



## KOYOOE TUKADU: PYRAMID LAKE PAIUTE KIT



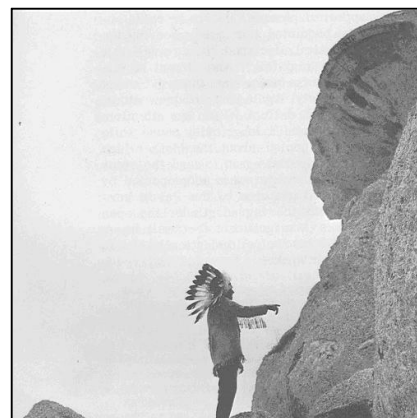
### ◆ WE ARE ALL PEOPLE OF THIS EARTH

The Murphy-Stevens-Townsend wagon train consisting of 26 men (some with families), 11 wagons, provisions, horse, and cattle from Missouri headed out west. In fall of 1844, they were the first party to prove that wagons could cross over the Sierra-Nevada Mountain Range. The first to attempt to cross these mountains in a wagon party was the Bartleson-Bidwell train. In a “March against Death” all members of the party crossed the Sierra-Nevada Mountains leaving their wagons at the base of the Pequop Mountains. Murphy-Stevens-Townsend’s’ successful expedition over the Sierra-Nevada Mountains with wagons made colonization into the west possible.

By the time the pioneers reached the Great Basin they were towards the end of their journey. They were tired and afraid. The animals were thin and tired, food was running low, and there was no water to be found in the heat of the summer. Many had to let go of their most valued, often family inherited, possessions in an attempt at making the load lighter for their dying animals. Needing a place to rest, the pioneers squatted where they were – unaware the land they were on was already being used.

Watching these strangers in their land, the Paiute Indians were careful to avoid the guns and people that belonged to these wagon trains. The natives continued with their daily life, only crossing the trains at night. The natives along the Humboldt River were the first in the area to be pushed out of their land due to this endless line of emigrants making a road right through their homes.

With the large number of settlers heading west, Native Americans faced many threats to their way of life, their land became overused, and resources were becoming depleted.



During their journey west travelers found rest in a grassy oasis in the mist of the desert above the Humboldt Sink. This meadow was a haven for the natives, but as the explorers, fur trappers, gold seekers, and emigrants came to open up the frontier trampled thought this area the grass in the meadow became stripped from the land.

For many years beaver could be found living freely and in large numbers by the Humboldt River. Due to the devastating impact of the fur trapping industry, by 1833 beaver that ran freely in this land became scarce.



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When silver was found in the Virginia Mountain Range the lives of the natives changed drastically. The miners that crossed the Great Basin Desert in 1849 headed back over the Sierra-Nevada Mountains to settle at the mines on the Comstock. Cattle grazed on the rice grass seeds that the natives harvested every August and replanted for the next season. Pine nut trees were cut for firewood to feed the furnaces in the stamp mills; timber was cut to brace the deepening mines – leaving the habitats of many important species barren. Sheep herders sent their sheep to pasture in the desert where their hooves destroyed the delicate plants that the jackrabbits ate. The river became contaminated with cyanide from the mills causing fish to die. The Paiutes that ate these fish and drank from the water got sick and in some cases died.

Some natives retreated into the unexplored backcountry, but were followed by prospectors searching for ore. Some killed cows and horses in retaliation, but more settlers came to protect the white mans property. Some protested mining camps and were given only small amounts of food. Women and children of the tribe waited for the miners to leave the mines for the day so they could retrieve their leftover lunches and cold coffee. Homes were now made with the same dome shape, but wire, boxes, boards, and sacks that were gathered from junk piles were used in replace of tule.



Above is a picture of a make shift Paiute camp near Stillwater before the turn of the century.

Agent Dodge, an agent for the Paiute Tribe, reported on January 4, 1859 that about 1,705 Paiutes were meeting around Pyramid Lake. Unaware of their customs, it created fear among the white men. When the same meeting was witnessed the next year it was considered a war council. The tribes were peaceful among each other, sharing their resources in each area and celebrating the times they could come together. After fishing and preserving the fish, there was time for visiting, dancing, games.

In May 1860, all of the Paiute bands were together at Pyramid Lake for the spawning of the Cui-ui and Lahontan Cutthroat Trout when the Pyramid Lake Wars of 1860 occurred. Although this war was a direct result of the mistreatment of some Paiute women, hostilities had been elevating for quite some time. The pioneers lived a different lifestyle than the Paiutes. The natives believed that we all belong *to* the land, moving about, living in harmony with nature and her gifts of life.



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The Pyramid Lake War forced an intervention by the government. Desperate to make the two cultures blend, the government gave the Numu permanently reserved lands. The natives were now forced to remain in one area making seasonal food sources unavailable. The economic balance of Americas' Native people was disturbed since all of the bands, other tribes, and Mother Nature were so closely knit.

In 1870, new mines were discovered in central Nevada. Stillwater became a town. The river bottoms and marshes in the Stillwater area were fenced in and wild grass was mowed for hay. 1873 Jim Richards built the first store and gave things like clothes, yard goods, combs, and soups to the natives. For the first time, women wore clothing on the top half of their bodies.

Next the settlers dug irrigation ditches, planted trees by their houses, and brought horses and cows to the desert for grazing. Hogs that were going to be sold to the miners got lose in the marshes, killing off the duck and mud hen population. Hunting for the natives became poor, makeshift communities were formed outside of towns wherever work could be found. Men dug irrigation ditches, and built fences while the women washed clothes and dishes for pay. Grandparents cared for and taught the old ways to the children.

In 1880, the Carson and Colorado Railroad was built through the Pyramid Lake Reservation. In exchange, the Paiutes were given free rides on the top of box cars. Many rode to California for jobs, sold fish or produce, and visited other tribes.

In 1890, a school that the Paiute children were persuaded to fill was built in Stewart, NV. The girls learned how to sew, cook, bake, and can food. The boys learned how to mend harnesses, shoe horses, and use hammers, saws, and nails. All of the children were taught to read, write, and count money. They were punished if they used their own language. Slowly, the children lost sight of the old way and were brought into the materialistic society of the pioneer.

Due to all of the changes taking place, the Pyramid Lake Paiute Band integrated themselves into the new culture. They began using the judicial system to dispute differences instead of initiating warfare. For example, the natives wrote to Agent Dodge's office telling of the destruction of their precious pine nut trees due to prospectors and miners traveling through the Virginia City Como regions.

Today, many of the native Paiute bands live together on reservations or in colonies, remembering the past while moving forward with the future by blending their ancient culture with the modern times.

Pioneer Impact

