



KOYOODE TUKADU:
PYRAMID LAKE PAIUTE KIT



◆ WE ARE ALL PEOPLE OF THIS EARTH

The early Numu respect Pyramid Lake as the center of life. They never treat it casually or ignore its sacred power. The Numu that live around the lake are called Kooyooe Tukadu because the lake supplies them with plenty of Cu-ui fish.

The small round growths at the bottom of the cottonwood branches turn from green to yellow in the spring - signaling the time when the Cui-ui spawn up the Truckee River towards the Reno area. The first fish to spawn were dark gray, then later in the year light gray, some with red stripes on the sides, and the last fish of the year to spawn had large lumps near their tails. As a family, the fish were caught and dried for the winter. Without bait, the men caught the fish and the women and children clubbed the fish to death and prepared them for drying. The Lahontan Cutthroat trout went up the Truckee River towards Lake Tahoe to spawn.

In early times the Pitt River Indians challenged the Numu for the lake by fishing on the northern side. The Pitt River Indians used tightly woven, grass breastplates that stopped the flint-headed arrows. Adapting, the Paiutes switched to greasewood arrows with slender three-inch points that were a quarter-inch wide. The next to come into Numu land was John Fremont in January of 1844. The natives offered him food and showed his party how to get over the Sierras. As more settlers came into this land, threatening their way of life, the Numu became less hospitable. Tensions arose leading to the Pyramid Lake Wars. The government tried to make peace by setting up boundaries, although these borders were new and often needed assistance upholding.

Along with settlers came schools. A day school was established on September 1, 1879 and replaced with a boarding school on January 1, 1883. This boarding school took the students away from their homes, families, and culture in order to teach the children the settlers' language and culture. Many Numu ran away. Since sickness and a loss of identity was frequent at the boarding school the elders kept their run-away children safe at home.

On the reservation some families attempted to farm, some did housework, but fishing remained the main source of income. Although there was objection, the Central Pacific Railroad ran through the southern and most agricultural part of the reservation. Settlers came into Wadsworth and the natives who were forced to the outskirts of town had to work for food. Eventually, the Numu used the railroad to travel freely, selling produce and visiting other tribes. The Numu allowed the Chinese railroad workers to fish in the Winnemucca Lake, as they did in their homeland, until they began to sell this fish for profit. In 1904 the railroad business moved to the Sparks/Reno area. The many settlers moved along with it and jobs became harder to find. The land was now open for farming.

Today the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe still depend on the lake. They have created a fishery on the reservation along with Natchez Elementary School and Pyramid Lake Junior/Senior High School.