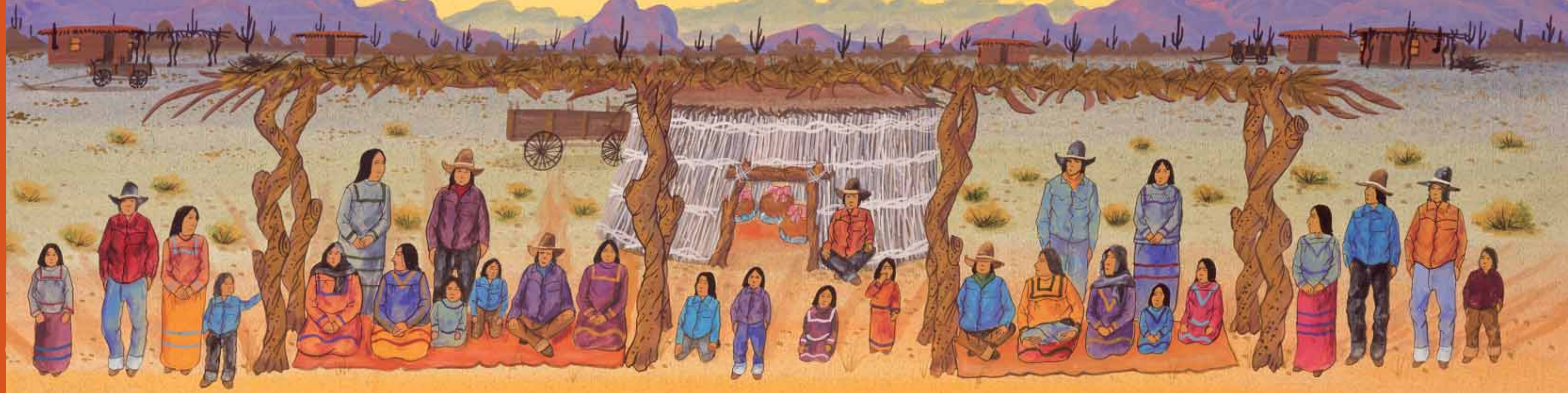


## Saguaro wine ceremony remains a sacred rite

Though few Tohono O'odham practice traditional monsoon farming today, the saguaro wine ceremony remains an important observance—a seasonal cleansing, which restores the people and the land. Contemporary Tohono O'odham carry on the centuries-old process, preparing the wine and gathering together for song, dance, and ritual drinking.

The rich oral tradition of the Tohono O'odham plays a key role in the wine ceremony. Speeches, which recall summer thunderstorms, are given at the start of the ceremony to summon the clouds.

# Saguaros helped sing down the rain



A. CHIAGO of THE HO-HONO  
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*It was I'itoi, Creator of the Tohono O'odham, tradition says, who taught the Desert People their sacred wine ceremony so they could summon the rain (ju:kí) they needed to survive. He taught them to make saguaro wine (nawait), to gather together to drink the wine and sing important songs, to "sing down the rain."*

## Many hands help to make saguaro wine

Traditionally, the annual process of making saguaro wine for the sacred wine ceremony was a community effort. When the harvesting season was complete, a wagon traveled from family to family collecting saguaro syrup donations. The syrup was taken to the round rain house (olas ki:), where it was mixed with water and left to ferment for several days.

*... to pull down the damp wind and pull down the clouds.  
They will wet the ground, and in it we shall plant.  
Therewith we shall feed our children.  
Our friends who come from afar we shall feed therewith.  
Therewith we shall feel happy.  
Therewith all shall be well.*

*Liquor maker to shaman during the singing*