



## KOYOOE TUKADU: PYRAMID LAKE PAIUTE KIT



### ◆ WE ARE ALL PEOPLE OF THIS EARTH

The Paiute Indians that roamed from Bishop, California over the Sierras into and throughout the middle of northern Nevada, southern Oregon, and Southern Idaho called themselves Numu, meaning “the people”. The language (Yadooana) of the Kooyooe Tukadu is Northern Paiute. Since all of the Northern Paiute bands came to the Pyramid Lake area to fish and trade, the language of the Kooyooe Tukadu is a mix between the Northern Paiute with a northern dialect and Northern Paiute with a southern dialect. The Washoe Tribe lives around the Lake Tahoe/ Carson City area with the Shoshones east of the Paiutes. The Numu hunted and gathered for food, moving throughout the land with the seasons. The Numu shared about 450,000 acres of land.

“Ogden observed the Indians who lived near the swamps used the tule and cattail for food. The roots were eaten fresh in the spring. The leaves were used for clothing, huts, boats, and duck decoys. The sink also contained fish and various species of waterfowl. Duck eggs added to the natives’ diet. The fat rabbits were killed in the fall and frozen to be used during the winter and early spring. Seeds gathered in season from various plants and greens were stored for food. In the spring fresh greens were supplemented.”

(Harner 31)

Utilizing natural resources, the Numu were dependant on living in harmony with nature. They traveled from place to place with the plants and animals. Different bands of Numu lived scattered, in well defined areas, throughout “Paiute Territory”. Each band was named after the food that was plentiful in their area. These bands consisted of many family groups. The mother was typically the head of the household, but not allowed around hunting tools or at the puberty hunting ritual. By heredity or a challenge, the men were in charge of things like the community antelope hunt, warfare, and scouting the site for pine nut harvesting. A challenge was done in a way that was careful not to hurt the pride of anyone, especially the elders. Often in the season, bands came together to hunt, fish, and gather. Paiute bands met in the Pyramid Lake area during spawning season, right about when the winter food stash was running low. They would fish, feast, visit with each other, and preserve food for the winter. The Pine Nut harvest was another time for bands to meet. A scout would be sent to find the best location for all of the bands to meet, gather and grind the pine nuts. The bands would visit with each other for weeks while taking care of their food needs. The pine nut was a staple food. The trees were never harmed and the underbrush was removed for firewood, help prevent large wildfires.

With a hole at the top as an outlet for fire, shelters were made out of natural materials by the women. There were also tightly woven willow fences, designed to keep the cold wind out. Old shelters were used and patched up, unless they were a site of death. These winter camps protected the natives from storms. However, if firewood ran out the camps would move to where there was a more abundant source of wood.



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Since deer was scarce, catching antelope was a community effort, and mountain sheep were difficult to catch, hides were used as bags for treasured possessions. Rabbit skins were used more commonly for clothing and blankets. The Numu wore rabbit skins that only went down to their knees. If their legs became cold they would squat down and cover them with their tunic. At nighttime, the skins were used like sleeping bags. Moccasins were only worn by a lucky few, but weren't waterproofed. Sometimes sagebrush skirts were worn. If there was deep snow, leggings made of skin and bark was also worn. The thick down feathers from the swan was used to keep the babies warm in their cradleboards. Robins and magpies were caught for their magnificent feathers as were bobcat pelts for making quivers.

The Numu had a mixed diet of meat, fish, duck, eggs, plant leaves, roots, seeds, and fruit that was enriched with dried and beaten wild sugar cane. Medicinal plants were dried for emergencies. The gum of pine pitch, root, and bark were chewed. As a community, chores were shared within each band.

The Numu lived long and happy in this desert land because they knew how to live with the land. Many early adventurers, new to this land, died because of the heat, lack of water, cold winters, or lack of food. For thousands of years, the Numu have lived in harmony with this "...land that his people have never tried to tame and where they have never attempted to dominate nature" (Herman 169).

Pre-History

