Episode 1: Our Land, Our Roots
Lesson Title: The Ancestral Puebloans and The Ute Tribes: Stewards of the Land

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Episode Description:

Our Land, Our Roots introduces audiences to the deep, layered histories that shaped Colorado long before statehood and continues through the settlement era of the 19th century. Establishing the thematic foundation for the entire series by highlighting land, roots, movement and adaptation, this story reinforces that Colorado's identity has always been shaped by many peoples, whose connections with place continue to evolve, intersect and endure.

Episode Inquiry Questions:

1. How have differing views about land and resources impacted human migration of various ethnic and cultural groups across Colorado?
2. How have humans adapted to and changed the physical environment?
3. How do the stories and memories of various individuals tell the story of Colorado?
4. How do the interactions of differing cultural groups impact the development of Colorado?

Lesson Description:

This lesson invites 4th graders to explore what it means to be a steward of the land through the lens of two connected but distinct peoples: the Ancestral Puebloans, whose cliff dwellings at sites like Mesa Verde reveal an advanced civilization that adapted ingeniously to the high desert environment, and the Ute Tribes, who later moved into the region and took on the role of protecting and honoring these ancient stone villages, even though they were not related to the people who built them. Through inquiry and discussion, students examine why

the Ancestral Puebloans may have chosen to settle where they did, what "stewardship" means in the context of caring for land and history, and how the Ute peoples carried that responsibility forward.

Grade Level/Time Needed:

4th Grade/90 Minutes (Split if needed into two parts)

Lesson Inquiry Questions:

1. What does it mean to be living on the land?
2. Why do we say the Utes People are stewards of the land and not landowners?
3. In what ways were the Ancestral Puebloans stewards of the land?
4. What do the Ute People have in common with the Ancestral Puebloans?

Supporting Questions:

1. Who were the Ancestral Puebloans?
2. Why do you think the Ancestral Puebloan picked where they lived?
3. Did the Ancestral Puebloans establish a successful community?
4. Where did the Ute People build their communities and live on the land?

Lesson Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Identify how the Ancestral Puebloans adapted to their environment.
2. Understand the harvesting/farming techniques and housing design that the Ancestral Puebloans used.
3. Understand the harvesting and farming techniques the Utes People use.
4. Describe the difference between a steward of the land and owner of the land.

Background Knowledge / Contextual Paragraph for Teachers:

Long ago before European explorers arrived in the high deserts of the Southwest, an advanced civilization built thriving communities. Today, students might know them from pictures of the cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde. For a long time,

textbooks called these people the “Anasazi.” However, we now know that this word is actually a Navajo term meaning “ancient enemy.” Because it is a derogatory name, modern historians and Indigenous communities have retired it. Instead, we respectfully call this culture the Ancestral Puebloans.

A common misconception is that the Ute People are the direct descendants of these ancient builders. They are not. The Ancestral Puebloans are the direct ancestors of modern Pueblo and Hopi Nations.

When the Ancestral Puebloans migrated south, the Ute People moved into the region. Even though they were not related, the Utes recognized the sacred nature of the empty stone villages. They took it upon themselves to act as guardians, looking over and preserving the ruins the best they could. To the Utes, protecting these sites was a duty of deep respect for the people who walked the land before them.

Building Background Knowledge for the Student:

Trigger the students’ background knowledge of what a community needs to have to survive.

1. Capture the students’ attention with the phrase written on the board in big letters, “What is a Community?” and under it write “Ancestral Puebloans.” Do not tell the students what either are yet. Ask the students to focus on the word community and think about what a community needs to be a community? Remind students to think about the work they have done around community and how that would apply to a social studies lesson about the beginning of Colorado’s history. This is to get the students to make connections that the classroom community is part of a bigger piece, such as being part of their state's history. This is a time to think.
2. Define the phrase “steward of the land” in terms of taking care of the land, before and during the stay of people. Explain how it is different in owning land. A landowner holds legal rights and control over property, while a land steward actively manages and cares for the land with a focus on sustainability, ecological health, and long-term benefit.

3. Ask students if they know who or what occupied the land we call Colorado before us, before their parents, or even before their grandparents. They might think of Native Americans, early settlers, or even gold miners. Someone might even mention dinosaurs. If so, ask if they know who lived here in the era between the dinosaurs and Native Americans. Most will likely admit they do not know, allowing the teacher to explain that today's lesson will introduce them to those very people.

Lesson Sources:

- Photographs are found at the end of this lesson.

Lesson Materials Needed:

1. Large envelopes for each group of students to move around on tables or the floor.
2. Printed pictures to have for each group to have a set.
3. Large screen to show video and display pictures.
4. Student notebooks or some way to keep notes for social studies or virtual notebooks.

Lesson Instruction:

Part 1:

Sorting Activity:

1. Group students into groups of four or five at tables or on the floor to have space for moving pictures around. Make sure they have their notebooks or notepaper along with some type of writing tool.
2. Give each group a packet with pictures in it (the pictures for sorting activity).
3. Have them spread the pictures on their tables, do not tell them what to do with the pictures. Let them look through the pictures for about a minute.
4. Ask the students to come up with a way to sort the pictures into four groups… then have each group of students share how they sorted the pictures and provide a short reason for their thinking behind it. Have them leave their pictures in the groups.

5. Show picture number 1 (page 10) and display it largely on the board for all the students to see.
    a. Write or post the phrase “cliff dwelling” by the picture.
    b. Have the students write this term in their notebooks or on a piece of paper or in their virtual notebook. This is a picture of the cliff dwelling in Mesa Verde.
    c. Ask the students, why do you think this is called cliff dwellings? Have students look closely at the structures and what they are built with. Tell them that thousands of years ago, people built these stone houses, raised families, made beautiful pottery and then moved away. "Today, we are going to discover why these people chose to call this area home for so long and learn why the next group of people wanted to protect what they left behind."
6. Have the students look back at the four groups they made. Ask them to now make three groups based on these three identifiers:
    a. Group A: shows the environment and surroundings of why they chose this area to live in
    b. Group B: shows what they built and used what was provided to them by their surroundings
    c. Group C: Do not fit into either Group A or B, so look at those pictures and discuss why they do not fit.
7. Give students 5 to 10 minutes to sort and discuss with each other over these photos. If possible, post these three groups for them to reference during the process.
8. Once it feels like they have reached a good spot to have a whole group discussion, ask students get their notebooks out to write down a few key terms and thoughts. Do not put the pictures away, they need them out to have the visuals.
9. Have the students write “Ancestral Puebloans” under “cliff dwellings.” Ask if any of them have heard these words before or know anything about these people. Then write the words on the whiteboard for them to copy and provide the definition of Ancestral Puebloan.

10. Next, have them write down “Stewards of the Land” in their notebooks and ask if anyone has heard this term before. Give them the definition of this phrase for them to write down.
11. Once they finish with these terms, have them look at the photos again. Ask if any of the images look like they don't fit the specific timeline of the Ancestral Puebloans. Hopefully, some students will spot the images of the Ute People and recognize that the photographs are more recent.
12. Next, write 'The Ute People' on the board and have students record it in their notebooks. Give them a working definition and ask if anyone has prior knowledge about this tribe. This is an ideal moment to introduce the background of both groups. Explain that though they are separate cultures, they share a deep connection through stewardship, meaning the Ute People respect and look after the ancestral lands.

Part 2:
Collecting information and writing about it.

1. Students are going to look up information about the Ancestral Puebloans and the Ute People. Have them use their notebook to collect/write down the information they find. Students may work in pairs or independently. Let them know they will be writing a complete paragraph. give them these sentence stems to start the research:
    a. one way they adapted to their environment (housing, farming, etc.)
    b. one way they acted as stewards of the land….
2. Once they have completed gathering information on both groups, they should check in with the teacher, and then the teacher can have them choose to write about the Ancestral Puebloans or the Ute People.
   Ask students, "What does it mean to be a Steward of the Land? Use at least one fact or detail from today's lesson to explain your answer."

Strategy Instruction Differentiation:

- Let students work in pairs or independently on Part 2.
- This lesson could be done on the computer if the educator is able to provide pictures to be moved and seen by all students on their devices.

- Pictures could be drawn if the student is not able to write or type (speech to text).
- Provide an organizer that has been used for writing paragraphs in class already, do not add something new at this time.

Assessment:

Students complete a simple two-column graphic organizer:

Ancestral Puebloans The Ute People
One way they adapted to their environment (housing, farming, etc.)
One way they acted as stewards of the land.

Then, using the organizer as support, students write 3–4 sentences answering: "What does it mean to be a Steward of the Land? Use at least one fact or detail from today's lesson to explain your answer."

Look-fors (informal rubric):

- Meets expectations: Includes at least one accurate, specific detail from the lesson (e.g., cliff dwellings built into canyon walls, Utes protecting the ruins out of respect) and defines "steward" in their own words as someone who takes care of or protects land/place.
- Developing: Mentions Ancestral Puebloans or Utes but details are vague or missing; attempts a definition of "steward" without full clarity.
- Needs support: Response lacks specific details from the lesson or confuses the two groups (e.g., states the Utes are direct descendants of the Ancestral Puebloans — a good moment for a quick individual re-teach).

2022 Colorado Social Studies Standards:

1. SS.4.1.GLE.1.EO.b.Identify cause and effect relationships using primary sources to understand the history of Colorado's development.
2. SS.4.1.GLE 2.EO.c: Describe both past and present interactions among the people and cultures in Colorado. For example: African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Indigenous Peoples, LGBTQ, and religious groups.

3. SS.4.2.GLE 2.EO.c: Analyze how people use geographic factors in creating settlements and have adapted to and modified the local physical environment.

2020 Colorado Reading, Writing, and Communicating Standards:

1. RWC.4.GLE.1.EO.a: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. (CCSS: SL.4.1).
2. RWC.4.GLE 2.EO.c: Organize relevant ideas and details to convey a central idea or prove a point.
3. RWC.4.GLE 2.EO.d: Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.

Extension Activities:

1. Do a compare and contrast between the Ancestral Puebloan and Ute Mountain Utes & Southern Utes. Can be done in picture form or written form.
2. Research more about the Ancestral Puebloans and look into Mesa Verde and why have they fixed the dwellings? Is this being Stewards of the Land? Give their opinion.
3. Research the term Steward of the Land and give an opinion piece on what they feel is better for the land, Stewardship or Land Owner?

Additional Resources:

1. The Southern Ute Tribe
2. Mesa Verde National Park
3. Video by the National Parks Service: Footprints of our Ancestors
4. The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe
5. Stewards of the Land: Ranchers on the Front Lines of Conservation
6. Parks and Wildlife take on Stewards and Landowners
7. Archaeology Southwest: Ancestral Pueblo

Pictures and Sources:

Picture 1:



Square Tower House from Overlook Along the Mesa Top Loop.

Source: National Park Service

Photographs for the Sorting Activity:



Cliff Palace, kivas, rooms, and towers at Mesa Verde.

Source: Indian Reservations

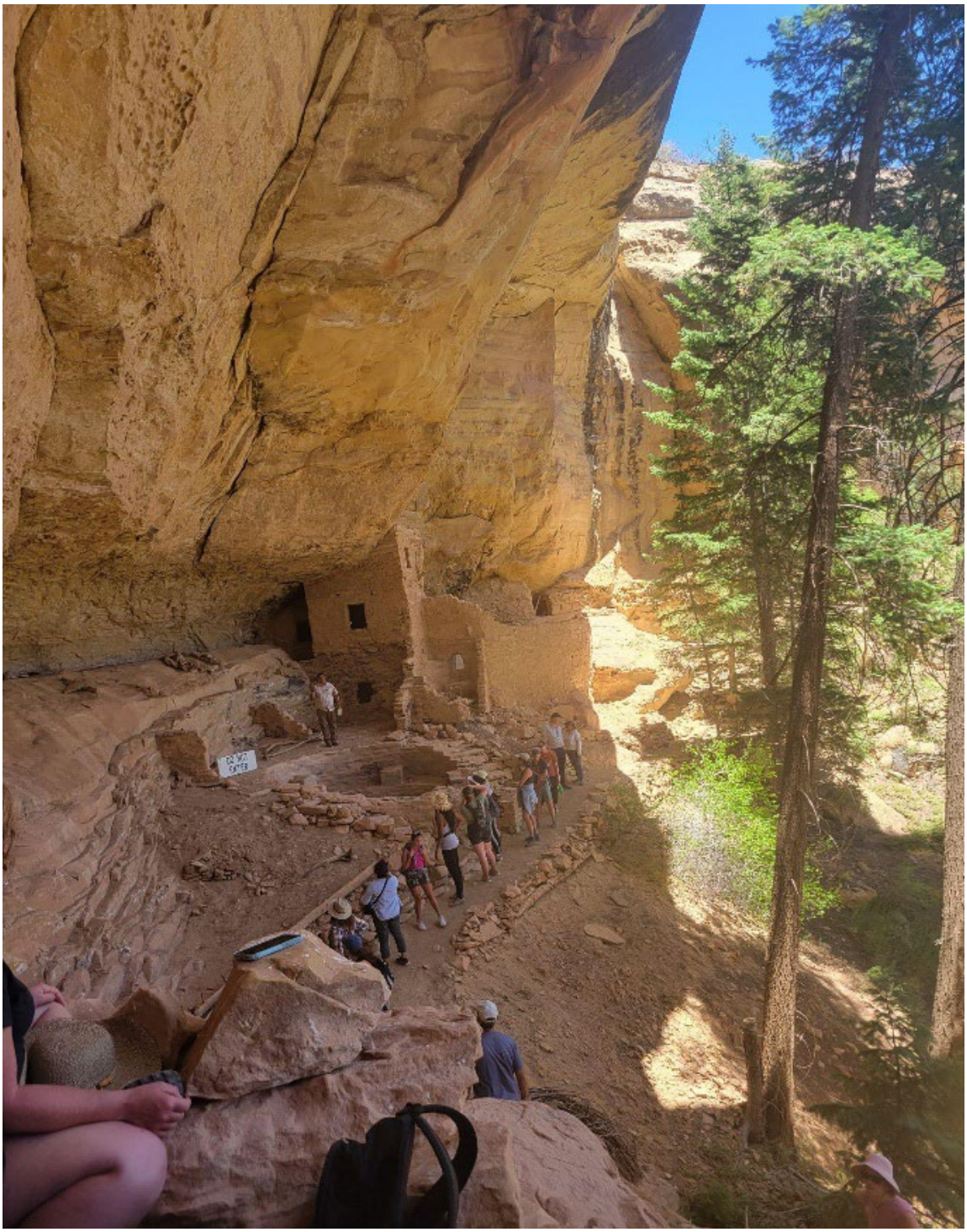


Ancient pictograph of a person and a person on a horse in the Ute Mountain Tribal Park. Photo by Sara Hill



Pot shards, bone tools, stone tools on a rock ledge.

Photo by Sara Hill



People walking along a trail under a rock ledge by cliff dwellings.

Photo by Sara Hill



People climbing an old wooden ladder in the Ute Mountain Tribal Park.

Photo by Sara Hill



Cliff dwelling found in the Ute Mountain Tribal Park.

Photo by Sara Hill



View of McPhee Reservoir near the Canyon of the Ancients Visitor Center & Museum

Photo by Sara Hill



The Escalante Pueblo, above the Canyon of the Ancients Visitor Center & Museum.

Photo by Sara Hill



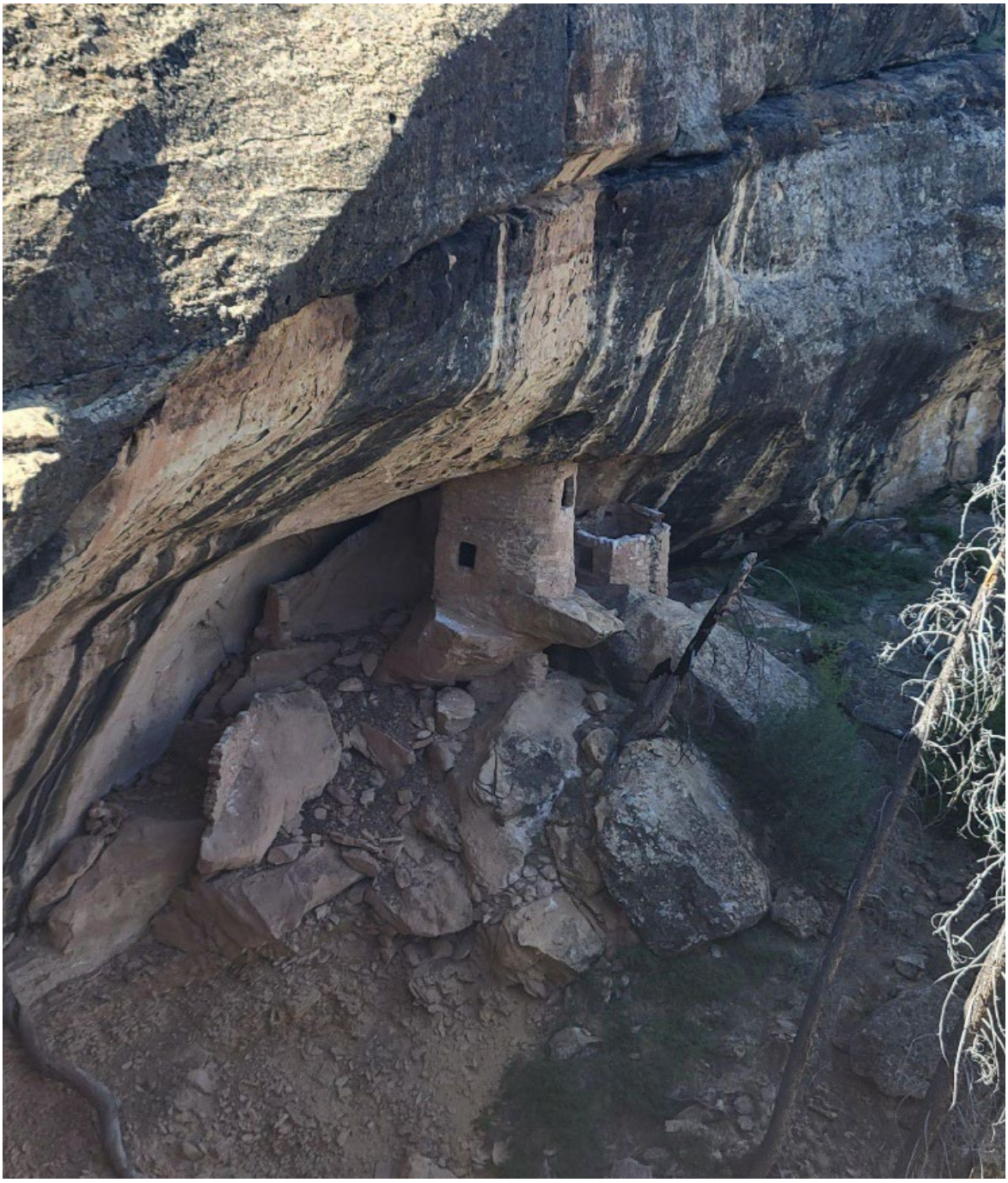
Visitors looking around a cliff dwelling in the Ute Mountain Tribal Park

Photo by Sara Hill



A window into a cliff dwelling

Photo by Sara Hill



View across a canyon towards a cliff dwelling

Photo by Sara Hill



View across Mancos Canyon looking towards a cliff dwelling

Photo by Sara Hill



View across Mancos Canyon looking towards cliff dwellings
Photo by Sara Hill



A view of Mancos Canyon in the Ute Mountain Tribal Park

Photo by Sara Hill



A view of cliff dwellings in the Ute Mountain Tribal Park

Photo by Sara Hill



View inside a kiva in the Ute Mountain Park

Photo by Sara Hill



Ancient pictograms on a rock wall in the Ute Mountain Tribal Park

Photo by Sara Hill



Ancient pictographs on a rock wall in the Ute Mountain Tribal Park.

Photo by Sara Hill



Studio portrait of Native American Ute women and children.

Source: [Colorado Springs Museum]



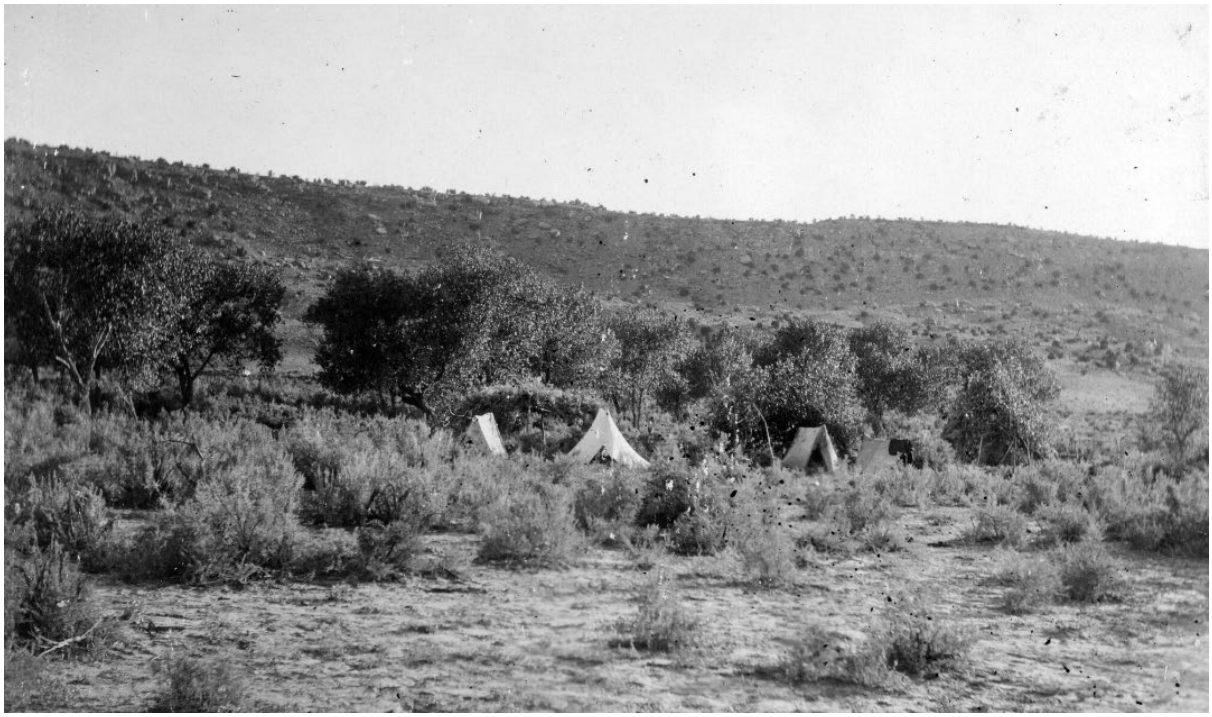
View of a Native American (Ute) scouting party mounted on horseback as they cross the Los Pinos River, La Plata County, Colorado, 1899.

Source: Denver Public Library Special Collections, P-51.



View of Native American (Ute) wickiups in Mancos Canyon on the Ute Mountain Indian Reservation in southwestern Colorado.

Source: Ute wickiups. (1880 - 1900). Denver Public Library Special Collections, [Z-15024].



A Ute Camp. Ute tents and tepees are near trees, McElmo Canyon, Montezuma County, Colorado.

Source: A Ute Camp. (1890 – 1900). Denver Public Library Special Collections, [X-21034]



Outdoor portrait (standing), Native American (Ute) men and women, near a tepee, old Zoo Park, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 1906.

Source: Denver Public Library Special Collections, [P-60]