**ROSS ANDERSON (581 words)**

Native American Ross Anderson became the fastest skier in the Western Hemisphere, hitting a speed of 247.934 kph in 2006 at Les Arcs, France. Born in New Mexico, he grew up in Durango, Colo., as a ski racer, but he discovered speed skiing and never looked back. He became one of the top U.S. Speed Skiing Team athletes, winning bronze at the 2005 World Championships, and is an eight-time national champion. Anderson is also known for leveraging his athletic success to bring skiing to native youth.

Anderson, who is enrolled with the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes of Oklahoma and also part Chiricahua and Mescalero Apache, earned the moniker Fastest Native American on Mother Earth for his accomplishments on snow.

His father had been a ski racer in college. So when the family moved to Durango, it was natural for young Ross to get on snow. He was on skis by three at Purgatory, where his father was on the ski patrol. By the age of six, he was racing gates. Anderson was on an elite development pathway in alpine, dabbling in the pro tour and also freestyle moguls.

But on the advice of fellow ski racer Dale Womack, Anderson drove through the night to California’s Tahoe Donner in 1994 to enter his first speed skiing competition. He flew down the hill wearing a motorcycle helmet and downhill suit at 78 mph.

By 1998, he had recorded a speed of 221.86 kph – making him the fastest Native American Indian on skis, a title he retained throughout his career and beyond. In 2001, Anderson made history by finishing second in the Pro Speed Skiing World Championships. Then, in 2002, he went 236.081 kph at Les Arcs – extending his Native American speed mark. Three years later, he took bronze at the FIS Speed Skiing World Championships at Cervinia, Italy.

His crowning achievement came in April 2006 at Les Arcs. On one of the fastest days ever for the sport, he established the fastest speed ever recorded by a skier from the Western Hemisphere, running 247.934 kph.

Known as a humble athlete, Anderson attributed his success to the spiritual connection he shared with the mountains he skis. With his athlete celebrity status, he saw a need early in his career to give back to the sport and his native people. His goal was to bring diversity and to represent all indigenous and Native American Indian dreamers, motivating them to achieve whatever they desired, no matter the color of their skin.

He began engaging in programs for youth, initially at his own Purgatory resort together with the Southern Ute tribe, as well as the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes of Oklahoma and the Mescalero Apache tribes of New Mexico. Over the years, he has also partnered with fellow athletes, such as Hall of Famers Suzy Chafee and Billy Kidd at Chafee’s Native Voices Foundation, to advocate for native youth.

The programs featured a valuable link utilizing skiing and snowboarding as an incentive to encourage youth in the classroom. With support from General Norman Schwarzkopf, his grassroots program inspired resorts across North America to invite over 10,000 native youth back to ski and ride on their ancestral mountains.

In a career that spanned 17 years, Ross Anderson established himself with athletic results, including the fastest speed by an American. But he is equally recognized for his work in bringing the excitement of skiing to native youth and persons of color.