

SOUTHWEST



Pottery

The Southwest region is home to indigenous peoples called Pueblos, who are descendants of the **Ancestral Pueblo**. They had lived in the Southwest for thousands of years. The name **pueblo** is a Spanish term for “town” or “village” and refers to the places where the peoples of the Southwest lived. In the 1400s, there were numerous Pueblo villages with the largest being home to the Hopi, Taos, and Zuni people. Today, these tribes, along with many others, are still thriving.

Each Pueblo community has their own language. Like their ancestors, they also have their own government. It started when the clans within the villages would choose a leader to represent them on the **Village Council**. If the villages needed to meet for larger issues, each village would choose a representative to speak for them at a **Tribal Council**, so each village could have a voice in the decisions. The Tribal Council still exists today.

The Southwest region does not have many natural resources to help the early peoples survive. The land is dry and lacks trees and rivers. This region suffers from periods of **drought**. Because of this hardship, early Pueblo peoples had to be creative to get water to their crops. They were the first people to develop their own **irrigation system**. These early engineers dug waterways to get water from the rivers, across the dry land, and to where their crops were being harvested.

Pueblo peoples are creative in other ways, too. In the early days, they grew cotton, which the men would weave into lightweight clothing. The women used clay and brightly-colored paint to make beautiful pottery for everyday use. Pueblo peoples are considered to be the most skilled potters. Women also made fascinating jewelry and baskets from willow and yucca. Today, Pueblo peoples continue to express their cultural traditions through art.

The early peoples of the Southwest were hunters, gatherers, and farmers. Although Pueblo peoples were able to hunt rabbits and elk and could gather some wild berries, the crops were the main source of food. Because of their creative methods, the Pueblo peoples were and still are amazing farmers! They grow crops such as squash, beans, wheat, and corn, also called "**maize**." Maize used to be the bulk of their diet. After harvest, they would dry, grind, and store it. They grew over 24 different varieties of maize, although yellow and blue varieties were the most popular. Because farming was so important to the early Pueblo peoples, they would designate someone as a "**sun watcher**" to let the farmers know when the best time was to plant and harvest their crops.

Most of the early peoples of the Southwest lived in villages called pueblos. These were multi-story houses made of adobe (a mixture of clay and straw baked into hard bricks). **Adobe** homes were easy to build in the dry, hot climate because the bricks could be mixed and dried very quickly. Many villages today use modern materials to build these homes. Many of the early Pueblo peoples built pueblos beneath the overhanging cliffs or on top of **mesas** (hills with flat tops) to protect themselves from enemies. Their homes are similar to apartment buildings. An adobe building may hold an entire clan, and each family inside the building may have its own unit. Traditional life has a **matrilineal** clan system, and the clan houses are owned by the women. Early Pueblo peoples were mainly farmers and stayed in one place to tend their crops. Since the adobe homes were permanent residences, early Pueblo peoples mainly traveled on foot.

Like all Native tribes, the peoples of the Southwest have many traditional beliefs and customs. They mainly stem from the close ties the people have with nature—the forests, deserts, mountains, and waterways. Ceremonies and other important meetings are held in secret underground rooms called **Kivas**. They are dug under each clan house. Pueblo peoples today still use them daily for meetings and ceremonies for their clans. They are now made in different shapes and some are above ground. The Zuni hold a **Shalako Festival** in the early winter. Dancers represent the rain gods. They celebrate the return of the sun and pray for rain, growth, and fertility. This sacred ritual is only open to members of the tribe. The Hopi are known for their **Snake Dance**. This dance worships their ancestors. It has a meaning of giving thanks and asking the spirits to grant overall good fortune, not exclusively rain. Some Hopi ceremonies use **Kachina dolls** to help teach the tribal religion to the clan's children and to help with the harvest. The dolls are made to represent the different spirits that the tribe worshipped. Often, Hopi dress up like the dolls during chants and dances.

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Boldfaced words represent important words in the article. Write the meaning of the words below using context clues in your reading.

1. **Ancestral Pueblo** _____
2. **Pueblo** _____
3. **Village Council** _____
4. **Tribal Council** _____
5. **drought** _____
5. **irrigation system** _____
6. **maize** _____
7. **sun watcher** _____
8. **adobe** _____
9. **mesas** _____
10. **matrilineal** _____
11. **kiva** _____
12. **Shalako Festival** _____
13. **Snake Dance** _____
14. **Kachina dolls** _____

Choose a word above and create a sentence:

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Use the words from the box to fill in the blanks.

pueblo drought mesa kiva kachina doll

- 1. Help teach tribal religion: _____
- 2. Town or village: _____
- 3. Secret underground room: _____
- 4. Lack of rain: _____
- 5. Hills with flat tops: _____

Answer the following questions.

- 6. How were the tribes in this region like the Ancestral Pueblo?

- 7. How could each tribe have a voice in decisions for large issues?

- 8. How did the Pueblo people overcome a major challenge?

- 9. How were the Pueblo people able to feast on maize year round?

- 10. Why do you think the Shalako Festival is only open to members of the Zuni tribe?

