

**An Ethnographic Study of the  
Borderlands Influence on Carrizozo,  
New Mexico**

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**Abstract**

In this thesis, the history of New Mexico will be explored intimately. The topics covered in this thesis were acquired primarily through interviews and first-hand experience while the facts and history were acquired through database research to expand on the finer points mentioned in the original interviews. The culture of New Mexico and how it came to be will be detailed along with an explanation of how the survival of the culture should be prioritized and supported by the country through government protection and tourism efforts.

## **Intro**

The United States is a place where cultures meet. Dozens of beliefs, languages, and religions coexist, especially in major cities like Los Angeles and New York. The underappreciated and overlooked culture that is quickly being forgotten is Native American culture. Even though it is the origin of our nation, interest in Native American ways has died off. This culture is one of the most resilient in the United States, having survived the pressure of Hispanic and Anglo influence over hundreds of years. There are laws in place to protect the sanctity of Native American customs. The Four Corners area has experienced incredible evolution, particularly in central New Mexico. This region felt the impact of a major railroad, influencing the economy and local farmers. Carrizozo is a town in New Mexico that felt the full force of cultural blending and economic waves, making it an ideal location for research on the evolution of Native American culture into what it has become present day.

## **Literature Review**

### *Ethnography*

Ethnography is the “art and science used to describe a group or culture” (Sangasubana, 2011). It is a type of qualitative research used to analyze data that is less tangible and more conceptual than raw data. An ethnographic study pursues a deeper understanding of a culture and its values and traditions (Herbert, 2000) and its research is most commonly used to explore human behavior and cognition, mostly through observation (Tripp-Reimer, Enslein, Rakel, Onega, and Sorofman, 2004). One of the benefits of this qualitative research method is that, as discoveries are made through first hand observations, more lines of questioning can be strung together to pursue further knowledge. It allows for more personal interaction and customization of the path of the research based on the subject and surroundings in the group or culture (Oliffe, 2005). One type of ethnography that will be explored in this study is a “spectacle ethnography,” which reflects the idea that races are given ranks based on how advanced their civilization is. Spectacle ethnography is not a widely accepted classification of ethnography, but this term, coined by Lori Jirousek who is a professor at the New York Institute of Technology in Manhattan, is applicable to this study of Navajos and their development over time into modern communities that maintain ancient traditions (Malecki, 2005).

### *New Mexico and Carrizozo*

Carrizozo, New Mexico is a small city that doubles as a secret cultural treasure. Between the lava fields with ancient stories engraved in them (Wilson, 2007), the gypsum White Sands monument that is a 6,000 year old pure white desert (Geiger, 2006), and the over 30 miles of underground caves in the Carlsbad Caverns National Park (Stoughton, 1999), it is a wonder that New Mexico is not already a hot spot for vacationers eager for a change of scenery and researchers in search of a wealth of history and culture. The history and influence of turquoise in the region is also of great cultural interest, yet it seems to go unrecognized and unappreciated by the rest of the nation (Journal, 1997). Carrizozo is a small, cozy town with a plethora of old culture that yearns to be explored. Local artists hold great value in New Mexico (Zeiger, 2005) and are supported greatly by towns such as Ruidoso that have many family owned shops selling the work of locals ([discoverruidoso.com/Art-in-Ruidoso](http://discoverruidoso.com/Art-in-Ruidoso)). The special dynamic between

new and old religions as well as the sense of cultural pride felt by all who live there make New Mexico a special place to be.

### *Stereotypes and Bias*

The Southwest has always carried stereotypes as a burden to their culture, much like tinted glasses that many cannot see around. The area carries the mental image of cowboys, endless desert, scorpions and spiders, and even the public death penalty (Cutter, 1998). Such stereotypes, while based partially in truth from the past, no longer are applicable to today's rich cultural mix. While there are still pseudo-cowboys and some seemingly endless desert ([horizon.nmsu.edu/chihuahua.html](http://horizon.nmsu.edu/chihuahua.html)), the cities are much more developed and demand the same respect as more popularized tourism locations in different parts of the country. Those who do take the time to visit the Southwest will find themselves pleasantly surprised that it is nothing like the old Western movies anymore (Malecki, 2005).

Another ignored truth about New Mexico is that it is a very different culture and territory from Mexico. Many American citizens have a bias against Mexican labor, whether that is because of the jobs that they acquire or how they gain access to the country (Treynor, 1982). The simple naming of New Mexico stirs these biases in the minds of the people, creating distaste for many. While New Mexico is also largely Spanish speaking (<http://www.city-data.com/states/New-Mexico-Languages.html>), the population is less than 12% foreign born ([migrationpolicy.org](http://migrationpolicy.org)). New Mexican culture is influenced by its Spanish roots, but as their slogan goes, "New Mexico: not really new, not really Mexico" (<http://high-road-artist.com/494/artist-profiles/not-really-new-not-really-mexico/>).

## **Origins**

### *Intro*

Much of the literature concerning New Mexico's culture, politics, religion, art, and history is focused on what happened when the Spaniards entered the Pueblos' territory (Stuntz, 2009) and how different religions have caused conflict in lives of the people (Anderson, 1998). These topics are useful in that they will provide cultural context into the development of Southwestern culture. Research into the history of the Four Corners region of the United States pre-colonization has revealed a great deal about the way of life and values in the people that claimed the land long ago. Research also offers insight into the roots of the beliefs and traditions of the people to this day (Kropp, 2002). There is a connection between the people and the art they produce that is practically untouched by scholarly journals, only to be mentioned by local news articles as alive and well.

### *Cultural Origin*

Before the Anglos got to the Southwest, before Mexico and Spain touched the Southwest, it was a land of natives. The earliest life in the area was a group of migrants called the Clovis people, existing 13,000 years ago only to become untraceable 3,000 years later (AKINGTONIEX, 2013). In the more current history of the Southwest, the Pueblo people were considered the first real village form of community. They began as basket-makers in the Hohokom, Mogollon, and Anasazi cultures from 500 B.C. to 750 A.D., phasing from a hunter-gatherer lifestyle of constant nomadic movement to a more permanent lifestyle of farming the land. The basket-maker culture had organized housing

known as pit houses, which were dug into the ground and usually were occupied by one to two families (Bryant, 2001). Over time the pit house peoples began to build above ground, and beginning around 900 A.D., the Pueblo culture evolved into what we know it as today: the form of community that stayed in one place for extended periods of time and traded with neighboring communities for resources (Timeline, 2012).

While the ancestor cultures of the Southwest have inhabited the region for thousands of years, other native peoples were more recent arrivals. Some of the original natives came to America across the Bering Strait from Asia during the last Ice Age (AKINGTONIEX, 2013). The Navajo tribe, which today is the largest federally recognized tribe in the United States with more than 300,000 members, migrated to the Southwest from the northwest region of Canada (AKINGTONIEX, 2013). Their language is an Athabascan language, which suggests the Canadian origin. Navajo is the name that was given to those Athabascan-speaking peoples that settled down from their hunter-gatherer lifestyle and adopted the local trend of settling to an area and farming the land for resources much like the Pueblo peoples. The other major Athabascan group that migrated to the Southwest, the Apaches, remained separate from Navajos primarily because they continued to be known as nomadic peoples rather than settling and farming as the Navajos did (Carlisle, 2010). According to Bryant, the “large housing blocks, religious chambers, irrigated fields, intricate communication systems, and food distribution networks” signified the peak of Pueblo life (2001). Hispanic influence came partially from Mexico but greatly from Spanish explorers in the 1500s (AKINGTONIEX, 2013). Hunters and gatherers coming from the far northwest region of North America were the first signs of a Southwestern borderlands culture full of cross influence and adaptation.

### *Religion*

Native American culture in the Southwest is comprised of many different sub-groups of natives from different areas with varying beliefs and customs. However, many native peoples of the Southwest based their customs and traditions around the earth and sky surrounding them (Bryant, 2001). Native American religion is monotheistic and much of their religious practices and cultural traditions are tied to the environment. There are plains that stretch on for miles bordered by immense mountains. Most Native peoples, especially those living north of Mexico, believed in one god whose name nearly always translates into English as the Creator. Their many dances and rituals come from a respect and thankfulness for what their god has provided for them in nature. Each native tribe has a creation story, which are occasionally similar to one another but differ in important ways. In the Navajo religious tradition, First Man and First Woman were sent on a long journey through treacherous underworlds, after which they were met with by Talking God. Talking God gave First Man and First Woman the hogan as a reward for their valiant efforts (Bryant, 2001). The hogan is shaped like Gobernador Knob Mountain, one of many the mountains and hills across the endless plains. Hogans are not only a home for families but are also a spiritual center. The doorway of these homes faces the east for Native American families to be greeted in the morning by the rising sun. Hogans had to be purified regularly to maintain their spiritual harmony. The blessing songs, such as the one quoted below, were perfect examples of the tie that Navajos felt to their home as more than just a shelter: “Beauty extends from the surroundings of my hogan, / it extends from the woman. / Beauty radiates from it in every / direction, so it does” (Bryant, 2001).

In this passage the Navajos speak of the nature surrounding their hogan, the beauty of women, and the serenity and harmony that their god provides between these elements.

Father Sun is one of the most respected and admired deities in Native American culture. While the sun itself is not the source of Native American religion, it is instead the god and power behind the sun that encourages worship. The misconception that Native Americans have many deities is due to the fact that they worship so many aspects of nature; it is not the nature that they worship, or different gods within nature, but one god that provides this beauty in the world.

### *Lifestyle*

Early villages developed by the Pueblos were inspired by the nature of the American Southwest. Distant mountain ranges, for example, inspired the design of their hogans. According to legend, the very first hogans were “built by the Holy People of turquoise, white shell, jet, and abalone shell” (“The Navajo Indian Hogan”, n.d.). Hogans are built in a six-sided dome shape out of a wooden base, often covered in dirt and mud to insulate and protect from harsh weather (Bryant, 2001). These dome huts have a smoke hole in the center of the structure with a fireplace inside beneath the opening.

Traditionally, hogans are built with their doorway facing the eastern sunrise (“The Navajo Indian Hogan”, n.d.).

The Pueblo people settled into hogans, but many Native American tribes still were nomadic in lifestyle. The Kiowa, Comanche, Cheyenne, and Pawnee tribes, for example, had portable housing known as tipis. They took buffalo hide and poles made from pine trees to create this cone-like structure. Despite common depictions, tipis were slanted slightly with an opening on the short side of the structure facing the east. This way, much like hogans, the first thing Native Americans see in the morning is the sun rise. The longer side of the tipi faces the west to counter prevailing winds (Bryant, 2001). According to Bryant, the buffalo hides were excellent protection against wet weather while providing a smooth interior for painting (2001). In later years, Native Americans would grow and their communities would include the adobe housing structures that are common in the Southwest today.

The Native Americans living in the Southwest lived in a desert biome, which meant they had very specific type of crops that could be grown (Berkley, 1996). In order to promote farming and stray from their previously nomadic lifestyle, Natives developed an intricate irrigation system. This system involved digging runoffs from streams and rivers that would wind through nearby communities and ultimately reconnect with the main water channel farther down. These man-made channels often broke off into even smaller channels, creating a web of water flow through otherwise desert land. These channels allowed for larger farms and higher crop yields. Corn in particular was as relevant hundreds of years ago to Native Americans as it is to the world today (AKINGTONIEX, 2013)- in fact, Native Americans introduced corn to later Anglo settlers in exchange for goods that they couldn’t produce themselves. Mostly the good traded were metal crafted weapons such as guns and axes (Carlos and Lewis, n.d.).

## **Reventon**

### *Intro*

During the 1600s-1700s, Carrizozo was still a twinkle in the eye of New Mexico. Near current Carrizozo are several older settlements, including the influential town of

White Oaks and its mysterious and still even older neighbor, the town of Reventon- which is thought to translate to Cloudburst (G. Rogers, personal communication, July 5, 2014). Though not mentioned extensively in historical texts, the town had great influence on the cultural development of Carrizozo prior to the arrival of the railroads in the late 1800s. Native Americans continued to be the dominant culture group in the area during the 1600s-1700s, though this time period brought the introduction of Hispanic influence to the region.

#### *Cultural Influences*

The influence in the Reventon region was largely Hispanic during its early development (Orozco, 2014). Some of the earliest non-Native Americans to settle in this area were descendants of Spanish families who found their way to New Mexico in the early 1500s (G. Rogers, personal communication, July 5, 2014). The 1500s marked the start of major European influence in the Southwest, particularly that of the Spanish, who gradually asserted political control over the region which later became part of the empire of “New Spain” (AKINGTONIEX, 2013). By 1659, Spanish colonists had migrated heavily into the area, gradually transforming old pueblos into Hispanic communities (Bryant, 2001). Cities like Santa Fe, Antonio, Reventon and El Paso are prime examples of how the Spanish culture influenced the development and culture of Native American life. Spanish is still largely spoken in the Southwest, particularly in New Mexico, to this day (AKINGTONIEX, 2013).

#### *Lifestyle*

Using similar farming methods to the Pueblo peoples, farming in Reventon flourished and provided valuable agricultural resources to neighboring regions. Reventon’s sheep ranchers were a major source of food for the miners of White Oaks (Orozco, 2014a); Hispanic farmers produced pumpkins, beans, squash, corn, chilies, and more to trade with towns like White Oak for sugar and other goods (G. Rogers, personal communication, July 5, 2014). They also raised sheep, goats, cattle, turkeys, pigs, and chickens. The women of Reventon ground corn and wheat to produce tortillas for the local population (Orozco, 2014a). American farmers and ranchers who moved into New Mexico from Texas were not fond of the Hispanic ranchers. The American settlers tried for decades to buy the land belonging to Hispanic farmers, but the families, many of whom had been established on the land for generations, refused to sell. Their success and stability in trading and bartering goods kept these families on their land until the early 1900s (G. Rogers, personal communication, July 5, 2014).

The United States army in the Southwest at the time Reventon existed was somewhat lacking. While conflicts arose between Native Americans and Hispanic or American immigrants, the army stood by uncertain of what to do. Native American raiders, riding on horseback and attacking suddenly and seemingly out of nowhere, left target communities little means to effectively retaliate. Horses gave the raiding groups a clear advantage that the army could do little about. Citizens became frustrated with the army, who were there more for appearances than protection (W.G.K., 1851).

#### *Religion*

While more ranches and communities were being established by Hispanic settlers in the Reventon region, Spanish missionaries entered Native American and Hispanic pueblos across the state to preach about the Christian God. Their hope in spreading the message of Christianity was to convert native peoples from their attachment to the

Creator God revered by most Native Americans and even certain Hispanic communities (Bryant, 2001). Many of the native peoples of New Mexico were not receptive to the Christian God and initially resisted the development of Catholic churches.

Over time, however, the Natives adapted and allowed this new religion to mesh with their own. It was eloquently put that, “the Roman Catholic God and the Sky Gods of the Pueblos coexisted or merged, and the dances of the Pueblo peoples combined elements of the High Mass with the Rain Dance” (Bryant, 2001). This signified the beginning of major cultural blending in the borderlands region of the Southwest. The Native American people were allowing their culture to evolve and be influenced by incoming cultures. Hispanic culture often revolves around Christianity, meaning that the Hispanic communities and farms that developed over the last couple hundred years were the beginning of Biblical influence on Native Americans. With the coming of white settlers, Native Americans had even heavier pressure put on them to adapt.

## **Carrizozo**

### *Intro*

The town of Carrizozo was born around the year 1900 with the development of the Southwest’s major railroad system. While this major railroad existed before Carrizozo’s creation, it wasn’t until 1899 that the railroad reached the upper half of the Tularosa Basin- a vast area stretching from the southern edge of New Mexico north into Lincoln County and the center of the state (“History,” 2008). Any life in this region before the railroad consisted of scattered farms belonging primarily to Hispanics that entered the region in the last hundred years; before that it was scattered Native American tribes. The culture of Native Americans living and the religious core of both Natives and Hispanics still linger in the growing town of Carrizozo.

### *Lifestyle*

Around the 1850s, organized ranching came to Lincoln County. Hispanic settlers had come to the region with “Cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs,” providing meat and trading hides with neighboring communities such as Fort Stanton, and even settlements as far away as St. Louis and Chihuahua, Mexico (Orozco, 2014b). Within fifteen years of the development of ranching in Lincoln County, over “300,000 head of cattle [were] in the territory”. Hispanic immigrants brought their tradition of rodeo to Lincoln County, which is still celebrated to this day near Ruidoso- the sister town to Carrizozo. Rodeos in Ruidoso today are famous and draw large crowds from all around the state (Orozco, 2014b).

Despite the early Native and Hispanic foundation of the region, today the influence of white settlers is undeniable. After the region was incorporated into the United States as the New Mexico Territory, new laws and regulations were imposed upon local populations and farming cultures that had been in place for hundreds of years. Hispanic farmers that used to barter and trade their goods with neighboring towns as a base for survival were suddenly required to pay cash taxes. While these families were wealthy in goods and farmland, they were poor in cash. Many reluctantly sold their lands to cash-wealthy Americans for ten cents an acre in order to save themselves from shaming the family name and being kicked out of their homes (G. Rogers, personal communication, July 5, 2014).

Yet American influence also proved beneficial, especially in the case of the railroad through Carrizozo. Gold from White Oaks- a town only 12 miles north east of Carrizozo- was a major money magnet going into the 1900s (“History,” 2008). In the 1890s, White Oaks made the detrimental decision to reject the passage of the railroad through its town. Carrizozo, on the other hand, accepted the railroad with open arms. With less expensive land than White Oaks, Carrizozo was an optimal choice. Once the railroad turned Carrizozo into a terminal town around the turn of the twentieth century, life and business boomed. Housing was built to accommodate workers and more roads were developed to ease traffic. Families moved to Carrizozo. With families following their working relatives to Carrizozo and others moving to Carrizozo for available land and opportunity, change came quickly. Schools and grocery stores developed alongside a movie theater and parks. The town now had a post office, bank, and Baptist Church, as well as two drug stores (Dietrich, n.d.). The railroad changed everything for this little town. What once were ranches scattered miles apart was now a popular little town with cross-state railroad access. By 1907, the mines of White Oaks were depleted and what once was a town full of people and business became more or less dispersed in comparison to the now booming Carrizozo (Dietrich, n.d.).

By the mid-1900s, around one million acres of land was taken from New Mexican ranchers by the U.S. government to become what is now the White Sands Missile Range (Orozco, 2014b). While this is south of Lincoln County and Carrizozo, it influenced ranchers and communities across the state by affecting the quantity of different resources going to and from communities. Bigger cities like Alamogordo, Ruidoso, and Lincoln felt the effects of these ranches closing down. This may have, however, given Carrizozo ranchers a chance to sell more livestock to the towns that counted on previous White Sands ranchers for food. With the railroad shutting down around the mid-1900s as well, Carrizozo needed the economic support. The 1950s also brought a small but influential rebellion from miners. Many miners went on strike, protesting pay and not having enough time off. The strike shut down production of certain mines for eight months in 1951 before an injunction was sought to end the strike and get miners back to work (Weinberg, 2010).

### *Religion*

A new wave of religious influence hit New Mexico only fifty years before the creation of Carrizozo as it is today, primarily spearheaded by the Baptist church. Initially, Baptists had no interest in the New Mexico territory. The Northern Baptist Home Mission Society originally planned to bring the word of God to the miners of California. However in 1849, the decision was made to stay in the Southwest and set up churches in the four-corners area in order to convert those who the missionaries dubbed as needing Baptism most (Carnett, 2000). The decision that White Oaks made to reject railroad passage through their town was a major marking point for the future influence of religion on Carrizozo culture. When the railroad tracks opened up new land for the taking in the Southwest, many of the immigrants that swooped into Lincoln County- especially Carrizozo- were Baptists from neighboring states (Carnett, 2000). These people were looking for a new place to build churches and call home.

As Christianity washed over New Mexico like a wave, it met little resistance from the Native American people. Hispanics who had lived in the area for generations and meshed with the local Native Americans had brought together their beliefs in the

Christian god with the Native Americans' belief in a Creator god that existed in the world around them. Baptist beliefs were slightly more commanding in comparison. They built churches in the communities they passed through and tried to encourage Native Americans to abandon their god and how he shows himself in nature for the Christian biblical way. Today, Baptists are "the largest religious group in New Mexico [next to the Roman Catholic Church], and account for just over fifty percent of all Protestants" (Carnett, 2000). Over the last century through the rise and fall of the railroad system through Carrizozo, the Navajo people have continued to let the Christian way of life bleed into their beliefs. Their religion has become a unique blend of their native sun-worship and Christianity (Flynn, 1895), though they cling to their old traditions in many other ways. Many who live in the Carrizozo region carry crosses, go to church and read the bible. They speak of Jesus and on the surface come across as very Christian. The more they open up and talk about their beliefs, however, the more the Native American religion bleeds through. Many individuals believe that God shines in nature and that they should worship God as much through the environment as through church. They believe that the land is God's beauty and should remain unharmed.

## **Today**

### *Intro*

Today, Carrizozo is a town with a population of less than 1,000 people and consists of mostly families that have been there since the railroad was built. Many of the restaurants and stores have closed down, now vacant and aged storefronts haunted by the ghost of what the town used to be. Carrizozo has one traffic light with two gas stations, two small hotels, and two small restaurants right on the corners. Not far from the intersection are the schools, which are newer looking than the rest of town. There is a park farther into the town that occasionally hosts outdoor concerts and parties with a locally famous drug store turned ice cream parlor right across the street. Though they have limited hours of operation, they have an original 1934 "liquid carbonic" soda fountain and ice cream that is thick, creamy, and highly sought after (Roy's Ice Cream Parlour, n.d.). The Carrizozo Orchards are a strong source of cash flow for the small town, located across the old railroad tracks just outside of the downtown area of Carrizozo.

### *Post-Railroad*

The last train passed through Carrizozo in 1968 (Cosentino, 2010). Around the 1950s, automobiles began taking the place of trains as the people's primary source of transportation. With the popularization of other modes of transportation, "Key railroad operations that had been carried out in Carrizozo were transferred to other locations as improvements in technology permitted regional consolidations" (Dietrich, n.d.). Popularization of other modes of transportation made the railroad quickly fade away. There became significantly less opportunity for work and education in the area, urging relocation. With no real economic opportunity in Carrizozo, the population dropped by almost half- from 2,000 people to about 1,200 people- in a few short decades. Families moved out of Carrizozo as they had moved out of White Oaks, bringing about a depression. Many of the businesses that flourished next to the railroad had to close down, including the local theater, some restaurants and cafes, and the train station itself. Even before the railroad quit running, the Great Depression caused great struggle for Carrizozo

citizens. The drug store, for example, offered simple jobs to teenagers and some children to help their families put food on the table (Dietrich, n.d.) Citizens of Carrizozo had to pull together to help each other through the economic roller coaster of the mid-1900s.

### *Lifestyle*

With a fast growing and changing culture that the United States had to offer, Native American culture began to fade into the background during the 1920s (Malecki, 2005). In order to survive, they often had to leave the reservations and find jobs, abandoning the customs and traditions they lived by for so many centuries before. Thankfully, an interest in Native American culture has begun to reemerge around the nation. While some make the decision to run casinos and hotels on and off the reservation and many leave the reservations in search of better economic opportunity, many Native Americans have decided to remain in the region to preach their culture to tourists and local residents (Hadekel, 2012). Some tribes produce pottery, dream catchers, and other products to be sold in shops in bigger towns like Ruidoso and Sante Fe. As Malecki put it, “tourism is credited with the salvation and revival of Indian culture” and Native Americans “now find themselves with a worldwide audience” (2005). Because the Southwest was late to feel the effects of white settlers, their culture is still very pure- this is part of the allure that tourists find that brings them to the Southwest for an escape. Native Americans are absolutely unmoving on their protection of authenticity and sacredness in their culture (Malecki, 2005). Tourists request authenticity of performances, music, products, etc. and Native Americans work hard to provide a realistic experience. However, many performances done for tourists (such as dances and songs that go back hundreds of years to ancient traditions) are altered slightly for the public in order to preserve the sacredness of their nature. For the most part, tourists are very accepting of this reality, seeing it as even more genuine for the protection of this unique Southwestern culture. As an extra step in assurance, state law requires a certain level of authenticity in all cultural displays by Native Americans to tourists.

### **Conclusion**

When the Anasazi, who were the Pueblo ancestors, first settled in the American Southwest, they became the foundation of a deeply rooted Native American culture. Native Americans lived in hogans made of dirt and mud on a hexagonal wooden base. These hogans have morphed over the centuries and still exist in New Mexico today, though not as relied upon since the popularization of adobe architecture. In Carrizozo in particular, there are still homes made in this style. Some are still occupied while others continue to be maintained by families for historical purposes. Native American traditions such as rodeos and ranching are still held near to the hearts of those in the Southwest today, particularly in Lincoln County. Towns like Carrizozo, White Oaks, and Ruidoso still rely upon such traditions for the wellbeing of their economy.

Religion has played a large role in morphing the culture of the Southwest into what it has become to this day. Native Americans held their beliefs in a singular god that showed its beauty through the form of nature, which Native Americans praised in gratitude to their god. White settlers from the east brought Baptism, specifically South Baptist culture, into the Southwest with great force. White settlers became somewhat of an invasive species, pushing into Native communities and popping up Baptist churches in a mad attempt to convert Native Americans to their own beliefs. Native Americans

refused to abandon their customs and beliefs but over time adapted certain Christian methods into their own cultural traditions. They managed to maintain the sanctity and purity of their religious customs while smartly evolving with their surrounding culture. To this day Native Americans protect their culture and traditions on their lives and are protected in doing so by state law. Those who grew up in the Southwest during this time of religious change and balance felt influence from both the Native American culture and the Christian and Baptist beliefs depending on what part of the Four Corners region they lived in. It is common today to find people with great knowledge on both religions who have personal beliefs pulled from each.

Tourism plays a large factor in the economic strength of some of these towns. It provides a basis for the continuation of Native American traditions on reservations. Crafts such as pottery, dream catchers, statues, and jewelry are exported from the remaining tribes and sold in more populated, tourist-dense areas. The debate of whether tourism has supported the continuation of Native American culture or if Native American culture has encouraged tourism is a balancing act that could tip either direction.

Tourism has also been a significant factor in the revitalization of Native American culture. The financial support has influenced families and tribes to continue living the way their ancestors did, only now to also produce product for sale. Still, many Native Americans choose to go off on their own, open casinos and motels and abandon their old way of life. In doing so, tribes become smaller and smaller each year and are able to produce less and less support for tourism efforts.

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## Interview

### **Gwendolyn Rogers and Fran Actieri – Carrizozo Town Historians**

**Gwendolyn:** Before Carrizozo, before White Oaks, there was Reventon, and nobodys really sure what the word means, we think probably cloudburst. But Gilberts, on his maternal side, great great grandfather, and his father, came to the area from the north east in White Oaks, after serving in the civil war as New Mexico volunteers and they moved their family from the Monsanto area, they were descendants of a Spanish family who had come here in the 1500s, and they moved to Reventon, and they settled in Reventon and they raised sheep and pumpkins and beans and were very successful farmers and sheep herders. They were friends with the Apache; they shared the spring, and they traded with other Hispanic and Anglo families in the Hundo valley, before it was Bloom Ko, they traded with the Ko brothers and they traded their goods for sugar and other goods, and they did very well for a long time. And a lot of Anglo cattlemen, mainly from Texas, who had been coming in since the civil war, didn't like sheep herders and they wanted the property. And the Luetez [sic] family wasn't interested in selling. And so finally in the 1920's they'd been there 80 years, through the gold rush, through everything. They knew Billy the kid, I mean they were established before any of this. There was tax levied on the property, and the tax had to be paid in cash. And they had lots of assets, but they were cash poor because they bartered for most of their things. So they said, "If you don't pay the tax you will lose your property and that would be disgraceful. We'll buy your property for like 10 cents an acre." and to save (face?) they sold it. And 10, 15 years ago when I started researching this, there were still older members of that family who could remember what happened what happened in the 20s who were still bitter they wouldn't even talk to me, they wouldn't even talk to him on my behalf. And today it's all about some Spanish descendants here who bought, but it was almost Anglo ranchers for almost 100 years. [...]

I said how come they had all this land they were so virtually wealthy, and so well thought of, they were postmasters, his great great grandfather started this school, the first, ya know, it was a big deal. And they said "Oh, the climate changed and their pumpkins wouldn't grow anymore" and I thought "climate change, mmm, it was a big drought and cattle grazing has been down ever since" so I got nosey and I went to the courthouse and amazingly most of that documentation was not available.

**Me:** So that was all, Carrizozo before it was Carrizozo and it's the same land for the most part?

**Gwendolyn:** No, it was on the other side of white oaks before it was white oaks.

**Me:** So, either from the historian point of view or personal point of view, what do you think about the status of religious beliefs in Carrizozo and New Mexico in general, because I've noticed there is a lot of talk about God but I don't think it's the same God people talk about from the east.

**Gwendolyn:** That's a hard one, the Catholic church here is definitely different form the one back east. I think it all stems from the blending of cultures and the tolerance.

**Me:** Yeah there is definitely more tolerance here than most places I've been. There's a type of attitude that people have here that is a lot more accepting and kinder and softer.

**Gwendolyn:** It's the only time I've lived somewhere where I was the minority. When I moved here 21 years ago, there was not a great influx of retired people that we have now and the majority of this community was Spanish

**Me:** So you did feel like a minority from that?

**Gwendolyn:** Oh yea.

**Me:** How recently do you think people have been moving in then, for retirement, and settling down land?

**Gwendolyn:** About 15 years

**Me:** So recently?

**Gwendolyn:** Less than 20 years, most of the non-Spanish people who are here have either come in the last 20 years or were descendants of long time ranching families in the area. (30, 40 years) mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. And the railroad brought in a lot of people, and the military posts here. It was different here.

**Me:** Yea, sounds like it, I've only started coming here in the past 8 years but that's short enough that I missed it, that part. So I guess that kind of answers my next question which is about modernizing the area of New Mexico in general, and I feel like coming here I feel like there is still a hold on the culture and the traditions, and I don't know if that's from choice, or if they just aren't as influenced by the rest of the country? But I guess with people coming and retiring that kind of says that it is getting influenced.

**Gwendolyn:** I think that it's opening up and Fran and I are the president and vice president of our local chamber of commerce, and we're working on a grant through the state of New Mexico for a tourist market. I'm originally from Oklahoma and I lived in Texas a lot and I think New Mexico is getting the point that they're going to have to open up and going to have to concentrate on the positive and be more open to not just tourists. It's an education to improve life here, it's not to change culture, because we embrace the culture-I'm the north east, and least she's from the west, I'm not anywhere near the west - so you don't come here and try to change culture, but we're seeing, because we live here too, is that you want to improve life, you want to improve quality of life a little bit.

There's no reason why people have to walk around with holes in their shoes. We need to bring in business, bring in more, boost the economy a little bit more. And it's not Vegas, and it's not LA, just give it a little more dignity.

**Me:** It's interesting you say that, but the impression I get is that people are letting go of the culture a little bit more because the people are making money with casinos and things like that so there's not a motivation for them to keep producing the jewelry and art and stuff as authentic as it once was.

**Gwendolyn:** There's a lot of empathy here too, they want to make money but then they say they don't have any money and then they don't want to work. And the improvement like the structures of the buildings, the architecture and the infrastructure, they tore down the court house- why? Ya know, so somebody back then wanted to look different to the rest of the world, to keep up with the rest of the country. But they didn't have the foresight or the knowledge to keep history, to preserve that culture. And I think people are influenced by the casinos and the two buffer cities Ruidoso and Alamogordo.

**Me:** Do you guys think that the culture will start being more manufactured than what it originally was? You said people hold on to the culture, but-

**Gwendolyn:** I think it's just going to hopefully become more appreciated. As they're more recognized and respected, as she said with education. To respect and educate and support what we have, and enhance what we have, as opposed to going "Okay, I'd love to walk in here and make this Billy Bob's but that ain't gonna happen." And there are more people in the Dallas Fort Worth Metroplex than there are in the state of New Mexico.

And I think we really need to support what we have and enrich that and I think education and- this is Gilberts work [gestures], and he looked and said “I can use my hands and I can craft” so I don’t know if this is history or this is culture from way back when. But it’s using-it’s hunting culture- and using his craft and his hand and his ideas –and Richards a cowman and a rancher and a farrier- and then the other pieces to the jewelry making and the beading and the basketry and I think some of the younger generations are learning they need to know that- your generation- I think our generation lost it, it went to things in the world. The guys who are his age in this town, ya know they went to war, they were in the military they were in Vietnam, and then they either came back here and worked or they didn’t come back.

**Fran:** And they didn’t see the craft or the different pieces that they should of. I think it’s the education and the appreciation and I think that’s the way it can come back and enhance and hopefully promote New Mexico.

**Me:** Is that happening?

**Gwendolyn:** I think so, I see that happening

**Me:** What comes to mind when you think of that? Where do you see that happening?

**Fran:** I always come back to the “oh gee” and we’re working on the New Mexico Truth Campaign where we’re boosting small business and tourists in the state, and I’m always just worried about the cost of feelings and trying to overcome the negative feelings and to promote more positive, more pride in what we do, and I’m coming down the interstate the other day and there’s this big sign that says “Welcome to New Mexico Home of the Lobos” [...] I thought that was wonderful that they took the initiative to put a sign up to say “Look, we have something here, that we’re proud of and wanna share it with you,” and I think that’s the message that we need to get out there. That we’re not just Ruidoso the cool pines, come on Texan, visit us, because we’ve been doing that for 50 years. That’s how I got here originally, because it’s the coolest place in the world in August. If you were gonna leave Texas and Oklahoma in August it was to come here, and that’s a big drawing card. But we have a lot more.

[...]

**Me:** So it definitely seems that you want more people coming in to New Mexico and appreciating New Mexico and appreciate New Mexico, but how do you feel about more people coming into Carrizozo specifically?

**Gwendolyn:** Oh definitely! What is our goal?

**Fran:** 1,500 people by 2015.

**Me:** Did a bunch of people move out after graduation?

**Gwendolyn:** No, the classes are tiny, not like Pittsburgh. What we really need are young people with families, and of course we don’t have the work force to sustain industry of any kind. It is art friendly, it’s district friendly, it’s the last Bible town between here and Santa Fe. We have a bank, we have a courthouse, we have a grocery store, we have shops and galleries-

**Fran:** And we’re on 2 major US highways, and we have an unused train depot, but if there was industry there the train could be made to stop here. We have room for industry, it doesn’t have to be gigantic, it’s not like Tesler where trying to put in a big company in Albuquerque, but we have room for small business, which is even 1500 employees maybe?

[...]

**Me:** So how do you think you can draw more people here?

**Gwendolyn:** Well what we're doing is our campaign is to touch them 6 times. We're waiting for the state to award us by July 1<sup>st</sup>, we've applied for a grant with the True Enchantment Tourist Board, and the True Enchantment Tourist Board is a subsidy of the Chamber of Commerce and it is strictly to drive tourism and we have to be New Mexico true like Gwen said and our marketing plan is we touch from Tularosa to [Corunna] to Hondo, so we have 222 miles of road and 6,000 people that we effect. And our goal is to reach 60 miles out from this area. The rest of Lincoln county basically, and LA and Amarillo and Houston, Midland... And we'll touch them 6-8 times before they actually come and stay here. And my question to you is: what's the first words you would come up with if you googled New Mexico, how would you find us?

**Me:** Art, small town, I'm honestly not sure...

**Gwendolyn:** See that's what we've been playing with, are we adventure? We've been trying to come up with a URL actually. We're doing a brainstorming next week, and it's all about "what do you think of?" We have trails, we've got it on four feet, two feet... we've got it all. It's just now how do we bring that adventure in? Your generation is telling us they don't want to just go shopping. They want to hike, and bike, and ride but if they get bored they want to go have a beer and listen to music and they wanna shop. So *you* are the people we want to come into our state, because you folks have the funds, you have some disposable income as you graduate college and go into your careers. The retirees have the money but they aren't going to do everything that you guys are going to do.

**Me:** I've brought two people down here, two different people two different times, and both of them have just fallen in love with it [...] I think if you can get people to just be here than you won't have a problem.

**Gwendolyn:** That's right, and that's our goal is to start marketing outside of our area, and we're bringing them in little by little and they will come and they will stay, but we don't want them one time, we want them to come back. Because when they come back is when we see the economic effect. Because tourism is our- and Dee was manager and I was her educator at Lincoln State Monument which is now Lincoln Historic Site but it's the biggest historic draw in New Mexico, is because of Billy the Kid with about 30,000-40,000 people a year. But they could do 60,000 if it were marketed correctly. It's an amazing place but people just come here "I didn't know you were here". Because if you google Lincoln New Mexico, you'd only get 5 hits. But if you Google Billy the Kid it's like yeah baby.

**Me:** Even as far away as Pittsburgh someone was moving into the complex next to me and they had a U-Haul with an ad for Roswell with the aliens.

**Gwendolyn:** Our calling card is Smokey the Bear and Billy the Kid and Geronimo, who isn't even as big as the other two. If you didn't put their names in, how would you find us? We have to go beyond that market.

**Me:** So I've heard of issues with the government wanting to have more involvement in the land and what happens with the land? Have you heard anything of that nature?

**Fran:** The government is the largest land owners in the state of New Mexico, and the US forest service, and they work pretty well with the general public, I would think. The issue is water. We don't need any more golf courses, and you can quote me on that. Water is a

real issue here for the villages, the towns, the general public, for the ranches, for the future. Water is a big issue.

**Gwendolyn:** One of the issues that came up this past year was the fly-overs from the military, because the transmissions are going in for the wind towers, and those towers, because the German air force and our air force train through here at night. They had issues and wanted to tell the ranchers that they couldn't put the towers on your property. Well the towers bring in money to those ranches who have had to diminish their cattle because there is no source of water. So they found another source income, and that was an issue of the government trying to tell them what to do, but I think that got fixed I haven't heard much lately. Basically the Germans can fly somewhere else. [The towers were transmission lines for wind and solar power towers]

