Native American Cultures: The Southwest

By Encyclopedia Britannica, adapted by Newsela staff on 06.09.17

Word Count 786
Level 580L

The Pueblo lived in compact, permanent villages of apartment houses modeled after the cliff dwellings of the Ancestral Pueblo, such as in the Taos Pueblo, shown here. They were made from stone and adobe (sun-dried clay). When Spanish explorers saw these huge houses in the 1500s, they called them pueblos, from the Spanish word for village. Photo: Ron Cogswell/Flickr
Long ago, there were many Native American tribes living in one part of the country. Today, this area is the Southwest. It includes the states of Arizona, New Mexico and parts of Utah and Colorado.

Many Native Americans still live there today. Their culture is everywhere. It can be seen in art and buildings.

**Native People Spoke Many Languages**

Native Americans in the Southwest speak different languages.

The Navajo and Apache languages are similar to languages spoken by Native Americans in Alaska. This is a clue about the ancestors of the Navajo and Apache peoples. They must have migrated to the Southwest. They arrived a very long time ago.
Another group of tribes includes the Hopi and the Zuni. They are called Pueblo Indians. They were given this name by Spanish settlers. These people built homes close together. The groups of homes looked like little towns. So, they were called pueblos, which is the Spanish word for town. The Spanish called many groups pueblos. These people spoke several different languages, though.

**Food Changed Over The Years**

Most people in the Southwest farmed. They also hunted animals and gathered food in the wild, like berries.

The Pueblo people were mainly farmers. Later the Spanish brought new crops, including wheat, onions and fruit. The Pueblo people grew these, too.

The Navajo and the Apache were hunters and gatherers. They did not stay in one place for long. Instead, they moved around in search of food. Later, they also began farming.

**Settlements And Pueblo Life**

The Pueblo Indians lived in villages. The villages have many apartment-like houses. They were made from stone and sun-dried clay. They are called adobe homes. Each home had several stories. There were rooms for preparing food, sleeping, storage and worship. Adobe homes were modeled after ancient cliff dwellings. They were built thousands of years ago. Groups of these homes, like the people, are called pueblos.

More than 20 pueblos are still home to families today. One is called the Taos Pueblo. It is in New Mexico. About 150 people live inside the old pueblo.
The Navajo people started out as nomads. This means they moved around often. Then they began to have more permanent homes. They did not move around anymore. The Navajo lived in round houses made from stone, logs and earth. These homes are called hogans.

The Apache still moved around. As a result, their homes were less permanent. It had to be easy to take them apart and move them. The Apache made huts and tepees to live in as they moved from place to place.

**Leather Goods, Tools, Clothing And Art**

The Pueblo Indians made most of their clothing. They used cotton that they grew themselves. The Navajo and the Apache made clothing from animal skins and plants.

Many of the women also made beautiful pottery. The men made leather goods, bows and arrows, stone knives, and tools. Later, they learned to make jewelry from the Mexicans.

American Indians usually divided up the work. For example, Navajo and Apache women raised children and made food. The men were responsible for hunting and warfare.

At early ages, boys and girls had chores. They learned that each person must help.
Religion And Culture Of Pueblos Today

Pueblo ceremonies were based on the idea that every being is important. All members of the tribe participated. The Pueblo Indians believed that everyone had to participate so the crops would be plentiful.

The Apache believed that the world was filled with powerful beings. These included animals, plants, witches, rocks and mountains. They could perform good or bad acts. Apache ceremonies asked these beings to help them. They asked for good health, success in hunting, and victory in warfare. Navajo ceremonies were similar.

Many years ago, the government wanted tribes to be more like white people. The government tried to change Native Americans’ beliefs and ways.

Today, many Native Americans of the Southwest are proud to share their culture. Tribes have their own businesses. They share their cultures through jewelry, pottery and artwork. Some, like the Taos Pueblo, welcome tourists. People can visit the pueblos. They can learn about Native American history and ways of life.
Quiz

1 Which section of the article gives information about Native American homes?
   (A) “Food Changed Over The Years”
   (B) “Settlements And Pueblo Life”
   (C) “Leather Goods, Tools, Clothing And Art”
   (D) “Religion And Culture Of Pueblos Today”

2 Select the paragraph from the section “Native People Spoke Many Languages” that explains HOW the Pueblo Indians got their name.

3 Which of the following questions is answered by the map?
   (A) Where did Native American tribes live?
   (B) Where did Native American tribes move?
   (C) Why did Native American tribes move?
   (D) How did Native American tribes live?

4 Based on the image in the section “Settlements And Pueblo Life,” where is Cliff Palace?
   (A) Colorado
   (B) New Mexico
   (C) Arizona
   (D) Southwest