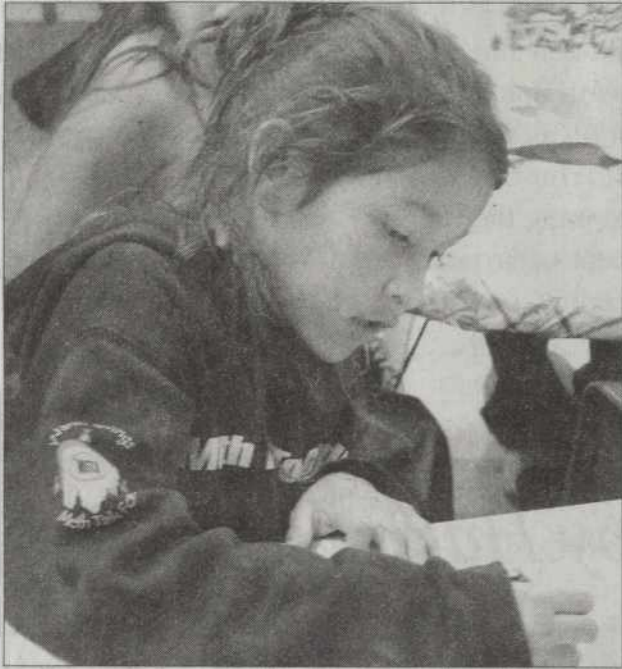




Keeyana Yellowman (above) and Vivian Yazzie (left) focus as they color at the Community Center on Oct. 16.



The "Color with a Color Party" celebrated Arts and Crafts Coordinator Carol Allison's redecorated room—now complete with four play areas and a new butterfly mural.

The event entertained kids with games and a coloring contest.

Next the Community Center staff will prepare for Halloween activities, including a pumpkin carving contest, costume contests and a Halloween carnival.

Leslie Mitts photos

## Trust office has answers

By Leslie Mitts  
Spilyay Tymoo

If you have questions about your trust fund money, it's inevitable that the trust office has the answer.

Staff members from the trust office with Bureau of Indian Affairs want to get the message out about what they can do for tribal members.

Charles Jackson, the fiduciary trust officer with the BIA in Warm Springs, said his office is responsible for things like the Individual Indian Money (IIM) accounts.

"The focus of the trust office is to represent beneficiaries, Indians who own trust assets," Jackson said. "It might be land, it might be funds, it might be timber. Our primary focus is to represent their interests."

According to Jackson, "Before the establishment of trust offices there was never any position in the Department of the Interior or the BIA whose primary responsibility was to represent the beneficiaries."

"Our primary role is to implement the trust reform initiative of the Department of the Interior in regards to the American Indian Trust Fund Management Reform Act of 1994," Jackson said.

The Warm Springs BIA office employs three accounting techs who handle local accounts.

One thing that communities need to know, he said, is that they can have the money from their trust funds directly deposited into their bank account—something that reduces complications in the transfer of funds.

Some people may not even know they have funds available. According to Jackson, there can be money in accounts for Indians who can't be located.

To find out if you or someone you know is on the Whereabout Unknown List, you can check with the trust office or visit [www.doi.gov/ost](http://www.doi.gov/ost) and click on "locating IIM account holders."

One thing that many people don't take enough advantage of, according to staff, is the toll-free trust beneficiary call center.

Recently the call center was developed to answer questions from American Indians specifically regarding trust funds. Since opening in 2004, the center has responded to more than 125,000 calls. The call center is available by calling (888) 678-6836.

## New law changes tribal probate

Probate cases without a written will are handled in a different way after a policy change took effect June 20 with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The American Indian Probate Reform Act of 2004 replaces the Indian probate laws of 2001.

The act was originally signed into law on Oct. 27, 2004, and changes the way that Indian land and property is inherited.

According to Charles Jackson, fiduciary trust officer for the BIA in Warm Springs, the change involves a new set of laws that apply to people who die without a written will.

Before, he explained, their estate was handled according to

state laws.

With this new act, their estates will be handled with the new set of laws if they die after June 20, 2006.

The act affects ownership rights in trust or restricted land (unless the land is located in Alaska) and changes the way trust estates are distributed to heirs after a person's death.

The new changes are nationwide and also provide opportunities for tribal members or the tribe to purchase interest in trust or restricted land at probate.

Probate is a legal process that determines the heirs and beneficiaries of the deceased person.

In general, the new law protects the rights of property owners by allowing them to transfer property through a will at the time of their death. If a will is not written, trust property will fall under the new probate code.

The laws state that after a person's death, and without the presence of a written will, federal and approved tribal probate codes will determine who are the eligible heirs.

Jackson said the BIA will conduct a series of meetings to introduce the new policies to the community. For more information about these changes, call 1-888-678-6836, extension 888.

— By Leslie Mitts

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