



## Cole Cooper

**Meet Cole Cooper.** His family lived off the grid in Utah; as he grew up he developed a keen passion for social justice and environmental issues. He came to Western Colorado University to earn an MA in Rural Community Health, and his capstone project was to help bridge some of the gaps between the Hospital and the needs of the Cora people. Gunnison's significant number of Cora people are an indigenous group from Nayarit, in Mexico, whose first language is Cora and who often turn to a "curandaro," or native healer, to administer shamanistic and spiritistic remedies for mental, emotional, physical and spiritual illnesses.

Cole traveled to Nayarit to see how Western medicine and traditional healing interfaced there. He spent many, many hours in community-based research: building trust with Gunnison's Cora community, hearing their stories, making sure he understood them correctly and obtaining permission to share them. He gathered quantitative data, too, and ultimately he presented his findings and recommendations for bridging health care gaps to hospital administrators, doctors, nurses, staff and emergency personnel. One immediate result is that the hospital is planning to hire a Cora Patient Navigator.

Cole plans to make Gunnison his home, where his research will surely help bring about more changes here.