

Heritage Edition

# The Apache



Indians  
of North  
America



Michael E. Melody

Series Foreword by  
Ada E. Deer

H e r i t a g e   E d i t i o n

The  
Apache  Indians  
of North  
America

H e r i t a g e E d i t i o n

**Indians  
of North  
America**



The Apache

The Arapaho

The Blackfeet

The Cherokees

The Cheyenne

The Choctaw

The Comanche

The Hopi

The Iroquois

The Mohawk

The Navajo

The Pawnee

The Teton Sioux

The Zuni

H e r i t a g e E d i t i o n



# The Apache

**Michael E. Melody**

With additional  
text written by  
**Paul Rosier**

Foreword by  
**Ada E. Deer**  
University of Wisconsin-Madison



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# Foreword



Ada E. Deer

American Indians are an integral part of our nation's life and history. Yet most Americans think of their Indian neighbors as stereotypes; they are woefully uninformed about them as fellow humans. They know little about the history, culture, and contributions of Native people. In this new millennium, it is essential for every American to know, understand, and share in our common heritage. The Cherokee teacher, the Mohawk steelworker, and the Ojibwe writer all express their tribal heritage while living in mainstream America.

The revised INDIANS OF NORTH AMERICA series, which focuses on some of the continent's larger tribes, provides the reader with an accurate perspective that will better equip him/her to live and work in today's world. Each tribe has a unique history and culture, and knowledge of individual tribes is essential to understanding the Indian experience.

Prior to the arrival of Columbus in 1492, scholars estimate the Native population north of the Rio Grande ranged from seven to twenty-five million people who spoke more than three hundred different languages. It has been estimated that ninety percent of the Native population was wiped out by disease, war, relocation, and starvation. Today there are more than 567 tribes, which have a total population of more than two million. When Columbus arrived in the Bahamas, the Arawak Indians greeted him with gifts, friendship, and hospitality. He noted their ignorance of guns and swords and wrote they could easily be overtaken with fifty men and made to do whatever he wished. This unresolved clash in perspectives continues to this day.

A holistic view recognizing the connections of all people, the land, and animals pervades the life and thinking of Native people. These core values—respect for each other and all living things; honoring the elders; caring, sharing, and living in balance with nature; and using not abusing the land and its resources—have sustained Native people for thousands of years.

American Indians are recognized in the U.S. Constitution. They are the only group in this country who has a distinctive *political* relationship with the federal government. This relationship is based on the U.S. Constitution, treaties, court decisions, and attorney-general opinions. Through the treaty process, millions of acres of land were ceded *to* the U.S. government *by* the tribes. In return, the United States agreed to provide protection, health care, education, and other services. All 377 treaties were broken by the United States. Yet treaties are the supreme law of the land as stated in the U.S. Constitution and are still valid. Treaties made more than one hundred years ago uphold tribal rights to hunt, fish, and gather.

Since 1778, when the first treaty was signed with the Lenni-Lenape, tribal sovereignty has been recognized and a government-to-government relationship was established. This concept of tribal power and authority has continuously been

misunderstood by the general public and undermined by the states. In a series of court decisions in the 1830s, Chief Justice John Marshall described tribes as “domestic dependent nations.” This status is not easily understood by most people and is rejected by state governments who often ignore and/or challenge tribal sovereignty. Sadly, many individual Indians and tribal governments do not understand the powers and limitations of tribal sovereignty. An overarching fact is that Congress has plenary, or absolute, power over Indians and can exercise this sweeping power at any time. Thus, sovereignty is tenuous.

Since the July 8, 1970, message President Richard Nixon issued to Congress in which he emphasized “self-determination without termination,” tribes have re-emerged and have utilized the opportunities presented by the passage of major legislation such as the American Indian Tribal College Act (1971), Indian Education Act (1972), Indian Education and Self-Determination Act (1975), American Indian Health Care Improvement Act (1976), Indian Child Welfare Act (1978), American Indian Religious Freedom Act (1978), Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (1988), and Native American Graves Preservation and Repatriation Act (1990). Each of these laws has enabled tribes to exercise many facets of their sovereignty and consequently has resulted in many clashes and controversies with the states and the general public. However, tribes now have more access to and can afford attorneys to protect their rights and assets.

Under provisions of these laws, many Indian tribes reclaimed power over their children’s education with the establishment of tribal schools and thirty-one tribal colleges. Many Indian children have been rescued from the foster-care system. More tribal people are freely practicing their traditional religions. Tribes with gaming revenue have raised their standard of living with improved housing, schools, health clinics, and other benefits. Ancestors’ bones have been reclaimed and properly buried. All of these laws affect and involve the federal, state, and local governments as well as individual citizens.

Tribes are no longer people of the past. They are major players in today's economic and political arenas; contributing millions of dollars to the states under the gaming compacts and supporting political candidates. Each of the tribes in *INDIANS OF NORTH AMERICA* demonstrates remarkable endurance, strength, and adaptability. They are buying land, teaching their language and culture, and creating and expanding their economic base, while developing their people and making decisions for future generations. Tribes will continue to exist, survive, and thrive.

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June 2004



# The Game of Survival

**L**ong ago, before humans inhabited the earth, huge beasts stalked the land, and vast serpents slithered across it. These creatures were always famished, so they fed on small birds as well as on wolves, rabbits, and squirrels. The small creatures tried to flee, but because the world was shrouded in eternal darkness they could not see where they were going.

One day all the creatures—large and small—met on Mescal Mountain, which rose above the desert in what is now New Mexico. A debate concerning daylight began. The monsters, beasts, and serpents wanted the world to remain dark so they could continue to pursue the smaller animals, who, of course, favored daylight. After a lengthy quarrel, the two sides agreed to settle the issue with a game. Each side dug many holes in the ground and hid sticks in one of them. The other side then tried to guess which hole held the sticks. If they guessed correctly they gained possession of the sticks. The side

that won all the sticks would be declared the champion and would slaughter the losers.

The contest was close. First the small creatures—led by the birds—forged ahead, collecting several sticks. Then the beasts rallied. Eventually, the birds were left with only a single stick and faced a terrible loss. One hope remained. At the start of the game, a large bird, Turkey, had placed some sticks in his moccasin and wandered off to nap. Now the other birds ran to awaken him. Turkey brought his sticks and joined the game. A deft player, he helped the birds win back many sticks. They even took some held by the beasts and moved into the lead. Soon the beasts were down to only a handful, and, to their amazement, the sky, which had always been pitch black, filled with light. Wren, a small songbird, chirped, “Daybreak is coming! Daybreak is coming!” The beasts lost their last stick, and the birds started to kill them.

In their excitement the birds set upon one of the most fearsome beasts, Giant. They removed arrows from their quivers and shot at him, but they failed to pierce his heart. Giant still lived. Suddenly, one of the beasts, Lizard, changed sides and came to the aid of the birds. He knew that Giant’s heart was lodged in the underside of his foot. He aimed an arrow there, and at last Giant was slain. The other beasts panicked and fled, chased by the birds. They shot arrows at Snake, but he slithered into a crevice on a cliff where they could not reach him. Thus, though no giants inhabit the earth today, the desert is filled with snakes.

This story—which pits large animals in a violent contest against smaller ones and whose outcome seems a matter of sheer luck—provides many clues to the culture from which it originated: that of the Apaches. These people inhabited the Great Plains and the deserts of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, in what is now called the American Southwest.

This region has a harsh and changeable climate. Fierce winds whip year-round over the level acreage. In the summer,