



KOYOODE TUKADU:
PYRAMID LAKE PAIUTE KIT



◆ WE ARE ALL PEOPLE OF THIS EARTH

The winter of 1859 – 1860 starved many tribes and their ponies. It was becoming very tense in the Great Basin Desert due to the hardship of the winter and all of the difficulties between settlers and Paiutes. By late April the Northern Paiutes were meeting to discuss their troubles. Having the same issues, the Bannock, Shoshone, and Pitt River Tribes also tried to find a solution.

Around the same time some Paiute girls were missing. Search parties were sent out without any luck. One day an old man went to trade at the Silver Springs Trading Post, owned by the Williams brothers. While he was leaving, he heard screaming come from their cellar. He returned to alert the rest of the band. A group of young men went to the trading post to rescue the girls. The Paiute group killed six people at the trading post, including the Williams brothers. Word got back to Virginia City that a group of Paiute Warriors had gone on a rampage. The city gathered a force of soldiers and miners. Seeking to bring justice, Major Ormsby took an army of approximately 107 volunteers to Nixon in May of 1860. On May 6, 1860, the army traveling up the east side of the river was lured into a trap six miles north of Dead Ox Canyon. Most of the force was killed, but the remainder escaped back to Virginia City.

Following the loss, U.S. Army troops gathered from Virginia City, Reno, Carson City, Sacramento, and San Francisco. In June, a force of 800 men marched to Pyramid Lake. The “Washoe Regiment” was much larger in numbers, upset they were beaten, and much harder to defeat. At Dead Ox Canyon, the Paiutes held the Washoe Regiment off as long as they could so that the women, children, and elders could retreat into the mountains. When it was safe to do so, the warriors, carrying their dead, went to the mountains as well. Men from the Washoe Regiment stayed close by at makeshift Fort Haven. In July, the men went to aid in the construction of Fort Churchill. Treaty negotiations began. The Kooyooe Tukadu Band was now restricted to the lake - if they traveled to secure food, as they had in the past, they were considered dangerous and were often relocated.

The Pyramid Lake Wars are extremely important to the Kooyooe Tukadu. Since the tribe was strong and wise enough to win the first battle and hold the army off for so long in the second, the government was forced to step in. Although for the next 13 years, disputes between the settlers and the Paiutes continued. In 1873, an executive order was signed by Ulysses S Grant officially making Pyramid Lake an Indian Reservation - consisting of Pyramid Lake and its’ boundaries. The Kooyooe Tukadu is now a federally recognized tribe with its own government. The Pyramid Lake Wars played an instrumental role in allowing the Kooyooe Tukadu to remain, together as a tribe, on their land.

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