

# Example of essay on hualapai indians economic expansion in southwestern america

[Environment](#), [Water](#)



The Hualapai tribe, or nation of American Indians are a sovereign people located in the southwestern section of the United States. More specifically, their lands lie within the northwestern part of Arizona. The name of this tribe is pronounced “ Wah-lah-pie” and according to the information on their official website, the significance of its meaning translates to “ People of the Tall Pines” (“ About Hualapai Tribe”). The total acreage of the Hualapai reservations lands covers approximately one million acres. The geographical elevation and features span the gamut from grassy lands, hillsides, canyons, and bushy forested terrain. The total number of the Hualapai members in their tribal group is approximately 2, 300. When most people think about American Indians’ economic venues in the United States, they almost always consider the idea of gambling casinos. But, according to information provided by the Hualapai tribe, “ There is no casino gaming on the Hualapai Reservation. Tribal administration, public schools, and state/federal government provide the bulk of current full-time employment. The principal economic activities are tourism, cattle ranching, and arts and crafts” (“ About Hualapai Tribe”). This paper explores the economic expansion of the Hualapai Indians and how they were able to expand to other forms of revenue, aside from only casinos, unlike other Indian tribes.

As stated above some of the principle economic activities the Hualapai have been able to develop include tourism, cattle ranching, and artistic craftsmanship. For one thing, the location of the tribal nation in the northwestern area of Arizona offers a richly endowed natural setting of greenery, and life. When you drive through the area there are many signs along the highway warning to watch out for deer and elk, which may run or

walk out in front of moving traffic. The freshness and beauty of the richly green forested landscape makes you want to stop your vehicle, and get into a nice peaceful walk and enjoy nature. For this reason, the Hualapai lands have been described as “ an outdoorsman’s paradise” representing an ideal location for fishing, hiking, or to engage in river rafting experiences (“ About Hualapai Tribe”). Even though the mainland of the United States has been known for all kinds of natural beauty, the Hualapai Nation’s area has fascinating species of animals. One economic outlet for the Hualapai Nation is to offer paid permits for hunters to track big-game animals in their natural habitat. Examples of these species include trophy elk, antelope, big horn sheep, and mountain lions. Another venue that has afforded the Indian tribe an economic enterprise is their owned-and-operated river rafting business, on the Colorado River. The Hualapai Indians are the only Native American peoples who own their own company, of this kind.

As you can clearly understand, the location of the Hualapai tribe lands are in an ideal spot. Their location is situated so that an abundance of richly diverse activities may occur in an overwhelmingly pretty setting. In fact, the Hualapai Nation is located in an area that encompasses part of the Colorado River and the Grand Canyon. It is difficult to imagine that no American citizen is unfamiliar with the Grand Canyon. This magnificent red-hued gorge draws visitors from around the world, and is truly considered a geological wonder. In terms of comprehending the geo-physical and economic boundaries of the canyon, consider the following. The official Grand Canyon National Park charts its grounds under the auspices of the U. S. federal government. The Hualapai reservation lands comprise the western rim of the Grand Canyon.

Obviously then, the Hualapai Indians find themselves located on an ideal piece of real estate that has gorgeous views and a great natural bounty of wildlife. Their section of the Grand Canyon is called the “ Grand Canyon West” and visitors may enter the canyon for sightseeing via the Hualapai Nation’s reservations. Four touring packages are offered to the paying public that reflect several ways in which the Hualapai were able to expand their economic horizons.

The main attraction and culmination of seeing the Grand Canyon from the Hualapai Nation side of the national park is the amazing glass-bottom bridge, called the ‘ Skywalk’ where visitors may walk along a path sitting 4, 000 feet above the canyon floor over the Colorado River. Other attractive and fun alternatives in the Hualapai tribe tours include helicopter rides, boating tours, and various informative or educational excursions around their reservation. Touring the Hualapai reservation can provide an excellent lesson in history, helping one to understand how the Nation came to govern itself and set a foundation for economic growth. Organization of a national institution is a key to economic expansion and growth. For example, the tribe (as a sovereign nation) “ is composed of a nine-member Tribal Council which includes a chairperson and vice-chairperson. Council members are elected to office by Tribal members and serve 4-year terms” according to the official Hualapai explanation (“ About Hualapai Tribe”). The society is governed by both judicial and executive branches.

Historically, the Hualapai Indians’ land also border the Black Mountains and Colorado River which became officially established in 1833. When you are driving along the northern Arizona highway, you will notice turnoff signs

indicating ' Peach Springs' located on Highway 66 as " the tribal headquarters" (" Hualapai Tribe and Skywalk"). When deciding to take a trip to the area or reservation, the National Park Service of Arizona website will usually post any advisory about the safety of drinking water from the various natural springs. Most often all water inside the park area is safe for drinking. Over time, the Peach Springs headquarters of the Hualapai grew to offer a gift shop, restaurant, and hotel. These aspects represent additional forms of income and revenue. For example, older people or families with very young children may not want to go on wild river-rafting trips or game hunting. In this way, less physically inclined visitors can get a taste of the Hualapai Indian culture and enjoy a slower pace of sightseeing. As mentioned prior, the Hualapai do have cattle ranching but this only marks a small portion of their revenues. The bulk of Hualapai income and economic prosperity come from marketing their tourism industry. The tourist trade provides the best and most employment opportunities for the Hualapai Indian tribal members. Another historical note of interest involves President Theodore Roosevelt's trip to the Grand Canyon. He was known to remark " Leave it as it is. The ages have been at work on it, and man can only mar it. What you can do is to keep it for your children, your children's children, and for all who come after you, as one of the great sights which every American should see" (" Hualapai Tribe and Skywalk"). Food access lacks in abundance in the area, but can be had as part of any of the tour packages. One reason for not having much food access for humans is probably because the area could become littered with trash.

Also interesting to note, the Hualapai Indians do not need to gain revenues

from building casinos because the beauty of their surrounding lands are a natural treasure. Unlike other Indian tribes who thrive financially from casino revenues, the Hualapai Nation was able to vastly expand an economic base with many forms to choose from. There are entire segments of people who enjoy fishing and big-game hunting and as the availability of nature shrinks, in terms of points of interest, the Hualapai have much to offer. When people enter into the lands of the Hualapai tribe there is a fee which is always “subject to change at any time” and not every part of the reservation is permitted to be viewed by the public (“Hualapai Tribe and Skywalk”). To stay overnight it is possible to sleep at ‘The Hualapai Lodge’ and it is advisable to make reservations for purchasing a ticket to see the Skywalk. When driving through to the Grand Canyon West side, eventually you must drive onto a dirt road. Exact directions how to get there are posted on the government’s National Park Service website. It is advisable to diligently check this website for any alerts or updated information, such as weather, depending upon the time of year traveling there. The far end of the Grand Canyon is where the Hualapai section is located, and can be reached by driving approximately five hours from the south end. Map locations are clear and easy to read. But if you do not feel like driving or personally navigating in your vehicle, there is a shuttle service available to the Hualapai boundary site – of course, for a fee.

The Skywalk communicates a spectacular feat of engineering, as well as a fantastic point to behold one of the greatest sights of natural beauty. The photo provided herein (courtesy of Creative Commons) illustrates the kind of experience one might have while walking on this amazing bridge. Keep in

mind the bottom is glass, so when looking down a literal sense of dizziness may ensue. To gain a sense of appreciation of the economic magnitude the Skywalk represents, the costs involve a multi-million dollar tourist site. But it was not so easy to have the attraction erected. Much controversy circled conversations as to several issues. Some of the issues centered on the fact that the Skywalk would mar the natural beauty. And then, there was the engineering problem. As you can visualize, the architectural balance and structural strength would need to be uncompromisingly safe to hold the weight of many people.

The Hualapai Indians did not always have an easy path to keep claim of their lands. Even after the lands were officially, and legally declared theirs it was always under threat. For example, “ One of the biggest threats to their livelihood became the Santa Fe Railway, which claimed ownership of one-third of their reservation” (“ First Peoples New Directions”). The Hualapai filed a lawsuit in protest of the Santa Fe Railway encroaching upon their lands, and finally won a favorable decision from the Supreme Court in 1841. After the lawsuit, one would think no other entities might dare to invade or build on Hualapai tribal lands - but corporations wanted to use their lands for different purposes. For example, one big company wanted to drill on the land for uranium, and at one point the U. S. government proposed to dump “ nuclear waste on their reservation” (“ First Peoples New Directions”). Therefore, economic freedom and control of their land has not been an easy or smooth pathway to success for the Hualapai Nation. The Skywalk represents a kind of ultimate economic victory for them, as a people.

According to the article in First Peoples, “ he Hualapais have struggled to

gain control of their land and resources, build a self-sustaining economy, and exercise their sovereignty for the better part of their history" (" First Peoples New Directions"). In short, one cannot separate the economic expansion from the social and political aspects of the Hualapai Indians' quest to retain ownership of their lands, while creating a fiscal autonomy for themselves. The Skywalk itself curves into a horse-shoe shaped structure, as pictured above. As mentioned before, some critics complained that the way the structure protruded out over the Grand Canyon presented an ' eyesore.' They claimed it spoiled the natural beauty of the scene. A plethora of objections to the Skywalk project intruded into the plans for the tourist attraction. Still others argued " about the environmental impact from increased traffic and potential gas and oil spills" in terms of bringing all the extra traffic to the area (" First Peoples New Directions"). Tribal members of the Hualapai felt that the presence of the Skywalk would dishonor their cultural lands by insulting the sacred quality. No matter what opinions may hover around the issue, the fact is that the Skywalk has delivered a great economic boom to the Hualapai Nation. While other American cities and states are suffering financially from an ongoing global recession, the Hualapai Skywalk project has brought in healthy amounts of revenue. One observer notes that " Unemployment rates have dropped, tribal revenue has increased, and important social and medical services have been funded on a more regular basis" (" First Peoples New Directions"). These are critical realities and impressive gains of economic improvement.

The origins of the Skywalk project derived from a Las Vegas developer, David Jinn, who conferred with the Hualapai Tribal Council about the situation.



Although the Skywalk project was completed in 2007, arguments still persisted. Despite its economic success, Jinn is dissatisfied because he claims he has not received his promised revenues. Likewise the Hualapai are not happy with Jinn, and accuse him of failure to complete certain aspects of the Skywalk project. Greed and dissatisfaction seem to go hand-in-hand with the financial success of Skywalk. The discussion and fuss continues in social media like Twitter and in the print media of The New York Times. Different opinions abound. Some people feel that the Hualapai Indians have every right to “ exercise their sovereign powers to protect themselves from a deal gone bad” (“ First Peoples New Directions”). Others disagree, and think that dealing with the Hualapai Indians in other business ventures will be impossible because they are problematic to negotiate with.

Despite the disagreement and arguments over these issues, the Skywalk directly corresponds to a form of economic expansion, and a certain measure of economic freedom for the Hualapai Indian Nation. Also, the Skywalk is an architectural feat of accomplishment as well, although some Hualapai tribal leaders dispute its historical value. Julie Cart describes the glass spectacle as “ Buttressed by 1 million pounds of steel and supporting 90 tons of tempered glass, the see-through deck will give visitors a breathtaking view of the canyon” (“ Skywalk Opens Deep Divide”). The Los Angeles Times writer recognized that although the Skywalk cost over \$40 million, it is an exciting attraction that will draw a lot of people wanting to see and experience it. Once again, however, not everyone are thrilled by the idea. The tribal members who complain about its existence are not alone in their criticism of the project. People outside of the reservation “ regard the

development” as “ tantamount to defacing a national treasure” (“ Skywalk Opens Deep Divide”). One former administrator of the Grand Canyon National Park, Robert Arnberger, characterizes the Skywalk structure as akin to a ‘ carnival’ sideshow. He was born in the area, and grew up in proximity of the Grand Canyon and states “ Why would they desecrate this place with this?” (“ Skywalk Opens Deep Divide”). Given all the hoopla over the Skywalk one could be inclined to think it was the only source of revenue for the Hualapai Indians. But clearly their economic expansion includes other forms of revenue as mentioned earlier in this paper.

Other economic developments may come in the form of branching out into opportunities for further education and business opportunities off the reservations. For example, Hualapai tribal member Joseph William Thomas, Jr., Flies-Away is the first Indian of their clan to receive a law degree. He paid his own way through private high school in Arizona, and graduated from Stanford and Harvard. Judge Joseph has “ taught at Stanford and Arizona State University, and has consulted with tribes all over the United States and Canada” (“ Looking for Balance,” 48). Economic advancement and inspiration carves different spaces, and can find opportunities for revenues beyond tourist attractions or in addition to them. Judge Joseph is quite proud of his Hualapai heritage, and represents great hope for the tribal nation members to obtain higher education in a quest for continued economic advancement.

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