

# KAYENTA TODAY

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE KAYENTA TOWNSHIP AND COMMUNITY

A Free Publication from the Kayenta Township

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December 2005



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Local bikers and skateboarders tear it up at skate park demo



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Students harassed by Gang Task Force

*Happy Holidays!  
from the  
Kayenta Township*



# If It's Hard, Grind It!

By Rocky Tano

A famous tag-line released in many TransWorld Skateboarding magazines in the mid-80's has been revitalized once again, spawning a slew of local skateboarders. The recent Skate Park demonstration held on November 12, 2005, was host to 100 skaters and BMX athletes. The Saturday-long event took place at the Kayenta Middle School basketball courts, which was covered with ramps from both the Skatewave and American Ramp Companies.

Considering the recent decrease in climate, there was little hesitation of any kind on behalf of the young spirits determined to prove their skills. In addition to the skaters, there were many community and political members in attendance, showing much support for the world-renowned sport.



A lunch was also provided, courtesy of Skatewave in conjunction with an indoor video presentation of the many positive results of skateboarding. By the end of the day, many friends were made, tricks were exchanged and many pats on the back were traded as the youth of Kayenta and its surrounding areas collaborated in unison.

According to SkateWave (Exer-play) representative, Dan Smith, the exhibit was a successful example of what a well organized Skate Park could do for the community.



"This has been a great turn-out. It's awesome to see the youth in an environment that allows them to take part in what they enjoy, skating, friendship, and music," commented Smith.

The obvious question on everyone's mind is when and where such a skateboard facility will be provided for Kayenta to enjoy. Smith included in his presentation that due to the high cost of concrete, an economical route that has served successful in other areas has been the use of an existing basketball court. The basic premise of the plan would be for a section of the basketball court to be sectioned off and occupied with various vert-ramps and rails to accommodate a skating/BMX area.

Kayenta Township Operations Director, Bill Cly contacted the vendors and organized the event. The Kayenta Township is looking into an alternate method of construction other than a typical concrete skate park due to concrete costs in the area.

Possibilities of this sort are also being discussed and spearheaded by Monument Valley's own Skate Club. Math teacher and Skate Club sponsor, Art Stendel has established a club where concerns and plans are reviewed with the intent of having a Skate park become a reality for the community's youth.

"We had many more participants than expected, it's been great! We appreciate the bands that played also, and the support we're receiving from the community," Stendel expressed.

# Township, Chapter, and Kayenta Law Enforcement Battle Drugs and Alcohol in Community

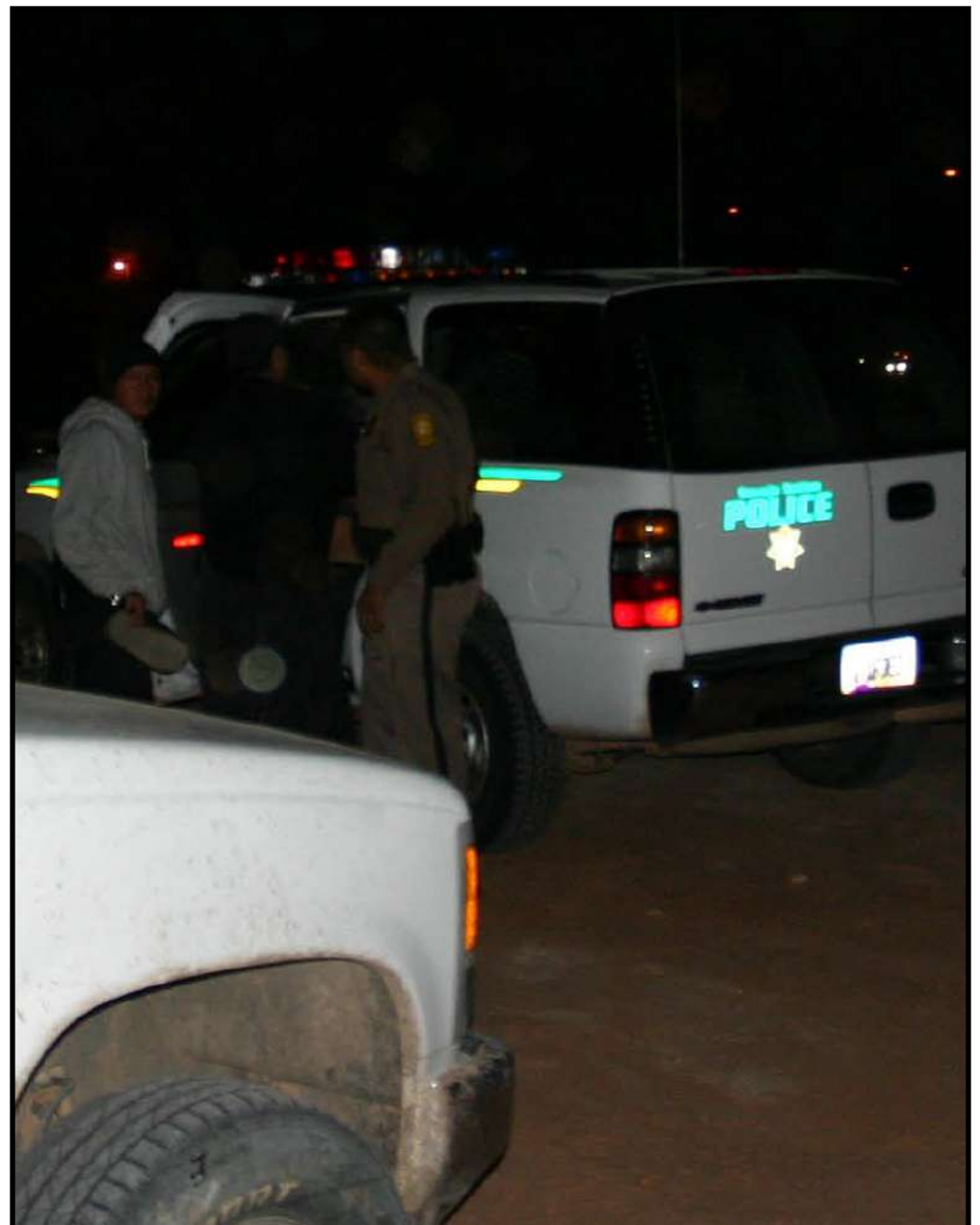
On December 12, 2005, the Kayenta Township met with the Kayenta Police Department and Kayenta Chapter to discuss the drug and alcohol problem in the community. Last week the Township received a letter from Kayenta Chapter requesting help from the Township to help combat the drug and alcohol situation within the community.

The Kayenta Police Department informed Township and Chapter officials at the meeting that the police department has been working together diligently with the Kayenta Criminal Investigation Department to help remedy the bootlegging and drug dealing that goes on in the community.

“We are very aware of this problem in the community and the outlying areas of Kayenta, we are working very hard on it. We try to hit (bust) these bootleggers as much as we can” said Lieutenant Thinn.

During the meeting, some mentioned legalizing alcohol and decriminalized public intoxication. Legal sales and taxing of alcohol would be limited to restaurants only and would generate revenue for the community. Concerns were brought up about this idea of legalizing alcohol. Legalizing alcohol would not remedy the bootlegging and alcohol problems in the community and would probably cause more harm than good.

The idea of legalizing alcohol sales on the Navajo Nation has been tossed around for years by many. The taxation of alcohol would generate revenue, but at what cost to our people? Some say the revenue could be invested in building rehabilitation centers for our people, but in reality, would this help the problem the Navajo people have been battling since the introduction of alcohol to our people? These were some of the issues discussed in the meeting.



The bootlegging issue posed concerns among the Kayenta Township and Chapter. The Kayenta Police Department and Criminal Investigation stated at the meeting that they are currently in the stages of identifying suspected bootleggers.

“It takes a long time to get these people and it’s hard. Most people know where bootlegging activity goes on, but are very hesitant to talk to police about the issue because they fear the possibility of retaliation from the people involved in bootlegging.” said Lieutenant Thinn. “Close family relatives and clanship relatives have always posed a problem, people don’t want to tell on their relatives for bootlegging.”

Many people turn to bootlegging as a form of income because the lack of jobs on the Navajo Nation. For many, this is their only form of income other than their monthly

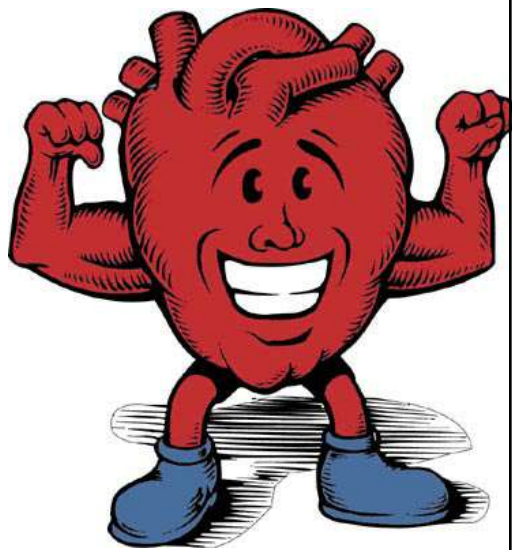
welfare check, which is usually used to purchase alcohol for illegal sale on the Navajo Nation. This has been a way of day to day life for these people for a very long time.

The implementation of more road blocks were also mentioned at the meeting and was questioned why there is not as many highway check points by Navajo Nation Police and the Department of Public Safety. Lieutenant Thinn informed attendees of the meeting that they continue to conduct road blocks.

“Unfortunately, we are not able to set up a highway check point at random any more because of peoples civil rights. We have to inform the public in advance. We no longer have the element of surprise, and bootleggers now know when and where there is a check point.” said Lieutenant Thinn.

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# Healthy Heart Project



Inscription House Health Center is one of three Indian Health Service facilities to be awarded a competitive grant called the Special Diabetes Project for Indians Healthy Heart Project. The purpose is to determine if a program in the clinic to prevent cardiovascular disease in people with diabetes is helpful.

Several research studies have shown that risk of developing cardiovascular disease can be reduced by treating and controlling risk factors, such as blood pressure, cholesterol and stopping tobacco use. In 2004, Congress funded the Indian Health Service to give funding to selected Indian health programs to demonstrate the implementation of activities in Indian communities to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease in people with diabetes.

Participation in this program is to try to prevent cardiovascular disease through education, treatment of risk factors, and other prevention activities. A total of 50 people per year for 3 years will participate in the project. People who have diabetes will have the opportunity to consider joining the Healthy Heart Project.

There is no cost to participate in this project. There will be no charge for procedures required by the project. Payment will not be rendered for participation in the project. Promotional items such as t-shirts and

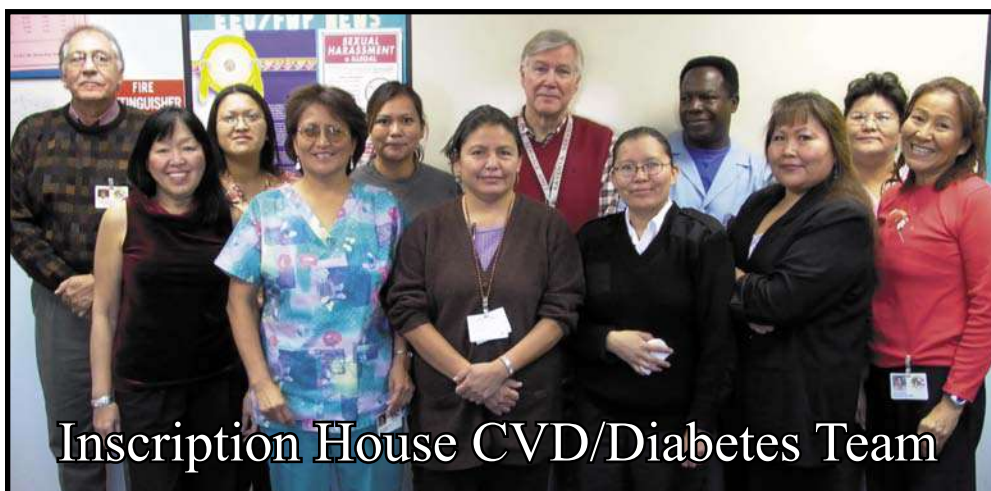
water bottles etc may be given away during the activities of the project.

Funding for this program is provided by the Indian Health Service, Special Diabetes Program for Indians.

We want to find out the impact of the activities of the program on the program participants. We want to see a continuation of the project using lessons learned and reduction of cardiovascular risk in participants, family members and others through education, coaching for life style changes, personalized exercise strategies, case management and disease management. At the end of the program the data gathered will be used to support more funding and we want to see our participants take part in investing in a better quality of life for themselves through education and interactive activities.

**For more information contact:**

**Healthy Heart Project  
Inscription House Health Center  
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**Inscription House CVD/Diabetes Team**



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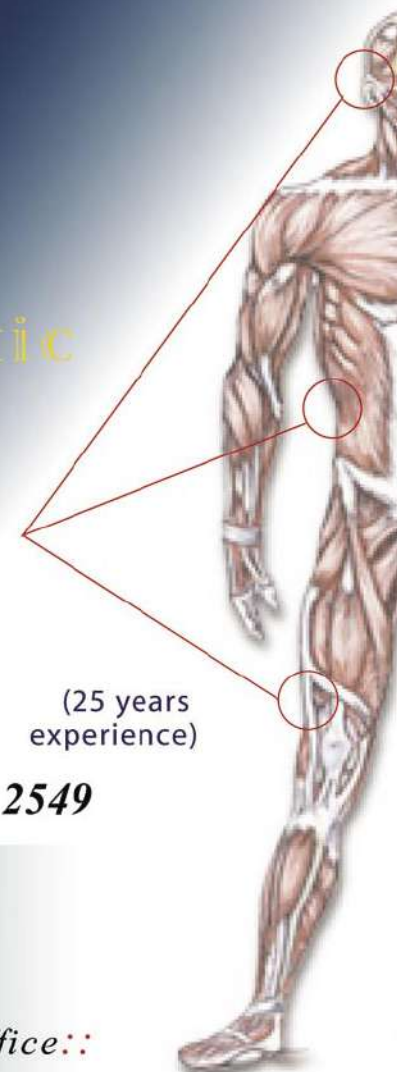
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# Our Unsung Heros

When we think of school, the first people that come to many of our minds are the teachers that educate our children. What many of us tend to over look are the ones that are the first and last to see them everyday, our school bus drivers and the people behind the school transportation departments. These special individuals are given the ultimate responsibility of transporting our children to and from school everyday, safely.

Student transportation is a very important part of any school and is unfortunately overlooked and underappreciated by parents, students, school officials, teachers, and community leaders. What many people don't know and understand is that a lot of hard work and dedicated individuals go into student transportation.

The Kayenta Today was given the privilege to take an in depth look into the Kayenta Unified School District Transportation Department and how a dedicated group of individuals work together to run one of the safest transportation departments in Northern Arizona.

We begin our story with Transportation Supervisor Carol Todecheene. Carol first began her career with the Kayenta Transportation Department as a bus driver, when the opportunity to apply for Transportation Supervisor came her way three years ago; she immediately applied and got the position.

"I knew a lot of things needed to change in order to make the department better than it was. We needed cooperation, team work, and a sense of pride in our work." said Carol. "We needed more training for our drivers and mechanics; we needed new equipment for the shop, more school buses, and district vehicles, more everything."

Although there was an extensive list of improvements that needed to be made in the department, Carol set short term and long term goals and stayed focused on the improvements that needed to be made. When asked, "What drives you to be so dedicated?"

"The kids. The kids are our first priority here. It's our job to protect them. We have the ultimate responsibility of transporting these children in the safest manner possible. Everything we do here is for the kids. That's what drives me." said Carol. "Every person in this department plays a vital role in our children's safety, from a bus driver, mechanic, parts person, and secretary. Everyone here has a job to do"

Since Carol had been appointed the position of Transportation Supervisor, the Transportation Department has been awarded the "Top Shop" award three years in row by the Arizona Department of Public Safety. Every year the Arizona Department of Public Safety conducts stringent school bus inspections through out the state of Arizona.



**A Department of Public Safety Officer inspects one of many school buses in the KUSD fleet.**

Last year, the Kayenta Transportation Department received a 22% deficiency. Three years ago, the department received a 35% deficiency. This year the department received a 6% deficiency.

"This year only two school buses failed inspection. These were brand new buses and we had just received them from the dealer. The deficiencies that caused the buses to fail inspection were manufacturer defects and were in no way related to our maintenance program." said Carol. "The maintenance and upkeep of our school buses takes a lot of work and dedication from the mechanics, in house bus inspectors, and the bus drivers. The road conditions we have to travel on take a major toll on our buses."

The life of a school bus on the Navajo Nation is very short. It does not take long before the signs of wear and tear of everyday use on these treacherous bus routes take effect. Many of these routes may seem impassable to someone not familiar with the back country roads on the Navajo Nation, but to those of us that live here and drive these roads daily, it's normal. Although the bus routes are maintained, rain, snow, and wind can dramatically change a road in a matter of minutes, making it extremely difficult to travel on. Only a well trained, skilled, and knowledgeable bus driver will get our children safely though these roads and to their destination.

Over the past three years, the Kayenta Transportation Department has undergone a dramatic change for the better. Many of the aging school buses have been replaced, new shop equipment is now available to make the mechanics job more efficient and productive, a new and improved pre-trip inspection for school buses and district vehicles has been implemented to help alleviate vehicle downtime, much needed training is now provided to everyone in the department But most of all, it's the new sense of pride everyone has at the department.



**"The kids. The kids are our first priority here. It's our job to protect them." - Carol Todecheene**

"We have teams and team leaders in the department now. Each team has specific duties and they do it very well." said Carol. "They compete against each other, each team trying to out do the other team. This is team work! We never really had this before, it used to be only a few individuals that would have this type of attitude and they were never recognized for it."

This change didn't come easy, Carol had dedicated many hours of her own time on weekends and evenings to do work she didn't have time for during regular working hours. She ran into problems with individuals that had a problem with "working under" a woman.

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**Carol Todecheene holds the new issue of School Bus magazine in which she is featured as "One of the Top 20 Fascinating Personalities in Student Transportation"**

The Kayenta Criminal Investigation Department also stated that they are currently investigating nearly sixty suspected bootlegging establishments in and around the community of Kayenta.

Another area of discussion was the drug problem in Kayenta, primarily the methamphetamine problem. The methamphetamine problem has spread across the Navajo Nation like a wild fire over the past few years. The problem it has caused to the families and communities of the Navajo Nation is both heartbreaking and astronomical.

During the meeting, many were very concerned about how to combat this major problem.

Kayenta Township Commissioner, Eugene Badonie said, "I have been tackling this problem head on the



best way I can, which is through education." Mr. Badonie stated to attendees that more workshops and presentations need to be given to the people, both young and old, to inform them about the dangers of methamphetamine and its use.

"I helped present the documentary film "G Methamphetamine on the Navajo Nation" at Monument Valley High School a few months ago, it was very informative and helped a lot to educate the viewers about the dangers of methamphetamine." said Mr. Badonie.

Kayenta Township Public Relations Officer, Shonie De La Rosa was also in attendance at the meeting, Shonie is also owner and director of the film company Sheephead Films, he and his wife Andee directed the documentary film "G Methamphetamine

on the Navajo Nation" that Mr. Badonie presented at Monument Valley High School.

"The methamphetamine problem on the Navajo Nation is immense. Although the Navajo Nation Council recently made using or possessing methamphetamine a crime punishable by Navajo Nation Law, I really don't think this will make much of an impact on the meth problem." said Shonie.

Shonie also stated that most people know about meth now, but what they don't know is how to combat the problem. "I believe you need to target the problem at its source here on the Navajo Nation, people are selling it and the demand for it is very high." said Shonie.

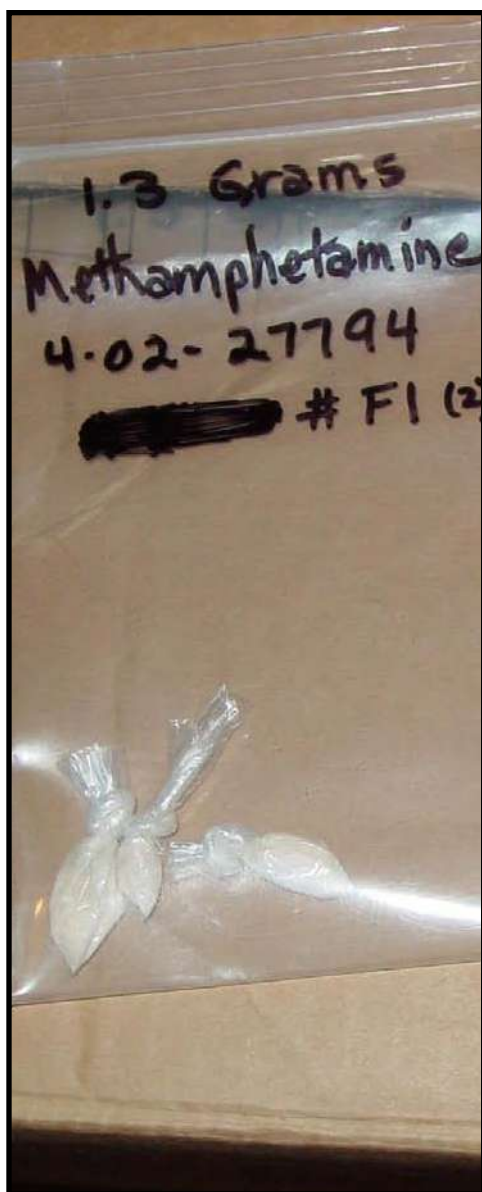
Shonie also believes that the manu-

facturing of meth on the Navajo Nation is nowhere near as big as some may say. Producing methamphetamine is a time consuming process, most methamphetamine users do not have the patience to wait for it, and it's much easier and quicker to buy it.

A recent article by Sarah Fenske published in the Phoenix New Times states:

*Crystal meth users, no matter how badly addicted, aren't known to spend their time boiling and filtering Tylenol Cold/Severe Congestion cool-burst caplets. There are better ways to get the drug. Cheaper ways. Even the addicts in Arizona who "cook" their own crystal meth -- and the Drug Enforcement Agency is convinced there aren't too many left, now that cheap, potent Mexican meth has flooded the market.*

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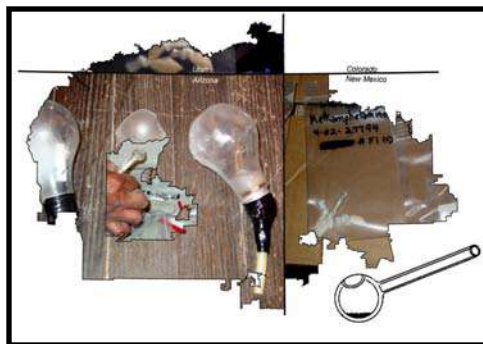
The majority of methamphetamine on the Navajo Nation comes from Phoenix and Albuquerque (most probably Mexican Meth), and is distributed through out the Navajo Nation through various dealers all over Navajo Land. Methamphetamine has attacked every single community on the Navajo Nation. "I don't believe that there is one single person on the Navajo Nation that has not felt the effect of the meth problem." said Shonie.

Lieutenant Thinn said, "Many kids today have lost their identity, they turn to television and think it's cool to try and be what they see on television. We all have lost the value of family, in today's world, we are all too busy to sit down with our kids and families and guide them. We need to go back to these values in order to combat the drug and alcohol problems."

Another suggestion to combat the problem of bootlegging and drug dealing in Kayenta was given by Shonie De La Rosa. He suggested that the community enact a "Three Strikes and You are Out" ordinance. An individual(s) caught bootlegging or drug dealing would have to pay a fine and attend a counseling and job training program for their first offense. A Second offense would result in mandatory inpatient rehabilitation and job training. A third offense would result in mandatory jail time and loss of their home site lease.

Shonie believes that this ordinance may seem cold hearted to some, but also believes that it would send a good clear message to individuals that violate the law. He also stated that this would also make individuals think twice before they consider bootlegging or drug dealing in Kayenta.

Reaction to his suggestion to the drug and alcohol problem in Kayenta did not generate much conversation




**"We need to continue to educate our people about the dangers of drugs and alcohol, and we need to educate our community."**


- Eugene Badonie

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from attendees of the meeting, but lead to many other ideas such as a Crime Stopper program and Neighborhood Watch program that was suggested by Harry Sombrero of the Kayenta Criminal Investigation Department.

Mr. Eugene Badonie finished off the meeting by stating, "We need to continue to educate our people about the dangers of drugs and alcohol, and we need to educate our community."

The Kayenta Township, Chapter and Law Enforcement officials of Kayenta realize the drug and alcohol problem in the community needs to be addressed. They realize this is something that can not be ignored and are dedicated to combating the problem head on. The Township, Chapter and Law Enforcement officials of Kayenta will continue to meet on a regular basis until they come up with a solution for these problems.

For more information, please contact the Kayenta Township at (928) 697-8451

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“I was told by a former employee here, that a Navajo woman’s place is at home and that in Navajo way, a Navajo man is not supposed to do what a woman tells him to do at his place of employment. Even if she is the boss.” said Carol. “That was a long time ago and I no longer have that problem. I have and always will treat people with respect.”

The Kayenta Today attended a recent Team Meeting at the Kayenta Transportation Department, at the meeting a Team Leader and also Head Mechanic Steve Poorman addressed other Team Leaders about the upcoming annual Department of Public Safety Bus Inspection. “We are shooting for the “Top Shop” award for the fourth time, we all need to pull together and work as a team to accomplish this.” Through hard work, team work and dedication, the Kayenta Transportation Department is the only school district on the Navajo Nation to receive this prestigious award.

During Team meetings, all agenda items are openly discussed among the staff and are open to all suggestions and comments. “The decisions we make here affect every aspect of the day to day operation of this department.” said Carol.

The mechanics of the department play a vital role in the maintenance and repair of district school buses, vehicles and heavy equipment. With out the professional skills of these outstanding individuals, the department would cease to operate.

Raymond Fatt, a certified diesel technician has been working for the department for over seven years. “It seems like only yesterday that I began to work here, a lot has changed since then.” said Raymond. He recalled when he first started working at the Transportation department that most of the district school busses were old and in need of replacement. Since then, all school buses have been replaced.

“I really enjoy working here. At times it’s like a rollercoaster, but we all pull together. It’s all about team work, to work as one.” said Raymond.

Salary off the Navajo Nation for a certified diesel technician such as Raymond is nearly three times as what he makes currently. This also applies for nearly every member of the Transportation Department which includes bus drivers, mechanic helpers, as well as the transportation supervisor.



***Many of these routes may seem impassable to someone not familiar with the back country roads on the Navajo Nation, but to those of us that live here and drive these roads daily, it’s normal.***

*- Carol Todecheene*

Transportation departments off the Navajo Nation have better wages, benefits, and union representation, which is denied to these hard working individuals on the Navajo Nation. Off Reservation transportation departments do not have to endure the type of extreme working conditions such as weather, road conditions, and the isolation that transportation departments on the Navajo Nation have to face everyday. Many believe this is unfair because public schools on the Navajo Nation should be paying employees the equivalent of what non-reservation public school pay their employees, if not more.

“Even though the pay is not what other schools pay off the Rez, jobs are hard to come by on the Rez, and you just have to take what you get. Besides, I need the benefits such as insurance and retirement. I’m a single parent and have to provide for my kids. With that aside, I really enjoy it here, it’s like my second family. Everyone here gets along really well, we like to tease each other clan wise and just have fun.” said Raymond.

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Despite the low pay, working condition, and long hours, the Transportation staff has one common goal. The safety of the children they are responsible for. It is this common goal that keeps them going day in and day out.

Ernest Poorman, a bus driver and mechanic helper from Red Point Flats has been working with the department for over eight-teen years. He has seen many things change at the department over the years.



**The Kayenta Transportation staff pose for a picture with the infamous "Mustang Bus"**

***These incredible people are the first to see and greet our children and the last to see them at the end of the day.***



**Mechanic Roger James and Head Mechanic Steve Poorman return from a repair job on a bus in the field.**



**KUSD students enjoy a tour of the Kayenta Transportation Department.**

"Things here have changed for the better, we all realize our main goal is the safety of the kids. We all play a vital part in this goal. When we were awarded the "Top Shop" award, I really didn't think it was all that big of a deal. I thought it was just some small thing, but it wasn't until I saw a newspaper article about us in a Tucson newspaper that made me realize how important this award is. After being awarded the "Top Shop" award three times now, I now realize it is something to be very proud about." said Ernest.



**Head Mechanic Steve Poorman shows KUSD students parts that get replaced on school buses.**



**Kayenta's Transportation staff receive training in basic e-mail use to the latest training available for automotive and diesel technology.**



**Bus driver and mechanic helper Ernest Poorman explains to KUSD students the importance of regular school bus maintenance.**



**"We all realize our main goal is the safety of the kids. We all play a vital part in this goal."**

**- Ernest Poorman**

Although many of us may over look these hard working dedicated individuals, it is they that go that extra mile to make sure our children are safe. These incredible people are the first to see and greet our children and the last to see them at the end of the day. So, the next time you see anyone of these dedicated people, shake their hand and let them know that they are appreciated and valued members of our communities.

# Navajo Nation Chief Justice Meets With Kayenta Township

On December 12, 2005 Chief Justice of the Navajo Nation, Herb Yazzie met with Kayenta Township Officials and Kayenta Chapter Representatives about the Kayenta Master Lease and Land Use Plan at the Kayenta Town Hall.

Herb Yazzie described the Master Lease as a mechanism to determine how the Kayenta Township will work with the Navajo Nation and the Federal Government to lease land within the Kayenta Township boundary. Currently the Township and Chapter still have to work with the Navajo Nation and the BIA even though the community of Kayenta is a self governing township.

The Master Lease is to help relieve the current bureaucratic red tape that is involved with any lease request by an individual or business to the Navajo Nation today. "Others have talked about this idea of a Master Lease, but there are practical details you have to deal with such as the leasing process and corporate entities." said Herb Yazzie.

Mr. Yazzie also had concerns about Kayenta Chapter certification. Once a Chapter becomes certified, the Chapter is authorized to issue leases within its Chapter boundaries. Herb Yazzie said, "How will this impact the Kayenta Township?"

"How will the Township and Chapter share in its revenues? The Kayenta Chapter and Kayenta Township must talk about this." said Herb Yazzie.

Mr. Yazzie also went on to state that the Navajo Nation has been working hard to change Navajo Nation laws as well as Federal laws to help make it easier to obtain a lease on the Navajo Nation.

Bureaucratic red tape has always hindered potential business growth on the Navajo Nation for years. This red tape discourages many and in turn redirects a potential business to non Native lands. Unfortunately, this results in the loss of much needed jobs and economic growth the Navajo people have been yearning for, for many years.

If the community of Kayenta has the Kayenta Township, Kayenta Chapter, and KEDCO in charge of approving leases, this only creates another bureaucracy. "A decision needs to be made, who will have the ultimate authority to issue and sign leases?" said Herb Yazzie.

Mr. Yazzie said, "A political decision needs to be made stating that the Navajo Nation and the BIA will accept the status of the Kayenta Township as "Home Rule" and recognize the Townships full authority. Currently the BIA will only recognize the signature of the Navajo Nation President and not the Townships status of "Home Rule"."

The Kayenta Township submitted the Master Lease Plan to the BIA many months ago. The BIA rejected it and informed the Township that the Master Lease needed the approval of the Navajo Nation Council. The Township then submitted the Master Lease Plan to the Navajo Nation Council and in turn the Council informed the Township that the Master Lease Plan did not need the approval of the Council. Since then, the Master Lease Plan has been approved and signed by Navajo Nation President, Joe Shirley Jr. and submitted to Washington by former Town Manager, Gary Nelson. To this day there has been no response from Washington on the Master Lease Plan.



**Kayenta Township Commissioners L-R: Richard Mike, Charles Young, Jimmy Austin II, Eugene Badonie, and Anthony Peterman.**



**Navajo Nation Chief Justice, Herb Yazzie**



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# HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS HARASSED BY GANG TASK FORCE, PARENTS DEMAND EXPLANATION & APOLOGY

Flagstaff, AZ – On Thursday December 8th, members of Youth of the Peaks, concerned parents, and community leaders demanded an apology from the Flagstaff Police Department and the administration of Coconino High School for intimidating and harassing young women involved with the Youth of the Peaks, an organization committed to protecting culture, community, spirituality, and the environment here in the Southwest.

On Wednesday, December 7th at Coconino High School, while preparing for lunchtime rehearsal for an upcoming play, members of the

“Youth of the Peaks” witnessed several Gang Task Force Officers tearing down flyers for a series of events that the new youth group had been planning for months. The next day, the administration cancelled the screening for “The Snowbowl Effect” that was earlier permitted by the administration and played in the school last year.

The youth group believe this seemed to be in direct response to the Youth of the Peaks vigil that brought nearly 200 youth the night before where Flagstaff Law Enforcement filmed the people involved with the vigil.



“The officers saw that we had flyers in our hands and started questioning us, they also said that we couldn’t put flyers up because they were causing political problems.” said Shelby Rae of the Youth of the Peaks, “We showed them that we had permission from the school administration but they still told us that we couldn’t put up flyers and then they made us go with them to the principals office.”

The officers then took the flyers, confiscated them and escorted the young women to meet with the principal.

They took Alberta Nells (15), Jinelle (14) Lomatewama, and Teara Jean (14), three young indigenous women into the office without parental guardians present. Regardless of officers saying they were not attempting to intimidate these young women, the situation seemed hostile, and completely inappropriate to put these young women through.

“They told us we weren’t in trouble but I felt intimidated and scarred, I was crying.” said Shelby Rae 14 year

old Coconino High School student, “We didn’t do anything wrong, all I am doing is trying to stand up for my community.”

Requests were later made to the Gang Task Force to retrieve the flyers but was denied as they were now considered “evidence”.

“Who is responsible for this outright harassment of these youth?” said Shonto Begay, guardian of a Youth of the Peaks member Justin John. “This is not an appropriate action to take during school hours. At the least the administration and responsible law enforcement officers should apologize for intimidating these students who are not criminals or involved in gang activity and should not be treated as such. These youth are actually trying to do something positive for our culture and environment.”

“We will move forward with our faith our spirit and our love, not with fear.” said Alberta Nells declaring that this will not stop their efforts to protect the San Francisco Peaks.



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