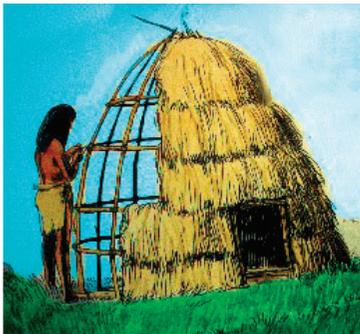




ESSAY: The Acjachemen Nation ORANGE COUNTY'S FIRST INHABITANTS

The Acjachemen (A-ha-che-men) Nation lived prosperously for more than 10,000 years on the coastlands of Orange County. They were among the 275,000 people that inhabited California. Their nation's territory, which consisted of many villages, spanned from Long Beach to Oceanside, as far east as Lake Elsinore, and westward to Catalina and San Clemente Islands.

Each village of 50-250 people lived within an intricately structured social system governed by a male and female clan chief called Nu and Coronne. Village leaders coordinated and directed hunting, gathering expeditions, migrations to seasonal settlements, tribal councils, and ceremonies. Each villager worked together to insure survival.



Each family in the village would construct a home called a kiicha, a dome shaped structure made of willow and tule. The tribal members were assigned tasks and responsibilities within their

own village. Acjachemen women gathered acorns, native plants, and berries, and were master basket weavers and cooks. Acorn meal, or wi-wish, was a staple food for the village. Men hunted deer and rabbit with bows and arrows and hand carved throwing sticks. Village men also fished and collected many resources from the ocean.

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Due to the warm climate of Orange County, the men and women of the village did not wear much clothing. Typical dress included grass skirts for the women and animal skins for the men.



Although the Acjachemen Nation relied upon hunting and gathering, they became expert native agriculturalists. Their supermarket or pantry laid in the ocean, meadows, and hillsides of their land. To help develop the plants most important to them they found ways to manipulate the land. Through a process of observation, the native people understood that the best most fruitful years came after a fire. Because of this observation, they manipulated the environment by setting low impact fires in meadows to provided rich minerals for plants to grow more abundantly.

The Acjachemen Nation through trial and observation developed great knowledge in the environment around them. They knew the medicinal value of plants, specific patterns of wildlife, and the best locations for their villages. Their everyday lives, occupation, and religion interconnected with their environment.