

Flutes and Whistles of the Pueblo People

Jemez Historic Site



Instructional Coordinator, Marlon Magdalena with some of his flutes.

Essential Question

What types of flutes do Pueblo People use today and in the past? Why is the flute significant to Pueblo People and other Native People?

This lesson will explain the significance of several types of flutes that Pueblo People have used for hundreds and hundreds of years. This lesson will cover the basic construction and playing techniques for making and playing different types of flutes.

Objectives

After completing this lesson, student will be able to:

1. Understand basic history of Native American flutes of the Southwest
2. Learn how to make a simple whistle

Background

Flutes and whistles are types of wind instruments that are a very common instrument throughout the world. Indigenous people of the American Southwest have been using and making flutes and whistles for at least 1000 years here in the American Southwest. Some of the earliest of these wind instruments come from cave sites in arid regions of the Colorado Plateau that date to the Late Basketmaker II (50CE-500CE) and Basketmaker III (500CE-750CE) time periods.

Some of the oldest flutes come from a cave site from Northeastern Arizona called Broken Flute Cave and date to around 640CE. An early archaeologist excavated the site in the 1930s and uncovered four wooden flutes. These four flutes are rim-blown type flutes. This type of is a simple flute that is basically a hollow tube with holes drilled into it for the fingers. The sound is produced by blowing on the rim of one end and holding down and opening the finger holes to produce a melody. Other rim-blown flutes have been found at Pueblo Bonito, in Chaco Canyon, NM, Grand Gulch in SE Utah, and Mummy Cave in Canyon de Chelly, AZ. Rim-blown flutes continued into the Historic period and have been documented at most Modern Pueblos of Arizona and New Mexico.

Early 20th century ethnographers documented and collected many sacred objects from the Pueblo People. Some of which, included flutes made from wood and reeds. These flutes were rim-blown flutes that were identical to the flutes found at Broken Flute Cave and Pueblo Bonito, which shows a long continued tradition of flute making and flute playing throughout Pueblo History.

Bone flutes and whistle have been uncovered at many Pueblo IV (1350CE-1600CE) period sites like Pecos Pueblo in NM, Poshouinge north of Santa Fe, NM, and Unshagi in the Jemez Mountains, NM. The majority of the bone instruments were made from eagle bones and a type of pitch glue (made with pinyon sap) on the inside to create a narrow airway for sound production.

Flutes from other tribes have come into use among the Pueblos as well. Flutes from the plains tribes are being used at some Pueblos for personal use as an instrument for meditation or for public performances. These flutes are commonly known as Native American Style flutes and are easier to play than the older rim-blown type flutes.

Many modern Pueblos continue to use various types of flutes for ceremonial and personal purposes. All these flutes and whistles have a life and the sounds that come from them represents their voice. The person playing the flute or whistle uses their own breath and becomes part of the instrument, because the sound doesn't come out until the person breathes into it. So, flutes and whistles continue to hold a place among the Pueblo People as an important producer of sound.

Activities

K-4 Crossword and Coloring Pages

K-12 Watch video about flutes

K-12 Make a whistle using common household items

New Mexico Content Standards

<https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/instructional-materials/new-mexico-content-standards/>

K-4th Grade Standards

STRAND: History



Content Standard I: Students are able to identify important people and events in order to analyze significant patterns, relationships, themes, ideas, beliefs, and turning points in New Mexico, United States, and world history in order to understand the complexity of the human experience.

K-4 Benchmark I-A: New Mexico: Describe how contemporary and historical people and events have influenced New Mexico communities and regions.

(K) 1. Identify the customs, celebrations, and holidays of various cultures in New Mexico.

(1st Grade) 1. Identify common attributes of people living in New Mexico today.

(2nd Grade) 1. Describe how historical people, groups, and events have influenced the local community.

(3rd Grade) 1. Describe how the lives and contributions of people of New Mexico influenced local communities and regions.

(4th Grade) 1. Identify important issues, events, and individuals from New Mexico pre-history to the present.

K-4 Benchmark II-B: Distinguish between natural and human characteristics of places and use this knowledge to define regions, their relationships with other regions, and patterns of change.

(K) 1. Identify natural characteristics of places (e.g., climate, topography).

(1st Grade) 2. Identify how traditional tribal and local folklore attempt to explain weather, characteristics of places, and human origins and relationships.

(2nd Grade) 1. Explain how people depend on the environment and its resources to satisfy their basic needs.

(3rd Grade) 1. Explore examples of environmental and social changes in various regions.

(4th Grade) 3. Identify ways in which different individuals and groups of people view and relate to places and regions.

K-4 Benchmark II-C: Be familiar with aspects of human behavior and man-made and natural environments in order to recognize their impact on the past and present.

(K) 1. Identify family customs and traditions and explain their importance.

(1st Grade) 1. Identify examples of and uses for natural resources in the community, state, and nation.

(2nd Grade) 1. Identify ways in which people depend on natural and man-made environments including natural resources to meet basic needs.

(3rd Grade) 2. Identify ways in which people have modified their environments (e.g., building roads, clearing land for development, mining, and constructing towns and cities).

(4th Grade) 1. Explain how geographic factors have influenced people, including settlement patterns and population distribution in New Mexico, past and present.

5th – 8th Grade Standards

STRAND: History

Content Standard I: Students are able to identify important people and events in order to analyze significant patterns, relationships, themes, ideas, beliefs, and turning points in New Mexico, United States, and world history in order to understand the complexity of the human experience. Students will:



5-8 Benchmark 1-A. New Mexico: explore and explain how people and events have influenced the development of New Mexico up to the present day:

(7th Grade) 2. describe the characteristics of other indigenous peoples that had an effect upon New Mexico's development (e.g., pueblo farmers, great plains horse culture, nomadic bands, etc. - noting their development of tools, trading routes, adaptation to environments, social structure, domestication of plants and animals); 3. explain the significance of trails and trade routes within the region (e.g., Spanish trail, Camino Real, Santa Fe trail)

9th – 12th Grade Standards

STRAND: History

Content Standard I: Students are able to identify important people and events in order to analyze significant patterns, relationships, themes, ideas, beliefs, and turning points in New Mexico, United States, and world history in order to understand the complexity of the human experience. Students will:

9-12 benchmark 1-D. Skills: use critical thinking skills to understand and communicate perspectives of individuals, groups and societies from multiple contexts:

3. Describe primary and secondary sources and their uses in research; 4. Explain how to use a variety of historical research methods and documents to interpret and understand social issues (e.g., the friction among societies, the diffusion of ideas)

Additional Resources

1. <http://www.flutopedia.com/index.htm>