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Navajo sandpainting artist Mitchell Silas, center, poses with Glenwood Springs Middle School students, from left, Amanda Moran, Fernando Torres, Martha Nila and Liah Ramirez, who are displaying their works from the just-completed Access Roaring Fork Second Shift program at the school.

Second Shift sandpainting program introduces students to native culture

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Mitchell Silas has been doing Navajo sandpainting since he was 7 years old, and has traveled the world over doing demonstrations.

Silas recently oversaw an eight-week Access Roaring Fork Second Shift after school program at Glenwood Springs Middle School.

The addition of glue and dyed craft sand is a bit of a departure from the rituals he watched medicine men perform when he was young, but that doesn't dampen his enthusiasm for the craft.

"Maybe in the future these kids will

learn a different way of doing it," he said.

Navajo sandpainting, like similar practices in India, Tibet, China and Russia, is a dying art, Silas says. He bemoans the loss of many aspects of Native American culture and language, including many of the medicinal rituals that went with the sandpainting.

"When the missionaries came in they told us [our] ceremonies were evil, and we shouldn't do them," he explained.

Still, growing up near the town Aneth in the southeastern corner of Utah, Silas was able to witness the old rituals firsthand.

"When I first saw it when I was 6, I just loved it. It was like magic," he recalled.

TURTLE

From page A1

are spots for 10 tepees that are 18 feet in diameter and equipped for WiFi connection.

"There's lights but no television. The tepees are sort of camping and sort of not," Dr. Pete said with a smile. "And there's a central area with picnic tables and a fire pit. The whole look of the place is different."

Camping is also allowed on the island in the river.

Rod and reel and fly fishing are available right out of the front door of the cabins and there is a stocked trout and bass pond a short distance away.

Turtle Tracks got its name because Paula is admittedly "obsessed" with turtles and has more than 5,000 turtle knick-knacks in their home.

"It started when I was on a motorcycle ride in California and this little California Desert Turtle stepped into the road and peed," she said with a laugh. "When they pee, they lose all their water and he was going to die. So I took him home and called Fish and Game to report it."

And so a lifelong fascination with the shelled reptiles was born.

The Langedggers hope to partner Turtle Tracks Riverfront Resort with other businesses in Silt to help attract visitors to the town.

"We're hoping to offer sleigh rides and hay rides at Christmas with hot chocolate and outdoor music and concerts in the summer," Paula said. "We want it to be a community gathering place."

A grand re-opening is expected in about a month, but reservations are being taken now for the cabins and for events such as reunions, retreats or other day events or



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Pete and Paula Langedgger, owners of Divide Creek Animal Hospital, are also opening the nearby Turtle Tracks Riverfront Resort on the Colorado River.

as a place for family vacations or to put up out-of-town friends.

"Now is also the time to call for hunting season," Dr. Pete said.

Pets are allowed at the resort with a deposit, or day care/boarding can be arranged at the animal hospital.

For more information about Turtle Tracks Riverfront Resort, call (970) 876-0503, 1-800-876-0503 or visit www.turtlettracksriverfrontresort.com.

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MAY 1 - 30

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www.garfield-county.com