

5-Yavapai-Apache Wickiup

The Indigenous People of the Verde Valley



The Yavapai

The Yavapai ("Abaja" – "the people") are a Yuman speaking tribe, as are all Upland Pai tribes (Hualapai, Havasupai, Yavapai and the displaced Pai Pai of Baja del Norte). Many archaeologists assume that they arrived in the Verde Valley around AD 1200, although their history suggests a much earlier arrival.

They are linguistically and culturally unrelated to the Apache, who live in eastern and central Arizona. Due to the similarity of "Abaja" to "Apache" and physical similarities of black hair, basket technology and subsistence adaptations, the Yavapai were often mistakenly referred to as Apache by Euro-American observers, especially by the military, who unfortunately did not as a rule concern themselves with cultural nuance.

The Apache

The term Apache applies to a diverse group of Diné (Athapaskan) speaking tribes and bands who entered the Southwest before the arrival of Europeans. In the 19th century the Apache inhabited a broad area from central Arizona to southern Texas and northern Mexico. They lived with a light hand on the landscape. With a mainly perishable material culture and a life on the surface, very little evidence survives to pinpoint any chronological entry into the region let alone from where and how many.

Some archaeologists place the Tonto-Apache arrival in the Verde Valley around 1450, others place the arrival up to two centuries earlier just after the great regional disruption at the end of the thirteenth century based on Hopi oral traditions.

Wickiups

Most Yavapai and Apache Indians lived in wickiups. Wickiups are small round or cone-shaped houses made of a willow frame covered with brush. This was a good house style for a tribe that moved around like the Yavapai and Apache because it was easy for a family to build a new brush house whenever they migrated to a new location.



Wickiup Construction

Sixteen to twenty long poles were planted in the ground in a circle about fifteen feet (four and a half meters) across. They were arranged so that each pole had a mate on the opposite side of the circle. These pairs were then bent towards each other and lashed together with strips of bear grass or cedar bark to form arches. Next, two or three rings of saplings were tied around the structure to increase its strength. To cover the outside, they used whatever was available: bark, animal hides, even rush mats made of cattails ingeniously sewn together to make them watertight. In cold weather all of these might have been combined.



Yavapai-Apache Nation

A Nation Created

The Yavapai-Apache Nation is the artificial amalgamation of the two distinct cultures, who occupied opposite sides of the Verde Valley for centuries prior to the Euro-American conquest of the Southwest. The Nation is the result of legislation passed by the Congress in 1934 in an effort to establish a single tribe in the Upper Verde Valley. This was done as an expedient by the federal government who believed that the shared experience of the Yavapai and Apache at San Carlos from 1875 to around 1899 rationalized this as a legitimate act.

Today

Today the several satellite communities of the Nation truly reflect the evolution from two historically distinct Tribes into the single Nation. The Nation is a single political entity but still respects its dual heritage as an important legacy for all of the descendants from those times. Today, Reservation Trust Lands include almost 2,000 acres spread across four parcels in the tribal communities of Lower Camp Verde, Middle Verde, Clarkdale and Rimrock.

This exhibit is sponsored by George and Pat Witteman

The Great Seal

The Great Seal of the Yavapai-Apache Nation represents the unity of the Yavapai and Apache people and the coming together of the Tribe as one nation.

