Interesting facts about the Tigua Indians

1) **The Tigua** are the only Puebloan tribe still in Texas.

2) **Location** Ysleta del Sur Pueblo is located within the southern boundary of El Paso, Texas.

3) **Reservations** Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, established in 1682, contains 66 acres. The Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, like many others Native American Settlements, is recognized as a sovereign nation even though it is located inside Texas. The State of Texas is trustee for all tribal lands.

4) **Government** The tribal government is Spanish-style civil. There is a cacique, a cacique teniente (lieutenant cacique, or governor), an alguacil or sergeant at arms, a capitan de guerra or war captain, and four assistant captains. Ysleta del Sur Pueblo also possesses the old Spanish canes, symbols of political authority, that were carried by the original settlers.

5) **Religion** Most Tiguas practice Catholicism, with some native elements. The Pueblo’s patron is Saint Anthony, who was the patron of Isleta Pueblo before the 1680 revolt. A small core of people practice a more traditional religion, featuring a katsina like entity known as the awelo, or grandfather, who oversees all behavior. The tribe also possesses buffalo awelo masks and an ancient ceremonial drum.

6) **Dwellings** Originally, adobe houses were arranged around a church plaza.

7) **Dress** Men wore cotton kilts and leather sandals. Women wore cotton dresses and sandals on high mocassin boots. Buckskin and rabbit skin were also used for clothing and robes.

The Cultural Diversity Celebration was established to promote awareness of various cultures, their histories, and their contributions to the global community. This celebration includes information and cuisines from the regions showcased in order to enhance cultural understanding. This event provides an opportunity to highlight the amazing diversity among the faculty, staff, residents, and student body of Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso.

If you have any questions, please email DiversityInclusionGlobalHealth@ttuhsc.edu.
The Tigua Indians are descended from an ancient desert culture that evolved in the Southwest over ten thousand years ago during the Pleistocene when a major drying period altered the region’s flora and fauna. The drier climate gradually transformed the grassy savannas into deserts with cacti and mesquite. The lakes receded and became pools and salt beds. Smaller animals such as prairie dogs, deer and rabbits replaced the larger ones.

The Tigua of Ysleta del Sur Pueblo is the oldest community in the State of Texas. It is the southern most of the Rio Grande Indian Pueblos that extend northward to Taos Pueblo, New Mexico. The Tigua community is an urban enclave. Some tribal revitalization has occurred since the 1960s, including ceremonies, language, and hunts, but the population is overwhelmingly assimilated. Tribal rolls closed in 1984 with 1,124 certified members. Today, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo consists of 1,700 tribal members.

The Tigua called their ancestral home Pueblo Gran Quivera. Gran Quivera was north of El Paso in the Manzano Mountains southeast of Albuquerque. Manzano means Apple in Spanish so these are the Mountains of the apple. Gran Quivera was started about AD 800. By 1300 it was one of the largest Pueblos.

The Tiwa Language belongs to the Kiowa-Tanoan Family that includes Tiwa, Tewa, Towa and Piro and Tompiro. The closest relatives of the Tigua of Ysleta del Sur Pueblo (El Paso, Texas) are the Tiwa Indians of Isleta and Sandia Pueblos, located just north and south of Albuquerque, and the Tiwa Indians of Taos and Picuris Pueblos north of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The old Spanish spelling was retained by the Tigua of Ysleta del Sur Pueblo. In the early 1900, Spanish largely replaced Tiwa on the Pueblo, with English as a second language. Today, the Ysleta Indians speak English and Spanish and some tribal members are familiar with the Tiwa Language. The songs and chants are nearly all in the Tigua Language.

The Tigua still remember Gran Quivera in their prayers and songs. A song’s verse in English:

"My home over there,
Now I remember it,
And when I see it, the mountain far away
Oh, then I weep,
Oh, what can I do?"

Sources:
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