



KOYOOE TUKADU:
PYRAMID LAKE PAIUTE KIT



◆ WE ARE ALL PEOPLE OF THIS EARTH

John C. Fremont named the land between the Sierra-Nevada Mountains and the Wasatch Mountains the Great Basin. This land holds chains of basins that are a half days walk wide, with no drainage points. During the Earths' last ice age know as the Pleistocene Age, these basins filled with water forming lakes that rose and fell with the periods of glaciation. At one point, the water level was high enough to connect these lakes at mountain passes to form 8,000 square mile Lake Lahontan. Today, Pyramid Lake and Walker Lake are all that remain of Lake Lahontan. Pyramid Lake, residing in the middle of the Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation, is 30 miles long and 7-9 miles wide. The water is briny because its salt water body is fed with fresh water from the Truckee River. Briny lakes contain salts and minerals that precipitate when they dry to form tufa grottos for fish and, when the water recedes, shelter for animals.

As Lake Lahontan receded, sage and greasewood became the dominant vegetation. These remarkable plants can withstand dry wind, hot days, cold nights, droughts, snowfall, and winter fog. The height of these plants depends on the amount of moisture there is for their traveling roots to find in the soil. These hardy plants protect the soil from erosion and were used for clothing, fuel, and medicine. They provide shelter for animals and were turned into shelter for humans.

Throughout the years the natives have adapted to the changes in this land. They have learned to live through the cold, windy winters, with the heat of the sun through the summer months, taking its' warmth away with the night, and using sagebrush, greasewood, willows, and cottonwoods as their only shelter. They have adapted to the inconstancies of water in the marshes and on the playas, where flash floods turn them into lakes that only last up to a month, by weaving baskets tight enough to save water for the dry seasons. The spring provided water for those who knew where to look and the fall was spent in the cool, moist hills gathering nuts.

When explorers entered the Great Basin they found four tribes in the area. The Southern Paiutes, Western Shoshones in the east, the Northern Paiutes in the west (all with a similar language) and the Washoe tribe in the Lake Tahoe area (using a completely different language). The mountain ranges to the east and the west provided natural boundaries from outsiders. The Sierra-Nevada Mountains to the west also provided storms in the winter that filled the rivers, but kept most of the rain in the summer due to the rain-shadow effect.

Tribal members lived together in bands that roamed the Great Basin, setting up camp in the same places year after year depending on the season. The Pyramid Lake Paiute tribe is called Kooyooe Tukadu, Cui-ui eaters, since Pyramid Lake is the only place that Cui-ui fish can be found. The Kooyooe Tukadu populated the western shore of Pyramid Lake, including the mountains and valleys behind it. During fishing season, the more rugged eastern shores and mountains were occupied with visiting bands. It is uncertain how long these people have inhabited these lands, but remains have been found in the area that would place human life here as far back as 9,200 years. Today, there are 2,600 members of the Kooyooe Tukadu.

Geography

