

SAN JUAN BASIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Chapter of Colorado Archaeological Society



FIELD TRIP REPORT

Date: **June 21, 2014**

Destination: **Summer Solstice at Aztec Ruins N. M.**

Leader: **Richard Robinson**

Number of Participants: **3**

Three SJBAS members were able to get up early Saturday morning June 21 and meet at the Aztec Ruins National Monument, located in Aztec New Mexico, at the gate at 5:30 AM. This event was open to the public and a handful of others along with Clarence, Kathryn and I met with Ranger Cindy with toothpicks under our eyes. Although Cindy is new to the Aztec Ruins she has had a lot of experiences and knowledge with Archaeo-Astronomy events west of the Mississippi River.

We arrived at the back wall of the West ruin with some extra time so we discussed and looked at drawing of Summer Solstice events. She mentioned Cahokia, Big Horn Medicine Wheel, Chaco, Yellow Jacket, and Holly House. How many times a day do you look at a clock for the time, or a calendar for the day of the week or date? Yet we surmise that people long ago lived their lives without any idea of time! Yet time and season of the year was very important to them and they could use full moons, shadows and positions of the sun-rise/set on the horizon to tell much about changes in the time of the day or the seasons. Should we plant or harvest, will it get warmer or colder, dryer or wetter? Various members of their society had various functions such as the sun priest, and their might have been more than one performing that function, watching the sunrise position in the sky. As the sun started to change the direction in the sky it moved (and length of day/night) the sun priest would call the people to start dances and ceremonies. Maybe only he or a couple of the sun priests knew what they were looking for, but as each approaching day came they would call out for more ceremony and finally the sun would change its direction of movement in the sky and that brought even more ceremony. The gods have listened. Did it matter at what hour and minute that the sun changed directions of if you were a day off because your vision was obstructed? There are several days where the sun's position changes very little in the sky. Many individuals in our society that I have talked to, do not even know what the summer solstice is (except maybe that it is the beginning of summer). As one might expect, instead of viewing the sun rise with its light tangent to the wall

Prepared by: Richard Robinson