Senior Police Academy held for second year

By Ira Hayes
Weenuche Smoke Signals

TOWAOC—The Senior Police Academy was held for the second year by the Ute Mountain Tribal Police Department March 31 and April 1 at the Community Center.

The two-day course was conducted by Ute Mountain Tribal Police Officers Chris Cable and Karla Ross. Officer Cable has been here at Towaoc for one year and Officer Ross has been here for two years.

The course covered both Tribal and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) jurisdictions and laws that apply to the community and also explained how police vehicles and equipment were used on the job.

“Through this course we hope to present a more positive image of the police and the work we do,” said Cable on why the course was important to the relationship between the community’s kids and the police.

Cable also said that they would like to motivate the kids to be good and stay out of trouble and added that building a positive relationship creates a safer community.

See POLICE, pg. 7

Junior Police Academy held for second year

By Ira Hayes
Weenuche Smoke Signals

TOWAOC—The Junior Police Academy was held for the second year by the Ute Mountain Tribal Police Department March 29.

Alfred Wall Sr. recently retired and was honored with a reception for the tribe at the age of 15. Between college and vocational training, he has worked for the tribe all of his life.

Wall graduated from Montezuma-Cortez High School in 1965. That same year he went to a vocational program to discuss the “Running for a Stronger and Healthier Navajo and Ute Nations” run that will take place July 27 through August 2.

The mission behind this run is to encourage people to look back on traditional values to help eliminate diseases and other health problems that plague native communities. It will also be a means to help with costs of these diseases.

“Looking back through our history, a lot of our people ran and they were healthy,” said Ray Baldwin, co-coordinator of the run.

“That was the way of life and along the way, with economic development and development of our communities, we fell away from our traditions of running.”

Navajo Nation Vice-President, Rex Jim, initiated the start of this run in 2011 to bring attention to the health of people. Originally the run was held in October, but to encourage youth participation, the run will be held in July and August.

This run is an estimated 400 miles and will start from

See RUN, pg. 3

President Student return to sign wills for community

By W. Plenty Holes
Weenuche Smoke Signals

TOWAOC—Students from University of Denver (DU) Sturm College of Law came to draft wills at no charge for American Indians March 13-21.

This is the second year that Professor Lucy Marsh invited students as part of the Tribal Wills Lab, which they are hoping to make an annual event.

“We had such a good time down here last year that lots of students wanted to come again,” said Marsh.

“There was a waiting list, we couldn’t bring all the students that wanted to come.”

Typically, when getting a will drafted there is an interview process then one would go back a couple weeks to finalize the will.

“We’re condensing two weeks of work down to a day,” said Marsh.

Marsh brought down twice as many students as last year and branched out to include the White Mesa, Utah community.

Professor Marsh had to go thru a lengthy process to get licensed to practice law in Utah so that they could draft wills in White Mesa.

The students chose to spend their spring break in the Ute communities to help draft wills receiving no extra credit to do so – there were even a few repeat students from last year.

“We had such tremendous success in terms of numbers of wills written – just the relationship that we’ve developed down here, we feel so welcome,” said Colin Fletcher. See WILLS, pg. 3
The Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs held their quarterly meeting at the Carriage House on the Boettcher Mansion on March 21.

By Amie Hammond
Weenuche Smoke Signals

DENVER—The Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs (CCIA) held their quarterly meeting at the Carriage House at the Boettcher Mansion March 21.

Southern Ute Vice-Chairman, James Olguin, gave an update on the tribe’s health care program.

“We do have insurance cards issued to all Southern Ute tribal members. We are currently in the process to hopefully, by April, have a vision and dental insurance cards issued to all Southern Ute tribal members. We are trying to connect to other youth to hear concerns and issues. The council is a thirteen-year project. We are trying to figure out how to get broadband up to rural parts of the state,” said Sheppard.

The second part of Sheppard’s presentation was about the First Responder Network Emporium. This was brought together after the 9/11 Commission, Hurricane Katrina and Sandy relief efforts.

First responders typically rely on smart phones and most of them use networks providers such as AT&T and Verizon. In the case of an emergency, those networks are the first to go down. The response to this issue was to build a nationwide cell network for first responders. This network would be available in all states and on tribal lands.

Chairman Newton was also known on the “Powwow Trail” as a member of various drum groups including his own drum group YellowJacket. Newton made powwow regalia, barrettes, earrings and plumes.

Newton was a strong cultural advocate and taught Ute culture to the students at the Southern Ute Indian Montessori Academy. “Our hearts are heavy at the passing of Chairman Newton, whose time with us was all too short,” said Joseph Garcia, Colorado Lt. Governor.

“Chairman Newton was a wise leader and tireless advocate on behalf of his tribe. His collaborative nature and progressive spirit will be sorely missed.”
WILLS continued

on why he decided to return and do the wills project again. “There was a part of me that wanted to go to the beach in Mexico for my last spring break as a student, but I couldn’t pass [this project] up.”

Fiduciary trust officer for the Southwest Region, John Roach, reached out to various law schools last year about issues surrounding the American Indian Probate Reform Act (AIPRA) and if there were any schools that wanted to help by writing wills for American Indians. “So what we do is draft wills for these individuals so that they can say where their land goes if they don’t want it to eventually work its way back to the tribe,” said Sheena Goldsborough, president of the Native American Law Student’s Association at DU. “It’s our understanding that there aren’t a whole lot of attorneys down here that do any kind of federal Indian probate, so we thought this would be a good way to get into a market niche and hopefully keep it going every single year.”

A section in AIPRA states that any land owned with less than five percent interest will go to the eldest child, if you do not have an eldest child, then it goes to the eldest grandchild or great-grandchild, if not, then the land goes back to the tribe. The act excludes additional children or grandchildren, aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews or nieces that one may want to leave land with.

“Everyone should get a will. They are very important things to have, and based on the current federal law, it’s something that’s really a necessity and it’s a way to make sure that your family’s taken care of when you can no longer speak for yourself,” said Goldsborough.

Gold’s research restarted the Native American Law Student’s Association at DU, which the national association was founded in the 1970s to promote the study of federal and tribal Indian law and to support American Indians in law school. The University of Denver lacks an American Indian law program and offers only one class on the topic which is offered every other semester. “We’re hoping to get a stronger [American] Indian law program, we definitely need one,” said Marsh. “And with the students who come down here, they’ll probably be good at trying to persuade the school that we should have more courses in Indian law.”

Law issues are huge in Indian Country ranging from land-into-trust, economic development and treaty rights.

With many tribal cases being heard before the Supreme Court, Professor Marsh shared her opinion as to the need for more American Indians to pursue a law degree. “I think the more American Indians who become lawyers the better it will be,” said Marsh. “That doesn’t mean they have to be tribal lawyers, if they’re just lawyers in some corporate office, they’re never less getting the idea, the concept, of the sovereignty of the tribes [...] and hopefully will prevent many of the laws that have been passed in the past.”

RUN continued

Towaoc and end at Twin Arrows Casino in Flagstaff, Arizona. “We will be averaging 60 to 65 miles a day,” said Baldwin.

Communities or chapters along the way will provide a place for participants to stay. Runners will be able to continue and follow along the way to the end of the run.

Navajo Nation Vice-President Rex Jim attended the meeting to promote collaboration with the tribe on the run. Jim talked about the simple things that can be a start to living a healthier lifestyle. “A simple idea is to promote health and sometimes when we think about things, we think that we need a lot of money and fancy equipment to be healthy,” said Jim. “But all we need is a pair of walking shoes to start walking. Drink more water, eat well and sleep well.” Jim noted that many communities will offer health fairs and daily events along the route.

People who have joined us have said ‘I am running this not for me, but to offer respect for my mother or uncle or somebody who passed on who died of diabetes, or heart disease, or cancer,’” said Jim.

“These chronic illnesses don’t say ‘well you are Ute, Zuni, Navajo therefore I will leave you alone.’ It takes all of us – we need to work together. The health of our nations is at stake.” Cedric Lang and Gordon Hammond plan to start the run from Towaoc. The signing of a Proclamation between the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and the Navajo Nation in support of the run was held on March 25 at the Ute Mountain Scoping meeting. Contact the Sleeping Ute Diabetes Program or Cedric Lang at Ute Mountain Recreation for more information.

WALL continued

The Navajo Nation Vice-President, Rex Jim (top left), Navajo Nation health department representatives along with the Sleeping Ute Diabetes Prevention Program have been meeting since early March to plan the “Running for a Stronger and Healthier Navajo and Ute Nations” run set to take place on July 27 thru August 2.

The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and the Navajo Tribe and the Navajo Nation in support of the run was held on March 25 at the Ute Mountain Scoping meeting. Contact the Sleeping Ute Diabetes Program or Cedric Lang at Ute Mountain Recreation for more information.
The enactment of the ACA envisions, brings them together and health care – and public health provisions of promoting and prevention provisions are called for by APHA and other leading experts in its health reform law is comprehensive. Included in the historic prevention provisions consistent with those called for by APHA in its health reform agenda and supported by other leading experts in population health. American Public Health Association (APHA) and its Affiliates have been at the forefront of promoting and protecting critical public health provisions for decades. The ACA is another step toward creating the healthiest nation over the course of the next generation. “The idea is to begin to move our health system upstream so we’re dealing with prevention as a primary thought versus fixing injury. Driving a motor vehicle is a privilege and not a right or “personal freedom” in Colorado. When you do not wear a seat belt and you injure yourself or others in a traffic crash, the public pays (in increased medical costs, insurance premiums and taxes for publically-funded medical care). That makes it a public concern, not just a personal one. Make buckling up a habit YOU can live with! The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Since Click It or Ticket started in Colorado in 2002, seat belt use in Colorado has increased from 72 percent to 82.9 percent, and unrestrained deaths have declined by 56 percent.

On the Ute Mountain Ute Reservation, however, seat belt use is only 30 percent. Since 2011, five unrestrained tribal members have lost their lives in traffic crashes and several have suffered debilitating traumas. 

Regular seat belt use is the single most effective way to prevent serious injuries and save people from dying in motor vehicle crashes. In 2010, 166 people who were not buckled up lost their lives in traffic crashes on Colorado roadways. If everyone had buckled up, nearly half of the victims would have lived.

“Click It or Ticket” is a nationwide campaign from the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. It is an annual enforcement effort to remind motorists of the importance of using seat belts. This year’s Click It or Ticket enforcement period is May 24 through June 6, 2010. 

Students each week were given an opportunity to work with Chef Arnold Safari from the Strater Hotel in Durango.

The cooking activity for the day was making whole wheat pizza with vegetables and turkey pepperoni.

Students made the dough, sauce, and cut the vegetables. Chef Safari helped the class with the preparations by reading the instructions out loud. 

In the previous classes, the students were given an opportunity to go shopping for ingredients to make a healthy meal. A student reminded the class that the healthiest options for food are found in the perimeter of a supermarket meaning the produce, meat, bakery, and dairy areas. Foods with the most preservatives are usually the unhealthiest and are found in the center of the supermarket. 

The Ute Mountain Learning Center held the last “Cooking Matters for Adults” class on March 24. The class taught students how to buy and cook low-costing healthy food.

The Ute Mountain Learning Center held a six week “Cooking Matters for Adults” class which ended on March 24. The class taught students how to buy and cook low-costing healthy food.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) takes two U.S. health systems – public health and health care – and brings them together like never before. As the ACA envisions, more collaboration between the overall health workforces will save lives and money. The enactment of the ACA signals a shift in our nation’s health system from one that focuses on treatment of the sick to one that is committed to proactively keep people and communities healthy and safe.
UVU photo department to hold gallery next year

Utah Valley University professors and students came to Towaoc to teach Ute Mountain high school students the basics of photography for their photos to possibly go in their gallery next year.

By W. Plenty Holes
Wenuche Smoke Signals

TOWAOC—Utah Valley University (UVU) photography department representatives and students came to speak with Ute Mountain high school seniors about documenting their stories thru photography March 14.

The hope is to have the photos placed in the UVU art gallery next year.

“One of the things that we really want to stress with you guys is we care what you think,” said Kimberly Slade, UVU photography instructor.

“We want to know what you care about – we want to know what makes you excited.”

The students were given cameras and taught how to use them. They broke into individual groups where the high school students were taught the basics of light and framing by the instructors and UVU students.

“What we’re really concerned with is the story itself, or really intrigued in is the story itself, not the mechanics of the camera and all the other technical kind of things,” said Travis Lovell, UVU photography area coordinator.

Due to a lack of American Indian representations in the media, most images and perceptions that non-Natives receive about American Indians are stereotypical and inaccurate.

Teaching American Indian youth media skills such as photography provides them with a voice.

“Our job as we see it is to help you, empower you with the tools and confidence, so that you feel comfortable telling your story,” said Slade.

“Because whether you know it or not, people care what you think and what you have to say.”

The professors and students will come back in a few months to check on the progress of the high school students. They will also keep in contact thru a Facebook page designed specifically for this project.

UVU photo department to hold gallery next year

UVU art gallery next March 14.

Chantelle Manuel (right) learns the basics of lighting by a UVU photo department to hold gallery next year.

High school graduation fundraiser dance

A dance was held on March 14 to raise money for non-enrolled graduating high school students. Lightning Rock band played for the dance and a concession stand was also held to raise money. The organizers also celebrated Tyreisha Posey’s birthday (bottom right).

GRADUATION FUNDRAISING RAFFLE

Pendleton Blanket, Three Necklaces, Four Pairs of Earrings, Ute Mttn. Pottery Cup, Ute Mttn. Pottery Glass Bear Vase

$2 each ticket or 6 tickets for $10

You can buy tickets at the Education Center, or any High School Senior Student from now until April 30.
DURANGO — The American Indian student alliance, Buffalo Council, held a speaker symposium featuring music, exercise and guest speaking March 3.

The main speaker of the event was lawyer, film-maker, writer, Gyasi Ross (Blackfeet, Suquamish).


“Native people, our stories have not been told in a compelling way,” said Ross. “Because we’re not the ones telling those stories, unfortunately, we’ve been relying upon other people to tell the stories and then getting mad when those stories aren’t told correctly.”

Ross said American Indians have the power to change the way the world sees them by creating their own media.

“When we have the ability to create the images and yet we don’t take that opportunity to create the images, that’s just like we agree to the images that were created.”

Ross also spoke of past Indigenous art as “survival art” – it was not made for art’s sake but as a means of survival like pottery and wall carvings warning people of danger.

A lot of contemporary art counters survival art and contributes to our destruction.

“Some hip hop music that I so much that once told me how to survive when I have these interactions with the cops, now tells me to take ‘mollies’ right? Now tells me that I got to go spend all my money on liquor and to have unprotected sex.”

Ross said that it’s possible to create modern survival art that is acceptable by a majority of people without being “preachy.”

Sihasin, Natannii Means also performed at the event and Rulan Tangen (Metis) had the audience doing various exercises to “decolonize” the body.

The American Indian Economic Development Specialist of NCAIED, Gary “Litefoot” Davis, and Derrick Watchman, chairman of the NCAIED Board, White House Office of Public Engagement Deputy Associate Counsel, Raina Thiele, read a letter from President Barack Obama stating his support of RES.

After the opening session, there was a ribbon cutting ceremony to kick off the Business Tradeshows and Business Matchmaking Expo which had various businesses from around the country and was used for networking and attaining business contacts.

There was also a $20,000 “Business Plan Competition” throughout the summit. In order to be eligible to participate members must be: enrolled in a federally recognized tribe, an existing or upcoming business and have a creative idea.

The winner was the American Indian fashion boutique “Beyond Buckskin.” There were various sessions throughout the days of the summit. Sessions were an 90 minutes long with presentations discussing the following topics: Tourism, Investment, Affordable Care Act (ACA), Global Enterprise, Oil and Gas, Real Estate, Renewable Energy, Business Plan Development, Women in Business, Marketing, Mobile and Payment Solutions amongst others.

At the conclusion of each day, RES hosted networking reception dinners. On Monday, the grand opening reception dinner had musical guest Gabriel Ayala. On Tuesday, the reception’s theme was “Res Las Vegas Circle” with performances from Cirque Du Soleil and Wednesday’s reception was a business-to-business dinner.

Before Wednesday’s receptionRES, there was a “Native American Sports, Entertainment, and Fashion Industry Networking Reception” where conference attendees got the opportunity to meet middleweight boxer, George “Comanche Boy” Tadodahohippah, Moses Bring Plenty from “House of Cards,” and model Mariah Watchman from “America’s Next Top Model.”

The summit ended with a Small Business Showcase and Award Luncheon. There was a special presentation by the Office of Native Affairs to the U.S. Small Business Administration.

There was also a keynote speaker, Zach Ducheneaux, from the Tribal Technical Assistance Network, Intergovernmental Agriculture Council.

Besides the education gained from each session, networking was another component and it was great to meet people from other tribes and get business contacts for the better of our tribal economy.
A retirement reception was held for Tallas Cantsee Sr. on March 1 at the Community Center. Cantsee retired after 33 years as a police officer and is moving over into dispatch.

By W. Plenty Holes
Weenuche Smoke Signals

TOWAOC—Tallas Cantsee Sr. recently retired from his service as a police officer after 33 years and will transfer into dispatch. An honoring reception was held for Cantsee March 1 at a packed Community Center.

“He [Cantsee] laid aside his family, children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, relatives to dedicate himself to the protection of your community,” said Charlie Tailfeather (Warm Springs), master of ceremony for the event.

“Those 33 years are not going to be forgotten.”

The many trials a police officer has to go thru dealing with death and other tough issues were brought up.

Officers have to protect the privacy of the individuals they deal with so they often times have to hold a lot of these things inside. “They [police] deserve more than to be hated by us,” said Tailfeather.

“They deserve more than to be enemy number one.”

The master of ceremony spoke of past times and how there were individuals who policed in their encampments, keeping order. He also mentioned that the hatred towards police would stop if there were not so many people doing bad things. “We should not hate police officers because they’re doing the best they can. “Maybe that hate would stop if we stop our children from behaving the way they are now.”

All the presenters spoke of how great an officer “Uncle Tallas” was and how much they were going to miss him as an officer. Cantsee even helped a social worker become a police officer, who now has a criminal investigation degree.

“They deserve more than to be hated by us,” said Juanita Plenty Holes.

Cantsee spoke of the difficulties he faced being a police officer from the tribal police not being recognized by the state at first and then not being recognized federally and the issues they had to go thru to clarify that.

Other past issues with the revolving police chiefs, police brutality, the lack of training and the lack of officers were also talked about.

Cantsee spoke of the importance of protecting and valuing the community — for the youth to not vandalize the community. “Kids, don’t destroy our property – take care of it, be proud of your home,” said Cantsee.

“We have an awesome tribe and we take that for granted,” said Juanita Plenty Holes.

The many trials a police officer has to go thru dealing with death and other tough issues were brought up.

The BIA officers “Uncle Tallas” has to go thru dealing with death and other tough issues were brought up.

“I’m proud to be a member of this tribe,” Cantsee was honored with blankets, a plaque, a few badges and a revolver.

A small ceremony was held to help him let go of being an officer to be a regular citizen.

A small ceremony was held to help him let go of being an officer to be a regular citizen. 

POLICE continued

They introduced the police department’s chain-of-command; Chief of Police Michael McCoy, investigator Sammy Carol, Lieutenant Dale American Horse, Lieutenant Gwendolyn Smith. BIA Police Officers are: Lyle Benally, Kurt Holman, Eugene Yazzie, Jason Logg, Jerry Thompson and Shane Johnson, who patrols the White Mesa, Utah Community.

BIA Police Chief McCoy is a Choctaw from Oklahoma. Officer Eugene Yazzie is presently finishing the one year he has in the U.S. Navy. The three Ute Mountain Tribal Officers are Andy Ghere, Karla Ross and Chris Cable. On each shift there will be one tribal officer on duty. Each of the 17,399 law enforcement agencies across the US have different jurisdiction.

The BIA officers enforce tribal and federal laws on the reservations. They have the power to arrest Native American offenders on the reservations — it does not matter what tribe they are from.

Non-Native American offenders can only be arrested by the Ute Mountain Tribal Police on or off the reservation. They have federal, state, county, and tribal jurisdiction. That is the reason why at least one tribal police officer has to be on duty for the different shifts. Some of the tribal laws that apply on the reservation are: liquor violation, intoxication, contributing to minors, terrorist threats (i.e. “I am going beat up!” or “I am going to kill you!”) domestic violence, fire bans, and drugs, refusing to assist a police officer.

Monday morning the kids got the opportunity to tour the patrol vehicles. They learned how to operate the emergency lights, sirens, talked on the speakers. They sat in the front and back seats of the two patrol cars.

On Tuesday, they covered the “duty gear” each officer uses to do their job. The bulletproof vest and duty belt worn together weigh about 25 pounds.

The new tasers now have two shots. They can also be activated by touching the taser anywhere on the body. It is only used when a suspect is uncooperative, combative or resisting arrest.

The taser may hold 50,000 volt charge but it is designed to only apply .002 amps to the body. That is enough amps to take down a 344 pound adult male.

The officers are required to qualify with the baton, rifle, shotgun, pistol and tasers every six months. Safety rules with all firearms were covered with the kids.

One: never point a weapon at anyone. Second: make sure of your backstop. (See if there is someone or something behind your target) Third: treat all weapons as if they’re loaded.

The course also covered car accident and crime scenes investigations. One goal of this year’s academy was to allow the kids to get to know their community police officers and what, why, and how they do their jobs.
DENVER—A Tri-Ute meeting was held at History Colorado on March 20.

The three tribes met in the morning at the State Capitol to be introduced in front of the State Senate and Terry Knight Sr. gave the morning’s blessing, which has become an annual event.

At the Tri-Ute meeting, Ute Mountain Ute Tribal (UMUT) Chairman, Manuel Heart, proposed a change in the bylaws quorum to two members from each tribe instead of three. The quorum has always been an issue due to various reservations. Berry mentioned that the MOU was sent out to the UMUT and the MOU was sent out to the SUIT in September. There was no feedback given to the SUIT to complete the finalizing of the MOU.

“As soon as the MOU is done we can outline what services may be whether its elder services, construction services, wood deliveries, etc,” said Berry.

“I think that this document is very crucial in providing services to all of our tribal members,” Berry also mentioned that the SUIT will hold their general meeting in April to give updated reports on housing, employment, health, and restructuring. She also mentioned the health care plan and the cards that the tribe is providing to its members.

“We are working with the state and the tribal department to obtain IDs that would be recognized at the state level. It is not just a tribal ID but a government ID,” said Berry.

Berry also mentioned that the project could also be used in partnership with the UMUT.

UMUT Chairman Heart said the UMUT council will be taking a retreat in Ignacio to discuss economic development for the tribe. Other areas of focus will be on health care, education, and housing.

Heart talked about the upcoming honor roll trip for students to Washington D.C. Heart announced that he would be taking five to ten parents to accompany the 15 9th thru 12th grade students. Heart also announced the possibility of taking honor roll students to other places besides Washington D.C. such as Alaska.

Heart gave an update on the Ute Mountain Ute Elder Committee and the proposal of a Ute Mountain Youth Committee. The previous youth committee had been established and then diminished.

“Our voters are getting younger and we really need to educate them on what’s going on in their own government,” said Heart.

Also on issues that we are facing on the regulatory side with law enforcement – it’s something we really need to address,” said Howell.

The Tri-Ute Council pose for a photo after their meeting on March 20 in Denver, Colorado.

The Tri-Ute Council pose for a photo after their meeting on March 20 in Denver, Colorado.

Happy Birthday!!!

Happy Belated Birthday to my granddaughter and daughter

Brygall Ponzo  
3-18-14

Tania Ponzo  
3-29-14

May our creator always guide you and stay close beside you and bless you in so many ways.

Happy belated birthday Brygall and Tania Ponzo.

Your Grandma Francine Root and your Dad Bryan Ace Ponzo Sr.

Happy Birthday

Very Happy birthday to our beloved mom Jennie Rebecca Root.

We love you so much and happy to have our mother around and we wish you a very happy birthday with all our love and all our heart.

From Krista and Daniel Weaver Jr.