

# San Juan Basin Archaeological Society

a Colorado Nonprofit Corporation



## Field Trip Report

Destination: Zuni Pueblo Exploration

Date: April 24-April 26, 2026

Leader(s): Susan Hicks

Number of Participants: 18

“Zuni Pueblo is the largest of the nineteen New Mexican Pueblos, covering more than 400,000 total combined acreages (not including other sites) and with an enrolled population of over 20,000.

We are considered the most traditional of all the New Mexico Pueblos, with a unique language, culture, and history that resulted in part from our geographic isolation. With perhaps 80% of our workforce involved in making art, we are indeed an "artist colony." Our main "industry" is the production of arts, including inlay silverwork, stone “fetish” carving, pottery, and others of which we are world famous.

Most of Zuni's residents live in the main village of Zuni and the nearby "suburb" community of Blackrock and Bluebird. Zuni is a sovereign, self-governed nation with our own constitutional government, courts, police force, school system, and economic base. Our year is marked by a cycle of traditional ceremonial activities; the most sacred and perhaps the most recognized is the annual Shalako Ceremony.” (all quoted text is from the Zuni Visitor Center website - <http://www.zunitourism.com/> - which is a very helpful website)

**Day 1** - At 1:00pm, Friday, April 24th, our group of 18 met at the Pueblo of Zuni Visitor Center where we we met Marla Lallo, Visitor Center Director, who was instrumental in planning our tour and our guide for the afternoon, Kenny Bowekaty. Some of us had come a day early and spent part of the morning at the excellent A:shiwí A:wán Museum and Heritage Center which is half a block from the Inn at Halona where we all stayed.



The Inn at Halona - a “true, unexpected oasis”. The Innkeeper, Roger, his wife, Ann, and the staff were very friendly and accommodating. Each room is unique, full of artwork. It began as a trading post in 1903 and has an interesting history. It was a perfect place for us to stay and have meals together. <https://www.halona.com/about/history/>



Kenny is a tribal member and shaman who studied archaeology and anthropology at Stanford. He explained the A:Shiwi (Zuni) World View and we learned about the history, culture and religion of the A:shiwi through the Migration Story, impacts of the Spanish, how the Zuni community is organized and what roll traditional religion plays in the daily life.

Kenny then took us to Badger Springs, “a remote backcountry rock art and great house site to experience a rich variety of ancestral images that come alive through cultural stories and interpretation.” Kenny shared many stories about the possible meanings and context of the hundreds of petroglyphs.



After the tour, we enjoyed snacks in a common area and then a group dinner that was catered by the Halona Inn. The meal featured the Halona Restaurant’s famous Halona chicken. The food was very good, the service was very friendly, and it was fun to socialize with the group. A special treat was Blue Corn Chocolate Chip and Cherry cookies made by Roger’s wife, Ann.



**Day 2** - We began with a group breakfast (eating is important to Zuni’s and to us!) which included blue corn pancakes. Mmmmm! We then headed to the Zuni Visitor Center where we met Shaun Latone, the Visitor Center Cultural Interpreter and our tour guide for the morning. He led a tour in the Middle Village and the Old Zuni Mission.

Shaun started the tour with some history, then we carpoled to the Middle Village (Halona:Idiwan'a) which is “the historic, central,

and active residential heart of the Pueblo of Zuni in New Mexico, considered the "middle place" of the world." He took us into the historic Old Zuni Mission, also known as the Mission Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe church. The interior walls featured a magnificent kachina mural the late Alex Seowtewa created during the 1970's. Shaun explained the stories behind the paintings which portrayed the four seasons and the annual ceremonies and dances. We were not allowed to take pictures inside the Mission. Restoration of the Mission continues.

Next, we walked around the village and Shaun told us more about the culture and traditions of the Zuni people. The picture on the right is from the Zuni Tourism website. It features an above ground, rectangular kiva.



We ate lunch back at the Halona Inn - we were treated to a Traditional Zuni Meal of delicious tamales, posole, salad, and bread baked in horno ovens. They served us Zuni Bread Pudding for dessert which is "quite different from custard-based Southern bread puddings." It's fun to try new foods.



The afternoon included free time to visit artist coops where we were able to meet some of the artists. A surprise find was the Eagle Sanctuary which houses several Bald and Golden Eagles that have been injured and are unable to survive in the wild.

We met again for a group gathering before dinner and then enjoyed another fine dinner at the Inn.

Day 3 - More great food at the Halona Inn for breakfast, then on to the Visitor Center where we met up with Kenny again. He took us to the Village of the Great Kivas, a Chacoan-outlier village site with two great kivas, numerous room blocks, and extensive pictographs and petroglyphs. The kivas and rooms were excavated in the 1930's and have since been back-filled. The pictographs and petroglyphs were beautiful and

Kenny did a wonderful job explaining the context and meaning of many of the hundreds of petroglyphs.



The pictographs in the photo below were painted by Zuni people during their lunch breaks from their excavation work in the 1930's.



We then traveled to Hawikuh, founded around 1400 AD, is one of the fabled "Cities of Cibola" and was still inhabited "in 1540, the place of "first contact" between Europeans and Native peoples in the Southwest." We were taught about the history, the importance of the landscape, and shown the entrance that Coronado used. Kenny showed us a collection of pottery sherds and taught us a historical pottery lesson. It was a windy day but we persevered!

Some members headed home after the Hawikuh tour. Others stayed one more night at the Inn. Those that stayed enjoyed a dinner at Chu Chu's Restaurant and then headed home the next morning.

I highly recommend a trip to the Pueblo of Zuni, a stay at the Inn of Halona, and tours led by Shaun and Kenny. Report submitted by Susan Hicks, May 24, 2026

Participants: Pamela and Quent Baker, Randy Graham, Dave Manley, Leigh Grench, Mary and Jack Irby, Chris Anderson, Betsy Moore, Phil Bruckbauer, Pete and Tish Varney, Rita Jo Anthony, Jim Holoway, Jill and Bill Tripp, organized by Susan Hicks.



