

Arapaho Unity Youth Gathering

Rocky Mountain EcoDharma Retreat Center

June 15-21, 2026

The Arapaho youth and elders loved the gathering on their beautiful, ancestral land.

There were 10 Southern Arapaho youth from the Cheyenne & Arapaho Reservation in Oklahoma and 10 Northern Arapaho youth from the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming. There were 2 Southern Arapaho elders and 4 Northern Arapaho Elders (who also functioned as chaperones). There were 3 Southern Arapaho chaperones and 1 Northern Arapaho chaperone. There were also had 2 cooks from the Cheyenne & Arapaho Reservation.

The group arrived from Oklahoma on the evening of Sunday, June 14, and stayed at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Boulder (UUCB). They were greeted by members of UUCB and provided with dinner from Right Relationship Boulder (RRB). They received welcome bags decorated by youth from UUCB which included a water bottle from Broomfield Open Space and lots of other goodies. The group also received a welcome bag backpack from the City of Lafayette.

Members of UUCB and the Boulder Valley Unitarian Universalist Church (BVUUC) provided breakfast the next morning, and RRB members met them to help load equipment and go to the Rocky Mountain EcoDharma Retreat Center (RMERC) in the mountains above Jamestown. The Northern Arapaho met us there. We set up 4 tipis on the beautiful land at RMERC.



Setting up tipis



Carrying tipi pole

On Tuesday they visited the Great Outdoors Waterpark in Lafayette.

On Wednesday Donald Whyte, a Ute Mountain Ute elder, who recently retired from the National Park Service, met with them to escort them to Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) where they got a personalized Native American tour of their homeland, mixed with friendly banter about the Ute People and the Arapaho People. The group had free entry without reservations to RMNP were able to have a wonderful experience on Trail Ridge Road and a visit to the headwaters of the Colorado River.

On Thursday, Maggie Engelman arranged a fishing experience at Sawhill Ponds with David Ford and some of his staff members from Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks. Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks paid for fishing licenses for the youth who were 16 and older and chaperones and elders who wanted to fish. The fishing trip was a rousing success with people having significant bites, and most catching fish!

Lynn Walker, owner of Colorado Mountain Ranch provided trail rides and archery on Friday. This is always an outstanding experience for the youth. Some of them never rode a horse before this!



Trail ride at Colorado Mountain Ranch

The Northern Arapaho left for home on Saturday. The Southern Arapaho wanted one last Boulder Reservoir experience, so they headed down to Boulder in the afternoon.

The Southern Arapaho group left on Sunday. They stopped at Debbie Lanes's in Longmont where they were graciously provided with brunch before they left for Oklahoma.



Tipi pole “load out”

In addition to everything listed above, the youth received teachings from the elders that included things such as plains Indians “Hand Talk”.

The trip was made possible through the generous donations of so many individuals, as well as time and services donated by the Rocky Mountain EcoDharma Retreat Center, the Colorado Mountain Ranch, the City of Lafayette, the Boulder Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, The Unitarian Universalist Church of Boulder, Broomfield sister-city and Broomfield Open Space, Boulder City Open Space and Mountain Parks, Rocky Mountain National Park, Tipi Raisers, The First Congregational Church of Boulder, Control Group Productions, People of the Sacred Land, and the members of Right Relationship Boulder. It took a village!

With gratitude,

Laurie Rugenstein

Right Relationship Boulder, Land Group