

History Take Out Program



Ute Knowledge: Colorado's Original Scientists Pre-History to Modern Day

Pre-Visit Activities

The following activities can help students understand some of the important themes that they will be introduced to during the Ute Knowledge program. If possible, we recommend doing all four activities before the scheduled visit.

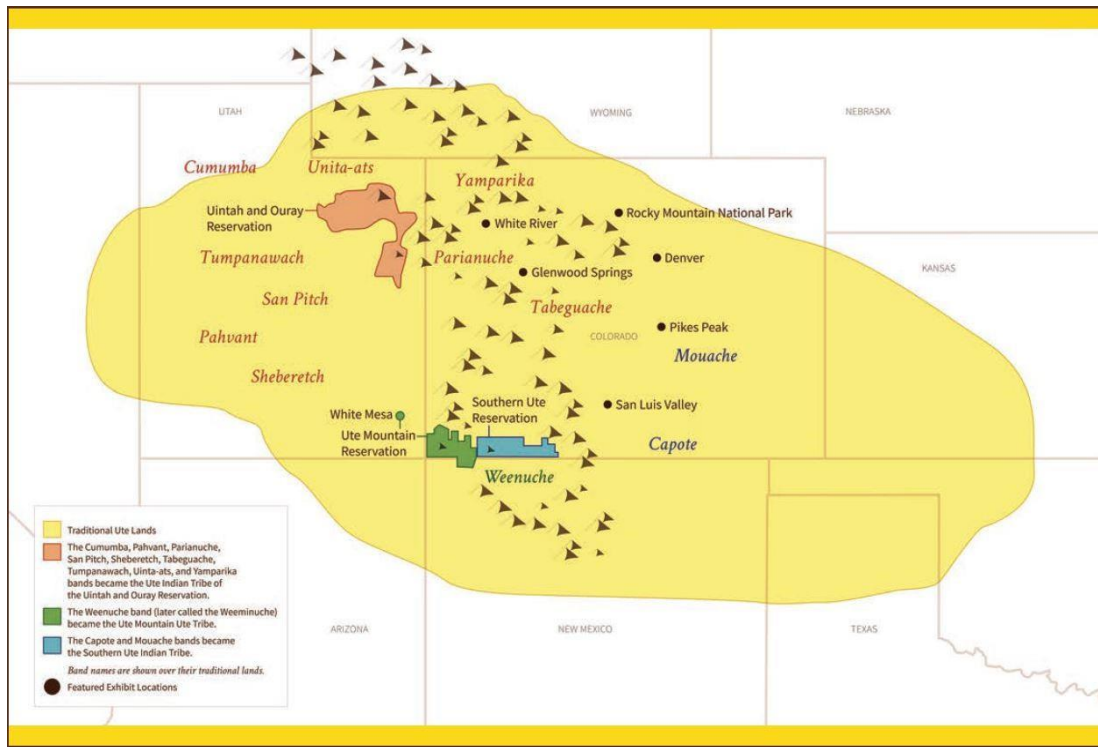
All Units and Lessons can be found in the [Nuu-cui Strong Resource Guide](#).

Background on Ute People

The Ute Indians are one people, seven bands, and today, three tribes. Their long history goes back generations and was shaped by interaction with their environment and their neighbors.

Historic changes since 1849 have dramatically impacted the Ute way of life. Their relationship with the land shapes their Ute language, dances, and ceremonies. The Ute People's place in their tribes, their bands, and their families form their identities as Ute. They are Colorado's oldest continuous residents and are still here today. The Ute live in the modern world and carry on their traditions.

The Ute People's original territory included Colorado and Utah, and parts of New Mexico, Arizona and Wyoming. They thrived in the diverse ecosystems of the Rocky Mountains and high plateaus. To the east and north of the Ute People were the Arapahos, Cheyennes, Kiowas, Apaches, Comanches, Sioux (Lakotas) and Pawnees. To the south were the Pueblos, Navajos, and Apaches. To the north and northwest were the Shoshones, Bannocks, Paiutes, and Goshutes.



Ute people speak different dialects of the same language. Their ancestors spoke this language, but it wasn't written down. In modern times, spellings of the same word vary depending on the dialect that is being recorded. The Ute language shares structure and vocabulary with the Numic group of languages. Their nearby neighbors the Paiute, Shoshone, Comanche, and Hopi also speak Numic languages.

The Ute People call themselves Nuuchu (also spelled Nuu-ciu), which means "the human" or "the Ute". The name "Ute" comes from Spanish explorers, whose American Indian neighbors called them "Yoo'tawtch" and "Guaputa". "Guaputa" is the Jemez Pueblo Indian word for "people who live in stick houses."

Today, there are three Ute tribes:

- Southern Ute Indian Tribe, headquartered in Ignacio, Colorado (Capote and Mouache).
- Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, headquartered in Towaoc, Colorado and White Mesa, Utah.
- Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation, headquartered in Fort Duchesne, Utah.

Suggested Pre-Visit Activities

Unit 1 of the [Resource Guide](#)

This unit covers the history of the Ute People from their creation story and life on the land to interactions and conflicts with Europeans and Native Americans.

Within this unit we recommend the following lessons (or pieces from lesson),

- **Lesson #1: The Creation Story** ~ watching the [Spirit of the Nuche video](#) or Reading #1 “The Ute Creation Story”
- **Lesson #2: Before the Horse** ~ Reading #1 “Neighbors” or review [Ute Tribal Paths Online Digital Badge](#)- Tab #1 “Hides for Horses”
- **Lesson #3: European Contact** ~ Reading #2 “The Horse Changes the Utes’ Way of Life” and Reading #3 “Impact of the Horse”
- **Lesson #4: Broken Promises** ~ Reading #1 “A Shrinking Domain” just the *Ute Territory Gets Even Smaller* section, and ask students: What problems were the Ute facing against these new people in their land? What solutions were left?

Unit 2 of the [Resource Guide](#)

This unit covers three essential lessons about the nomadic way of life of the Ute bands of Colorado, the daily lives of the Ute people, and the legacy of the Utes found throughout Colorado in geographic place names.

Within this unit we recommend the following lessons (or pieces from lesson),

- **Lesson #2: Daily Life of the Ute People** ~ full lesson if you have the time (140 mins)

Unit 3 of the [Resource Guide](#)

This unit provides an in depth look at the cultural heritage of the Ute People. Students will explore the art, music, and the historic background of the Bear Dance in addition to a brief introduction to the ways in which the Ute People celebrate the seasons.

Within this unit we recommend the following lessons (or pieces from lesson),

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- **Lesson #2: Celebration of the Seasons** ~ Reading #1 “Cycles of the Year”
- **Lesson #3: Beadwork as Art** ~ full lesson if possible
- **Lesson #4: A Basket’s Story** ~ Reading #2 “Ute Basketmaking Journey”