

Native American Facts For Kids

The Hopi Tribe

How do you pronounce the word "Hopi"? What does it mean?

It's pronounced "hope-ee," and it means "peaceful person" or "civilized person" in the Hopi language.

Where do the Hopis live?

The Hopi are natives of northwestern [Arizona](#), where they and their ancestors have been living for thousands of years.

How is the Hopi Indian nation organized?

The Hopis live on a **reservation**, which is land that belongs to them and is under their control. The Hopi Nation has its own government, laws, police, and services, just like a small country. However, the Hopis are also US citizens and must obey American law.

In the past, the Hopi Indians had a *theocratic* government. That means that the head priest or **kikmongwi** of each village was also the town chief. Today, each Hopi village still has its own kikmongwi, but he is primarily a religious leader. The Hopi nation is now led by an elected tribal council.

What language do the Hopi Indians speak?

Almost all Hopi people speak English today, but most of them also speak their native **Hopi language**. Hopi is a complex language with long words. It isn't related to other Pueblo languages at all, but is actually a distant relative of the [Aztec language](#). If you'd like to know an easy Hopi word, "ha'u" (sounds a little like hah-uh) means "hello" in Hopi. You can also read a Hopi picture glossary [here](#).

What was Hopi culture like in the past? What is it like now?

Here is the homepage of the [Hopi Nation](#). On their site you can find information about the Hopi people in the past and today.

How do Hopi Indian children live, and what did they do in the past?

They do the same things all children do--play with each other, go to school and help around the house. Many Hopi children like to go

hunting and fishing with their fathers. In the past, Indian kids had more chores and less time to play in their daily lives, just like colonial children. But they did have [dolls](#), toys, and games to play. A Hopi mother traditionally carried a young child in a [cradleboard](#) on her back--a custom which many American parents have [adopted](#) now.

What were men and women's roles in the Hopi tribe?

Generally, Hopi women were in charge of the home and family. Hopi clans are **matrilineal**, which means Hopi people trace their family through their mothers. Hopi men were in charge of politics, agriculture and war. Hopi political leaders and warriors were traditionally always men. Both genders took part in storytelling, music and artwork, and traditional medicine.

What were Hopi homes like in the past?

Hopi people lived in **adobe houses**, which are multi-story house complexes made of **adobe** (clay and straw baked into hard bricks) and stone. Each adobe unit was home to one family, like a modern apartment. Hopi people used ladders to reach the upstairs apartments. A Hopi adobe house can contain dozens of units and was often home to an entire extended clan. Here are some [pictures of Hopi adobe homes](#) and other Indian houses.

Unlike most old-fashioned Indian shelters, traditional Hopi houses are still used by some people today. Other Hopi families live in modern houses and apartment buildings, just like you.

What were Hopi clothes like? Did the Hopis wear feather headdresses and face paint?

Originally, Hopi men didn't wear much clothing-- only [breechcloths](#) or short kilts (men's skirts). Hopi women wore knee-length cotton dresses called *mantas*. A manta fastened at a woman's right shoulder, leaving her left shoulder bare. Missionaries didn't think this dress style was modest enough, so in the 1900's many Hopi women started wearing blouses underneath their mantas. This style is still in use today. Men and women both wore [deerskin moccasins](#) on their feet. For dances and special occasions, women painted their moccasins white and wrapped white strips of deerskin around their shins as leggings. Here is a site with sketches of [Navajo and Hopi clothing styles](#), and some photos and links about [Indian clothing](#) in general.

The Hopis did not traditionally wear [feather warbonnets](#). Hopi men usually wore cloth headbands tied around their foreheads instead. Most men wore their hair gathered into a figure-eight shaped bun called a *hömsoma*, though some Hopi men began cutting their hair to shoulder-length during the early 1900's. Unmarried Hopi women wore their hair in elaborate [butterfly whorls](#), while married women wore theirs in two long pigtailed. The Hopis also painted their faces for special occasions. They used different patterns for war paint, religious ceremonies, and dances.

Today, many Hopi people still wear moccasins or mantas, but they wear modern clothes like jeans instead of a breechcloth... and they only wear legging wraps or kilts on special occasions like a dance.

What was Hopi transportation like in the days before cars? Did they paddle canoes?

No--the Hopi Indians weren't coastal people, and rarely traveled by river. Originally they just walked. There were no horses in North America until colonists brought them over from Europe, so the Hopis used dogs pulling **travois** (a kind of drag sled) to help them carry heavy loads. Once Europeans brought horses to America, the Hopis could travel more quickly than before.

What was Hopi food like in the days before supermarkets?

The Hopis were expert farming people. They planted crops of corn, beans, and squash, as well as cotton and tobacco, and raised turkeys for their meat. Hopi men also hunted deer, antelope, and small game, while women gathered nuts, fruits, and herbs. Favorite Hopi recipes included hominy, baked beans, soups, and different types of cornbread.

What were Hopi weapons and tools like in the past?

Hopi hunters used bows and arrows. The Hopis did not go to war often, though Hopi warriors did sometimes have to defend their territory against the Spanish and Navajos. When this happened, they normally fired their bows or fought with spears. Hopi tools included wooden farm implements, spindles and looms for weaving cotton (and later wool), and pump drills for boring holes in turquoise and other beads.

What other Native Americans did the Hopi tribe interact with?

The Hopis traded regularly with other tribes of the Southwest,

particularly the other [Pueblo](#) tribes. Pueblo trade routes reached into Mexico and to the California coast, supplying Hopi craftsmen with shells, coral, and turquoise for their jewelry. The [Navajos](#) were frequent trading partners, but also frequent enemies, who sometimes raided Hopi villages.



What are Hopi arts and crafts like?

Hopi artists are famous for their intricately carved [kachina dolls](#) and fine [pottery](#) and [baskets](#). All of these art forms are still flourishing today. Here is a good site about the [art of Hopi kachinas](#).



What kinds of stories do the Hopis tell?

There are lots of traditional Hopi legends and fairy tales. Storytelling is very important to the Hopi Indian culture. Here is a Hopi story about [a rooster and mockingbird](#) trying to win a wife.



What about Hopi religion?

Sorry, but we cannot help you with religious information. Religions are too complicated and culturally sensitive to describe appropriately in only a few simple sentences, and we strongly want to avoid misleading anybody. You can visit this site to learn more about the [Hopi religion](#) or this site about [Native American religion](#) in general.



Can you recommend a good book for me to read?

You may enjoy [Truth Is A Bright Star](#), a good historical novel for young readers about a Hopi boy's experiences in the 1800's. Younger children may like [Field Mouse Goes To War](#), a picture book of a traditional Hopi legend. [Meet Mindy](#) is an illustrated biography of a modern Hopi-Tewa girl which makes a great introduction to Hopi life today. If you want to know more about Hopi culture and history, two good books are [Hopi Native Americans](#) and [The Hopi Indians of North America](#). You can also browse through our reading list of recommended [Indian books](#) in general.



How do I cite your website in my bibliography?

You will need to ask your teacher for the format he or she wants you to use. Our names are Laura Redish and Orrin Lewis and the title of our site is Native Languages of the Americas. The site was first created in 1998 and last updated in 2009.

Thanks for your interest in the Hopi Indian people and their language!

Redish, Laura and Orrin Lewis. "Native Languages of the Americas."
[Website and Database] 1998. http://www.bigorrin.org/hopi_kids.htm.
Accessed 19 November 2009.