

PUEBLO OF JEMEZ

The Pueblo of Jemez, pronounced Hay-mez; traditionally pronounced He-mish, is one of 19 pueblos located in New Mexico. It is a Federally recognized American Indian tribe with just over 3100 tribal members, most of whom reside in a puebloan village that is known as "Walatowa" (a Towa word meaning "this is the place"). Walatowa is located in Sandoval County New Mexico, within the southern end of the majestic Canon de San Deigo. It is located on State Road 4 approximately one hour northwest of Albuquerque (55 miles), and approximately one hour twenty minutes southwest of Santa Fe.

The Pueblo of Jemez is a dependent sovereign nation with an independent government and tribal court system. Our secular Tribal Government includes the Tribal Council, the Jemez Governor, two Lt. Governors, two fiscales, and a Sheriff. Interestingly, for reasons discussed later, our 2nd Lt. Governor is also the Governor of the Pueblo of Pecos. Traditional matters are still handled through a separate governing body that is rooted in prehistory. This traditional government includes the spiritual and society leaders, a War Captain and Lt. War Captain. Through perseverance, our people have managed to preserve our traditional culture, religion and knowledge of our ancient traditional way, regardless of outside pressures. We have also preserved our complex traditional language, a language that anthropologists and linguists refer to as "Towa". Jemez is the only culture that speaks this language, and in fact, our traditional law forbids our language from being translated into writing in order to prevent exploitation by outside cultures.



Jemez Women Washing winnowed wheat circa. 1900

Having originated from a place called "Hua-na-tota," our ancestors, the Jemez Nation, migrated to the "Canon de San Deigo Region" from the four-corners area in the late 14th century. By the time of the European contact in the year 1541, the Jemez Nation was one of the largest and most powerful of the puebloan cultures, occupying numerous puebloan villages that were strategically located on the high mountain mesas and the canyons that surround the present pueblo of Walatowa. These stone-built fortress', often located miles apart from one another, were upwards of four stories high and contained as many as 3000 rooms. They now constitute some of the largest archaeological ruins in the United States. Situated between



these "giant pueblos" were literally hundreds of smaller one and two room houses that were used by the Jemez people during spring and summer months as base-camps for hunting, gathering, and agricultural activities. However, our spiritual leaders, medicine people, war chiefs, craftsmen, pregnant women, elderly and disabled lived in the giant pueblos throughout the year, as warriors and visitors could easily reach at least one of the giant pueblos within an hours walk from any of the seasonal homes. In addition to this impenetrable barriers, cliff dwellings were also built along the sides of the adjacent cliffs to guard access to springs and religious sites, to monitor strategic trail systems, and to watch for invading enemies. In general, the Jemez Nation resembled a military society that was often called upon by other tribal groups to assist in settling hostile disputes.



