

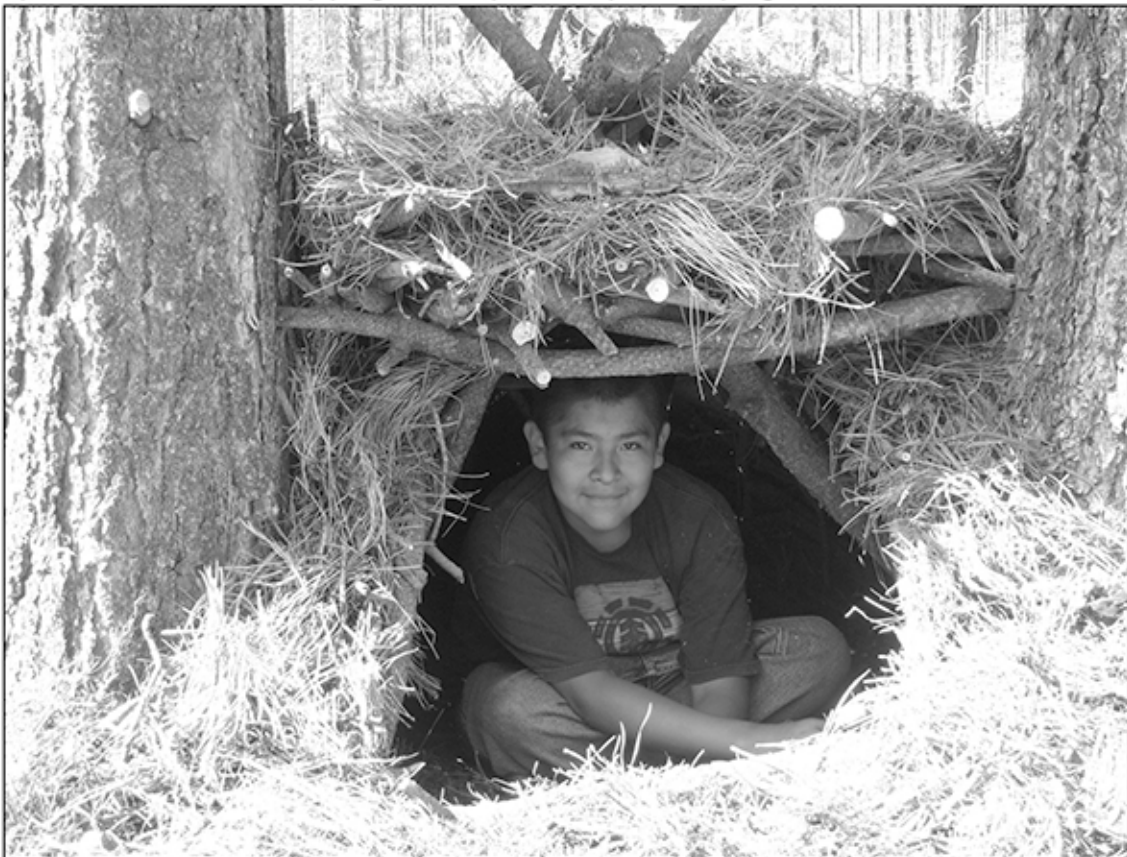
Community News

Jemez Pueblo Youth Learn Leadership and Earth Skills



PHOTOS BY ELISE PEIXOTTO

EARTH SKILLS CAMP – Rourke McDermott and Brophy Toledo (kneeling left to right) developed the Earth skills camp program and plan to expand the program statewide.



SHELTER – Jemez Pueblo Camp participant Jacob Casiquito looks forward to sleeping in the shelter he built.

by Elise Peixotto

Eight young men from the Jemez Pueblo can build a shelter, hunt with the rhythms of nature, make and maintain a fire, create tools, and identify medicinal herbs and food, thanks to a two-night, three-day program called, "Traditional Earth Living Skills Jemez Pueblo Youth Camp."

This first-of-its-kind program is a remarkable concept developed by Rourke McDermott, founder of the nonprofit Earth Living Skills School, and his collaborator and partner Brophy Toledo, a traditional Puebloan leader and Puebloan herbal practitioner. Estevan Sando, summer recreation program coordinator at Jemez Pueblo, played a key role in recruiting this summer's participants.

The Jemez Youth Camp, held June 28-30 in the Valles Caldera National Preserve, was generously supported with a grant from the Chamiza Foundation of Santa Fe. The Foundation's goal is to preserve Puebloan culture and language – a perfect match to the goals of the Traditional Earth Living Skills Jemez Pueblo Youth Camp, which is to expose youth to the traditional Puebloan skills a young person would need to provide and protect, and be good men and leaders. The program is presented in the Towa language.

The camp focuses on teaching ancient traditional methods and conveying knowledge and wisdom. While essential living skills are taught, Earth awareness and living in harmony with nature are emphasized.

All the young men are enthusiastic to share their new skills and knowledge with their peers. And most importantly, the traditions of Puebloan harmony with nature are passed to another generation of the Jemez Pueblo.

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Community News

Earth Living Skills School Creates Connections to the Earth

Story and Photos
by Elise Peixotto

"Making fire with sticks empowers us to not just survive the night, but survive in a simple low-carbon manner. And just as an ember in a timber bundle catches flame, so we are here to share and spread our fire and our light with all Earth Peoples. We all come with our own unique fire/light and gifts. We all are part of a family, community, tribe and others. Through spiritual intentions and attitudes we have the opportunity to give love, gain love. Learning this comes from wisdom and Earth balance." — Rourke McDermott, Founder of Earth Living Skills School.

Earth Living Skills School, a non-profit founded by Rourke McDermott and based in Jemez Springs, is gaining regional attention and support for its unique approach to addressing the stress and disconnection experienced by many in our modern, high-speed world. The School emphasizes awareness, self-discovery, and the primitive arts known as Earth Living Skills through classes and workshops.

Earth Living Schools recently completed its second annual Traditional Earth Living Skills Jemez Pueblo Youth Camp. This summer's camp was supported by a grant from the Chamiza Foundation, which provides support to New Mexico's Pueblo Indian Tribes to help insure the sustainability of Pueblo culture. It was held June 27-29 in the Valles Caldera.

While learning to build a fire using a bow-drill fire-making method; build and survive in a primitive shelter; create tools including a bow from a tree limb; identify food

and medicinal herbs; and hunt with the rhythms of nature, students also received from camp leaders a framework for how these skills are directly linked to the stewardship and care of the land. There also was outstanding marshmallow roasting and storytelling around the evening fire.

"When we connect to the Earth's heartbeat, we also know it is our heartbeat," says Brophy Toledo, Jemez Pueblo spiritual leader and herbal practitioner, and Earth Living Skills School instructor. "Then we are able to build trust, which builds harmony, which builds balance."

Toledo inspires youth and adults with the Earth and origin stories of his tribe. "All problems on Earth are created by Earth People, and Earth People can solve those problems," says Toledo. "It begins with valuing and interpreting the land. Connecting, or reconnecting with the land, enables us to change our thoughts, change the world. It is one world, one moon, one sun we share," Toledo adds.

"All Earth People have similar experiences. We all understand fear, sadness and joy," adds Rourke McDermott. "We are each born into an individual story, yet we share all things with all people. We share the Earth's

resources as well as each other's thoughts, actions and individual energies, which are constantly mixing and sharing."

McDermott elaborates, "Awareness frames a person's intentions and how they interact with the world. Earth Living creates awareness and a balanced connection with the natural world.

Our goal is to share the knowledge, awareness and skills necessary to live in harmony with the Earth, rather than at odds with the Earth," he adds. "We are all born with an inherent united connection."

For more information on classes offered by Earth Living Skills School, visit www.earthlivingskillsschool.com.



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