

The West: Apache and Ute People



The earliest inhabitants of the region were indigenous people who were both farmers and nomadic hunters. The Apache belong to one of the five major tribes in the southwestern United States. Today, many Apache live on reservation lands in Arizona and New Mexico. The Apache were hunters who tracked wildlife and gather wild plants for food.

They made their homes of animal skins. These “tepees” could be packed up and taken with the Apache as they followed their game. They resisted the government when they were told to stop their hunting and live on reservations. In the late 1800s, an Apache named Geronimo led a rebellion against the government. But he was forced to surrender.

Today, the Apache tribe owns many businesses, such as lumber and cattle companies. Many tribal members work here. The Jicarilla Apache also earn money from the sale of oil and natural gas on their lands. The United States Supreme Court ruled that the Apache had a right to tax resources taken from their lands.

Many of the Ute people live on reservation lands in Utah and Colorado. The Ute were also hunters who followed the bison, elk, and antelope. Yearly, they would travel south to trade with Pueblo Indians and Spaniards. Sometime in the 1600s, they traded for horses brought by the Spaniards. The horse increased their ability to follow game and hunt more food. The Ute developed an economy based on trading meat and hides for other goods. Today, the Ute work in agriculture, forestry and tourism industries in the region.



The most famous Ute leader was Ouray. He spoke many languages and helped settle disputes between the Ute and early settlers. In fact, he helped write the first treaty between the Ute and the United States government.