

## WARRIORS

Continued from B4

tossed in a shot. The Warriors caged a 3-pointer and Uintah River was ahead 22-14. Uintah River led 22-15 at the half.

Uintah River added a 3 for a 25-17 edge to start the third quarter and Spoonhunter plus Talldbird garnered hoops for a 29-20 Warrior lead. The Warriors were up at 29-26 after three quarters of action.

"It was good game, but was intense. We buckled down and did what we had to win," Teague said.

The fourth quarter was a scoring nightmare until Real Salt Lake scored a free throw with 2:46 left in the game to put Uintah River's lead to two

at 29-27. The Warriors' Kris-hani McCook baked up a treat of two free throws that had Uintah River ahead by 31-27.

"A state championship feels really amazing. Our teamwork was key to the win and we talked a lot on the court. I hit some free throws late in the game," McCook said.

Serawop drove to the bucket for a layup that had Uintah River up 33-27 with 1:19 left. Real Salt Lake scored three points, but lost to Uintah River, 33-30.

"It was an amazing win and in front of hometown fans, which was great," said Serawop.

Also scoring for Uintah River were: Serawop 6, Vanderhoop, Teague 4, McCook 3, Murray 2.

Audyah Spoonhunter and Sequiah Talldbird combined for 15 points to lead the Uintah River Warriors with Spoonhunter scoring eight and Talldbird seven counters.

"It was an unexpected win. We

"We won the title with great composure and defensive pressure. We got them for the state championship. We have relied on our defense all year," he said. "Our boys placed third in region and lost a first round game at the state meet."

David Sorensen coaches both the boys and girls basketball squads at Uintah River High School.

Uintah River won their second straight USSA Girls Basketball State Tournament title in front of its hometown fans at Fort Duchesne on Saturday over a tough team. Real Salt Lake from Ogden 33-30. Uintah River also won the state crown in 2018.

**STORY AND PHOTOS**  
By ALDON RACHELE  
arachele@umedia.biz

pushed through it and are state champions," said Spoonhunter. Talldbird was ready for the state tournament.

"We worked for the best shots and used up time on the clock with good passes," she said.

Real Salt Lake went up 2-0 at the start of the game and Mea Serawop added a field goal that gave the Warriors a 3-2 edge. Serawop and Kennaleigh Teague added foul pitches for a 6-2 advantage for Uintah River. Jussyn Vanderhoop made a bucket that had the Warriors with a 7-5 lead. However, the first quarter ended at 7-7 on a layup by Real Salt Lake.

Uintah River netted a 3-pointer for a 10-7 lead early in the second quarter. January Murray marched to the basket for a two-pointer and Uintah River was ahead at 12-7. A 3-pointer had Uintah River up at 15-7.

Real Salt Lake cut the lead to three at 15-12, but Talldbird scored to give Uintah River a five-point edge at 17-12. Vanderhoop

See Warriors on B6



Uintah River won the Girls Basketball State Tournament at Fort Duchesne on Saturday. Uintah River Girls won the state title last year as well.

# UINTAH RIVER NETS STATE TITLE



January Murray from Uintah River is surrounded by a couple of players from Real Salt Lake. Uintah River's Girls won the state title, 33-30 at Fort Duchesne.

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UBS-MAR 5, 2019

May 5, 2004

# Uintah River High on a mission for Ute Tribe

By Maureen Spencer  
Express Writer

Perhaps I heard it on a subconscious level as I waited to sign in at the front desk.

Most likely, though, I was so absorbed in listening to the receptionist's gentle voice giving instructions to the two women ahead of me that I missed it's resonant rhythm.

It is a heartbeat--according to tradition--and can direct emotions. Despite chest-thumping vibrations, it's cadence can show respect and reverence. It's rhythm can also reinforce anger.

Having checked in, I entered the hallway between the administrative areas of Uintah River High School and opened the heavy doors into the school's main academic complex.

As my hand touched the second door I recognized the deep, throbbing sounds beyond. Decades before, on still evenings in Neola, across the pastureslands, Sun Dance drums could be heard as the Ute Tribe celebrated its annual milstone.

Tribal drums are an experience like no other, but then, Uintah River High School is like no other.

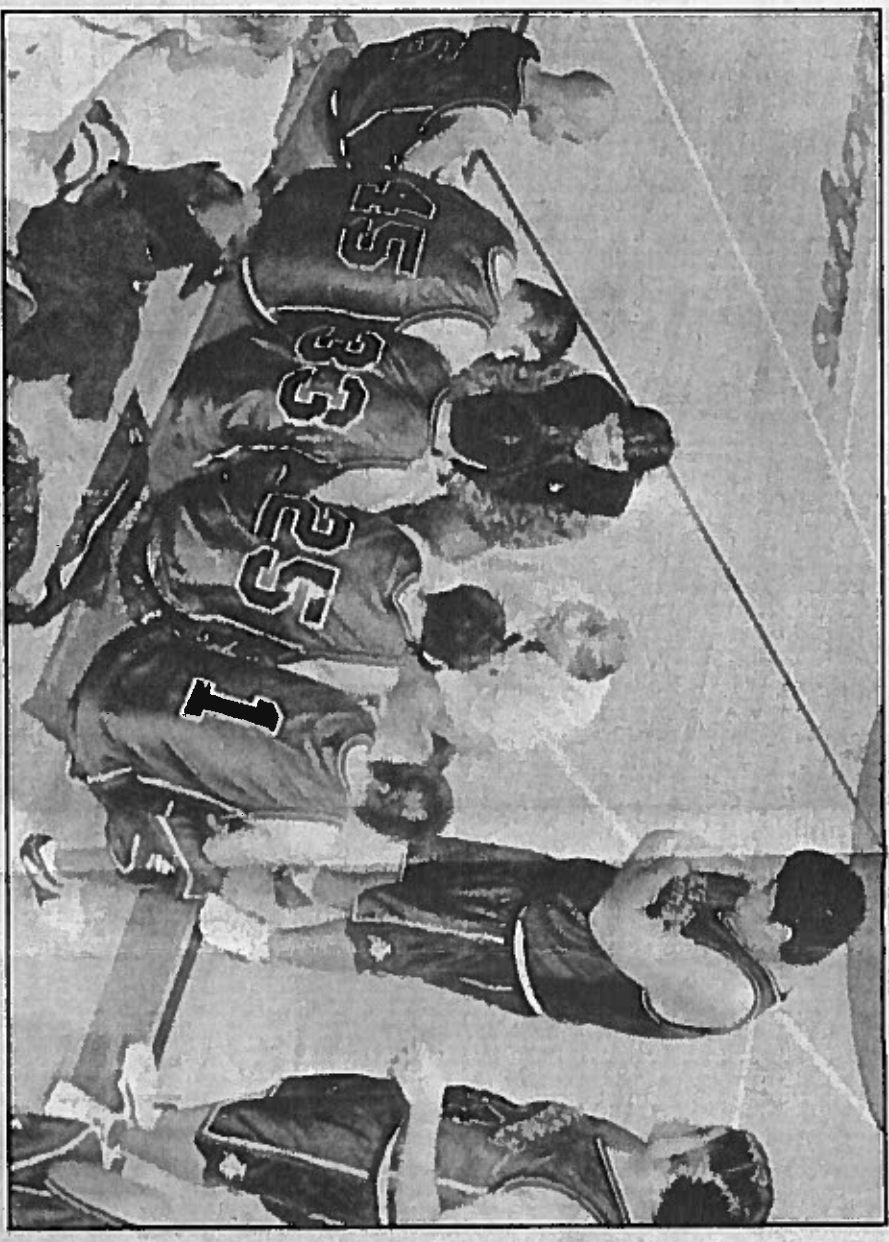
The young men seated around this booming drum are in a high school music class. Instead of madrigal choirs and marching band, boys here attend classes to learn the ceremonial singing and drumming.

These specialized cultural classes are designed to do far more than teach singing and drumming.

Bent over the drum's massive head, silently and intently coordinating their precision blows, theirs is a mission to learn and preserve the skills and knowledge of their ancestors and be prepared to pass this part of their cultural heritage on to generations yet to come.

Talking with Ute Tribe Education Director Cameron Cuch, it is impossible not to catch the excitement in his voice as he explains the purposes of this unique Utah Charter school. He holds a Masters Degree from the University of Utah in education.

"Historically, Native American Ute students have suffered a lot of challenges in Utah. The school is designed to provide a safe environment for them."



Uintah River High's basketball team has begun an athletic tradition at the school.

ently difficult to include aspects of education that are important for the Ute students.

He recognizes that traditionally trained non-native teachers also lack the expertise needed to represent native culture to native students.

In the late 1990's, the Ute Indian Tribe Education Board took a big step in its efforts to direct tribal youth and assumed a more active role in education.

In August of 1999, Uintah River High became one of the first schools chartered by the state of Utah. "Becoming a Charter School was a big step forward," says Cuch, and he quickly adds that the other four Utah tribes are suffering with their education problems, also.

"We hope to pave the way for other tribes."

On the state level, Uintah River receives high marks from State Coordinator for Charter Schools, Patricia Bradley.

"I think Uintah River is unique in its approach to education. The school is designed to provide a safe environment for them."

school unless a waiver is granted. Cuch feels URHS is addressing the high dropout and low academic achievement of many Native American Ute students. In fourth year, the Tribal support is still strong.

"We are working to provide quality outcomes for students and parents." He says the tribe has need in many areas--health, police, law, educators--to develop future leaders by being trained beyond high school. "They need to develop strong character and identity," he says.

It is hoped Uintah River graduates will further their educations and return to help strengthen the tribe's needs. To do this, many in the tribe feel their youth need to know their own culture and learn the Ute language. The URHS staff is proposing to the education board to make speaking the Ute language a graduation requirement.

observes.

Her blackboards are filled with Ute/English word pairs. They are basic, everyday Ute words and to many of these teenagers they are new words.

Trevapont's expertise is not limited to native language. She also teaches the art of native beading and making cradleboards as part of her curriculum.

At present, traditional dress making is taught after school.

As a charter school, the student body is open to all students who attend the school, which is located in Fort Duchesne in the former Ute Fair building complex. It is spacious and works for now, but Cuch dreams of the day when the students will have a "school" building designed for the needs of his active and industrious student body.

The school's curriculum goes by the state core and additionally teaches about tribal government and history.

choose and rotate every six weeks. By so doing, they may pick a wider variety of classes.

All classes have an instructor, with the addition of state-of-the-art computer labs that enhance the scope of the subjects.

On average, the student/teacher ratio is 15 to one. The staff has four full-time teachers and four part-time teachers. School has a unique schedule.

The campus Nahnahmah Club will travel to Rapid City, S.D. this May to the Native America Leadership Conference. Lead by Quannah Powakkee, the community service group held many fund raisers to meet the \$5,500 expenses for the trip.

Students enjoy basketball and cross country sports programs.

Cameron Cuch says he sees real promise in the teams. "They're getting some real good personal growth, and in the next few years they will be pretty competitive."

He wants people to know that Uintah River High School is an accredited school. "We are building an environment to support the needs of our students. We're working on a real caring environment and want to see these students succeed."

Intent upon the success of this unique educational experience for the Ute Tribe, Cuch continues, "I want those who may have a negative perception of what we're doing, to come visit our school and see for themselves what we're accomplishing."

In addition to school-based classes, course work is also held on-site in the mountains, at natural history sites and a variety of locations where the students will benefit most.

Evidence is found in every class that the students at this school are motivated and involved.

Drumming class is over now.

Students are jostling and sharing a good time as they move to their next class--some to learn the Ute language, some to dissect frogs, some to study history or English or math.

As I prepare to leave Uintah River High School, I happen to glance at a bulletin board in the foyer. Among

## April 29

- TOPS meets in Conference Room of Vernal City Building 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Gwen Peterson, 789-8356. Open house 11:30 a.m.

- Basin Symphony Rehearsal 7 p.m. Vernal Middle School Band Room. Greg Rau, 789-4438.

- Opening night of Vernal Junior High's production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream--The Musical." Doors open at 7 p.m., curtain time is 7:30 p.m. Admission is \$4. Performances on April 29, 30, May 1 and 3.

## April 30

- Annual Vernal Area Chamber of Commerce Golf Tournament.

- Deadline to register for the Uintah Recreation 2004 Ice Breaker Softball Tournament, to be held May 6-8. Registration fee is \$135 per team. Call 781-0982 or register at 134 West Main, Suite 101. Deadline may be earlier if all spaces are filled with paid teams.

- Community dance at Golden Age Center, 155 South 100 West, 8-10 p.m., every Friday night. Kay's Band provides the music.

- Deadline to apply for HEAT program. Call Vernal HEAT office at 781-2021 or Roosevelt HEAT office at 722-3218.

- Final deadline to register for Uintah Recreation adult softball league play. Fee is \$435. 781-0982, 134 West Main, Suite 101.

- Uintah School District offering CHD test April 30 and May 1 at the Uintah School District Office, 635 West 200 South. Test begins April 30 at 6 p.m. and will continue on May 1. Application must be filled out by 5 p.m. on Friday. Administration fees is \$55; retakes available for \$11 per subject. Contact David John or Elaine Gardner at 781-3100 ext. 1013 with questions.

## May 1

- World Vision Assembly of God's 4th Annual Cinco de Mayo dinner, 444 West 400 North, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Cost will be \$4; menu will include Navajo tacos, ice cream and lemonade or coffee. There will also be a silent auction.

- Five-mile health fair run, 9 a.m. Sponsored by Uintah Recreation, 781-0982, 134 West Main, Suite 101.

- USOMATA rummage sale at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 226 West Main, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sale will be moved inside in case of inclement weather.

## May 6

- Uintah Recreation 2004 Ice Breaker Softball Tournament to be held May 6-8.

in education.

"Historically, Native American Ute students have suffered a lot of challenges," Cuch says. He said "American Indians have always maintained their identity, but the perspective of their culture, history and way of life has often been left out of public schools."

His eyes steady, he adds, "Native students have experienced racism at school."

Required studies of public school districts and state and federal guidelines, he sees, make it inher-

Coordinator for Charter Schools,

Patricia Bradley.

"I think Uintah River is unique in its focus and has a purposeful direction. It is getting stronger every year and it has tremendous potential," Bradley acknowledged in an interview last week.

Charter schools allow students to focus on a specific style of learning and curriculum. All students applying must be accepted and no charge may be made to attend. The same curriculum required of public schools will be found in a charter

education board to make speak-

ing the Ute language a graduation requirement.

Venita Taveapont directs the Ute language program at Uintah River and she is certified by the tribe. She is trying to have students become familiar with the three dialects from all three bands and to show the unique differences of each.

"The grandfathers didn't teach the student's fathers, and these fathers come from a generation where educators were telling tribal members not to teach the languages," she

body.

The school's curriculum goes by the state core and additionally teaches about tribal government and how it relates to state and federal governments and tribal history. Character development is another focus.

Uintah River Principal, Marlies Burns, says she would like to see her high school's cultural program expand so that, for instance, students could learn the entire process of preparing native garments, but that will require more faculty and space.

Burns hopes in time there will be many more certified native teachers not only at URHS, but on the faculties of other schools who have a Ute student population. Burns points to the school's "split trimester" system of classes permitting students to

math.

As I prepare to leave Uintah River High School, I happen to glance at a bulletin board in the foyer. Among the announcements of widespread activities hangs a copy of the following:

"As we walk upon the earth we must plant our feet carefully because we see the faces of the future generations looking up at us from beneath the ground.

We must never forget them. Our challenge is to leave behind us, a world that is better than the one we live in today."

The administration, faculty and students of Uintah River High are working hard to accomplish a better world for tomorrow.

The drums I heard today may well speak again through these student's grandchildren.

May 6

- Uintah Recreation 2004 Ice Break Softball Tournament to be held May 6-8 at Vernal City and Naples City softball fields.

- TOPS meets in Conference Room of Vernal City Building 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Gwen Peterson, 789-8356. Open house 11:30 a.m.

- Basin Symphony Rehearsal 7 p.m. Vernal Middle School Band Room. Greg Rau, 789-4438.

May 7

- Deadline to register for Uintah Recreation t-ball for kids ages 5-6 and coach pitch softball for kids ages 7-8 at discount price of \$25. Uintah Recreation, 781-0982, 134 West Main, Suite 101.

- Community dance at Golden Age Center, 155 South 100 West, 8-10 p.m. every Friday night. Kay's Band provides the music.

May 8

- Safety Fair at Vernal Middle School from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., sponsored by TriCounty Health, Safe Kids Coalition, Vernal Area Chamber of Commerce Health Civic Committee and Uintah Basin Medical Center in Roosevelt.

- Letter Carriers' Food Drive. Place non-perishable food items in a bag by your mailbox and your letter carrier will pick them up and donate them to local food banks.

- Final deadline to register for t-ball and coach pitch softball through Uintah Recreation. 781-0982, 134 West Main, Suite 101.

- American Legion Post 124 Jensen, Rummage and Bake Sale. Many great items, chili and corn bread lunch, craft and bake sale. Donations accepted 789-8869 or 789-2050.

May 11

- AVMC Diabetes Support Group, 6:30 p.m. in the AVMC medical offices conference room, located on the ground floor of the building adjoining the hospital on the east side. Topic will be "Is Your Blood Pressure an Ever Increasing Problem?" with guest speaker Dr. Kirk Woodward.

May 13

- TOPS meets in Conference Room of Vernal City Building 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Gwen Peterson, 789-8356. Open house 11:30 a.m.

- Basin Symphony Rehearsal 7 p.m. Vernal Middle School Band Room. Greg Rau, 789-4438.

To place items of public interest on the Community Calendar, mail to the Vernal Express, P.O. Box 1000, E-mail, editor @vernal.com, or call the Vernal Express at 789-3511.

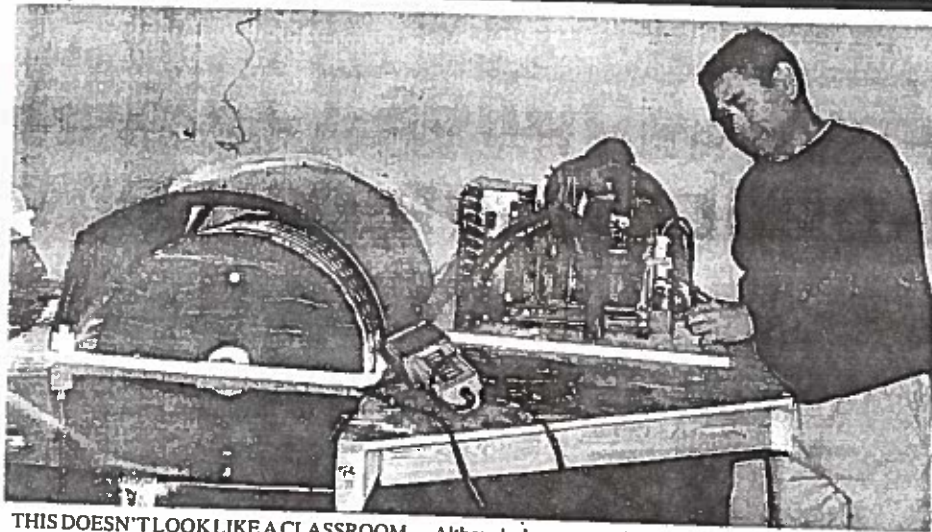


State-of-the-art computer labs keep students academic interest high.



Morgan Serawop studies below a wall of information pertinent for Ute Indian students--articles telling of native culture, news reports of tribal leaders, critically acclaimed Native American ballerina Maria Tallchief and shild sare through traditional Ute ways.

## EDUCATION



**THIS DOESN'T LOOK LIKE A CLASSROOM** — Although classes weren't being held last Thursday, Alan Ginn monitors the water environment of 20 purebred cutthroat trout in his aquaculture lab at Uintah River High. The trout are being raised for brood stock in a 500-gallon grow-out tank in Ginn's aquaculture class.

### Reintroducing Purebred Cutthroat Uintah River High students are farming fish in the desert

By Susan Collier

It's not often an instructor is able to directly benefit from the activities he supervises in his classroom, but that is exactly what Alan Ginn will be doing when he goes fishing. Ginn is the science and aquaculture instructor and

basketball and golf coach at Uintah River High and an avid fisherman (mostly catch and release).

Ginn and his students have undertaken a passionate restoration project, reintroducing purebred cutthroat trout to the streams, lakes, and reservoirs located on Ute tribal lands.

At first glance, Ginn's classroom looks fairly typical. A small aquarium of water is stabilizing on a bookcase waiting for its new inhabitants, fresh water fish, such as Tetras, Bala Sharks (suckers), Neons, and a variety of other hobby fish. But when Ginn opens the door to a cavernous dark back room, it's apparent this isn't just an ordinary classroom.

A 500-gallon round screen-covered water tank, called a "grow-out" tank, with 20 live purebred cutthroat trout occupies a large portion of the room. The tank is capable of producing 200 pounds of cutthroat every six months. It is equipped with a temperature control device and a large biological circulating unit which removes ammonia and nitrates from the water. The temperature control device will not allow the water temperature to rise above 55 degrees Fahrenheit or about 13 degrees Celsius. Temperatures greater than 55 degrees can be fatal for the fish.

Ginn's aqua-farmers first built and

then stabilized the environment the \$3,000 holding tank. They monitored the temperature, pH, nitrate ammonia, and oxygen levels of the water for the anticipated arrival of their fingerling cutthroat. They began their project late last year with 1 fingerlings from the Whiterocks Fish Hatchery as brood stock.

Once their grow-out tank is stocked, the students must continue to monitor and graph the temperature, pH, nitrate, ammonia, and oxygen levels daily. They also vacuum the tank weekly with a special underwater vacuum.

When the fingerlings are approximately 12 to 13 months old, the aqua-farmers will take them to the Ute Tribe's hatchery facility located near Whiterocks, where they will be raised to maturity so their eggs can be harvested. Once harvested, the eggs are deposited into a separate container. The sperm is then "milted" from male fish and deposited directly on the eggs.

"Milting" and harvesting eggs is similar to properly dispensing toothpaste from a tube. In this case the milter or harvester gently squeezes the trout near its dorsal fin and works his way toward the ventral fin.

Ginn expects to get at least 500 to 1,000 fertilized eggs from each pair of fish during one harvest.

Thus far the ladies have shown the greatest interest in the fertilization process and have donned waders to brave the cold waters to pursue their work, he said.

Next the class will incubate the eggs until they hatch, anticipating a more than 90 percent hatch rate. The students will keep the "fry" or baby fish in a controlled environment until they grow into fingerlings. Then students will transport them to the raceways at the Youth Camp hatchery facility owned by the Ute Tribe, where they will be kept until they are mature and ready to breed.

Finally the big moment will come, probably sometime in 2004, when the students will release their first crop of 5,000 to 10,000 cutthroats from nets into their new homes in the wild.

Of course, anglers are looking forward to the fight they will have when they catch one of these tenacious, aggressive fish. However, they won't know if they catch one of Uintah River's cutthroat because Native American cultures forbids branding of wild creatures.

Ginn's students spend many hours monitoring the future habitats of their trout before their eventual release to ensure the waters will adequately support their crop. All during the year they monitor the temperature of the waters at various depths. In the winter they even drill through the ice to take their measurements.

In spite of all the work, the students love the restoration project. "They're into it. Some are even thinking of going into aquaculture as a career," said Ginn. "It's a real learning experience for these kids."

In preparation for this restoration project the students practiced raising catfish and four ten-pound lake trout in their large tank.

Ginn attributes much of the project's success to Mike Montoya, the Ute Tribe fisheries biologist. "Mike has just been the greatest, as far as coordinating this," noted Ginn.

The 55-year-old Ginn retired to Duchesne to fish and be near his Ute friends after completing a successful teaching tenure at Barstow High in Barstow, California, where he was well-known for his ecology program and restoration projects.

Ginn, who is part Chinese and part Eastern Band Cherokee, interrupted his retirement three years ago when one of his Ute friends asked him to apply for a position at Uintah River High. "Now I have dedicated my life to the Utes. They are the most warm, kind, and spiritual people. They are



**THERE NOT AFRAID TO GET WET** — Thus far the ladies have shown the greatest interest in the fertilization process and have donned waders to brave the cold weather and cold waters to harvest eggs from and milt their purebred cutthroat trout brood stock. Alan Ginn's Uintah River High aquaculture students Jina, Cassy, Nina, and Shasta and Johanna jump right in the waters to help each other with the artificial spawning process.

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## 23 GRADUATES

# Uintah River High

Uintah River High School in Fort Duchesne graduated 23 students, Friday, May 17. Students had a pre-

graduation celebration at Stockman's Restaurant, Thursday in Vernal. Uintah River is a charter school.



Ashley Groves



Gina LaRose



Natalie Garner



Nina Mills



Katherine Mojado



Misty Neilson



Rossie Longhair



Tony Greaves



Randy Arnold



Sharlynn Manning



Tyler Farnsworth



Jocelyn King



Shawn Cochrane



Marcy Reed



LeRoy Reed



Maureen Reed



Coni Nephi



Isaiah Trujillio



Keven Dahlberg



Leland Chapoose



J.C. Reed



Kelly Johnson



Joe Amillitegui

Uintah Basin Standard  
28 May 2002

RHC 1327  
1141

# Sports

Tuesday, March 3, 2015

Standard C1



ALDON RACHELE, UTAH BASIN STANDARD  
Utah River team poses with the state championship basketball banner while being honored by the Ute Tribe. Utah River defeated five teams last week in state tournament play.

## Utah River sinks teams for state title

By ALDON RACHELE  
arachele@ubmedia.biz

Utah River proved the point that they were "for real" and a team that was



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C6

Tuesday, March 3, 2015



ALDON RACHELE, UTAH BASIN STANDARD  
Utah River Coach David Sorensen talks about how determined the Warriors were to win a state championship.



ALDON RACHELE, UTAH BASIN STANDARD  
Members of the Utah River state championship team show off the trophy they won for beating Wasatch Academy's A team.



# Uintah River wins state basketball title

By ALDON RACHELE  
arachele@ubmedia.biz

Uintah River's Lady Warriors won the USSA Girls State Basketball Tournament championship game over American Heritage 17-16 on Feb. 24 at Draper, Utah. Games were played at Lone Peak high school in Draper. Four first round games were also played on Feb. 21. Uintah River also won a first round game.

Uintah River reached the title game when they beat Freedom Academy on Feb. 23. Charter and other private schools competed in the state meet. Uintah River had only one loss during the season. Uintah River also won their division this year.

Team members are Dushonia McCook (senior), Krishani McCook, Gayn Vanderhoop (senior), Jessyn Vanderhoop, Mea Serwop, Audiyah Spoonhunter, Sequiah Tallbird, Kennaleigh Teague, Janik Murray, January Murray, Loydie Arrowchis, Aubrey Silva, manager Tanna Tanner. Coaches are: Jordanelle Angel, Janeen Nelson, Amber Helmus.

Please help us congratulate our new  
USSA 2018 State Champions  
Uintah River Lady Warriors



Tuesday, March 6, 2018 at 1:15 pm  
Uintah River Commons

Uintah River won the USSA state tournament. The Uintah River Lady Warriors placed first at the 2018 state meet.

UBS-Mar 6, 2018

June 12, 2018

Uintah Basin Standard

## A donation for spiritual and cultural teachings



SUBMITTED

SUBMITTED PHOTO

**Fort Duchesne, Utah** – UTE Bison announced it has gifted a bison robe and skull to Uintah River High School (URHS) and the Ute Indian Tribe Education Department to assist in spiritual and cultural teachings.

"This donation will help us continue our culture and teach what the bison represents for all tribes," said Kea Tarness, Ute Indian Tribe Tutor and Mentor.

The bison skull will be on display in the URHS commons area, and the robe will be used during cultural and teaching events.

"Our objective for UTE Bison is to bring people together and to share the tra-

ditional teachings and stories with our community," said Valentina Sireech, Ute Tribal Enterprises CEO. "The spiritual connection we have with the bison is strong, and preserving our heritage through our teachings is important."

"The bison symbolizes respect and tradition," said Seymone Gonzales, Nah-Na-Mah Club Treasurer and URHS student. "We are proud of what we believe in."

UTE Bison ranch is available for tours throughout the summer by appointment only. To schedule a tour, contact Ute Tribal Enterprises' Marketing Department at [marketing@utetribe.com](mailto:marketing@utetribe.com) or (801) 656-8931.

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Wednesday, March 31, 2010



The mural at the Uintah County Commission with commissioners Mark Raymond, Darlene Burns, Mike McKee, and John Go-third county attorney along with students from the Uintah River High School. Also present are Lynna Kendall of the Vernal Middle School and Shane Hamblin of Uintah River High School.

## UINTAH BASIN MURAL PROJECT

# 'Working together in partnership'

by Mary Bernward  
Express writer

The artwork produced by students for the Uintah Basin Mural Project sponsored by the Center for Documentary Arts enrichment program was on full display Monday March 15.

The results of an educational outreach program developed to "reach across cultural boundaries" bringing together students from the Uintah River High School in Fort Duchesne and Uintah High School in Vernal. "The work was completed under a grant from the Center," says teacher Lynna Kendall, Uintah School District. "We were assisted by David Sucec, rock art specialist, Dovie Thomason,

American Indian storyteller, and Ruby Chacon, Salt Lake area muralist."

Students from both schools along with teachers Lynna Kendall, Shane Hamblin, and Brock Thorne visited ancient and historic rock art sites as a source of inspiration.

They went from the classroom, to the field, and back to the classroom.

"The result is a mural that unites two different schools and cultural backgrounds," Kendall says. "Some of the students have since graduated and only a portion of the participants are here today," said Hamblin, noting all have benefited from the cultural exchange.

Hamblin described the process as "brainstorming with the muralist Chacon and later, bringing her back to see the outcome."

"Each culture provided elements of their own, including a poem painted onto the eagle's chest written in the traditional Ute language," the art said.

Commissioner Darlene Burns offered congratulations to the young artists, saying "the County was fortunate to provide partial support for the project through events funding."

The mural will be on display at the State and County Building on the balcony overlooking the north entrance. [mbernward@vernal.com](mailto:mbernward@vernal.com)



Close up of Vernal's Uintah High School portion of the mural completed in April 2009.

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Close up of the Fort Duchesne Uintah River High School portion of the mural completed in April 2009.



OCT 10, 2006

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# Basin LIFE

## UINTAH RIVER HIGH FILLS CRUCIAL NEED

### Charter school holds opportunity to succeed

By Lacey McMurry

It's a new day and Kathleen Chegup, principal of Uintah River High, sits in her office looking over the transcript of a new transfer student. There are 20 conspicuous Fs and only a tiny smattering of Cs and Ds.

"This is our job, and it's a big one," Chegup said. "We have to get students like this caught up and on track to graduate."

And amazing as it may seem given the daunting task that lies before them, Chegup and her counterparts at Uintah River High

School, the Ute Tribe's charter school, are succeeding where others have failed.

"This school that most people don't know much about is the jewel of the Ute Tribe," said Marilyn Hetzel, tribal education director. "It's our hope for the future."

#### A Little-Known Place

Uintah River High School is located off Highway 40 on the Uintah and Ouray Indian reservation in Fort Duchesne. It's a place that many people who have lived here all of their lives have never seen with their own eyes. The school itself is housed in a large, refur-

bished warehouse that had previously been vacant since the 1970s.

The slow transformation of the old, dilapidated warehouse into a fully-operative charter school has become an analogy of sorts for what administrators hope to see happen in the lives of their students.

"We want these kids to realize that they can make changes for the better, and as this happens, we want them to develop a sense of purpose," Chegup said. "We want them to hope and have confidence in themselves."

The success that administrators at Uintah High are enjoying is even

*"We're trying to show these students through example that they all have the potential to graduate and do whatever they want."*

— Kathleen Chegup,  
Uintah River High principal

more remarkable considering common mistaken perceptions about the school. Hetzel said she has to dispel myths about Uintah River on a daily basis. It's important for the public to know that Uintah River isn't an alternative school, Hetzel said. Instead, it's an accredited charter school on the cutting edge of academics.

"Without a second thought, people usually label our students as a 'problem group' of kids," Hetzel said. "But they aren't. They're teens who deserve to be respected and given a chance."

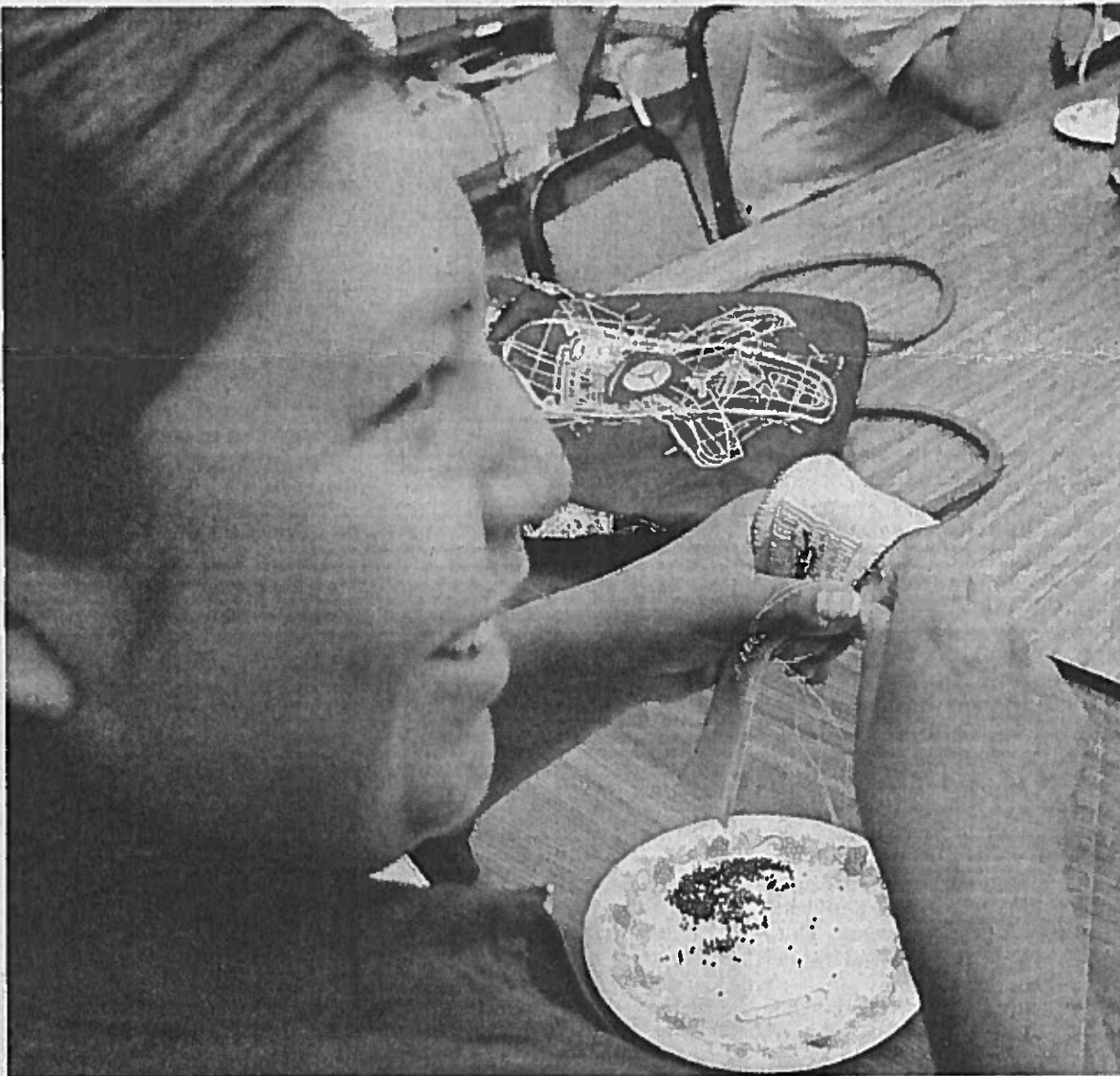
Being labeled as a "problem kid" is something that happens to Sasha Lopez all too often. Lopez, a senior at Uintah River, said she is asked the same question almost every time she tells someone where she attends school.

"They always ask me 'What did you do wrong to get sent there?'" she said. "People all look on the school as a school for students that are in trouble. But it's not like that. This is a school that is here to help students succeed."

Without a doubt, Lopez said she knows Uintah River has helped her find academic success. She came to the school as a 10th grader with report cards plagued with failing grades and poor attendance.

Lopez said she managed to earn

SEE UINTAH RIVER on page 17



**A NEW TALENT** — A student works on a beadwork project during a Native American arts and crafts class. Uintah River High School offers students several elective course on tribal language, culture, and art.

# UNINTAH RIVER

Continued from page 18

all Bs and near perfect attendance records. Under this act, schools are determined to have made adequate yearly progress if a majority of students pass proficiency exams in language arts and mathematics. Each year, Unintah River has also met the required graduation and attendance rates as required by the federal government.

Hetzl said the reasons for the school's success are simple, but the list is long. Currently, Unintah River has a student-to-teacher ratio of 10 to one. Classroom settings are more interactive, and small class sizes mean teachers have time to give students individualized attention. The implementation of school uniformed has also promoted a more disciplined environment and cut back drastically on incidences of school violence.

"All we're doing here is giving these students the attention they need and letting them know they are wanted and missed when they choose not to come to school," Hetzel said. "Our teachers work really hard to get students through the classroom."

In addition to small class sizes, Unintah River High School students are also presented with a variety of learning options that students at public schools don't always enjoy. The school is a firm believer in the value of field trips that promote hands-on learning. Each year, for example, students spend a class segment learning about filmmaking and then they are given the opportunity to attend the Sundance Film Festival.

Native American culture is a core component of curriculum, and students are given the opportunity to study Ute language and art. Powaukee said she learned from numerous discussions with past students that they actually felt peer pressure to not succeed at public school. At Unintah River, students indicated that they didn't feel intimidated and that fellow students always supported their success.

"I think the main reason for our success boils down to caring," Powaukee said. "Students care about each other, and they don't feel any sense of separation from other students in the class. In addition, teachers here are our students' neighbors. They are usually from the same cultural background and they are coming from the same community. They really have a connection with these students, and that makes all the difference in the world."

# Unintah Basin Standard

October 10, 2006 -- Page 18



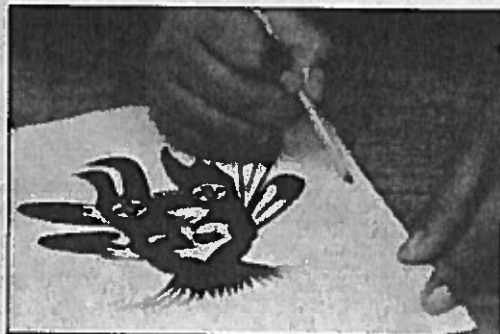
SHE PUT THE PAL IN PRINCIPAL — Unintah River Principal Kathleen Chegup meets with Sasha Lopez, a student. Unintah River is a charter school that was organized by the Ute Tribe to address high drop out rates among Ute students in traditional public schools.

Chegup believed in this message so much that she decided to return to school and earn an administrative certificate so she could qualify to become the school's principal. She enrolled in courses at Utah State University in Logan for two summers to take required classes that weren't available locally. This year marks Chegup's first year as principal at Unintah River and as the school's first Native American administrator in a decade of operation.

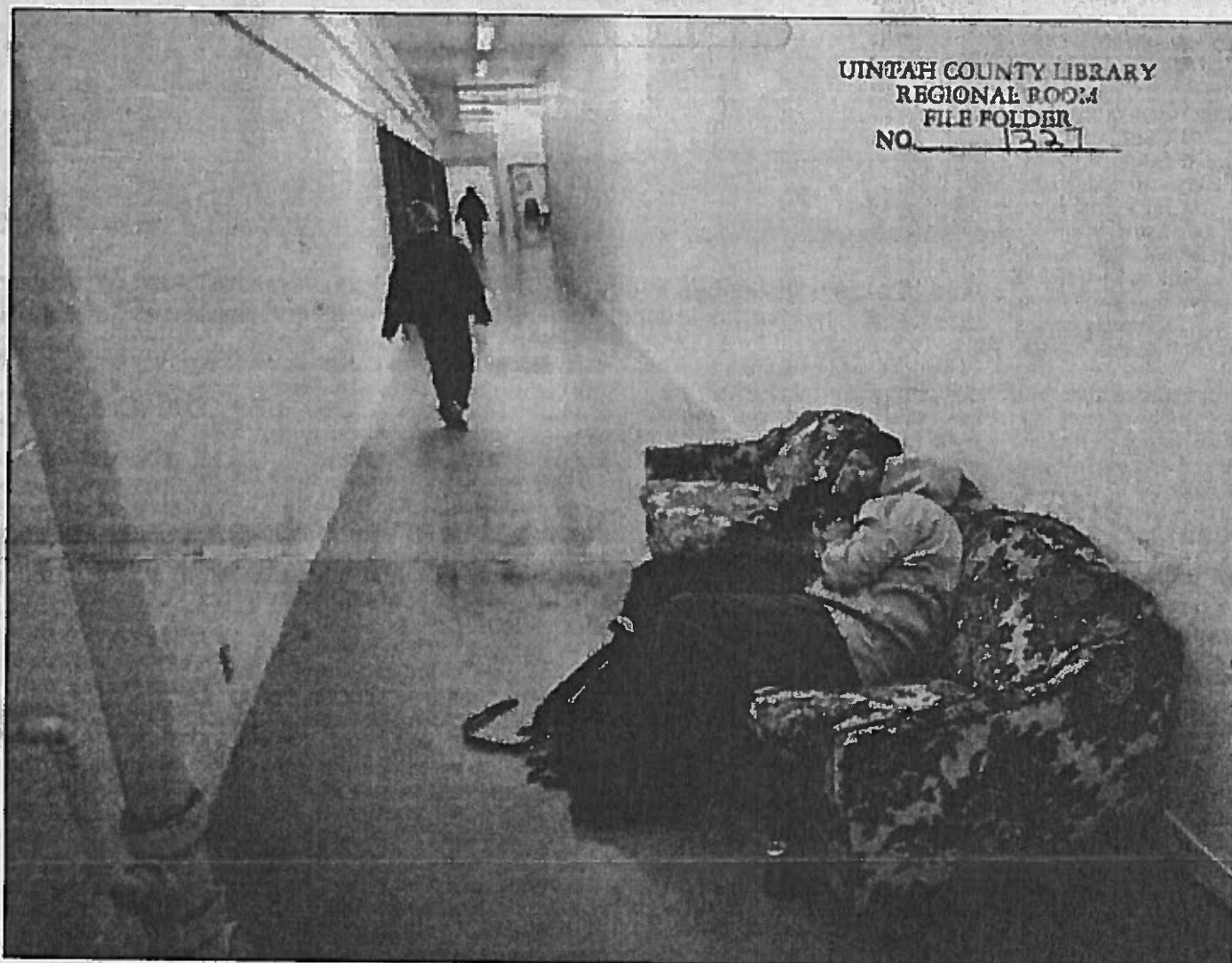
"We're trying to show these students the potential to graduate and do whatever they want," she said. "It's sad, but so many of them don't realize that they don't have enough confidence to believe that college is a possibility for them. That's something that we are trying to change."

# CHARTING A NEW COURSE

SLTribune 12 Nov 2000



Rosie Longhair, an 11th-grader, sketches a design for the main graphic that will appear on the cover of Uintah River High School's first yearbook.



Photos by Al Hartmann/The Salt Lake Tribune

Students hang out between classes on a couch in the hallway at Uintah River High School. The charter school on the Ute Reservation in Fort Duchesne offers students freedom in their education as well as a voice in the administration.

American  
Indian students  
find success at  
Ute Tribe's  
charter school,  
where the  
emphasis is on  
the mind, heart,  
soul and body.

BY ASHLEY ESTES  
THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

**F**ORT DUCHESNE — In a corner of a large warehouse that serves both as a food distribution center and schoolhouse, the Uintah River High School student body is meeting for circle time.

It's a time for them to air grievances about the charter school, their teachers and anything in particular. In turn, administrators speak to them frankly about the financial condition of the school, facilities and fund raising. The one rule: "What's said in the circle stays in the circle."

The "circle" meeting mirrors the gatherings of many Uintah River students' forefathers, and is part of Uintah River's unwritten philosophy, which focuses on developing not just students' minds, but their hearts, souls and bodies.

Founded and supported in part by the Ute Tribe, Uintah River serves mostly American Indian students — members of the group that ranks dead last on nearly

every indicator of educational success in Utah. American Indians face higher rates of suicide and alcoholism and a low graduation rate. At one school, only 5 percent of American Indians received diplomas, according to the Utah Division of Indian Affairs.

Uintah River is one of eight charter schools in the state, each formed with specific agendas. Like most of the others, it operates on a shoestring budget. And Uintah River's cultural, economic and ethnic challenges are myriad.

Uintah County, where the reservation is, had an unemployment rate of 6.1 percent as of 1998, according to the state's Office of Planning and Budget. That is nearly double the comparable state unemployment rate of 3.8 percent for that year. In 1997, the latest year available, Uintah County's per capita net income was only \$9,121, according to the planning and budget office's Web site.

Some of the school's 38 students come

See UTE TRIBE, Page B-5

# Ute Tribe Gives Students Second Chance

Continued from B-1

Some of the school's 38 students come from homes without telephones, forcing the school to use the U.S. Postal Service as a primary means of communication. Other students are teen-age parents, have learning disabilities or cannot attend regular high schools because they are over the age of 18. One student is terminally ill.

"We take all kinds of kids, but what we're getting is the students who are not successful in regular school," said Kathy Cochrane, a first-year principal at Uintah River. "The most difficult thing is getting these kids . . . not to give up on themselves."

"We bring them into a setting where, No. 1, they know we're not giving up on them. We do a lot of work with parents, as well as with community and tribal agencies [to help these students]."

Founded as an alternative school three years ago, Uintah River is in its second year as a charter school. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own decisions and their own education, keeping up with their high school credits. They are also expected to help with school fund raising if needed.

But the school's unique approach, combined with lots of individual attention, has paid off for many students, who are making A's and B's instead of failing.

Referral to Uintah River from other schools "in some respects is actually a favor to the students," Cochrane said. Fridays are makeup days, set aside for students who are behind on credits needed to graduate.

"You look at the dropout rate, it shows there needs to be more schools meeting students' needs," said science teacher Alan Ginn, who is half American Indian and half Chinese. "I was raised in an Anglo world. I know what these kids are going through."

"Here, I'm back with my people, back where I belong," Ginn said. "It's going to take a stick of dynamite to remove me."

Most of the students have limited funds to travel outside the Uintah Basin. Through the school, Uintah River students get the



Isaac McCook, right, works alongside fellow 12th-grader Carson Harris on an art project.

Photos By Al Hartmann/The Salt Lake Tribune



there. We have artists here, we have musicians here . . . This is bringing it out in them, and there's nothing wrong with that."

The school faces a constant battle for funding. Supplies are old and overused; space is at a premium. The school lacks lunchroom facilities, so a teacher must pick up lunches each day from the Uintah School District.

Ginn's tiny science room lacks sinks and lab facilities. He points out that instead of ordering moss or wood samples for a class, he grows or cuts his own. He is looking forward to moving to his new science room, which will include an aquaculture lab, but says he doesn't know when that will happen. "We're trying to get more of a hands-on situation," he said.

The Ute Tribe helps as much as it can, financially and otherwise. This year, it gave \$133,000 to the school to pay teachers' salaries and other costs, said Cochrane. Also, tribal services such as mental health or substance abuse treatment have stepped in and helped students who are nontribe members, she said.

Principal Kathy Cochrane talks to students during circle time, during which students and teachers are open to discuss just about anything.

opportunity to attend the symphony, go fishing or travel to Dinosaur National Monument.

"We try to show them there are other things out there," Ginn said. "These kids are so talented, but it takes some guidance to get them

Still, working with the Utes is sometimes a challenge, said Cochrane, who is not American Indian and is the school's third principal in as many years.

"There have been some ethnicity issues," she said, "from sources that I never dreamed of, like the custodial staff. We're not always on the same page, and we don't always have the same vision. It's about learning to work through it."

One problem she faced upon arriving at Uintah River was the long-held American Indian belief that longevity fosters respect. "To some of the people, I was the underling because they'd been here longer," she said.

Gesturing toward a mountain of paperwork on her desk, Cochrane bemoans the fact she is required to file as many state reports as larger school districts. "Instead of working with kids, I work with paper," she said.

Parents are encouraged to attend bimonthly meetings, and most do, Cochrane said. "If they don't, they miss out on a whole bunch of stuff." Recently, the Parents' Committee considered a question from a bikers' group, which offered to donate \$5,000 to Uintah River if students would help serve food at a June gathering. The parents voted down the invitation, but the students approved it, meaning the issue goes back to parents.

Parents volunteer in the school sometimes, she said, but "in a lot of cases, we have students who are more educated than their parents."

The school's staff includes four teachers, Cochrane and a secretary, meaning teachers often wear multiple hats. Carrell, for instance, teaches 10th-, 11th- and 12th-grade English, along with music, health and fitness and art.

Senior Emmy Cesspooch is secretary of the student council. Now in her second year at Uintah River, she enjoys attending the charter school because "it's more diverse

than other schools." "Class sizes are less than 10, so that's an advantage," she said. "Being on student council — that's another chance I probably wouldn't get if I went to Union or Uintah [high schools]. I like being a part of it."

"It's a lot easier to go to school here," she said. "You understand it instead of just doing it."

Most American Indian students at Uintah River are avoiding regular public high schools, not because of any prejudice but because they tend to get lost in the shuffle, said teacher Eric Pye.

On the yearbook staff, for example, "there might be 150 white kids and one Native American," Pye said. "Just the sheer numbers are intimidating to the kids."

In another effort to meet students' needs, the school has developed a "packet program" that administrators are preparing to present to state education officials, Cochrane said. The program was developed for students with jobs or other responsibilities, such as parenthood, that make it hard for them to attend school each day.

Under the plan, students would select objectives from the state core curriculum, then pledge to meet them within a certain time period. They must score at least 80 percent on a test for credit. Students may work at their own pace and are not required to attend school, other than required meetings with the teacher, Cochrane said.

"We do away with the seat work. We're more interested in what you're learning, instead of how long you're sitting in a chair."

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## PERCEPTIONS WILL BE BIGGEST CHALLENGE

# Olympian tells Native grads to find their dreams, live as warriors

By Leslee E. Whiting

Before the 16 graduates from Ute Tribe Adult Education and the tribe's Uintah River High School walked across the stage to receive their high school diploma last Thursday night, they received inspiration and words of advice from Billy Mills. The 64-year old Mills is a successful businessman, but is better known for winning an Olympic gold medal in the 10,000 meter run in the 1964 Tokyo-Japan Games. His run is hailed today as the fourth greatest race of

"Who are you? ... your achievements answer the question."

the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Mills grew up on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. His mother died when he was 9 and his father passed away three years later. He offered genuine insight into the lives of the mostly Native American graduates seated in the front two

rows in the West Junior High auditorium.

Mills was virtually an unknown the day he sprinted the 60 meters to the finish line from his third place position just in time to earn the surprise victory in a race that had never been won by an American. After he broke through the tape at the finish line he said he found himself face-to-face with a Japanese race official who repeatedly asked him, "Who are you? Who are you?"

And that is the same question Mills posed to the graduates on the eve of a new chapter in their lives. "Who are you? ... your achievements answer the question. Find your dream ... live your life as a warrior. Help your community, learn the balance of humility, the power of giving, center those around your core of spirit-

ality. Find that hidden gift and share it. The warrior seeks to be unique and to belong, to make a difference in society, to understand."

Mills said the greatest challenge facing Native American youth as they make their way in the world are the perceptions of their culture which are held by society. He noted that he is always referred to as "the Indian guy," by people who remember his accomplishment, but not his name.

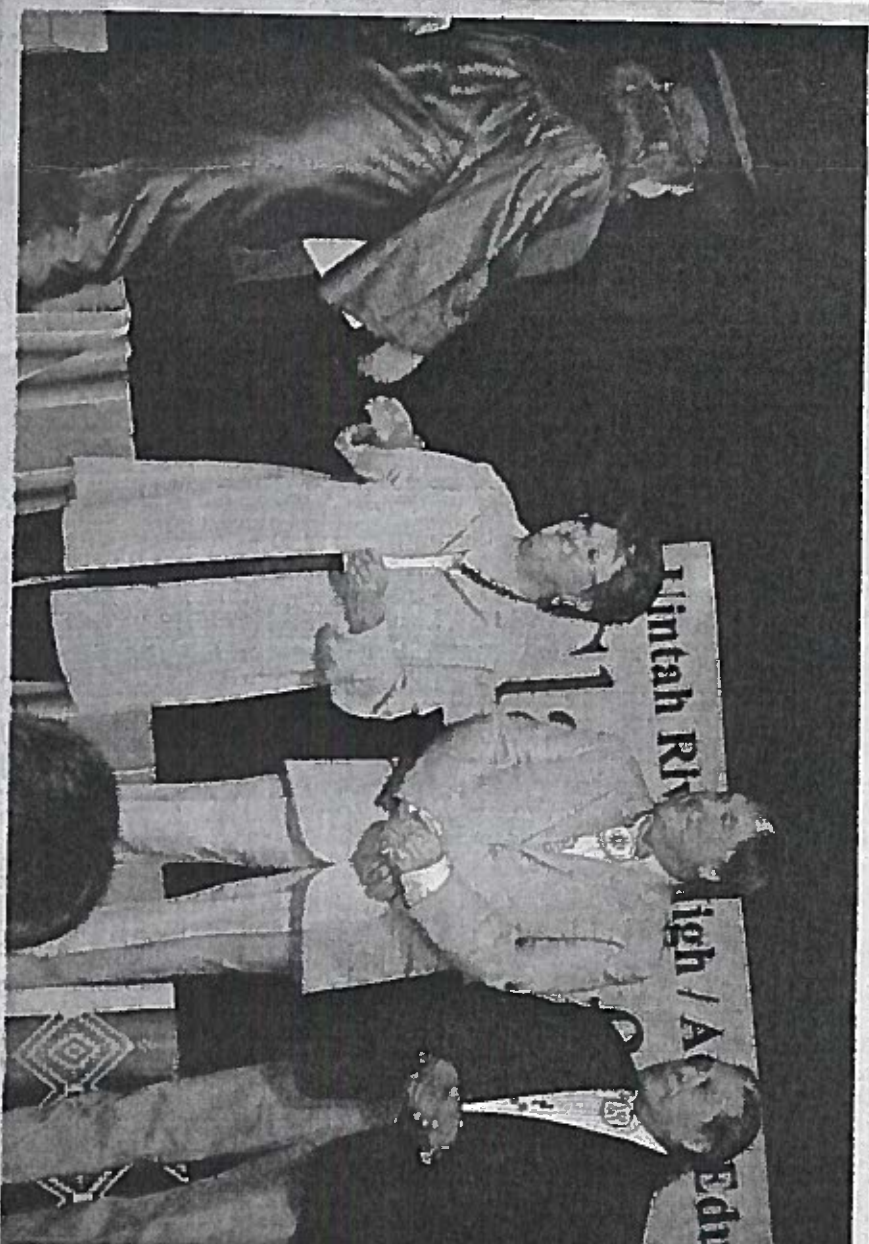
"I accept 'the Indian guy' with dignity, with pride. We need to deal with perceptions with the utmost dignity. I am going to say something to you and if you follow it you will have wings of an eagle ... you will find you have anger, pain, jealousy, self-pity and hatred because of the way we are treated. But those things will destroy you."

He urged the Ute Indian youth and non-Indian youth to empower themselves through giving to others. "More and more Indian young people are empowering themselves and empowering others. Make a new goal for yourselves after graduating."

Mills said that at a young age he took his own

OLYMPIC GOLD ADVICE — Billy Mills addressed Ute Tribe Adult Education graduates last week. He told graduates he is a "contemporary elder," and although he has grown older and changed on the outside since his 1964 run he is "still competitive on the inside."

CONGRATULATIONS — A Uintah River High graduate receives her diploma and shakes hands with Ute Tribe Business Committee Chair Maxine Natchees, former Olympian Billy Mills and Business Committee member Roland McCook (pictured left to right).



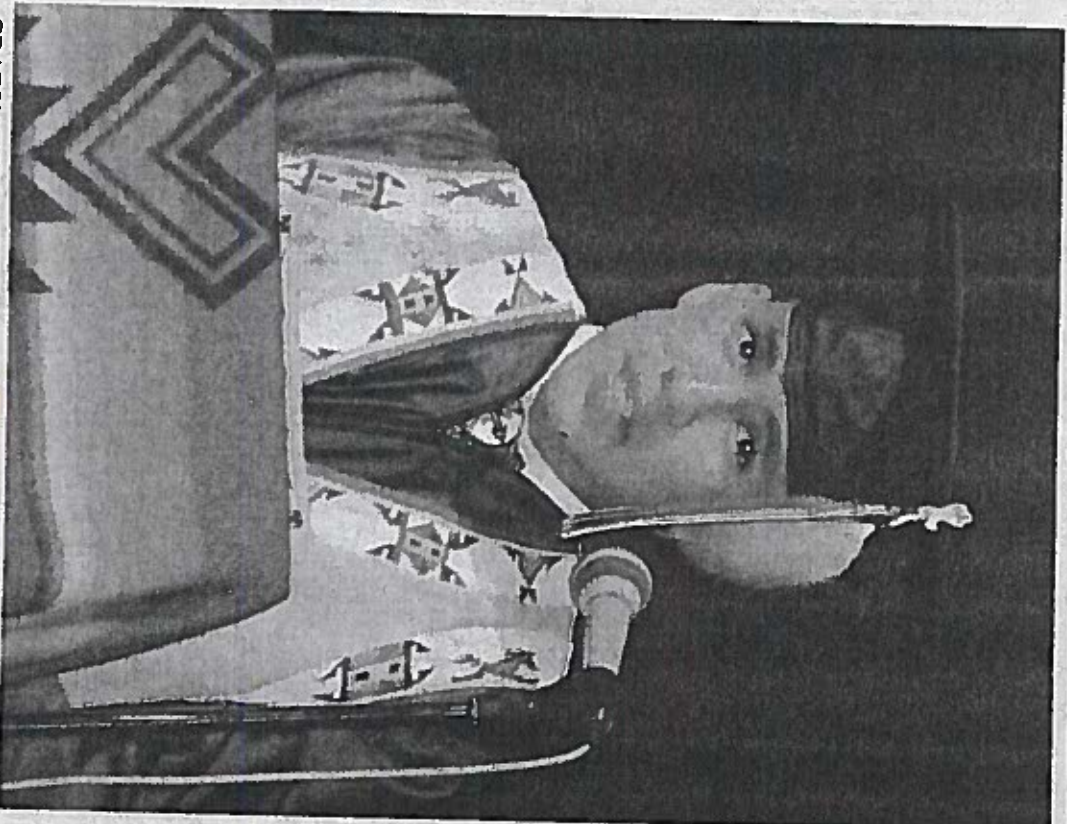
culture and traditions and combined it with the Olympic theme, "Unity through diversity," to empower himself.

"I really felt as though I had wings ... unity through diversity is not only the theme of the Olympic Games, it is the future of human kind. You have to take our culture, our spirituality, our diversity world wide," he said. "Morality is the empowerment of humankind."

Mills is the spokesperson for Christian Relief Services and has raised over \$300 million for the national charity. In 1984, actor Robby Benson starred in the major motion picture "Running Brave," which focused on Mills Olympic win and other accomplishments. Mills said he and Benson, who is Jewish, met during the filming of his life and remain good friends to this day.

The graduates were also addressed by education and political leaders from the tribe. Ute Tribe Education

SEE UINTAH RIVER on page 22



GRADUATION ADDRESS — Lane LaRose was the student speaker representing the Uintah River High class of 2003. "I love this Ute land and want to contribute to it in the future," he said.

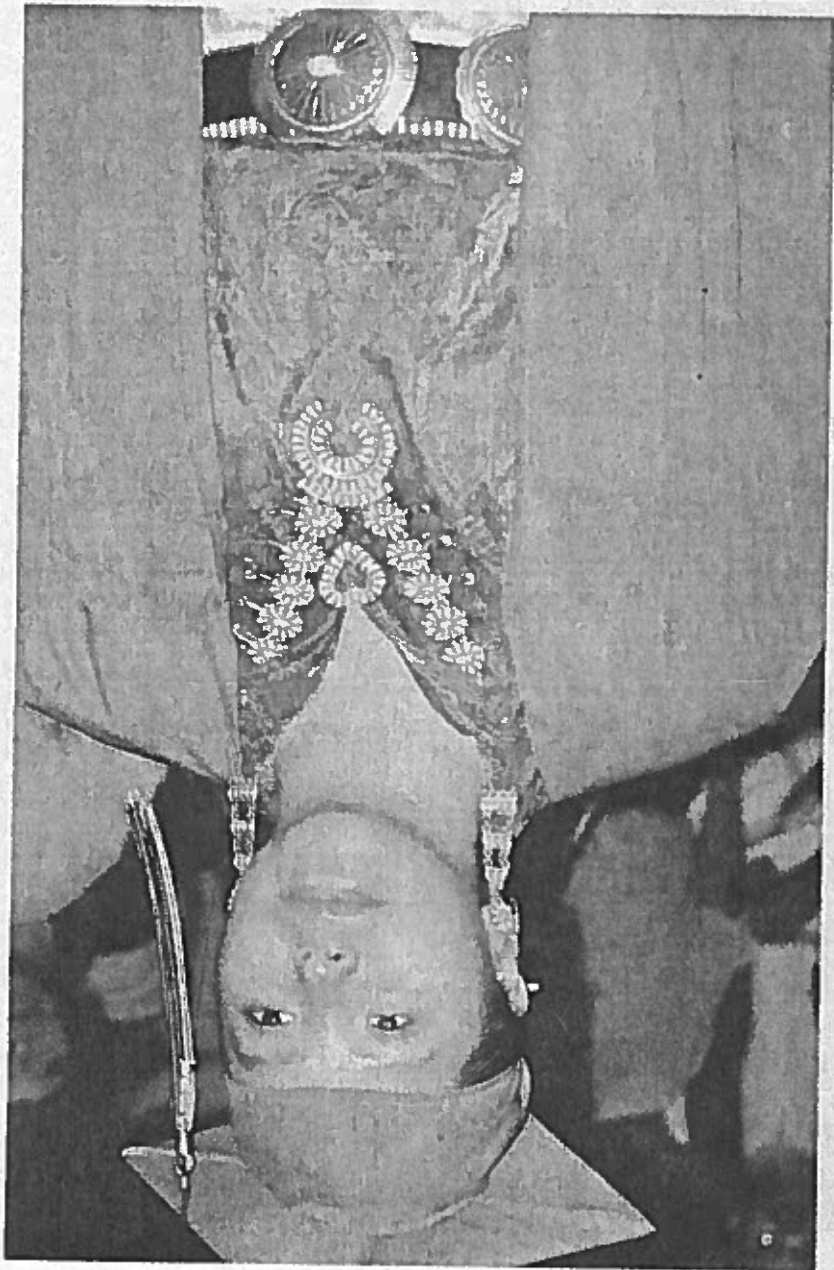
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## UINTAH RIVER

Continued from page 13

Board member Gloria Thompson told the youth that when they succeed the whole tribe succeeds with them and reminded the students how important it is to remember "their Creator." Student speaker and Adult Ed graduate Annie Little Flower Jenkins told her peers it is important to set goals and strive to keep them. Adult Ed students presented a gift to their teacher, Nannette Hall.

Uintah River High was established four years ago through funding from the Ute Indian Tribe. It became one of Utah's first charter schools the following year. Tribal leaders established the school to address the high dropout rate and low academic achievement that Indian students were experiencing in public school, said Ute Tribe Education Director Cameron Cuch. In addition to traditional academic courses, the school concentrates on Ute history, Ute language and culture.



**POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE** — A graduate from Ute Tribe Adult Education proudly marches down the aisle prior to the beginning of graduation ceremonies. There were eight graduates from Adult Education and eight graduates from Uintah River High.

# Basin LIFE



**DON'T DROP IT**—Uintah River High students, assisted by US Fish and Wildlife Service, stock fish in a pond near the Jay Groves Education Complex campus as part of their curriculum.

students' interest in fisheries biology.

"Our ultimate goal is to get these kids to understand the importance of an education," said Pye. To reach that goal, he is working hard to teach his students how to apply what they learn in the classroom and to see its relevance.

Parents and teachers are not the only ones excited about this new program. The students are equally enthused. Although the average daily attendance of Uintah River High in Fort Duchesne is about 50 percent, it is 85 percent at the education complex, according to Montoya. "In that respect alone, this program is a success," he said.

Students agree that it is more relaxing and they are able to concentrate better in such a natural setting. Some say it's nice to go there and forget their everyday problems. All agree that they are learning better with hands-on experiences. "It's better than regular school," they concluded.

Also involved are the tribal elders who are glad to see the youth camp many of them attended nearly 50 years ago put to good use. They helped design the reconstructed buildings and also requested screen porches attached to the building where they could sit and enjoy nature.

Several agencies, especially the Uintah Basin Applied Technology Center, have been eager to help get the program started and have graciously donated desks, chairs, tables and other equipment for which the program is extremely grateful, expressed Montoya.

Although the program is still in its beginning stages, big plans have been made for its future. A resource center and science lab will hopefully be constructed by the end of the current school year, said Montoya.

"The resource center will feature an instructional audiovisual interface with Utah State University as well as a computer lab also donated

by USU and a significant library collection with an emphasis in natural resource management, rural development, and Native American Studies.

The science lab will accommodate all high school level biology instruction. However, it will emphasize water quality analysis, fish disease testing and fish biology," Montoya explained.

The program is expected to expand as the budget allows and only students at Uintah River High who are interested in natural resource management will be allowed to attend class at the education complex.

A long-term goal of the program is to train and develop a professional, experienced workforce for the tribe. Eventually, the education complex will be converted into a tribal college that will produce a professional, experienced workforce for the tribe that has been schooled in a variety of trades.

# Outdoor learning complex lets Uintah River students enjoy unique educational setting

By Angela Eddington

Jay Groves, a Ute Tribal leader who recently passed away, had the dream of a learning opportunity in nature where tribal youth could go and receive hands-on training and apply what they were learning in the classroom to everyday life. This year that dream has become a reality.

Last November, Uintah River High students (under the supervision of teacher **Eric Pye**) renovated the buildings of the Uintah Canyon Youth Camp and converted them into a learning and training center for tribal youth.

The sound of a rushing river, trees swaying in the breeze overhead and animals walking close by all create the natural setting for the **Jay Groves Education Complex**, a place where Uintah River High students can go to learn.

Students attending Uintah River High are generally those who have been seen as "failures" in the traditional school system because they were not attaining adequate grades, but this program takes a new approach to learning and gives them a

The key is to reconnect kids with their culture, which is why it works so well for Native American kids.

chance to show that just because they learn best in a different way, they can still succeed, believes **Mike Montoya**, Ute Tribe Fisheries Biologist.

Montoya, a key person in setting up the program, has noticed that in their natural, comfortable environment, the students have been much more social and open than in other situations.

Each school quarter, about one-fourth of the students attending Uintah River High have the opportunity to meet each weekday morning and ride in a van to their classroom in Uintah Canyon where they spend the rest of the school day.

"The whole idea is to get kids in a more natural setting and create an environment where Native Ameri-

can kids can feel comfortable...The key is to reconnect kids with their culture, which is why it works so well for Native American kids," explained Pye, currently the sole teacher at the education complex.

Pye was teaching a trades class at Uintah River High when he got together with Montoya to begin the program in Uintah Canyon. Before teaching at Uintah River High, Pye taught for 11 years at Uintah High and is also an experienced carpenter by trade.

Pye is assisted in the classroom by **Anita Honwinewa**, who is working to continue her education in natural resource management.

In addition to classroom studies, students attending the education complex apply what they are learning to natural resource management as well as several different trades. They practice woodworking, monitor daily an outdoor pond to learn fisheries management, participate in a wild horse round-up, and will even catch and monitor wild turkeys. They also work with the adjacent Ute Tribe Fish Hatchery that provides a unique hands-on opportunity to develop stu-



GROUP PHOTO— Uintah River High students, their teacher Eric Pye and teaching assistant Anita Honinewa (both pictured middle front), and workers from US Fish and Wildlife Service gather for a photo after stocking a youth camp fish pond.

UBS Oct 1, 2002

# Basin LIFE



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## Uintah Basin Standard

February 1, 2005 -- Page 13

### UINTAH RIVER NOW ACCREDITED

# Principal new to Roosevelt, not to job

By Cheryl Meckam

Marlies Burns is the first to admit it. She is an education junkie. The mid-western gal born in Kansas has served as principal of Fort Duchesne's Uintah River High School for the past two years and is currently earning her doctorate through Utah State University Uintah Basin.

"I'm a perpetual student," she said laughing. Her love for education comes naturally. Her father, Errol Burns is a former Uintah High principal, and he was the one who told Marlies that the administrative position at Uintah River was available. At the time she was principal at a school in Wyoming which included kindergarten through 8th graders. The news immediately piqued her interest.

"I really enjoy this age of kids, they're learning who they are and who they want to be, they really start focusing," she explained.

Marlies recently moved from Vernad to Roosevelt, which cuts down her commute to work each day. "I'm new to the area, not new to the job," she said.

Under her administration Uintah River, a Utah charter school has received full accreditation, a long and comprehensive process that was completed last year. Marlies said it was a lot of work for her and her staff, but they are feeling tremendously satisfied with the new designation.

Uintah River is an "alternative high school" dedicated to helping students who are failing in the traditional school setting.

"Most of the students who come here, stay here. They keep coming and keep earning grades, some don't, but the majority earn a diploma," Marlies reported.

rolled with a waiting list. Marlies knows that education, especially secondary education can provide a better life. She began her undergraduate work at BYU Hawaii and went on to complete a degree in biology at the University of Nevada, in Las Vegas. Since then she had earned a masters in education with an administrative endorsement and is busy working toward her doctorate degree.

Although she is very studious, she also has a pretty big fun streak in her. Marlies is quick-witted, magnetic and a weekend explorer. "I travel a lot," she said, explaining that she enjoys seeing family and friends often and visiting both near and faraway places. As soon as she hits the airport she picks up the walking tour books and sets out on an adventure.

Marlies and her staff look for opportunities their students would "never have if they didn't attend here." For example, last Friday the students and staff attended the Sundance Film Festival in Park City. And because the majority of students are Native American, a trip is organized to the Northwest Indian Youth Conference, which is held in a different state each year.

"One year it was in South Dakota, the next in Boise (Idaho). It's good for them to meet with other Indian youth and do something fun. They learn leadership and hear what problems the youth face on other Indian reservations."

Because such trips are costly Marlies said the school will pursue fund-raising and donations. "We'll do whatever it takes."

Marlies applauds the work her teaching staff does at Uintah River to help the students. "Any educator has a challenge. We are surrogate parents, as well we teach social skills, self-esteem ... we all work together for the good of the student."



READY FOR CLASS—Marlies Burns, principal of Uintah River High is earning her doctorate degree and readily admits, "I'm an education junkie."

# New teacher says her life could have gone very differently



EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY - A radio ad directed Durinda Gouley to a grant provided for all Native Americans who are college sophomores to enroll in teaching courses to obtain a degree.

By Cheryl Meacham

Durinda Gouley began student teaching at Uintah River High School just a few weeks ago, but already she knows that a teaching career was the correct life choice. However, her life could have turned out very different, had a French teacher not steered her back toward education when she was a freshman in high school.

"Mrs. Vormitag was French, a teacher on the Navajo Reservation. That year I had a really hard time, I was sluffing a lot. She pulled me aside and showed she cared and really wanted me to succeed. That's when I decided that high school was worth staying in and succeeding. At the end of that year I had a 1.9 GPA when I graduated I had a 3.4 GPA," Durinda disclosed.

Her childhood dream of being a teacher of Native American children could have certainly ended with-out a redirection of focus and determination at a critical time, which is the reason today as Durinda begins her teaching career she is mindful of the positive roll that teachers play in the classroom.

Her secondary education began at Utah State University in Logan where she earned a bachelor's in history with a minor in anthropology. "I have always been interested in Native American and women's history and I always wanted to be a teacher." It was there that she met and fell in love with Alex Gouley who was completing his schooling with plans of working for the US Forest Service. They married and continued their education and soon after found that they were expecting daughter Taya. Shortly after Taya joined their family Alex accepted a temporary job in DuBoise, Idaho. Together, they decided that Durinda should stay put in Logan, however, that decision also meant that she could not continue her education and care for a baby on her own.

Alex and Durinda saw one another on weekends and waited for a transfer somewhere in Utah, and it game. Alex was transferred to the Ashley National Forest and in March of 2002 the Gouley family took up residence in Vernal. Durinda enrolled in John Barton's Utah History class at USU extension in Vernal.

"We were driving one day and heard an ad on the radio that said the Ute Tribe was offering grant money to Native Americans who would re-turn to school and get their teaching license. I thought that was a wonderful opportunity."

Durinda won the grant and began a full class load June 2003 at the USU extension in Vernal. The grant paid

for her tuition, books and provided a living stipend, which made it possible for her to leave her secretarial job in the tribe's Water Settlement Department. When classes that were offered every other year were available, Durinda chose to take them, sometimes filling up her schedule to as many as 17 credits a semester.

"It was hard at times, but my husband is good at helping out. He washed dishes, clothes and bathed

our little girl. He was wonderful," she said.

Her efforts paid off when Durinda was hired at Uintah River High two weeks ago. She teaches US history, English 12 and anthropology. Her classes range from 13 - 15 students. "She's great," said Marlies Burns, Uintah River High principal, adding, "She really connects with the students. She's got a good handle on not only her curriculum but how she interacts with her students." (See related story.)

Durinda has many interests that will enhance her teaching, she is an avid reader, with a ravenous interest in "anything." She loves to bake and cook when she has time and found herself ice fishing last weekend at Steinkjer.

Durinda hasn't taught long enough to know what unique quality she will bring to her teaching, but she does know that she wants to emulate the type of teacher that Mrs. Vormitag was, the kind to steer you right when your on the wrong path.



VETERAN EDUCATOR LEADS CHARTER SCHOOL

Retirement beckoned, but so did phone call to serve as Uinta High principal

By Sheena Forster

JoAnn Cowan was almost retired when she received a call asking her to apply for the open position as principal at Uinta River High, a charter school in Fort Duchesne. She was called and asked to apply along with nine other applicants.

She landed the job after being interviewed over the telephone as she lay in her hospital bed right after a knee replacement surgery in late August. "I've never been interviewed in a hospital gown before, and when the nurse asked 'what are you doing, talking to yourself,' I said, 'no I'm having a job interview'."

Because of her operation she

began the school year with a pretty poor attendance record — she missed the first month — but is quickly catching up. "The staff was really supportive, they made it really easy and helped me get caught up in what I really need to do."

The 35-year veteran educator and school administrator jokes, "I've gone to school every August since I started school!"

Cowan calls the Basin home. Born and raised in Duchesne, "This is where I've chosen to live. I like how neighbors help neighbors," she said.

She now resides in Vernal and is a member of the Vernal City Council. She represents the city on the TriCounty Food Pantry Board and the Uintah Basin Narcotics Strike

Force Board.

She received her bachelors degree from BYU, where she studied history and political science. She obtained her administrative certificate and masters degree through Utah State University. Cowan also attended classes at Lehi University in Penn., and at Columbia University in New York.

Cowan taught for three years in the Duchesne school district and the rest of her career has been spent in the Uintah School District. For four years she was principal at Ashley Valley High, an alternative high school in Vernal. "Both schools (Uinta River and Ashley Valley) work with people who struggle and are behind, and help them out," she said.

Cowan wears different hats every day, doing the odd jobs that need doing around the school. In addition to her administrative duties, she acts as a disciplinarian,

"This environment is friendly to the Native American learning style."

writes reports to the district, guidance counselor, and investigator when things go awry. She is the fourth principal to head the school since it opened five years ago.

Classes are held in the medium-size chnder-block building which used to house Ute Manufacturing.

The student-teacher ratio is enviable, with five teachers split among the 50 to 60 students who attend classes. The majority of the Uinta High students are Native American, although the school also accepts non-Indian students.

One of Cowan's goals is to see that Uinta River meets the educational requirements set by the state and to expand the variety of classes that are offered and the different opportunities for the students.

To add a cultural component to the school, the faculty is working hard to bring in Native people to teach dance, art and culture. Cowan related. It's not an easy task, particularly in view of state and federal requirements mandating that educators have teaching certificates or endorsements in each subject when teaching at the secondary school level.

"It's hard to provide enough activities for the students that they all will enjoy."

As an alternative to mainstream schools, charter schools give parents and students a choice, and since the students make the decision, they make the commitment to do well in school, Cowan noted. "With the small numbers it is easy to get everyone focused. Though it is hard to find teachers who can



WORKING TOGETHER — New Uinta River High Principal JoAnn Cowan, helps the students while they work to get good grades to be able to graduate from highschool.

teach in two or three different areas."

The challenges the school faces are many. One obstacle for Cowan and her faculty is trying to teach students technology when their school building isn't wired for Internet. At the same time there is little money in the budget for things like extra computers.

On the positive side, at Uinta River teaching styles can be tailored to fit the needs and individual learning styles of the students, she related. The alternative twist at the charter school gives students a chance to have more "hands on" learning experiences. "This environment is friendly to the Native American learning style," stated Cowan.

Charter schools usually have a theme like environmental, or the arts. Uinta River High's theme is focused on Native American culture, art, history and actual environmental study of the school's namesake — the Uinta River.

While charter schools often struggle financially from a lack of funding because of small enrollment, fortunately for Uinta River High, in addition to some state funding, they also have the Ute Tribe for financial support.

"We have a fabulous P. E. grant, which allows us to purchase things like free weights, bicycles and much more, we're really excited about it." The school will be able to make the purchases once spring comes.

When she isn't in the classroom or office, Cowan enjoys golfing, and more particularly the lack of lines when going golfing. She also does stained glass work, gardening, yard work and reading fiction in her spare time.

During the summer months she enjoys a hiatus journeying around the world to places such as Mexico, Canada, Egypt, and Europe. This summer she wants to travel to Scotland, which is home to her ancestors.

WHAT AN OPPORTUNITY — Principal JoAnn Cowan and the students at Uintah River High get to learn about the history and construction of tipis from John Martin.

