

## BRIEFS

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Page: a13

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**Justice for Naayitch:** Almost two years to the day after the violent death of Naayitch Friday, a YouthWorks employee and part-time Santa Fean, a federal jury has convicted his killer of second-degree murder and four other felonies.

Carl Romero, a 20-year-old member of Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, was originally charged with first-degree murder for shooting Friday, 26, in the face as Friday begged for his life in an arroyo in San Ildefonso Pueblo. According to jury instructions, a first-degree conviction would have hinged on proof the act was premeditated and didn't happen in the heat of passion. Romero also was convicted of two counts of assault and two weapons charges, and faces up to life in prison for the murder conviction, plus up to 65 years on the other charges.

Friday was a member of the Arapaho Indian tribe of Wyoming, who stayed in Santa Fe with his fiancé part time, and also spent time in Dulce with his mom.

"Naayitch was deeply loved by everyone at YouthWorks," YouthWorks Executive Director Melynn Schuyler says. "He had a huge heart for his work, for the outdoors and for New Mexico. He had a huge impact on all of us and will never be forgotten."

**Gas Hogs:** Depending on the outcome of an ongoing state Supreme Court case, oil and gas companies may have to cough up money for back royalties they allegedly withheld for natural gas they extracted from New Mexico land.

The State Land Office filed a civil complaint in late March, alleging Exxon Mobil Corp., Yates Petroleum Corp., Chevron Corp. and nine other companies shorted the state on royalty payments and therefore "deprived the State of critical funds used to pay for public education." New Mexico public schools are the largest beneficiary each year of money from the Land Grant Permanent Fund.

"Even as we have made more cuts to education, we've handed oil and gas more and more tax breaks... we need to always remember that our most precious natural resource is our children," New Mexico Voices for Children Policy Director Bill Jordan says.

State Land Commissioner Ray Powell says although the complaint has been filed, he is waiting to actually serve companies until the Supreme Court returns an opinion on a case filed by his predecessor, Patrick Lyons. Lyons appealed a 5<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court decision that prevented the state from suing ConocoPhillips for back royalties on natural gas extracted in Lea County.

"I'm absolutely determined to get every cent owed our school kids, but I want to make sure we have a strong case so we're not expending our resources on legal fees that otherwise could be going to our school kids," Powell says.

(Wren Abbott)