



Two Tribes ... A Shared History

The history of the Pima (O’odham) and Maricopa (Piipaash) is the story of a chain of events richly woven with legend and fact. According to our traditions, both tribes have always been in Arizona. Our presence here today is proof of the unbroken continuum that began with the Creator, was passed to their ancestors and now is held by us.

The Pima or O’odham consider our ancestors to be the “Huhugam,” a people who created an advanced society in central Arizona from about 300 A.D. to 1200 A.D. The word “huhugam” translates as “those who have gone before.” Archaeologists refer to the Huhugam as Hohokam. The ancestors of the Maricopa (Piipaash) are the Patayan who lived in what is now northwest Arizona. The Piipaash originated in what is now the Parker area as five separate groups of people. Over many years the Maricopa migrated to Mexico, then to Gila Bend and to Laveen in Gila River. Ultimately some moved to what is now the Lehi area of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community.

The joining of the two communities did not occur as a single cataclysmic event but as a migration that happened over generations. Even in pre-history, there is evidence of overlap between the Huhugam and the Patayan. Each tribe was a dynamic society. They traded, mixed and interacted with each other, and as they relocated to avoid their enemies, over the years, moved closer to each other.

By the time the Spanish made contact with the O’odham (Pima) and Piipaash (Maricopa) in the 1600s, the two groups had formed a Confederation that created a powerful fighting force to battle our enemies. We fought against the Apache and Yavapai and cooperated with the Spanish and the U.S. military. But despite our accomplishments, the Confederation was not able to win the decisive battle against an unrecognized enemy – westward expansion. Ultimately, the relentless drive West took away most of the tribes’ ancestral lands and all of our water, and forced the Pima (O’odham) and the Maricopa (Piipaash) to create a new life, together in central Arizona.