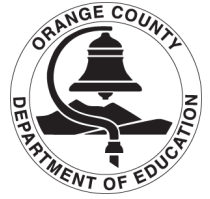




# Building a Kish Classroom Activity



Upper Newport Bay once provided a home for the Tongva and Acjachemen Native Americans. They relied upon the natural resources of the Bay in order to survive. They used plants that grow in Upper Newport Bay to build their homes, which were called kish or kiitcha.

## SYNOPSIS

In this activity, students cover the background information on People of Upper Newport Bay using a cooperative learning technique called “jigsaw.” In groups, students will then create a miniature Tongva or Acjachemen dwelling known as a “kish” or “kiitcha” using “local” materials.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students will use a “jigsaw” technique to read and discuss the background information on People of Orange County.
- Students will cooperatively construct a model Tongva or Acjachemen dwelling and will be able to discuss the kish in terms of environmental impact and Tongva or Acjachemen lifestyle.

## VOCABULARY

- kish/kiitcha
- conservation
- natural resources
- midden

## MATERIALS

- glue
- markers
- modeling clay
- paper or butcher paper
- Dwelling Picture (p. 3)
- People of Orange County (pp. 4-8)

### *Suggested Items for Models or use Repurposed Items*

- cardboard squares approximately 12” x 12” (1 per group)
- cinnamon sticks
- raffia
- bark pieces
- Oregon green moss
- straw
- toothpicks
- construction paper
- wood wool (excelsior)

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

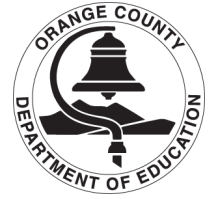
Tongva Website: [www.tongvapeople.org](http://www.tongvapeople.org)

Acjachemen Website: [www.juaneno.com](http://www.juaneno.com)

Acjachemen Education Website: [www.journeytothepast.com](http://www.journeytothepast.com)



# Building a Kish Classroom Activity (cont.)



## JIGSAW READING

1. Assign each student a number, one through eight. Instruct students to group themselves by number (all number ones together, etc.). There are ten topics in the People of Orange County section; assign one or two for each group (i.e., number ones to study “GABRIELEÑO and JUANENO INDIANS”). Students are to become “experts” on their assigned section(s). Students may take notes, outline or highlight major points. Each student is responsible for all of the information contained in his/her particular paragraph.
2. Rearrange students into groups of eight, one of each number. Each “expert” takes a turn teaching the group about what he/she has learned. The “expert” is responsible for answering any questions the group may raise. Students may then “quiz” their group to make sure their information has been understood.

## DWELLING CONSTRUCTION

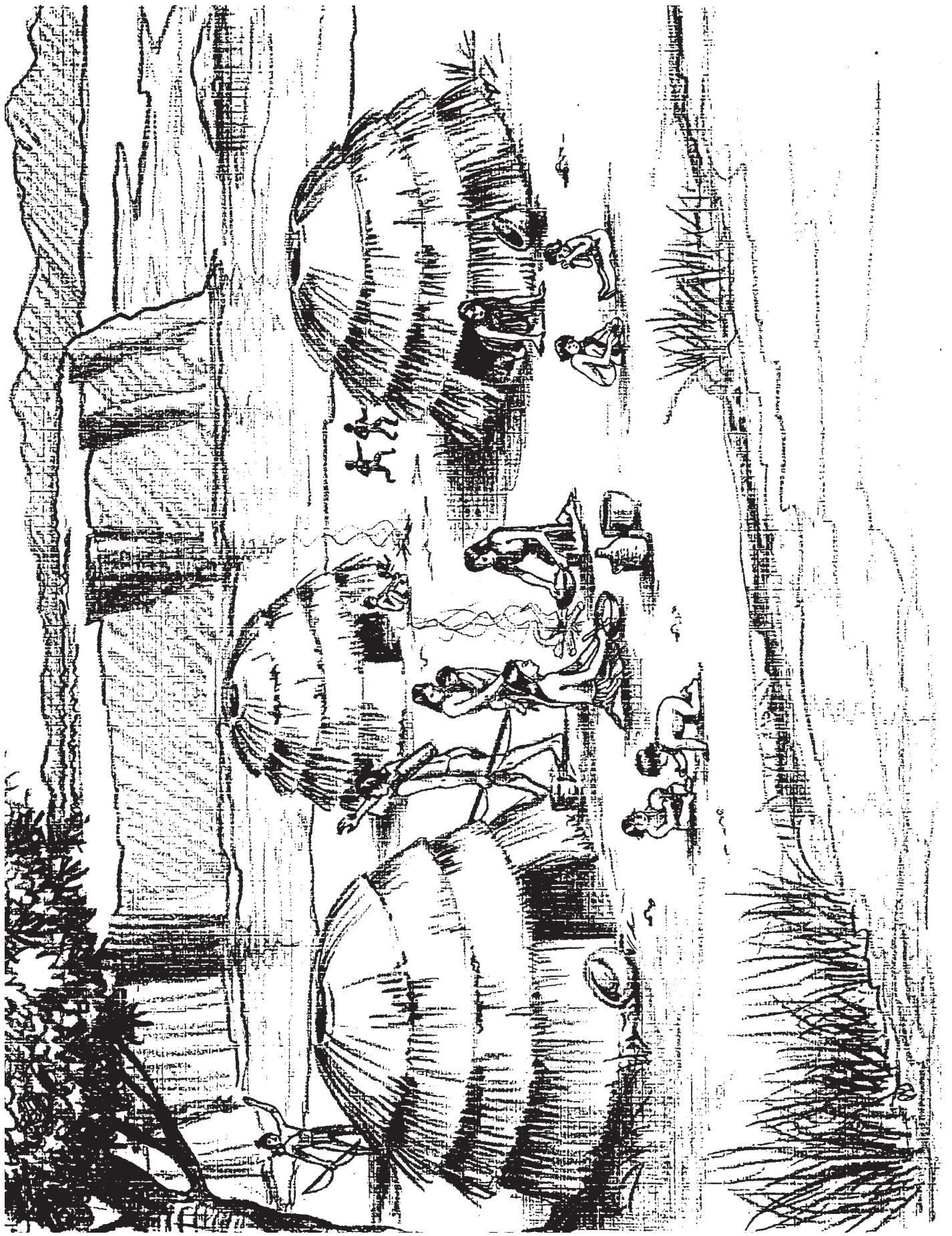
1. Show the Dwelling Picture, reviewing the information on shelter. Tell students they will be working in groups to create a “kish” or “kiitcha” using the natural resources that are available.
2. In their groups, students must first plan the design and discuss how they will construct the kish.
3. Each group will draw their plan on a piece of butcher paper.
4. After the group has designed and sketched their plan, they can start to build their kish. Remind the students that the Tongva/Acjachemen would wisely use their natural resources and not waste them.
5. Have each group share their kish with the class.

## CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

Ask students to share their experience through a brief writing assignment or verbally in class. The following questions are suggested to help initiate discussion:

- Would the Tongva/Acjachemen have used materials similar to these in constructing their homes?
- What did the Tongva/Acjachemen use their kish for?
- Were kish permanent? Why or why not?
- What are the unique features of your kish?
- Did the Tongva/Acjachemen have less impact on the environment than we do? Why or why not?
- Compare your home to the kish. How is it alike? How is it different?
- Would you like to live in a kish? Why or why not?
- What can we conclude about life as a Tongva/Acjachemen ?

Evaluate each group’s ability to work together and the level of cooperation which existed among its members. Display the finished products throughout the classroom.



# PEOPLE OF ORANGE COUNTY

## GABRIELEÑO and JUANEÑO INDIANS

The original inhabitants of Orange County are the Gabrieleño (or Gabrielino) Indians and the Juaneño Indians. The Gabrieleño were given this name by the Spanish, because they were named after the San Gabriel Mission, but they call themselves Tongva. The Juaneño, named by the Spanish after the San Juan Capistrano Mission, call themselves Acjachemen. The Tongva are of Shoshonean descent.

Historically, the Tongva occupied the entire Los Angeles basin and the islands of Santa Catalina, San Nicholas, San Clemente, and Santa Barbara. From Topanga Canyon to Laguna Beach, from the San Gabriel mountains to the sea, they lived throughout most of what is now Los Angeles and Orange Counties. The Acjachemen people occupied the coastline, valleys, and mountains which spanned from Long Beach to Oceanside, as far east as Lake Elsinore, and westward to Catalina and San Clemente Islands. With these wide ranges, archaeologists suspect that both tribes occupied Upper Newport Bay and other parts of Orange County during some time in their history. The coast was an ideal location because of the mild climate and abundance of wildlife.

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the Tongva had a highly developed and artistic culture and were widely known as thoughtful people. The Acjachemen's social structure was based on clans. Male and female clan chiefs ruled over the villages.

More is known about the Tongva than the Acjachemen's way of life prior to the arrival of the Europeans. However, the pre-European lifestyles of the Acjachemen and Tongva are thought to be very similar based on artifacts, research, and stories passed from one generation to the next to living members of these tribes.

## SHELTER

Tongva and Acjachemen spent most of their lives outdoors. They used their homes (called kish or kiitcha) only for sleeping, or shelter from poor weather. Kish, which looked like upside-down baskets, were made with willow poles that were secured into the ground. Tule grass and cattail leaves were woven between these poles. An animal skin might have been used for a door, with other skins laid on the ground for sleeping mats. A smoke hole on the top of the kish, made indoor cooking possible. When necessary, they would set fire to the kish and build a new one. These shelters show the Tongva and Acjachemen were hunters and gatherers. They traveled for food supplies or trading purposes, but they always returned to their village.

## **FOOD**

Food was another important consideration for ancient people and finding it was relatively easy because of the rich resources available at or near Upper Newport Bay. The natural materials they found and used are called natural resources. Plants, including seeds, berries, and fruits made up the largest part of their diet. Women collected these in a basket resting on their backs and tied to their foreheads. A few of their favorite plants were yucca, clover, wildcress, cattail roots, sunflower seeds, chia, thistle seeds, elderberry, lemonade berry, toyon berry, and cactus fruit. Acorns, a staple of their diet, were collected from oak trees as nearby as present day Tustin. Some plants were also used for medicine.

The ocean provided the Tongva and Acjachemen fish, shellfish, abalone, and other food items. Surrounding the bay, they could hunt rabbit, squirrels, bobcats, coyotes, mountain lions, deer, and bear. They salted or smoked the meat to preserve it. They ate reptiles and insects, such as snakes and grasshoppers. They also hunted ducks, which were available in large numbers. Most of the Tongva and Acjachemen's time was spent hunting or gathering food.

## **MEN AND WOMEN**

The roles of men and women were very strict in the Tongva culture. Women gathered and prepared the food. Men were involved in hunting, trading, and craft-making. The women made the utensils to eat or store food.

## **FOOD PREPARATION**

Knowledge of plants was important to Tongva and Acjachemen women. Many plants were used for food, medicine, or shelter. Because some were poisonous, they had to know a lot about the plants and which ones they could or could not use. The women's duties included gathering shellfish and plants, and preparing them with the game the men caught. A mano (grinding stone) and metate (grinding bowl) were used to grind acorns to make acorn mush. Utensils were very important to the women. Each woman had her own set. In fact, when a woman died, her metate was buried with her.

Baskets were the main tool used to prepare food. Tongva and Acjachemen women were expert weavers. Baskets were made in all shapes and sizes. Some were so finely woven that they were watertight. Others could be three feet in diameter and used as huge storage bins. Bowls were made out of soapstone from Catalina Island. Because they were made of stone, they could place these bowls directly in the fire. Meals were also cooked using hot rocks. Rocks, heated in the fire, were placed in baskets to cook and boil water. Women also dried and salted meat, like deer, to preserve it.

## **HUNTING AND TRADING**

Tongva and Acjachemen men were responsible for hunting, fishing, and making tools. Various methods were used to help them catch their game with limited resources. Deer heads were used as decoys to hunt deer and other large animals. When hunting ducks, Tongva and Acjachemen covered their head with a gourd, waited under water, and when ducks swam by, they grabbed them by their feet, and drowned them. The people also used their knowledge of plants to develop plant poisons that could kill fish. Men also designed fishing tools such as fish hooks from abalone shells or other animal bones. Any available resources were used to make scrapers, hammer stones, awls, and drills. The tools, as well as the methods to use them, were continually improved.

Evidence shows that trading took place between the Tongva and Acjachemen and other tribes. Soapstone and otter skins were obtained from Catalina. Obsidian, acorns, and large game were obtained from areas as far east as the present-day Salton Sea. Tongva and Acjachemen were successful traders because of their supply of salt, shells, shellfish, and dried fish. Plank canoes, called Ti'ats, were used to trade with the Chumash of Catalina. It was not an easy task to canoe 26 miles to Catalina! The men involved in trading gained importance in the eyes of their tribe.

## **CLOTHING**

Since the Tongva and Acjachemen lived in a mild climate, little clothing was necessary. Men and boys wore little to no clothing, and women wore skirts made of grasses in the front and skins in the back. This enabled them to sit comfortably while preparing food. Grass sandals (if anything) were worn to protect their feet. Both men and women wore accessories for decoration and status. Tattoos and jewelry were symbols of importance for them. Some even wore sea otter vests as a symbol of importance in the tribe.

## **RELIGION AND GOVERNMENT**

The Tongva had a loose form of government. Generally, a male member of the tribe gained the tribe's permission to act as leader. Interestingly, women were sometimes allowed to lead. The shaman was the religious leader, often giving plants, like jimson weed, for spiritual purposes. To pass into adulthood, boys were given a drink made from jimson weed and asked to create a painting of colored sand. The shaman then interpreted the painting. When he was finished, he destroyed it as a sacred lesson. The Tongva's religion was known as the Chiningchinich cult. This cult included the teaching of morals. All records show that the Tongva were a peaceable, kind people.

## **MIDDENS**

Tongva and Acjachemen buried unusable waste. A covered pile of trash left by early cultures is called a midden. An item left by early cultures such as tools or other objects, is called an artifact. Artifacts are useful in studying ancient civilizations. The study of people from ancient civilizations is called Archaeology.

## **TONGVA and ACJACHEMEN THEN AND NOW**

When the Spanish missionaries arrived in California, the Tongva and Acjachemen cultures gradually began to disappear. Prior to their arrival, there had been approximately 200,000 Tongva. By the mid 1800's there were approximately 70,000, and by the late 1800's the population was down to 6,000. The Acjachemen had fewer members to begin with. Both the Tongva and Acjachemen were wiped out by diseases, murder, and destruction of the environment.

Today there are approximately 3,000 descendants of the Acjachemen. Many of them live in the San Juan Capistrano area, where their tribal office is also located. Several members of the tribe are involved in educating the public about their culture.

In 1994 the Tongva people were recognized as the indigenous people of Los Angeles by the city of San Gabriel and the state of California. The Tongva tribal office is located in San Gabriel, and the Tongva people strive to keep their culture alive.