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**MAGIC AT ASPEN'S UTE-OLYMPIC CLOSING
*Austrians, Americans Unite to Champion Tribal Skiing***

Aspen enjoyed powder skiing on Easter, following a Ute-Olympic "Gratitude Ceremony" in the Gondola Plaza on April 10, led by the stars of Salt Lake's Olympic Opening. "Did you notice when the Utes started dancing, the heavens gave us one more magical snowfall to end the season?" declared an amazed Suzy Chaffee, the Olympic co-host with UN Eco Award winner Joanie Klar, at the closing ceremony.

"We thank you Northern Utes for your snowdance in November that started this abundant snow season," said Mayor Helen Klanderud. After leading the prayer in her Native tongue, Loya Cesspooch Arrum said, "The Utes want to thank the Mayor, Aspen community, and each of you for making us feel so welcome in the mountains of our ancestors, and sharing this wonderful skiing and snowboarding with our children."

Sheriff Bob Braudis was saluted by Chaffee as a "Champion of the Utes," along with local greats such as: World Cup Champ Speed-skier John Hembell, Swiss Olympic racer Stephen Kaelin, and X-Games caliber Paiute/Kiowa, James Quoetone, a fancy/hoop dancer.

The event was sponsored by Klar's Integrative Sustainable Solutions and Native Voices Foundation, a partnership of US Tribal leaders and Olympians, like co-founder Chaffee, Abenaki Olympian Billy Kidd, and Lakota adoptee Prince Albert. "This kind of magic over eight years has made believers out of ski industry leaders now united behind our Native Ski Programs going national because they strengthen the future of skiing," said Suzy, in honoring Aspen for being a role model.

Thanks to Aspen and Ski Sunlight teaming up this season, most of the Utes were transformed into ski racers on the Nastar Course on Saturday. And with coaching by champions, including Austria's Hubert Seigmann, who opened Kitzbuhl's Hahnenkamm downhill this year, a few tribal youth won bronze and silver medals.

Seigmann, who has a similar program in New Mexico, was invited to Aspen after meeting Chaffee and Klar during NVF's Ute Mountain Ceremony in Telluride last week. On Aspen's Channel 16 Saturday he said, "I live with the Mescalero Apaches in Ruidoso, and we've been bringing them to Austria to ski, race, freestyle and share their ceremonies since 1992. It's so beautiful seeing their brilliant warrior spirit reemerge. We are now creating World Cup talent." The Apaches, who built two ski areas over 30 years ago, helped reinforce NVF's pioneering the program in Telluride after learning that "they have the highest employment of any tribes because skiing is their No.1 motivator." (Harvard's study)

"I come from generations of farmers where the land is as sacred to us as the First Americans," said Seigmann. "Wow. What wonderful relations the tribes and ski areas have in Colorado, and that consciousness is now spreading across America, thanks to Native Voices," said the Austrian visionary and two time cancer survivor. "Franz Klammer and Franz Weber saved our Native ski program in Telluride in its infancy," said the grateful Chaffee. "I studied at the University of Innsbruck, attracted to the earthiness and sense of humor of my Austrian team friends, and later realized the similarities to our American Indians.

Seigmann also shared Klar's dream of bringing the two tribes, as well as the Apache Crown Dancers and more Olympians, celebs and locals together for a proposed "Native American Olympic Opening" in Aspen in November. It would include team races and a snowdance to help continue the magic!

In appreciation, Chaffee has offered to help Seigmann realize his dream of opening the Hahnenkamm with a splendid Native Ceremony - blessing the athletes and mountain. (never forgetting her world premier there with Willy Bogner's "Fire & Ice"). "We also had a huge snowstorm in Austria this weekend!...", noted Seigmann. This bridge to Europe was a vision of Cheyenne Ross Anderson, the "Fastest Native American, 2nd in World" in speedskiing in 2002.

Next season, Chaffee also hopes to unite her ski friend, the California Governor Arnold Schwarzenager, the pride of Austria and America, with Nevada's Governor and Hollywood stars who revere the tribes, to honor their contributions at Tahoe's Heavenly Valley. "This is all to help ensure that future generations have a chance to ski..." say Chaffee and Klar.

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