

The Tongva

The Tongva (TOHNG vah), also called the Gabrielino, settled along the coast of southern California. They lived in villages in areas that are now part of Los Angeles and Orange counties.

The Tongva told stories about the world around them. Storytelling was an important folklore tradition. By telling stories, the Tongva taught lessons, customs, and beliefs to their children. Stories also helped the Tongva understand events in the natural world.

One Tongva story is about earthquakes. According to the story, the world was built on the backs of seven huge turtles. When the turtles were happy, they stayed still and the land did not move. However, when they argued, the turtles tried to move away from each other. When the turtles moved in different directions, the land on their backs shook and split apart, causing earthquakes.



The Tongva built their dome-shaped houses with willow or sycamore branches. The branches were covered with layers of reeds and ferns.

Find Out Find out about the folklore traditions of other Indian groups from your area. Look in your local library for books of California Indian folktales.

1. Describe ways in which the Indians from your region taught lessons, customs, and beliefs to their children.

2. Learn more about a story told by the Tongva or other local Indian group. Illustrate a scene from the story.

