

SAN JUAN BASIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Chapter of Colorado Archaeological Society



FIELD TRIP REPORT

Date: **July 25, 2015**

Destination: **Ute Mountain Tribal Park – Inaccessible House, Casa Colorado and Casa Blanca Cliff Dwelling Tour**

Leader: **Lyle Hancock**

Number of Participants: **4**

Four SJBAS members and one guest participated in this tour, along with a family of four from Montana and a young couple from Boulder. We allowed a guest as the tour was through the Ute Mountain Tribal Park. Ricky Hayes was our Ute Mountain Ute guide. We drove through Mesa Verde National Park in our own vehicles to reach the remote trailhead for a little used route to these sites.

We viewed Casa Blanca from across Navajo Canyon. Inaccessible House was right below us, so we hiked and climbed down to a narrow ledge right below it; it is inaccessible, after all.

Ricky explained how the various Ute bands fit into the overall Native American landscape in eastern Utah and western Colorado for the past 1,000 years. The Ute Mountain Ute tribe was known as the Weminuche, or Utes from the south. Their lifestyle was nomadic and they had no permanent settlements; in the summer they would move to the high country of what is now Colorado and then move to lower elevations for the winter. They speak a Uto-Aztecan language which has its roots in what is now Mexico. Each spring the Utes hold their traditional Bear dances and a mid-summer fasting ceremony known as the Sun Dance. Dancers take no food or water for three days.

Of course, the cliff dwellings of the Four Corners region are associated with the Pueblo peoples of northern New Mexico and the Hopi in northern Arizona, not the Utes. Ricky described Hopi theology and cosmology. After lunch in the shade, we hiked across the mesa to Casa Colorado. The route into the cliff dwelling required a sketchy class 3 down climb using an old abraded nylon rope, so our members decided to view the cliff dwelling from above.

I believe everyone enjoyed the tour, but the best part for me was listening to the stories and views of Ricky Hayes.

- Prepared by: Lyle Hancock

Participants: Lyle Hancock, Rusty Chamberlain, Joan Kellogg, Barron Haley