needed to turn this situation around and restore the Swim Center to what it can be and should be. We would like to be part of the solution.



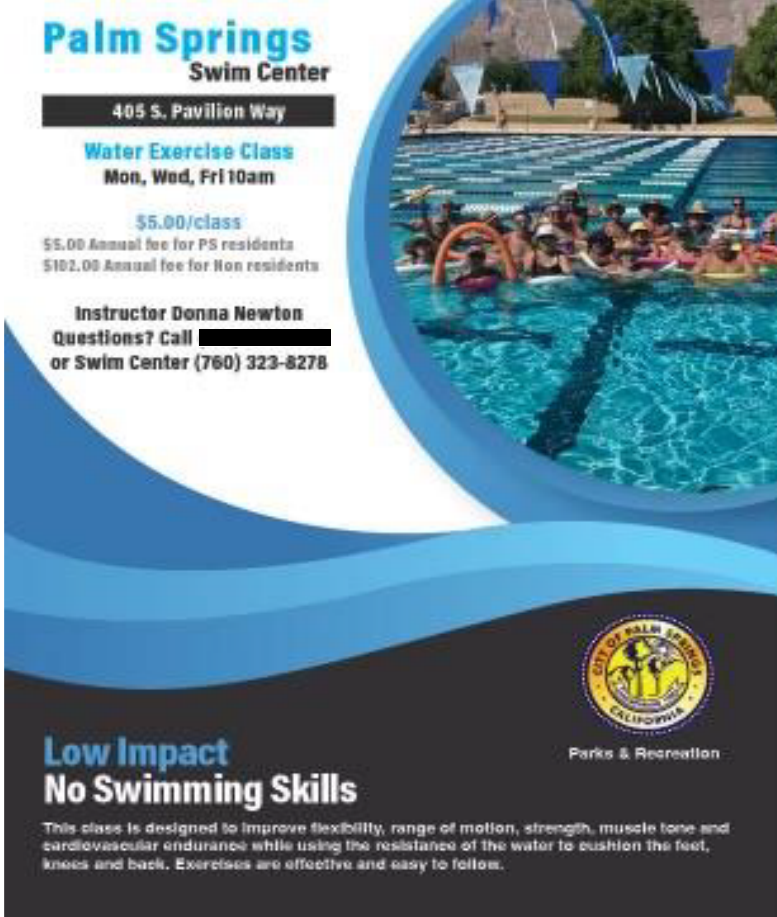
Today's Presentation

- I. Background
- II. Current Situation
 - A. Management/Leadership
 - B. Recruiting and Staffing
 - C. Maintenance
 - D. Vision and Planning
 - E. Public Outreach and Communication
- III. Immediate Actions
- IV. Subsequent Actions
- V. How can we help?



I. Background

- The Swim Center is nearly 50 years old and is one of only two large **public** swim facilities in the entire Coachella Valley which is used daily by many full and part time residents.
- Some of the user groups include:
 - Lap Swimmers
 - Aqua Exercise Program participants
 - Swim Lessons
 - Masters Swimming Program participants
 - Age Group Swim Teams programs
 - High School Water Polo
 - High School Swim Team
 - Competitions/Swim Meets
 - Family Enjoyment/Water Play
- Facilities are tired and neglected from a capital and operational perspective
- Both short term improvements and substantial rejuvenation are needed



Palm Springs
Swim Center

405 S. Pavilion Way


Water Exercise Class
Mon, Wed, Fri 10am

\$5.00/class
\$5.00 Annual fee for PS residents
\$102.00 Annual fee for Non residents

Instructor Donna Newton
Questions? Call [REDACTED]
or Swim Center (760) 323-8278

Low Impact
No Swimming Skills

This class is designed to improve flexibility, range of motion, strength, muscle tone and cardiovascular endurance while using the resistance of the water to cushion the feet, knees and back. Exercises are effective and easy to follow.


Parks & Recreation

IIA. Current Situation: Management/Leadership

Effective Leadership is desperately needed at all levels

At the Swim Center:

- Aquatic Supervisor needed; missing for 5 months
- Lead Lifeguard
- Full staff at 8 FTEs
- Facility must be kept clean and presentable at all times
- Eliminate unplanned closures and reduced hours

By the Parks & Recreation Department:

- Community outreach and engagement
- Improve/enhance programming, hours, etc.
- Open, honest and timely communication
- Monthly newsletter (?)

By this Commission and City Council:

- Strong and effective advocacy for the Swim Center
- Meaningful oversight of Department staff
- Commitment to adequate and consistent funding

February 26 email blast

Hello Swim Center Patrons:

The Palm Springs Swim Center will be on a modified schedule next week to align with staffing levels. All other days remain on the standard operating schedule. Please see below before coming over to the Swim Center.

- **Monday, February 27:** 10AM – 3PM (No lane reservations; drop-in swim.)
- **Tuesday, February 28:** 10AM – 3PM (No lane reservations; drop-in swim.)
- **Thursday, March 2:** 10AM – 1PM (No lane reservations; drop-in swim.)

Feel free to call us at (760) 323-8278 and also check our [website for updates](#).

Thanks for your continued patience, and we hope to see you!

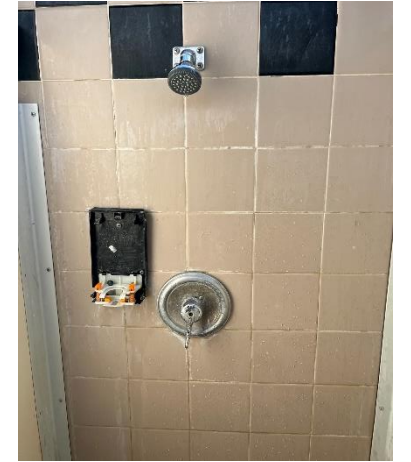
IIB. Current Situation: Recruiting & Staffing

- Currently VERY understaffed resulting in regular closures almost every week for six 6 months
- Salaries need to be competitive with private sector entry level positions in the Coachella Valley
- Need to meet budgeted staffing level of 8 FTEs immediately
- Training, mentoring and skills development are needed



IIC. Current Situation: Maintenance

- Pool bottom, locker rooms, pool deck and overall grounds are tired and not cleaned regularly
- Initially, daily cleaning and regular maintenance is needed of all areas
- Planning for improvements needs to be accelerated and completed so that those improvements can be made in a reasonable timeframe



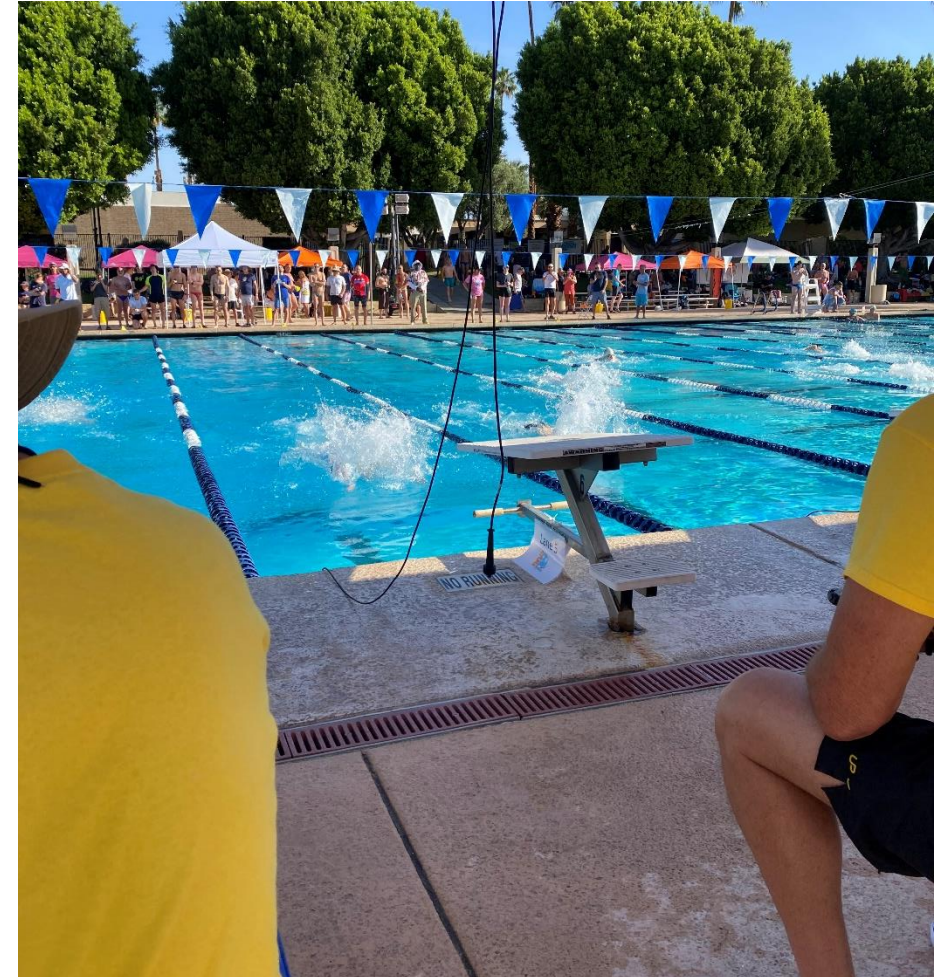
IID. Current Situation: Vision and Planning

- The current Parks & Rec **Master Plan** was completed in 2014 and is very outdated
- There is no overall **Capital Plan** to identify facility assets, useful life, anticipated timeframe for replacement and potential costs.
- There is no **Operational Plan** to govern day-to-day operations and give pool staff (and the public) clear guidance on expectations
- The **Annual Budget** doesn't seem to be an issue since the appropriated funds are routinely not spent



IIE. Current Situation: Public Outreach and Communications

- Hundreds of regular users rely on the Swim Center for their physical and mental well being on a daily basis
- Users have grown increasingly frustrated by unplanned closures, reduced hours, decay/deterioration all caused by poor management of the facility
- Poor communications have been only addressed recently (and partially) but none of the underlying issues have been addressed
- Mention has been made of a Community Meeting, but none has been scheduled to date



III. Immediate Actions

- Create an Ad-Hoc Committee to assist the Commission and Department in developing solutions
- Get to Full Staffing (8 FTEs)
- Improve Facility Management and Oversight
- Develop Operations Manual
- Improve Pool and Facility Maintenance
- Establish Staff Development Plan
- Improve Communications

IV. Subsequent Actions

- Develop an Aquatic Program and Facility Use Plan based Upon Public Input
- Sustained and Consistent Attention to Implementation, identification of changing needs and desires of the Community, and effectively addressing challenges
- Establish Swim Center Master Plan: Mission, Vision and Tactics
- Consider alternate operating models (e.g. management by YMCA)

V. How can we help? Some ideas...

- Getting a member of our group appointed to this Commission and establishing an ad hoc committee for Swim Center
- Having a “seat at the table” with selected architect for the upcoming planning process for facility improvements
- Regular (monthly) meetings with Department and Pool Leadership to discuss issues and brainstorm solutions.
- Consider volunteering opportunities (pool cleaning?)





Thank you for Listening AND Taking Action!

From: [REDACTED]
To: [ParksAndRec](#); [Janet Burns](#); [Yvonne Wise](#)
Subject: Parks and Recreation Commission
Date: Monday, February 27, 2023 8:38:15 AM

NOTICE: This message originated outside of The City of Palm Springs -- **DO NOT CLICK** on **links** or open **attachments** unless you are sure the content is safe.

The City of Palm Springs has a long established and proud history of providing parks and recreation for citizens of Palm Springs. The soon to be updated 2014 Master Plan identified the 55 and over age group as making up 45.6 percent of the city's population. The participants in the Water Fitness Program are predominately in this age group and depend on this program for their overall fitness, social, as well as mental well being.

The Water Fitness Program has been severely impacted over the last several months by frequent pool closures. In November, the steps going in to the pool were broken. It was previously reported to the staff to be in disrepair, but was not addressed until three weeks later. This meant the pool was closed for three weeks. I was only informed that they were fixed when one of the pool members informed me that they had been replaced. When I called to see why I wasn't informed so that I could resume my classes, I was told that they were going to call me the following week. Because of the delay in fixing the steps we were only able to hold classes four times in November.

Because of pool closures in the month of December we only had class 7 times (Unfortunately I had to cancel the classes 3 times due to weather conditions). In January, classes were held only 6 times. All cancellations in January were called by Parks and Recreations staff. I want to point out that classes are normally held 3x a week.

I, as well as many class participants, signed up with management to be notified whenever the pool is closed. These notices were often not received. It should be noted that some participants drive from as far away as Morongo for these classes and notification of pool closure is very important to them.

It is difficult to have consistency and encourage and promote the classes with this many closures. There are people who have stopped attending classes because of the frequent, unannounced closures.

I also want to point out that I often see the pool staff preparing for swim meets and other demands, but when it comes to the day-to-day needs of the city's community who count on the pool being opened daily there seems to be little accountability.

There are also many inconveniences at the pool:

- There is confusion at the entrance.
 - Often there are long lines because of signing new people up.
 - There is no toilet paper in the stalls.
 - Poor maintenance and months of delays in hiring pool staff.
 - Safety and security in the locker rooms/showers/dressing areas.
- Lockers are often broken into and the homeless jump over the wall to break into them and steal things

I realize there is a shortage of lifeguards nationwide, however, I feel the current staff needs leadership and motivation to keep present staff. I truly want to help the city build its capacity and generate more revenue to the maximum extent possible. I ask for your help in creating a swim center that we can be proud of being a member.

Donna Newton
Water Fitness Instructor