

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Uintah and Ouray Reservation, Utah — November 14, 2012

Ute Family Secures Return of Deceased Tribal Member Pursuant to Tribal Court Order

The Ute Indian Tribal Business Committee (Tribe) has announced that a deceased tribal member, Teddy Serawop has been returned to his family for proper burial. The matter relates to a dispute between Mr. Serawop's wife and other family members as to the method of burial of Mr. Serawop. The dispute had originated in Ute Tribal Court, which concluded, by a preponderance of the evidence, that Marie Morningstar Pawwinnee was the common-law wife of the deceased. The Court issued its order after considering the testimony and evidence provided at the hearing by all parties. Pursuant to the Ute Law and Order Code, the Court determined that Ms. Pawwinnee, as the common-law wife of the deceased, was to be given sole authority to determine the method and manner on the burial of Mr. Serawop.

However, the Mortuary handling the services, Hullinger Mortuary of Roosevelt, which has a contract with the Tribe to administer burials for Tribal Members, refused to recognize the Tribal Court Order, and continued to hold Mr. Serawop's body against the wishes of the family. Acting pursuant to the Tribal Court Order, Tribal law enforcement officers served the order upon the funeral home director, and the family members retrieved the body from the home for proper burial.

"I am shocked and dismayed at the level of disrespect and lack of sensitivity that Hullinger Mortuary has shown to the Tribe and Mr. Serawop's family in this case" said Irene C. Cuch, Tribal Chairwoman. "Hullinger Mortuary has shown they have no respect for the cultural ways of the Ute Indian People, and they should be ashamed of the pain and suffering they have caused Mr. Serawop's family." said the Chairwoman. The Business Committee also stated "the funeral home's refusal to recognize and act in accordance with a lawful order of the Ute Tribal Court, and the disrespectful manner in which they have treated Mr. Serawop and his family demonstrates the level of unequal treatment and institutional racism our Tribal Members routinely face each day in Duchesne and Uintah Counties, and this type of conduct will no longer be tolerated by the Ute Indian Tribe" Mr. Serawop was laid to rest by his family the morning of November 14, 2012, in a ceremony in Randlett, Utah, pursuant to the cultural traditions of the Ute Indian Tribe.