

## **Carolina Butler Citizen Activist and Indian Historian**

Carolina was born in Phoenix in 1934 to Rosaura and Elias Castillo, third of their seven children. Her ancestors came to Arizona from Mexico in 1864. The generations have spread out and continue today to make their contributions to Arizona. She graduated from Santa Cruz in 1951. In 1966 she married Walker Butler and moved to the Scottsdale area to raise her four children: Paul, Michael, David Elias and Christina.

In 1971, Carolina's passion for Arizona, its desert and mountains, its people, was challenged simultaneously by powerful issues. Big land developments, environmental degradation, controversial water issues, all threatened the spirit of her ideal Arizona. That year she also met the Yavapai of the Fort McDowell Reservation near Phoenix.

Few people translate their passions to action; they are called activists, people who produce results. And she did. With her household money, support from her husband, and a portable typewriter, she wrote countless letters, did endless research, attended and spoke at public meetings, organized communities. She worked with in- and out-of-state journalists, testified at the capitol in Phoenix and before congressional committees in Washington, D.C. Because Carolina had become so effective, Arizona Congressman Morris K. Udall's top aide once greeted her, "You're a legend in your own time!"

Carolina's chance meeting with the Fort McDowell Yavapai in 1971 would bring her into a whole different arena. For ten years she helped the tribe fight the government's plan to relocate them and take their land for the proposed Orme Dam. During the struggle, the oldest man in the tribe asked her to write the tribe's history. In late 2012 she published *Oral History of the Yavapai* which tells this historic tribe's forgotten story. [www.oralhistoryoftheyavapai.com](http://www.oralhistoryoftheyavapai.com)

In the 1980s, Carolina chalked up some huge successes. She convinced the state's top engineers to let the people vote for strong, more costly bridges over the Salt and Agua Fria rivers after record flows had toppled the previous bridges. The issue passed 5 to 1. This greatly weakened the calls for Orme Dam to control flows. The Orme Dam was defeated in 1981 and the tribe stayed on their land. Carolina had helped to save a culture. Also saved were rare Bald Eagles plus rich riparian habitat of the confluence of the Salt and Verde rivers.

In 1987, she led the effort to defeat the \$3B Rio Salado Project in a Maricopa County bond election. Voters defeated it 2 to 1. The Rio Salado Project, riverside land development, had been a main argument of the same powerful Orme Dam supporters. From 1971 to 2014, Carolina has put her passions to action. She is in fifteen books written by authors who have researched or recorded her remarkable successes.