



## Water Canyon

### Northern Paiute Indians

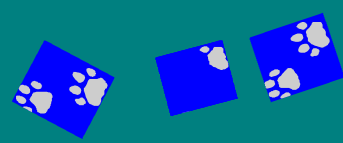
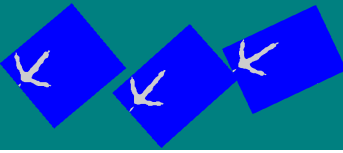
Water Canyon is within the traditional territory of the Northern Paiute Indians. Water is considered sacred by the Paiute. The word water is the beginning of their tribal name: Pah—Paiute. The water at Water Canyon may have spiritual values and was possibly used in rituals. The canyon would have also provided the Paiutes with the opportunity to obtain water, game, fish, and plants for subsistence purposes.

There are many plants found at Water Canyon that were used by the Northern Paiute Indians for medicinal purposes. For example, wild rose, called *ciabui*, was used to treat colds. Elderberry (*hubui*) roots were boiled and used as poultice for inflammations, cuts and wounds and tea from the roots was used to stop dysentery. The roots of willow (*siibi*) were ground to a fine powder and powder applied directly to sores. And the blades of Great Basin Rye (*wahabi*) were used to scrape eyelids—part of treatment for trachoma. It is believed that Water Canyon was an important place for the Northern Paiute Indians to gather medicinal herbs.



There are many animals that live within the canyon that the Northern Paiute Indians relied upon for food. Mule deer, jackrabbits, trout, and Mormon Crickets were all important food sources for the Paiutes. It is likely that they came to Water Canyon for the purpose of hunting game and catching fish.





Paiute Indians  
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## INTRODUCTION

- Various Paiute bands lived in Nevada and surrounding states; they had different districts which were separated by geographic features such as mountain range crests and hill tops.
- The different bands were named after major food sources or other dominant geographic features in the area.
- The meaning of Paiute is derived from the native's word for water; pa.

## FOOD

- The Northern Paiute were hunting/gathering bands that generally traveled seasonal rounds in small family groups.
- They survived on a variety of plant foods, insects, large and small game, and fish.
- All hunting implements were made of stone and plant products.
- The Paiute used mortars and pestles to grind seeds and make flour; digging sticks were used to dig up roots; nets, harpoons and hooks were used to catch fish; and baskets for carrying food and water and for food preparation.

## SHELTER

- The Paiute lived in temporary circular brush dwellings. The dwellings consisted of dome framework made of willow branches. They were covered with layers of tule, brush, and grass. The floors were also covered with grass.
- Women typically built the shelters.
- Families were dependent on fire wood and it was often the job of women and children to find firewood and haul it back to their shelter. Families found it more efficient to simply move to areas with abundant firewood rather than carrying the fuel long distances.

When the weather was cold and the food supply began running low, the Indians practiced a type of "hibernation." "The whole band would go to bed and eat only an occasional small meal. The old men said they lay very still so as to not use up any energy. With the moderation of the weather, a few of the strongest younger men would eat a small meal...and go forth in search of the elusive antelope or deer, or any other food they could find (Parman,14)."

## CUSTOMS

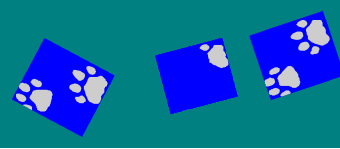
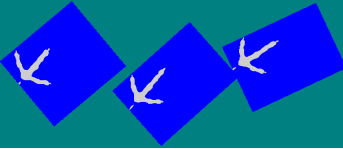
- Before harvests, rabbit drives, and fishing season the Paiute would celebrate ceremonial round dances. A typical round dance consisted of men and women dancing clockwise in a circle.
- Water was considered sacred, especially the water found in the hot springs. In addition to the water in the hot springs, the mud and plants at the hot springs were cherished for their medicinal purposes.

The Paiutes believe that everything on earth is connected and should be treated with respect.

Information obtained from:

Bunte, Pamela A. and Robert J. Franklin. The Paiute. New York. Chelsea House Publishers.1990.

Hopkins, Sarah Winnemucca. Reproduction of Life Among the Paiutes: Their Wrongs and Claims.

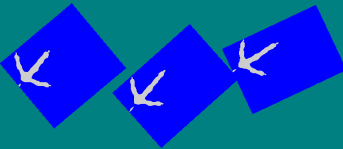


## DURING AND AFTER WHITE EMIGRATION

- Explorers and traders passing through northwest Nevada brought the first impacts to the traditional way of life of the Northern Paiute. These Europeans introduced diseases to the region long before the first emigrants, as well as certain trade items such as beads. Also, when the Europeans first arrived, they displaced tribal groups, who in turn impacted others long before whites arrived here.
- Emigrants utilized water sources, vegetation, and wildlife that were critical resources to the Northern Paiute.
- The Paiutes retreated to more secluded areas occasionally acquiring a horse or livestock for consumption purposes. As surrounding areas were developed the resources on which the Indians depended were increasingly adversely impacted making it more difficult to pursue their traditional lives.
- Some Indians supplemented their hunting/gathering lifestyle by selling fire wood, pine nuts, pelts, and baskets. Some Indians acquired horses and formed mounted bands and continued their hunting lifestyle. Some Indians supplemented their supplies by rustling livestock and raiding passing freight wagons. Later, others worked for wages at ranches and farms.
- The Lassen/Clapper murders, along with other murders, was attributed to the Paiute, which led to growing hostility and ultimately resulted in the Pyramid Lake War in 1860.
- After White contact, a need was created for permanent chiefs within the Paiute community to represent the local population as a whole in their dealings with the whites.
- “The Indians themselves used the rather apt word “boss” for persons in charge of their different activities in pre-white times. “Dance boss,” and “rabbit boss,” for example, implied merely temporary authority over a small group from which members were free to withdrawal at any time. The post white “chiefs” of peace and war factions would be better designated as “leaders,” since their authority was in no way rooted in aboriginal culture, but depended entirely on their personal ability to attract temporary followers to their own way of dealing with the whites(1).”

Information obtained from:

Steward, Julian and Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin. The Northern Paiute Indians. New York. Garland. 1974.



## Origin of the Great Basin People

Long ago in the beginning, there was a great body of water around the land of the coyote. One day as he was on one of his journeys, he saw some distant lands across the water. Since he could not swim across the water, he tricked the waterbug into carrying him on his back. Waterbug was afraid of the Coyote but the Coyote knew if he did not behave, the waterbug would dump him in the middle of the water. Coyote made it safely across the water and began his journey.

Along the way he met some people and stayed with them. While he was there he acquired a bride, the daughter of one of the leaders. The leader did not trust Coyote and knew he was always up to mischief. The leader wanted him to leave, but knew Coyote would take his daughter with him. So he told Coyote that if he would leave he would give him a great gift to take with him in exchange for his daughter. Coyote, enticed by the thought that he would be given this gift, decided he could always find another bride and agreed to the trade. When he left the leader gave him a woven willow basket with a lid and told him that he was not to open the lid until he returned to his homeland.

Coyote was a very curious person and had little patience. As he was traveling, he could hear sounds and movements within the basket. The sounds sounded like singing and drums beating. Coyote thought it would not hurt to take a small peek once he returned to the other side of the body of water. So once he touched the land, which was far from his homeland, Coyote opened the basket. Immediately, the little people who were inside the basket, jumped out and began running in all directions. Stunned, he watched them run away. He quickly shut the lid on the basket, fearing that he would lose all of them.

When he returned home, he opened the basket again, finding only three little people left in the basket. These three people stayed in this area and became the Great Basin People. The others who got away from Coyote were all the other Native American tribes that populated the North and South American continents.

Source: Native Nevada Classroom