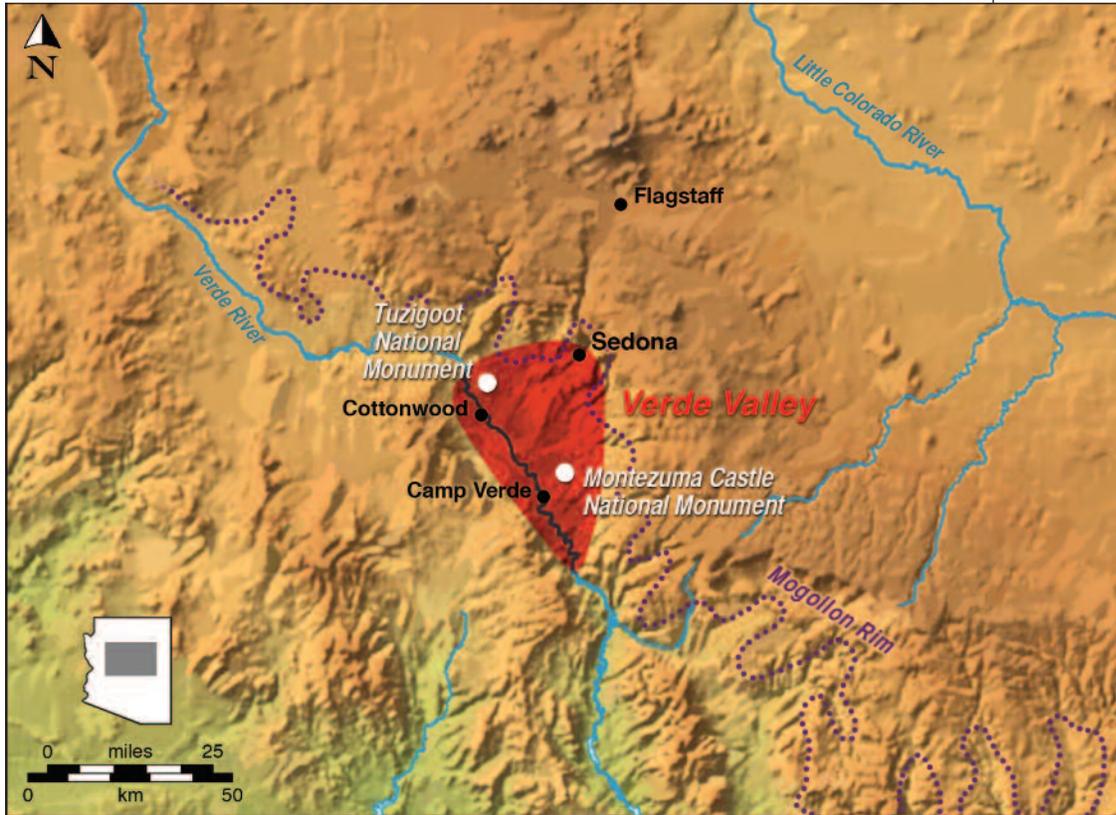


# PEOPLE OF THE VERDE VALLEY



Verde Valley in Central Arizona

The Verde Valley is a beautiful, tear-dropped shaped valley in central Arizona. The valley is located north of Phoenix and south of Flagstaff. It is surrounded by mountains, mesas, and broad flat areas called plateaus. Several streams flow with water all year. The largest stream is the Verde River. Today, the Verde Valley has three small cities: Camp Verde, Cottonwood, and Sedona. There are several smaller towns and villages. The Verde Valley is also home to the Yavapai-Apache Nation. Their reservation has five pieces of land. They are next to the communities of Middle Verde, Camp Verde, and Clarkdale. The Yavapai-Apache Nation is a Native American government that brings together two separate groups of people. The Yavapai and Western Apache are now related through marriage and friendship.

## The Yavapai-Apache People

The Yavapai-Apache people understand that their ancestors have lived in the Verde Valley for hundreds of years. Many of the ancestors were Patayan foraging and farming people. The Patayan once lived in the western deserts and near the Colorado River. The Yavapai people believe that some of their ancestors were the Sinagua farmers. The Sinagua farmed and foraged. They built and used the villages of Tuzigoot near Clarkdale and Montezuma Castle near Camp Verde.

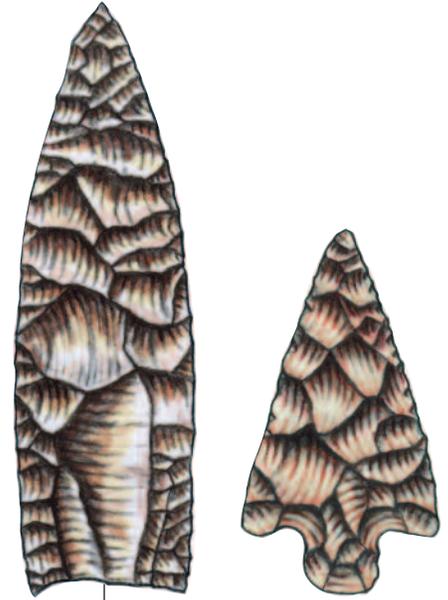
The Yavapai-Apache people consider Montezuma Well to be the place where their earliest ancestors emerged. In their stories, their people came through a hole from an underground world. Some time later, this hole was flooded. When it flooded it became Montezuma Well. Many of the places around the Verde Valley are important to the Yavapai-Apache peoples. Each place has a story about it. The stories tell of their past. All Yavapai-Apache consider Montezuma Well and the “Red Rock Country” near Sedona to be *sacred* places.

## Early People of the Verde Valley

Archaeologists believe people have lived in the Verde Valley for at least 8,000 years. The Verde Valley is located just north of the lower Sonoran desert and just below the Mogollon Rim and the Colorado Plateau. It is unique because it contains plants and animals belonging to both regions. Also, the Verde Valley has mild weather. Flagstaff to the north is cooler and Phoenix to the south is hotter. And, perhaps most important of all, it has rivers and creeks that run year-round. This makes it an especially good place to live. For all these reasons, the Verde Valley was and still is a wonderful place to live. It has everything a hunter-gatherer or a farmer-forager needed to survive!

## The First Hunter-Gatherers in the Verde Valley

Archaeologists have found a few stone artifacts dating to the Paleoindian period (10,000 to 6000 B.C.) and many stone artifacts dating to the long Archaic period (6000 B.C. to A.D. 650). These stone tools are the broken or lost dart points or spear points used by hunters to kill their prey. Once in a while, archaeologists find other artifacts made by Archaic-period people, such as grinding stones called *metates* and *manos*. The metate is a large flat or bowl-shaped stone that is placed on the ground. A mano is an oval or rectangular stone that fits in the hand. Together, they are used to grind nuts and seeds. Archaeologists also find stone knives that were used for preparing hides and cutting meat. In the places people lived, they find earth-ovens and *hearths* for preparing food. Sometimes they even find the area where a small house once stood before it was taken down or rotted away.

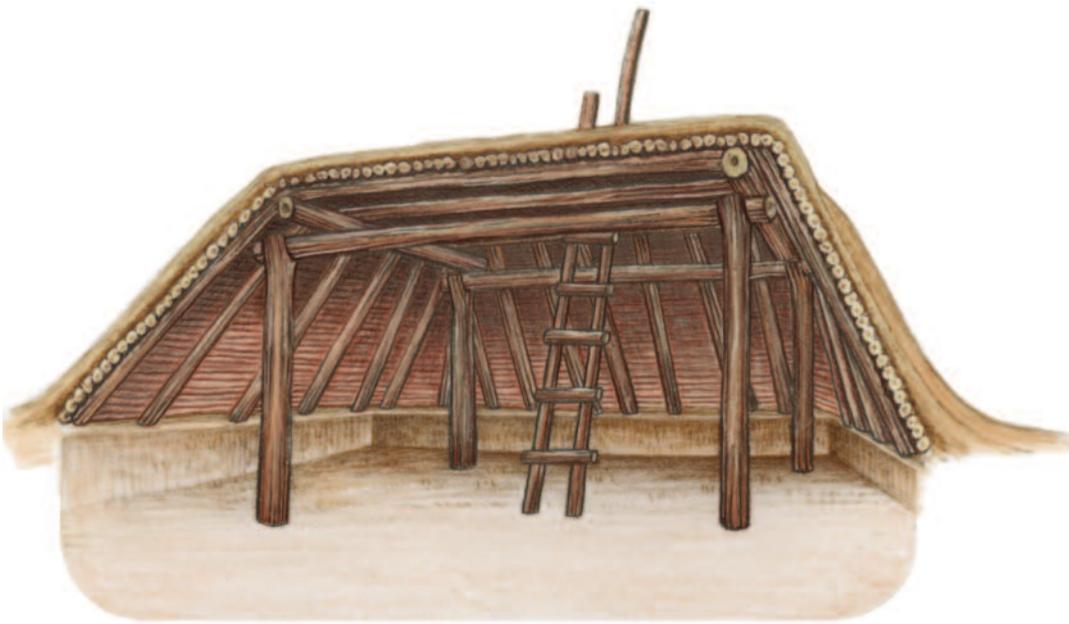


Clovis and Archaic Points used on spears and darts.

## The First Farmers of the Verde Valley

Archaeologists are still trying to learn when the first Archaic-period groups in the Verde Valley decided to do a little farming. Ancient corn kernels recovered from excavated sites in Verde Valley are at least 1,400 years old (just before A.D. 600). But by A.D. 700, there were people who were farmers first and foragers second. It is even possible that the new farmers came from some other place.

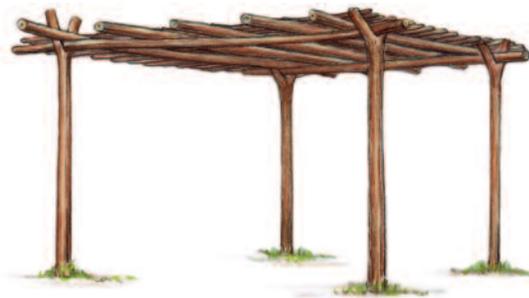
Archaeologists call these farming people the “Sinagua.” This name means “without water” in Spanish (*sin agua*). It was given first to a group of people that lived north of Flagstaff near Wupatki National Monument. They got the name because they lived in especially dry areas with little water. The name was given later to the people of the Verde Valley. They were given the same group name because they built similar style houses, made similar tools and pottery, and had a similar way of life.



Pit House

Over many centuries, the Sinagua people came to be the largest group in the Verde Valley. In about A.D. 650, there were just a few families living together. They lived in many small villages. They lived in a few wood-brush-and-mud houses that were built in shallow pits in the ground (*pit houses*). They had outdoor work areas that were like covered patios called *ramadas*. Like other farming peoples in the American Southwest, the Sinagua lived near places where they could raise crops and find wood, water, and other building materials. As their population grew, they spread out over most of the valley.

Their villages grew in size. People lived there year-round and sometime went far from their villages to hunt and gather. But, by A.D. 1150, for reasons that are not fully understood, most of the Sinagua peoples lived in only a few large villages. They had apartment-like stone houses. The villages were near flowing water and farmland. Some of the villages were occupied by many generations of people. Some villages lasted nearly 250 years!



Ramada



Montezuma Castle

After being settled so long, something changed. During the late A.D. 1300s and early A.D. 1400s, all but a few Sinagua families moved east and north to join other farming peoples near Winslow and the Hopi mesas. The modern Hopi Indians understand that the Sinagua are ancestors. The largest and best known of ancient Sinagua settlements or *pueblos* in the Verde Valley are Montezuma Castle and Tuzigoot Pueblo.

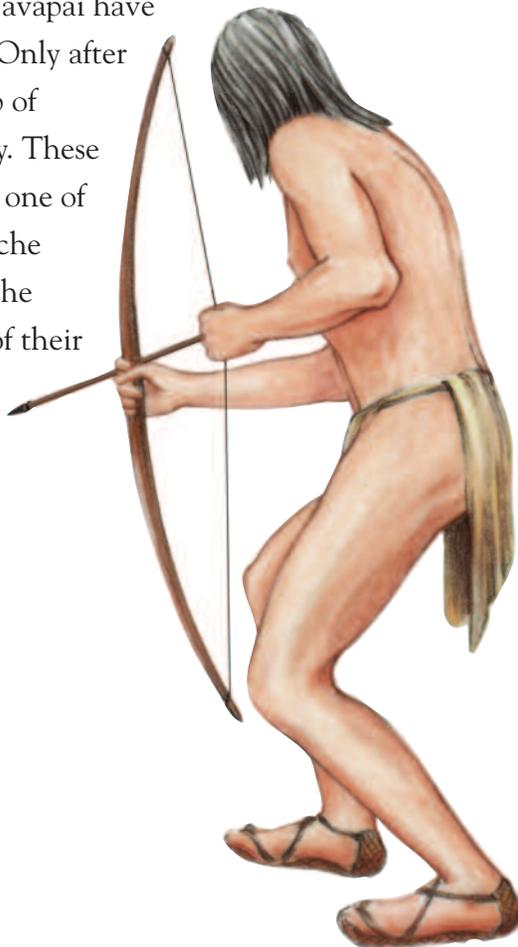
The Sinagua were not the only people who lived in the Verde Valley. Before A.D. 1000, there was a small number of Hohokam who also lived and farmed in the valley. Their styles of houses, pottery, stone tools, jewelry, and other crafts were very different than those of the Sinagua. Most of the Hohokam lived near Phoenix.



Tuzigoot Ruins

## The Ancestral Yavapai Come to the Verde Valley

After A.D. 1300, a number of ancestral Yavapai people moved into the Verde Valley from the west. Archaeologists do not know exactly when the ancestors of the modern Yavapai arrived in the valley. They also do not know if they raised crops, like the Sinagua and Hohokam. The ancestral Yavapai people certainly were expert hunters and gatherers of wild foods. They practiced a nomadic way of life, following the ripening of plants and the availability of wild game. It is likely that they arrived sometime before the last Sinagua families left their villages and the Verde Valley around A.D. 1400. When this happened, the Yavapai became the largest group in the Verde Valley. Two different groups of Yavapai lived in the Verde Valley. The Wipukpaya Yavapai lived near Oak Creek Canyon and Sedona. The Yavepe Yavapai lived near Cottonwood and Camp Verde. Except for brief time periods, the Yavapai have remained in the valley ever since. Only after A.D. 1700, was there another group of foraging people in the Verde Valley. These were the Northern Tonto Apache, one of several groups of the Western Apache people. The Northern Tonto Apache included the Verde Valley as part of their foraging territory.



# TO FARM OR NOT TO FARM: THAT IS THE QUESTION

Not all hunting and gathering people in Arizona wanted to raise crops, even if they had good farmland and enough water in their territories. There were several reasons for this. First, there were disadvantages to staying in one place for too long. For example, firewood might be used up too quickly. If this happens, people would have to walk very far to find wood and carry it back to camp. Other important resources might become hard to get, as well.

Second, garden crops might not have enough time to get ripe. Plants like corn and squash don't do well with droughts, floods, freezes, and diseases. It takes a lot of time and energy to raise crops. You have to prepare the soil, plant seeds, weed, and water. You have to keep hungry animals from eating your food. The failure to harvest a good and needed crop would be very upsetting. Not getting enough food from the crops might be risky for the community food supply. People would have to consider if the same amount of work collecting wild plants would have provided more food.

Third, if many plants did survive until the fruit and vegetables were ripe, then the food must be prepared, stored, and protected for future use. This required lots of work. In addition, after food has been stored for the future, people might have had to guard it to keep it safe from animals and other people.

Fourth, there were advantages to a nomadic way of life. Families and friends were always looking for new or better places to hunt and gather. If they were tied to one place, they might miss out on getting what they needed. Also, hunter-gatherer families would miss the annual gathering of their far-away family and friends that happened nearly every autumn. This gathering took place in resource-rich places when lots of food was on



hand. Many groups came together for a short time to visit and share food and stories with each other.

*There were other reasons as well why people might not choose to be farmers. Can you add more reasons to this list?*

There were good reasons to add cultivated plants to a diet. First, new, tasty, and healthy foods were always welcome. Domesticated plants, like corn, provided the slow burning sugars that give you energy. People need these to work hard and to satisfy their hunger.

Second, some crops, like corn and beans, were easy to dry and store. Dried grains and seeds could be used when fresh foods were unavailable. It was especially hard to get fresh food in the winter.

Third, the potential benefit from planting one or a few dried corn kernels (seeds) in a single hill or row could be very great. One seed can grow into a plant that would produce hundreds of seeds on each ear of corn. In addition, the corn cob and the husks could be used for other purposes. It can even be burned like wood in a fire. Very little of the corn plant was wasted. In a good year, farming could result in a large harvest. This would make it possible to feed many people for several months. It would provide security against hunger or starvation.

Fourth, with lots of stored food, larger groups of people could live together for longer periods of time. As a result, group members could help one another with their daily tasks. Daily tasks would include gathering firewood and water, collecting plants, hunting, and religious or social events. There would be more people to protect the group if they came under attack. As they say, "Safety in numbers."

*There were other reasons why people might choose to become a farmer. Can you add more reasons to this list?*

# THE HARVEST FESTIVAL

## Start of the Day

Red Woman was up early feeding the fire hearth in her cozy pueblo home. The day was a big day for the whole village. Soon, many friends and relatives would come to visit. They came to celebrate the successful harvest, trade for wonderful things, and compete in special games. Red Woman already had been preparing food for several days. Everything was stored in sealed pottery jars and on large woven trays. She also needed to finish weaving the cotton blanket she hoped to exchange for a soft deer hide and a willow basket from her Yavapai visitors.

“Yellow Moon, get up! The sun is already high, and we have much to do before our guests arrive.” Yellow Moon smiled brightly at the thought of the food, the excitement, and seeing her friend, Bobcat Boy. He always came with his parents to the Harvest Festival. Last year, Bobcat Boy brought her a shell pendant that he had carved just for her. Later that day, he and his team had won the foot race between her village (Tuzigoot) and the big village of Ha-ta-lac-va to the north. Yellow Moon also wondered if he would be as happy to see her as he was last year...



Food for the feast is stored in ceramic pots. Corn cakes are cooling on the wicker tray.

## Breakfast and Chores

The fire took the chill out of the cool October morning. Yellow Moon helped her mother feed her little brother corn-meal *porridge* and berry tea. After he had finished, she ate the same breakfast herself and did her chores. Everyday, Yellow Moon went down to the *bosque* next to the river to fetch small sticks for her mother's cooking fire. She also had to bring back a jar-full of cool, clear water. Her little brown dog, Pooko, always went with her.

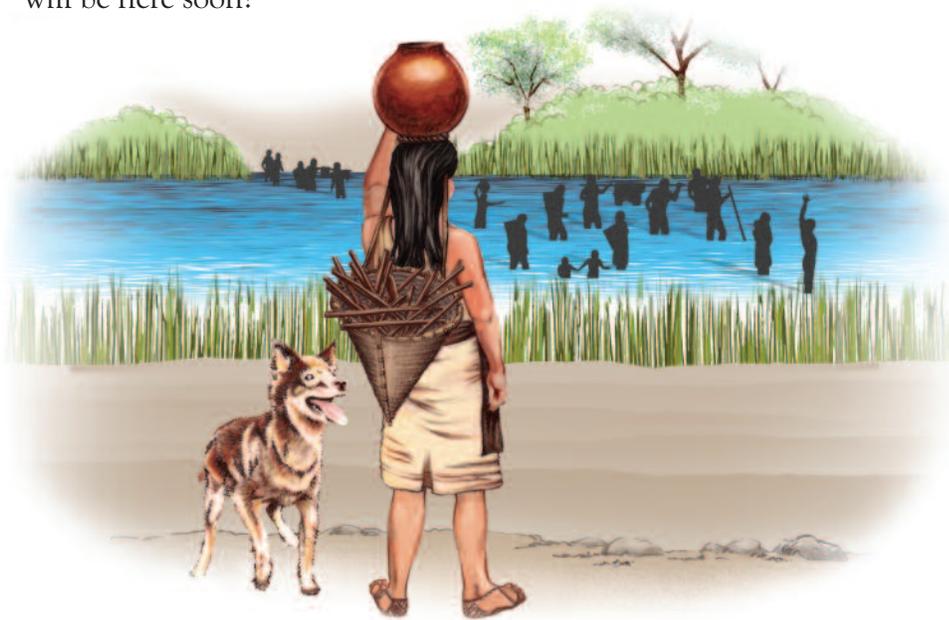
Even before Yellow Moon and Pooko reached the river, she could hear a group of men working together. They were busy cutting fresh cottonwood and willow branches. The wood would be used to build *ramadas* (sun-shades) in the big central open area in the village. The Sinagua elders and most

important guests would sit under the ramada and oversee the events. Her father, Bear, her older brother, Eagle, and her favorite uncle, Mountain Lion, would get to sit with others under the ramada.

Yellow Moon quickly gathered the wood for the fire and dipped her big pottery jar (*olla*) in the stream. Her father and uncle spotted her and came to help. Mountain Lion adjusted her basket full of sticks, and Bear helped her lift the heavy water jar onto her head. She would balance the jar there for the steep hike up to her hilltop village. They warned her to walk slowly up the trail to the village because her load was heavier than usual. She thanked them and told them goodbye. She and Pooko turned and began the half-mile walk back to the village.

## The Visitors Arrive

Close to the riverbank, Yellow Moon stopped to rest and Pooko began to bark. Yellow Moon turned and saw about 25 Yavapai men, women, and children starting across the river from the south. The men were working in pairs, carrying long poles covered with hides. The women had large, cone-shaped baskets on their backs. The baskets were so full they nearly overflowed! Even the children carried leather bags full of good and supplies for the day-long event. “Better hurry,” she told Pooko, “our guests will be here soon!”



Yellow Moon and her dog Pooko see the Yavapai visitors crossing the river.

By the time Yellow Moon and Pooko returned to their house, the sun was high overhead. Yellow Moon climbed up the ladder to the roof leaving Pooko to stay below. She climbed down another ladder into her house. Carefully, she set down the olla in a cool corner of house. She placed next to it a black-on-red painted scoop that was used for dipping out the water. Red Woman had reheated a large pot of beans and another pot with corn and rabbit stew. The food smelled wonderful!

## Special Clothing for a Special Day

Yellow Moon went to the store room, a small dark back room attached to the living room where her family slept and ate. She retrieved her special clothing that she would wear to the festival today. She put on the pure white cotton *manta* with the red edge. Her mother had made this special dress for her last winter. With it was the beautiful belt with the red and black designs. Hanging from a peg on the wall, were the white, high-legged moccasins that Uncle Mountain Lion had given her. They were a gift when she completed weaving her first really good blanket this past summer. Yellow Moon couldn't wait to show the blanket to Bobcat Boy. She also couldn't wait to give him the soft cotton cloth she wove for him.

When Yellow Moon came out from the dark storage room she was fully dressed. Her mother looked up from her work. She smiled as she saw how nicely Yellow Moon had dressed. It would not be many years before she and her clan members would have to find a good husband for the girl. But with Yellow Moon's good looks and growing talent as a weaver, there would be many interested boys. Of course, like all Sinagua men, he would have to be a good and hard-working farmer. He would need to raise lots of corn, beans, pumpkins, and cotton. But he also he must be a good hunter. "Never mind," she thought to herself, "there will be plenty of time to worry about that later. I must help her get ready for today's visitors and the feast!"



Yellow Moon folds the cloth she has woven.

## Something Special from Red Woman

With that, Red Woman called Yellow Moon to her side and began combing and styling her long black hair with a *yucca* brush. Finally, Red Woman walked over to a storage area in a corner of the front room. She removed the soft leather pouch made from prairie dog skin. From the pouch she removed her turquoise earrings. The little bag had been a gift to her from Bear when they were both children in the village. From the small pouch she took two pair of flat, tear-drop shaped turquoise earrings. Each one had thin cord looped through a small hole. One pair she would let Yellow Moon wear today. The other would be for her.

Yellow Moon wiggled a little when her mother pulled the thread through the holes in her ears. She wasn't used to wearing these earrings, but my, how beautiful they were! She had seen her mother wear them but never dreamed that she would also be allowed to wear them. Today, she would wear them to greet her family's guests and serve the food. Turquoise jewelry was always one of the items that the Yavapai women wanted from the Sinagua people. It was important to look good and behave well for all the guests, but Yellow Moon wanted to look nice for Bobcat Boy, too.

## Bobcat Boy's Family is Here

Pooko, started to bark. The Yavapai visitors had entered the village. They split up into smaller groups to visit various homes. Yellow Moon came outside and told Pooko it was okay, and the bark turned to a wagging tail as he greeted the visitors.

At last, Bobcat Boy and his parents stood below Yellow Moon's home. They had all kinds of gifts and things to trade. Bobcat Boy was barefoot, but he wore an animal skin cloth around his waist. He had a string of red stone beads around neck and he carried a deerskin bag over his shoulder. His father wore a similar cloth and red beads, but he also carried a *quiver* of arrows, a bow, and had a piece of leather wrapped around the wrist on his left arm. Bobcat Boy's mother wore a buckskin wrap-around skirt, a buckskin poncho, high-top moccasins, and red and black beads around her neck. A thick cotton strap stretched across Bobcat Boy's mother's forehead. The strap was attached to the huge basket on her back. Yellow



Red Woman's turquoise earrings.

Moon immediately recognized this *tumpline* as having been made by her mother. Everyone stood still; quietly waiting the signal to continue.

As if by magic, Bear, Eagle, and Mountain Lion appeared from the dust. Bear recognized his Yavapai guests, smiled broadly, and said, “Alaiksai!” (Attention) “You have come on a lucky day to share with us the foods of Mother Earth! You are welcome in our home!” To which Bobcat Boy’s father, Big Deer, responded with a look of happiness and a long speech in the Yavepe language. Even though the Sinagua and the Yavapai did not know many words of each other’s language, they all understood that this was peaceful and welcoming event.

## The Women Show, Tell, and Trade

After the greetings were finished, Bobcat Boy’s mother, Coyote Woman climbed the ladder to Red Woman’s house and began unpacking her basket. First out were two soft brown tanned deer skins. Then came a strong basket made from willow bark and two woven seed-parching trays. After that she pulled out a pine pitch-covered olla and a hairbrush made of *mescal* fibers with a buckskin handle. She laid down a large block of roasted and dried mescal and a small block of dried saguaro fruit. Then she pulled out a small pouch. Yellow Moon couldn’t see what was inside. Finally, Bobcat Boy’s mother pulled out another cone-shaped basket from the larger one she had been carrying. The bottom of the basket was covered with tanned leather, to protect it from being crushed when it was set down on the ground.



Coyote Woman laid out trade goods for Red Women.

Red Woman emerged from the roof entry carrying a tray of corn cakes for the guests. She greeted her Yavapai friends with a smile and put the tray down. Then she climbed down the ladder into the house to pick up her younger son, her woven cotton goods, and a bag of turquoise beads. Red Woman tried to hide her excitement. Coyote Woman brought along the very things she wanted. But how much would she have to trade to get them? She hoped that she had made the things that Water Woman wanted and needed this year. It was too late to worry about it, the *bargaining* would begin soon.

## The Men Share and Trade

While the women were doing business on the roof, Yellow Moon's father, brother, and uncle were down below on the cool side of the house, setting out their own things for the visitors to look at. Bobcat Boy was sitting next to his father. Big Deer had placed on the ground two finely made buckskins. He carefully laid out one mountain sheep hide that still had the hair attached. He also set out two fist-size cobbles of blackish stone. Each had been chipped on one side to show the shiny black inside of the rock. Yellow Moon watched from the roof as the men looked at all there was to trade. Yellow Moon knew that this stone was really good for making small arrow points and sharp knives, and her father would be happy to trade for such a big piece.

Bobcat Boy looked up to see Yellow Moon. They saw each other and waved a greeting. Since her mother was now back with Rabbit Skin



Big Deer laid out trade goods for Eagle and Mountain Lion.

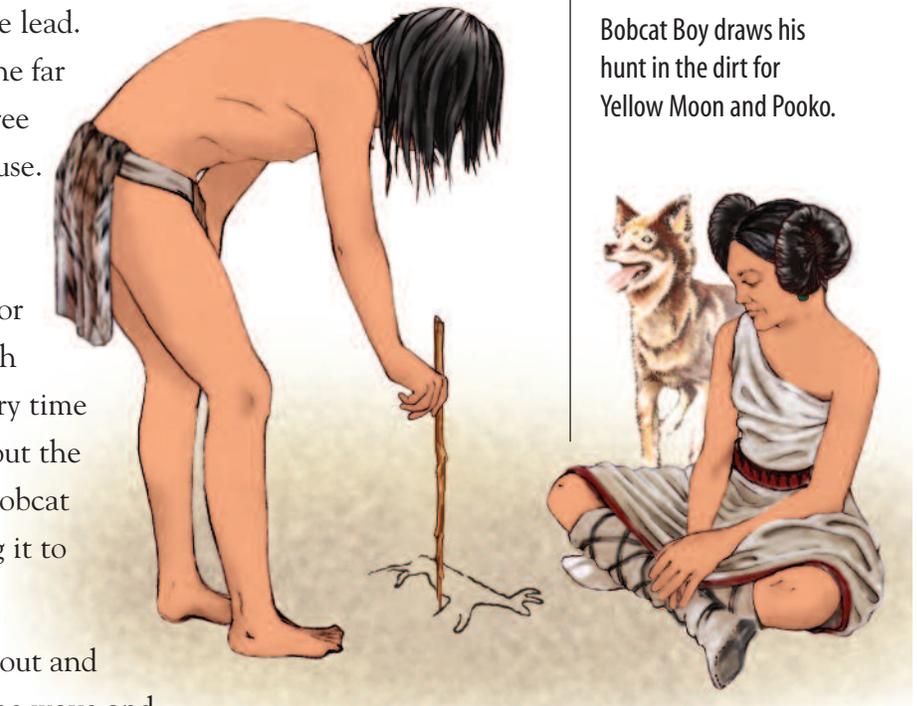
Blanket, her little brother, Yellow Moon knew she could ask to go visit with Bobcat Boy. She couldn't wait to see her friend and learn of his travels since the last Harvest Festival. She loved his stories. But since they spoke different languages, they told stories using sign language and drawing pictures in the sand.

## Yellow Moon and Bobcat Boy

Bobcat Boy was taller and stronger this year. His hair now was cut like his father's, with long bangs and straight sides. Besides these changes, he was, however, the same boy she knew from last year's Festival. He had the same grin and black sparking eyes.

Both Yellow Moon and Bobcat Boy knew this was a good time to walk away from the crowd. Everyone was busy. Yellow Moon, with Pooko at her heels, took the lead. They walked down the trail to the far south end of the village. The three sat in the shade of a deserted house. Bobcat Boy picked up a pointed stick and began acting out and drawing the story of his first major hunt. Yellow Moon squealed with laughter and the dog barked every time Bobcat Boy stood up and acted out the hunt. It was a funny story, and Bobcat Boy had a wonderful time telling it to Yellow Moon and her dog.

In turn, Yellow Moon acted out and drew a story about the blanket she wove and the praise she received from her mother and other relatives. Then, Bobcat Boy told another story about their family's travels that year. He said that they moved at least 40 moves since the leaving the winter camp. He drew images of mountains and hills; valleys and streams; animals like deer, rabbit, and bighorn sheep; and plants of various shapes and sizes. Yellow Moon could not believe how often the Yavapai moved. She and her



Bobcat Boy draws his hunt in the dirt for Yellow Moon and Pooko.

females relatives hardly went anywhere beyond the fields and the river. Only the men left the village and its immediate territory. When they did go, it was only a few days at a time to hunt, collect stone or salt, or to visit the religious places of her people.

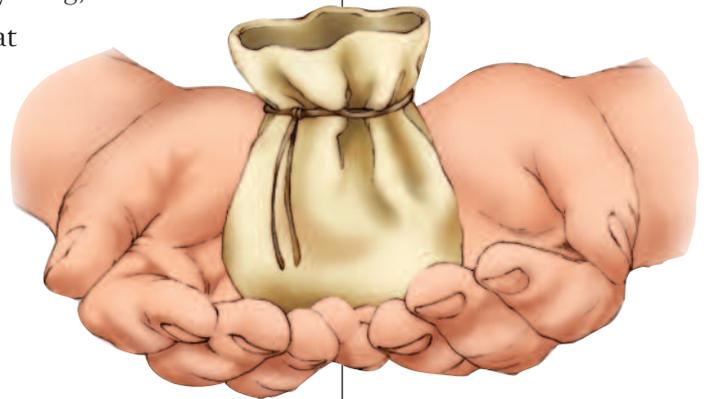
## The Yavapai Winter Village

Finally, Bobcat Boy made Yellow Moon stand up and look south to the black hills. He pointed to a place on hill far, far away. She could see golden-leaved cottonwood trees, suggesting that a spring was nearby. He drew a picture of three rounded stick houses with low doorways, pointed in the direction of his family, and pretended to go to sleep.

“So,” she told Pooko, who was watching everything, “this is where his family will spend the winter, in a camp at foot of the hills. Probably there is a good crop of pinyon nuts this year, and his family will have plenty of fire wood. He and the other Yavapai will be able to see our village, but we will not see them. I am glad we are friends not enemies, aren’t you Pooko?”

## The Gift

Pooko turned his head to the side, trying to understand what Yellow Moon asked. But it was no use. Pooko once again settled down in the cool earth next to the deserted house. Yellow Moon turned to look at Bobcat Boy, who shyly stretched out his arm toward her. There was a small bundle in his hand. It was a surprise! He had a gift for her. She carefully pulled back his folded fingers. In his hand was a soft pouch made of prairie dog skin, tied with a thin deerskin cord. She could tell by the look of pride on his face that he had made the pouch especially for her. She smiled and put her forehead against his to thank him for his kindness. For sure, he was glad to see her this year. She could hardly wait to give him her surprise, the soft cotton wrap that she wove last summer. But that would have to wait until after the feast and the foot races...



Bobcat Boy presents  
Yellow Moon with a gift.