

# Language Families of the Colorado Plateau

A **language family** is a group of languages related by descent from a common ancestor, called the proto-language of that family

# Language Families on the Colorado Plateau

- Uto-Aztecan
- Yuman
- Keresan
- Kiowa-Tanoan
- Zuni
- Athabascan

# Uto-Aztecan



# Uto-Aztecan

- Uto-Aztecan is one of the largest language families of North and Central America in terms of population, linguistic diversity and geographic distribution. The northernmost Uto-Aztecan language, Northern Paiute, is found as far north as Oregon and Idaho. To the south, varieties of Nahuatl are spoken as far south as Nicaragua and El Salvador. The most famous of these is Classical Nahuatl, the language of the Aztec Empire of central Mexico.

# Uto-Aztecan Languages on the Colorado Plateau:

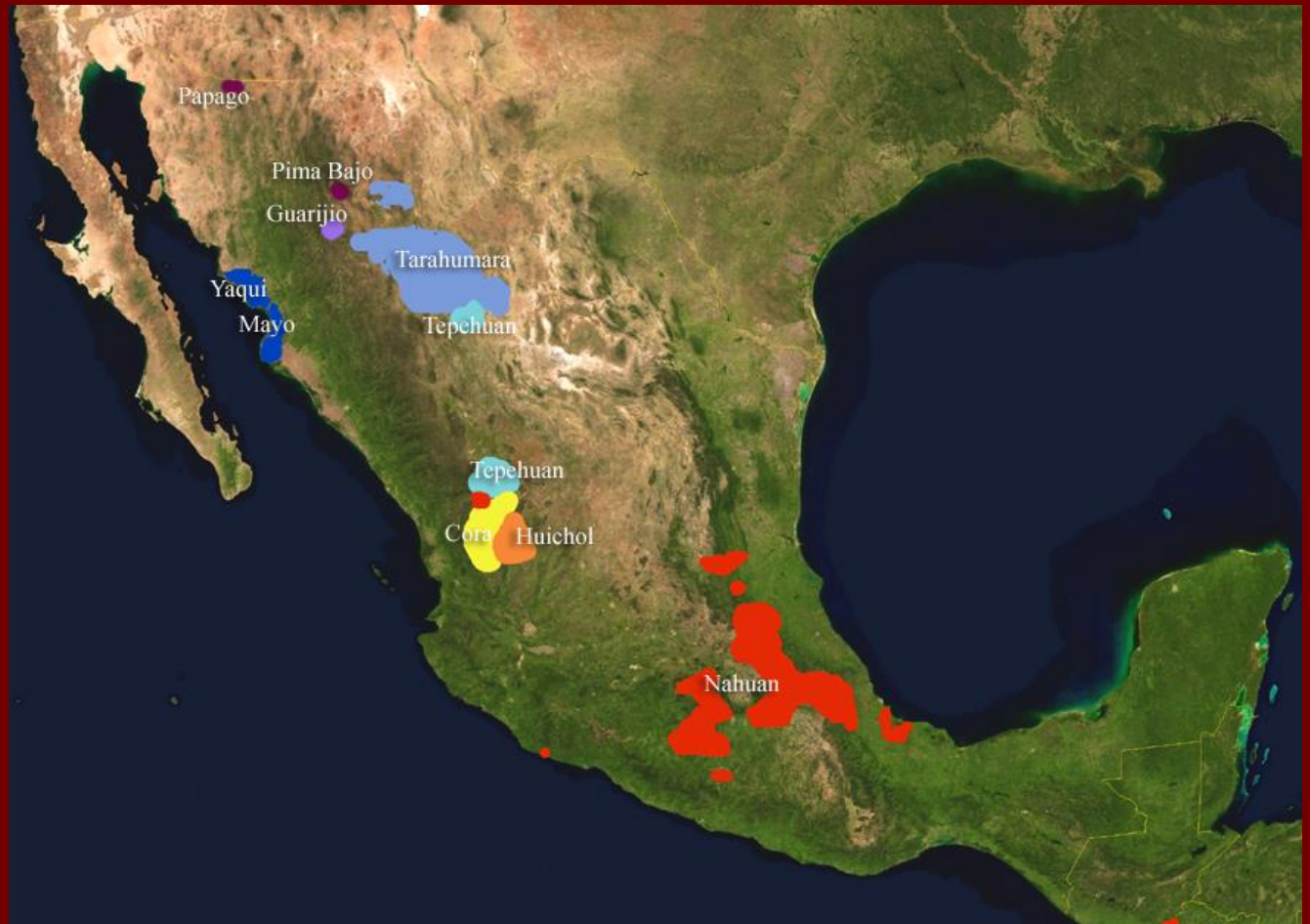
- Southern Paiute  
(Ute and Paiute)
- Hopi



# Uto-Aztecan

Southern Paiute is a Uto-Aztecan language of the Plateau and Colorado Plateau. It is spoken natively by more than 1500 Ute and Paiute people in Utah, Nevada, Colorado, and Arizona.

# Southern Uto-Aztecans



# Yuman Languages

Upland Yuman/  
the Pai Languages

- Hualapai
- Havasupai
- Yavapai





# Keresan Languages

Western Keresan:

Acoma

Laguna

Rio Grande Keresan:

Zia Pueblo



# Kiowa-Tanoan Languages

Tewa (Hano Village at  
Hopi)

Jemez Pueblo



# Kiowa-Tanoan

- The Kiowa-Tanoan language family has seven languages grouped into four branches.
- A. Kiowa
  - 1) **Kiowa**: 300 speakers
- B. **Tiwa**
  - I. Northern Tiwa
    - 2) **Taos**: 803 speakers (1980 census)
    - 3) **Picuris**: 101 speakers (1990 census)
  - II. Southern Tiwa
    - 4) **Southern Tiwa**
      - dialects:
        - Sandia - 144 speakers
        - Isleta - 1588 speakers
        - Ysleta del Sur (*extinct*)
  - III. Piro
    - 5) **Piro** (*extinct*)
- C. Tewa
  - 6) **Tewa**: total of 1,298 speakers (1980 census)
    - dialects:
      - Arizona Tewa (Tano)
      - Rio Grande Tewa groups (Santa Clara - 207 speakers, San Juan - 495 speakers, San Ildefonso - 349 speakers, Nambe - 50 speakers, Pojoaque - 25 speakers, and Tesuque - 172 speakers)
- D. Jemez
  - 7) **Jemez** (a.k.a. Towa): 1,301 speakers (1990 census)

# Zuni

Zuni, a “linguistic isolate”



# Athabaskan Languages

Southern Athabaskan on  
the Colorado Plateau

- Diné (Navajo)
- Apache



# Colorado Plateau as Native Language Repository

- Before 1492, 300 native languages were spoken in what is now the United States (lower 48); 154 are spoken today. There are 360,000 fluent speakers of those 154. Of these, more than half, 184,000, speak a language indigenous to the Colorado Plateau. 5 of the top remaining 20 native languages in the US are spoken on the Colorado Plateau: Navajo, Apache, Zuni, Hopi, Keresan

# Linguistic Retention

Tribe	Population	Fluent Speakers	Age 2-18
■ Navajo	260,000	57%	<50%
■ Havasupai	639	98%	90%
■ Hualapai	2100	30%	<25%
■ Yavapai	1675	<2%	<2%
■ Acoma	6344	50%	<2%
■ Hopi	10,916	48%	<8%
■ Zuni	9,690	66%	<60%

# Take Away Message

There is much native linguistic diversity on the Colorado Plateau.

There is no such thing as “the Indian language”.