Yokuts Life, Then and Now

Presented by The Tulare County Office Of Education

Teacher's Guide



Program Goal

This film is designed to educate students about the Yokuts Indians, who were the early inhabitants of Tulare County. Students will learn intimate details about the Yokuts lifestyle, as well as determine the marks these natives have left on the Central Valley today. Students can then compare and contrast what traits modern people have in common with Tulare County's first recorded residents, as well as see what has changed about life in the Central Valley over the course of the past few hundred years. This film compliments the Yokuts exhibit and tour available at the Tulare County Historical Museum.

<u>Objectives</u>

After viewing the video, "Yokuts Life, Then and Now" students will be able to:

- 1. Explain the Yokuts lifestyle, including: their diet, clothing, homes, weapons, habits and hobbies.
- 2. Discuss the similarities and differences of the Yokuts lifestyle to their own.
- 3. Discuss the evolution of the original Yokuts to the life the tribe leads today.
- 4. Recognize elements of local geography and key historical figures.

Concepts

- 1. Awareness of Indian traditions, legends, customs, art and folklore.
- Similarities and differences between the Valley's native people and our modern-day existence.
- Interactions between Native Indians and new settlers.

Standards Addressed

HISTORY: 3.1.1, H3.1.2, H3.2.1, H3.2.2, H3.2.3, H3.2.4, H3.3.1, H3.3.2, H3.3.3, H3.4.3, H3.4.5

Who were the people to live in this part of the central valley, long before the Spanish explorers, western settlers or you and your family came? That's right! The Indians! Specifically, the Yokuts Indians. 1. For thousands of years, the Yokuts, Western Monache, and Tubatulabal all lived in the long stretch of land we call the San Joaquin Valley. That was a long, long time before you were born. 2. With the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the east and the pacific coastal range to the west, the comfortable weather here was a primary reason the Indians chose to settle. 3. In the last part of the eighteenth century, which was over 300 years ago, the main tribe in Tulare County was the Yokuts Indians. They lived in the area north of the San Joaquin River and in the foothills to the east. 4. The Yokuts were divided into more than sixty sub-tribes, who lived between Sacramento to the north and Bakersfield to the south. 5. When the Yokuts came to our valley so long ago, their first task was to decide where they would build their homes. They often lived (or settled) along the shores of the Tulare Lake or close to one of the streams that flowed into the valley from the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Back then, the Tulare Lake spanned approximately 730 square miles. That's about half the size of the entire state of Rhode Island! Today, the Tulare Lake is dry because the water was drained and sent to other areas.

- 6. Why do you think the Indians chose to live near the lakes, rivers and streams? All living creatures need water to survive. The Yokuts used it in food preparation, to wash themselves and to drink. It was a prime location for hunting, as the wildlife in the area would come to drink the water, too. The lakes and rivers also held bountiful amounts of fish and waterfowl for the Indians to eat. Waterfowl is a word to describe birds that can live in the water, such as ducks and geese. The easy access to a fresh water source helped to insure the Yokuts survival.
- 7. The natives did not know how to grow crops like farmers do today. They had to use whatever they could hunt or gather. Over time, they learned to adapt to the area in which they lived, becoming very skilled at using the natural resources provided in this fair-weather valley.
- 8. All along the rivers edge, tall grasses grew wild. In some places, the grasses were so dense; you could hide in them and not be seen. The Yokuts used these native plants (called tules) for making baskets, clothing and shelter. They ate the roots and used dry roots for their fires. They even learned how to make boats from the tule grasses. Can you imagine standing in a boat made of grass? The Yokuts must have been pretty creative to make such clever inventions!
 - 9. Young boys were taught how to use bow and arrows so they would be able to hunt for their families when they grew up. There were plenty of animals to hunt in this valley long ago: rabbits, squirrels, wild pigeons, ducks and geese. There were also great herds of elk, antelope and deer that would graze on the large, open prairies.
 - 10. They studied the habits of all the animals they hunted in order to improve their success. For instance, they learned that when the fish swallowed ground-up Buckeye seeds, it would cause them to stop swimming and float to the top of the water. Then it was very easy to collect them up in scoop-nets. Other times they would set up a large, funnel-shaped trap called a weir (weer), across a stream. Remember: the Indians did not grow crops like we do today. There were no grocery stores or restaurants where they could buy their meals. If they couldn't catch, pick or kill their food, the tribe might go hungry.

- 11. The Yokuts used many tools for hunting. The neighboring Indians who lived in the nearby mountains made the best bows. The Yokuts would trade for these strong and powerful bows made of scraped and polished cedar. They would then make their own arrows, traps and spears. All of these weapons were either hand-made by members of the Yokuts tribe or bought or traded from other tribes. There were no 'bow and arrow stores' where they could go. You can see the quality of their hand-made weapons for yourself by looking at the artifacts on exhibit here at the Tulare County Historical Museum.
- 12. Acorns are bell-shaped nuts that come from oak trees. They were the biggest part of the Yokuts diet. Each Yokuts family could use 2000 lbs of acorns every year! Everyone helped to gather the acorns, even the children. After they were collected and the hulls removed, the acorns were pounded into flour using a mortar and pestle. We can still see the mortar holes made by the Indians in rocks like Hospital Rock. Yokuts women would scoop a shallow, bowl-shaped basin into sand and line it with leaves. The acorn flour was poured into the basin and hot water was poured over the flour, again and again, until all the bitterness was gone. This process was called leaching. Then the women made the flour into bread similar to biscuits or small cakes. The bread tasted best when the flour was mixed with nuts, berries or meat.
- 13. Yokuts women also gathered different kinds of seeds, roots and fungi. Some were eaten raw, while several types of plants were cooked. The Yokuts diet was not so different from ours. We eat seeds, such as sesame seeds and sunflower seeds. We eat roots like potatoes and peanuts. The mushrooms we eat are fungi. We eat the raw fruit off of plants (like berries and oranges) as well as cook vegetables (like onions and broccoli). Well, maybe we don't always eat our vegetables!
- 14. The Indians learned that some plants could be used as medicine. Most tribes had a medicine-man, or a shaman. It was his job was to heal the sick and drive out the evil spirits that the Yokuts believed could cause some illnesses. The shaman would know what plants to use and how to use them; depending on what sickness he was trying to cure.

- 15. The Yokuts did not have to fight for land or food, so they had time to develop their creativity. The Yokuts women used carefully selected grasses to weave beautiful and helpful baskets and cradleboards. Although they used these baskets and cradleboards as important tools in their daily lives, they were also quite lovely. Weaving was not easy. One basket or cradleboard could take many months, or even years, to complete. The women made the process even more difficult by weaving in intricate designs of animals and nature. They also used shells, bones and feathers as decoration. The skill and artistry of Native American basket weaving is still appreciated today. Many people attempt to collect these handsomely designed carriers as true works of art. Here at this museum, you will see a large collection of these exquisite, yet practical artifacts.
- 16. Artists are able to make hand-woven baskets today, using supplies and materials that were not available to the Yokuts. We can buy baskets at the store instead of having to make our own as the Indians did.
- 17. Yokuts wove Tule grasses into mats of different sizes. The mats were beneficial for lots of things, but one of their main uses was in building homes. The Yokuts would construct single-family dwellings by covering a wooden frame with the grass mats. Some mat-covered buildings were used to store food for the entire tribe. Sometimes, one very long home was built and then divided so each family could have their own space and even their own entry. The shaman would live on the far end of the village, and the chief would live on the other end. Little is known about the laws of the Yokuts, but we do know each tribe had a chief that acted as their leader.

- 18. The very same weaving technique used in building their homes was used in making their clothing. Maybe you know someone who sews. Yokuts women also used sewing to make their simple clothing out of animal hides and to make their small purses out of the leaves of plants. They did not have electric sewing machines. Everything they made was hand-stitched with needles made from bone. Yokuts women wore short skirts made from woven strips of animal skin or soft bark. The men wore very little except for a breechcloth. In cold weather, both men and women might wear a fur or animal hide around their shoulders. The tribe mostly went barefoot. Sometimes the men would wear elk-hide sandals or moccasins, particularly when hunting. Most men would wear their hair long and tied back in a braid or ponytail. However, the chief wore his hair loose. Some Yokuts would paint their faces and bodies with dyes made from berries, roots or tree bark or wear necklaces made out of shiny shells.
- 19. The Yokuts really enjoyed playing games. The women liked to gamble. They played on a large, almost-flat mat, using dice made from walnut shells. Yokuts children played games that helped them to learn skills they would need as adults. The boys made fake ducks and fish out of bark. They would float them down the river and practice shooting arrows and throwing spears at them. Girls made their own dolls and played at taking care of them like real babies. Boys and girls played "house" to practice skills for when they grew up and got married.
- 20. One of the favorite games played by children and adults was a hoop and pole game. It was another helpful way for the boys to practice their spear-throwing skills. The hoop, made from tule grasses, had a hole in the center. This made it look like a very large donut. Players lined up and threw a tall pole towards the hoop, trying to hit the hole in the middle.
- 21. Another lively game played with a round, polished stone was held on a field with two teams. It was similar to soccer, except they didn't kick the stone because that would hurt! Instead they pushed it or threw it toward the goal with their toes. The Yokuts amused themselves with many activities that we still do for fun today; they played string games, they wrestled, played with spinning tops, juggled and played Jacks.

- 22. Beads, bones and shells were used as money for buying and trading with other Indian tribes. Eventually the Yokuts traded with the settlers, too. A string of shells, as long as a man's hand and forearm, was worth about twenty-five cents to the settlers who traded with the Yokuts. Two beautifully polished pieces of bone, about 2½ inches each, were also worth twenty-five cents. The Yokuts would trade, or barter, for items they couldn't get where they lived. Some of these items were obsidian to make arrowheads, juniper wood, sea salt, moccasins and shell beads. In exchange, they would offer skins, furs, food, clay, paints and soapstone. Soapstone is a mineral that will not break when heated. It was used to make pipes, cooking utensils, ornaments and money.
- 23. The Yokuts believed rattlesnakes were sacred and therefore they never hurt or killed them. Instead they believed they should protect them. Every spring, tribes would meet for the Rattlesnake Dance. The shaman from each sub-tribe would paint streaks of color on himself, then covered in feathers and holding a rattlesnake, would dance around until the gathered tribe members brought him gifts.
- 24. Passing down beliefs, practices, and lessons through story-telling is called folklore. Parents and grandparents repeat the stories to their children and grandchildren. When those children grow up, they will tell the same stories to their own kids. Yokuts folklore often explained the mysteries of nature, like how the mountains were formed or why the stars are grouped the way they are. You have probably heard folklore stories from your own grandparents.
- 25. Cave drawings like these were also used as a way of telling a story, teaching a lesson or to acknowledge an event in the Indians lives. The ones at Painted Rock are probably 500-1000 years old. Painted Rock is located west of Bakersfield in the Carrizo Plain. This area was used as a Yokuts campsite for many years. Today, we can view these drawings as art as well as history.

| 26. The Yokuts believed they were protected and guided by animal spirits. In their | H3.2.1 |
|---|--------------------|
| folklore, animals often taught a lesson or explained nature. Favorite animals | Art5.5.1 |
| were the bear, the falcon and the coyote. Totems were carved wood figures that | |
| represented animal qualities the Indians admired, such as strength or wisdom. | |
| The father and mother of each family had a totem. The father would pass his on | |
| to his children. | |
| 27. The Yokuts people worked and lived together, peacefully, for many years before | H3.2.1 |
| any settlers came. In 1772, Lt. Don Pedro Fages rode into the area looking for | Art5.5.1 |
| deserters from his army. These were soldiers that had run away from the | |
| Spanish military to live with the Indians. Fages was the first outsider to see and | |
| write about our Central Valley. | |
| 28. During this time, the Spanish explorers were building a string of settlements along | |
| the California coast called missions. The Spanish Padres (who were the leaders | Art5.5.1 Sc3.1i |
| of the missions) hoped to have the Indians join their Roman-Catholic religion. | |
| Unfortunately, some Spanish soldiers raided Yokuts villages and forced the | |
| Indians into service at the missions. Many Yokuts began to die from 'white man's | |
| diseases'. | |
| | |
| | |
| 29. Troubles increased for the Yokuts when they were invaded by the Paiute and | H3.2.1 |
| Athabascan Indians. Between 1850-1857, many members were killed by gold | Art5.5.1 |
| miners and white settlers during the Tule River Indian War. More than 14,000 | |
| Yokuts lived in Tulare County in 1849, but by 1870 fewer than 1,000 remained. | |
| Tokato iivod iii Talairo Obanty iii 1040, bat by 1070 lower tilaii 1,000 leillaillea. | |

- 30. Indians across the country were required to move to reservation land set aside by the United States government. These reservations often provided poor land, poor hunting and poor farming. In 1873, The Monache Indian Reservation was moved to its current location 17 miles outside of Porterville and was renamed the Tule River Indian Reservation. It covers almost 85 square miles (which is about 55,000 acres) of the Sierra Nevada Foothills. In 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Indian Reorganization Act, allowing the Indians to govern themselves. In 1878 and 1998, other US Presidents passed laws giving more land back to the tribes. These changes drastically improved life on the reservation. Out of the 850 Tule River Tribal members alive today, 566 live on the reservation, which now houses a timber program, an aviation operation and the Eagle Mountain Casino. These businesses have created many jobs, allowing improvements such as a health clinic, a childcare center and the building of new homes.
- 31. Native American tribal members are making efforts to teach the native songs and stories, language, and arts and crafts to their new generations. Each year, Native Americans around the country celebrate their culture at local pow-wows. The Tule River Tribal members hold a pow-wow each fall, like the one we see here. Everyone is welcome to come and enjoy this colorful festival. It is events like these, and museums like the one you are visiting today that help keep the history of the Yokuts Indians alive.

Vocabulary words

Places and People

H3.2.3 H3.3.2

H3.4.3

Vocabulary

adapt forearm resources

artifacts gather scoop-nets

barter gold miners settle

basin graze settlers

breechcloth habits shaman

chief improvement soapstone

construct Indian Reorganization Act survival

cradleboard invaded tradition

creativity leaching tribes

dense missions tules

deserters moccasins totems

dwellings mortar and pestle waterfowl

event obsidian weir

explorers polished

festival pow-wow

folklore prairies

<u>People</u>

Athabascan Spanish Padres

Don Pedro Fages Tubatulabal

Paiute Western Monache

President Franklin D.- Roosevelt Yokuts

Spanish

<u>Places</u>

Bakersfield Sacramento

Carrizo Plain San Joaquin River

Central Valley San Joaquin Valley

Hospital Rock Sierra Nevada Foothills

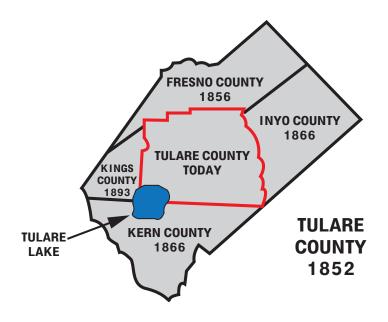
Monache Indian Reservation Sierra Nevada Mountains

Pacific Coastal Range Tulare Lake

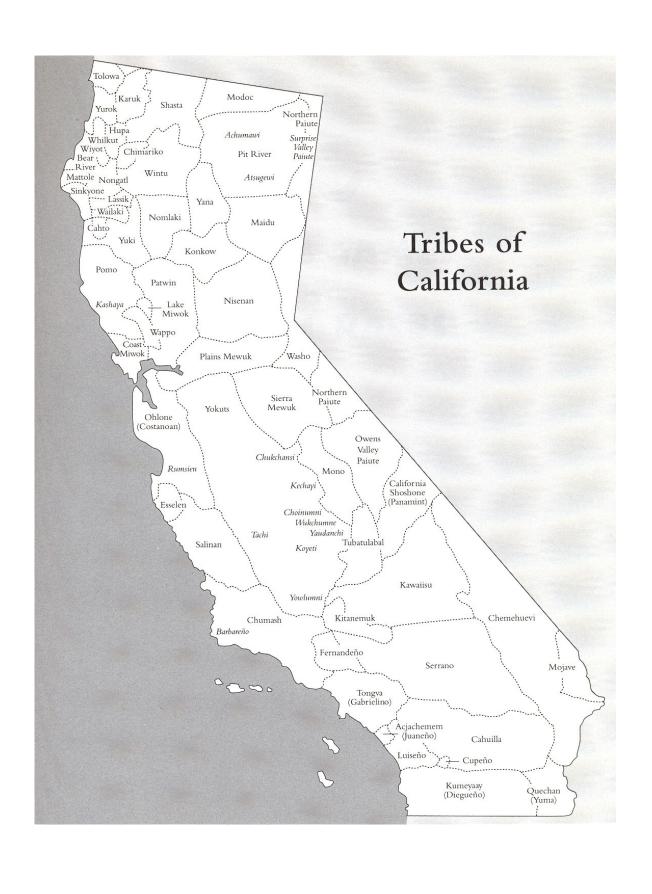
Painted Rock Tulare County

Porterville

Tule River Indian Reservation







Questions for Discussion

1. How was the life of the early Yokuts similar to the life of the modern-day Tule River Indians?

They both live/lived in Tulare County, modern-day Indians still celebrate traditions and customs at pow-wows, early Yokuts ate similar food to modern-day people (berries, seeds, roots, fungi), they played games to entertain themselves, they told stories to teach lessons, the modern-day Indians are still allowed to self-govern, etc.

2. How is it different?

Some Yokuts live on a reservation, while Americans inhabit the rest of the land, there have been advances in technology and science, The Tulare Lake is now dried up, etc.

3. How was the life of the early Yokuts similar to yours today?
We both eat things like berries, seeds, roots and mushrooms; we play similar games; we both tell stories to teach lessons; we both have people who can build our homes or make clothes; we both use money to buy things; some people still go hunting; etc.

4. How is it different?

Early Yokuts had to "do everything by hand" and use natural resources; they kept totems and believed animals were sacred; they didn't have restaurants or

stores; men and women had different jobs, they had a chief; we no longer really trade or barter for things; they didn't farm crops; etc.

Name some things the Yokuts made that we still make today.
 Baskets, houses, weapons, clothing, necklaces, toys, etc.

6. Why did many Indian tribes choose to settle near lakes, rivers and streams?

They could use it to bathe and drink; lots of waterfowl and fish lived in the water; animals they usually hunted would go to drink the water; they could use the natural resources around the water (such as tules and shells); etc.

7. What was the first thing the Yokuts had to do once they decided to settle here?

They needed to build homes for shelter.

8. How did they go about doing this?

They would construct a wooden frame and then weave different sized mats to cover it with.

9. What types of food did the Yokuts eat?

They would hunt for animals such as fish, waterfowl, rabbits, squirrels, elk, deer, antelope; they would gather acorns and make the flour into bread; they would collect berries, seeds, nuts, roots and mushrooms.

10. Do we eat anything similar to what they ate?

People today still eat meat, like fish; we also eat seeds, plants, roots, nuts, fungi. Name some examples!

11. What kinds of games did Yokuts play?

Women gambled; men and boys wrestled, kids "played house", everyone played a hoop and pole game, they played a game with a round stone that was sort of like soccer; they made toys, they played string games, spinning tops, jacks; they juggled; etc

12. Why was Tulare County and it's lake area such a good place to live then?

The weather was comfortable; lots of animals lived nearby; the water was plentiful; the tules by the lake met many of their needs

13. What are some of the duties of the shaman?

His job was to heal the sick, drive out the evil spirits that the Yokuts believed caused some illnesses, know what plants to use as medicine and how to use them

14. What kinds of weapons did the Yokuts use?

Bow-n-arrows, spears, traps. They would use scoop-nets and weirs to catch fish

15. What is a cave drawing?

Pictures drawn by Yokuts and found in caves that were most likely used as a way of telling a story, teaching a lesson or to record an event in the Indians lives

16. What were some of the ways that the Yokuts used tules?

To build their houses, to make clothes, to make baskets, to made cradleboards, to make utensils for games and hunting, to make boats, etc.

17. How did the Yokuts get things they did not have, like obsidian, moccasins and beads?

They would trade or barter with other tribes or even with the settlers. They would offer furs, skins, food, salt, clay, paints and soapstone. Or they would use "money", which was strands of shell-buttons, or polished bone

18. What are some of the traditions the Yokuts passed on to their children and grandchildren?

Folklore, totems, dancing, celebrations called pow wows, basket-weaving and other arts and crafts, their language, etc.

Questions for Review

1. What was the name of the main Indian tribe to settle in and around Tulare

| | Count | ty? | | |
|----|--|---|--|--|
| | a. | Athabascan | | |
| | b. | Yokuts | | |
| | C. | Tubatulabal | | |
| | d. | Paiute | | |
| | | | | |
| 2. | Why was it important for the Yokuts to live close to a water source? | | | |
| | a. | All living creatures need water to survive | | |
| | b. | No big animals would attack them | | |
| | C. | Indians liked to water-ski | | |
| | d. | All of the above | | |
| | | | | |
| 3. | Men a | Men and women had very different jobs. Which, of the following, was a | | |
| | man's | s job? | | |
| | a. | Leaching acorn flour | | |
| | b. | Weaving baskets | | |
| | C. | Hunting | | |
| | d. | Sewing clothing | | |
| | | | | |

| 4. | Which, of the following, was <u>NOT</u> a reason the Yokuts made baskets? | |
|--|---|--|
| | a. | For gathering food |
| | b. | To catch fish |
| | C. | For carrying babies |
| | d. | To put on display at a museum |
| | | |
| 5. What food combination sounds closest to what the early Yokuts woul | | |
| | eaten' | ? |
| | a. | Berries and mushrooms |
| | b. | Bananas and peanut butter |
| | C. | Pineapple and mushrooms |
| | d. | dry-roasted peanuts and cheese |
| | | |
| 6. Which, of the following, was <u>NOT</u> a way the Yokuts made their clo | | , of the following, was <u>NOT</u> a way the Yokuts made their clothing? |
| | a. | With needles made from bone |
| | b. | By weaving tules |
| | C. | By weaving animal skin |
| | d. | With electric sewing machines |
| | | |
| 7. | What | is <u>NOT</u> an example of an Indian game? |
| | a. | A game, like soccer, played with a polished stone |

b. A game, like basketball, played with a hand-made basket

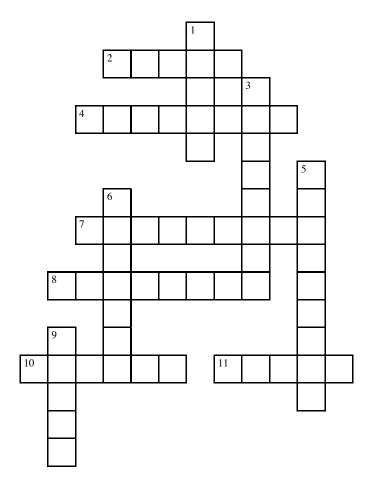
c. A hoop and pole game

- d. Playing "house"
- 8. Cave drawings had many purposes. Which, of the following, was <u>NOT</u> a main purpose of cave drawings?
 - a. To tell a story
 - b. To teach a lesson
 - c. To start a war
 - d. To record a special event
- 9. When settlers began to arrive in Tulare County, the Yokuts life began to change dramatically. Which, of the following, did NOT happen?
 - a. The Yokuts built huge forts to protect themselves
 - b. Many Yokuts died from "White man's diseases"
 - c. Yokuts fought in the Tule River Indian War
 - d. Reservation land was set aside for the Indians to live on
- 10. There have been many changes that have helped make life better on the reservations. Which is <u>NOT</u> one?
 - a. The Indian Reorganization Act, which allows Indians to self-govern
 - b. New tribal businesses, which help bring in money
 - c. The Yokuts getting their land back from gold miners in 1998
 - d. Presidents passing laws to give back more land to the Indians

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW ANSWER KEY

- 1. B
- 2. A
- 3. **C**
- 4. D
- 5. **A**
- 6. D
- 7. B
- 8. **C**
- 9. A
- 10.C

Yokuts: Then and Now Vocabulary



ACROSS

- **2** This is a carved, wooden figure that is meant to represent an animal spirit.
- **4** The Yokuts played a game similar to soccer, but instead of a soccer ball, they used a round, ______ stone.
- 7 These are soft leather shoes worn by the Indians.
- **8** This is another word for house.
- 10 The name for the doctor, or medicine-man, of the tribe.
- **11** Leaves used to make shelter, baskets and clothing.

DOWN

- 1 The tule grasses grew so _____, you could hide in them.
- **3** What is the process of rinsing flour over and over again with hot water?
- **5** Because there were no stores or restaurants, the Yokuts had to use the natural available to them.
- **6** This word means: the part of your upper limb from wrist to elbow.
- **9** The name for the leader of the tribe.

WORD LIST

shaman moccasins totem polished dense leaching resources forearm chief dwelling tules

Yokuts: Then and Now Vocabulary

Crossword Key

ACROSS

- 2. totem
- 4. polished
- 7. moccasins
- 8. dwelling
- 10. shaman
- 11. tules

DOWN

- 1. dense
- 3. leaching
- 5. resources
- 6. forearm
- 9. chief

| ame | Date | |
|-----|------|--|
| | | |

Yokuts Vocabulary

| ZERGA | |
|----------|--|
| TADAP | |
| AERTBR | |
| INSAB | |
| EETNV | |
| RHAGTE | |
| SETELT | |
| OLKLEFRO | |
| RWIE | |
| | |

The circled letters are your clues to discovering the vocabulary word for the bottom line.

Yokuts Vocabulary

EARGZ G R A Z E

AADPT ADD ADD T

ARRBET B A R T E R

ISABN B A S I N

TEEVN E V E N T

ETHRGA G A T H E R

TETLES SETTLE

OLLREKOF FOLKLORE

REIW WEIR

EOTONPSSA S O A P S T O N E

Name _____

Date

Yokuts Word Find

D N O U P L A I U C R B K
E Z W L Y Z A A S C Y Y M
D H T A F B V V R N X P O
A V A E T Z T E I Y J Y T
V G F Z C E A I S T I X I
N C O N S T R U C T S G K
I P T B I P S F X R S E T
Q V O V Z U K T O L Z R F
H W I W H M J P I W I Y U
Z T U M W T I I D B L Y F
Y I I N E O T S E F A U W
C G W Z J X W S K X F H S
Z F S U R V I V A L N T G

waterfowl tribes survival construct breechcloth festival habits powwow invaded creativity

Yokuts Word Find Answer Key



waterfowl tribes survival construct breechcloth festival
habits
powwow
invaded
creativity