The Five Native American Nations of Utah

PREHISTORY
Archaeological excavations and research has uncovered evidence of human presence in the Salt Lake area at least 11,000 years ago. Two major prehistoric farming cultures developed out of a common archaic culture. In the southern part of the state, the Anasazi, ("The Ancient Ones," ) adapted and flourished for over 1000 years. They abandoned the area just before 1300 AD. Another cultural group called the Fremont, lived in most of Utah. This Fremont culture ceased to exist at about the same time that the Anasazi left the area, circa 1300 AD. Evidence suggests that there was an environmental component to the abandonment, and disappearance of these Utah farming cultures.

Archaeological evidence has also identified several groups of Numic speakers (Uto-Aztec language family) that started migrating into Utah and Colorado by 1000 AD, with a definite presence by 1300 AD. The Ute, Shoshoni, Goshute, and Paiute were part of these groups. The Dine' (Navajo) believe they emerged through four worlds into their present location in the Four Corners area, between their Four Sacred Mountains. However, archaeological and linguistic evidence show that the Dine' people also migrated into the area, probably moving south from an area in Canada and arriving in their present southwestern area sometime in the latter part of the 12th century. The Dine' are a part of a larger Athabaskan-speaking people who range from Alaska and Canada through the United States to Mexico. (Source: Begay and Maryboy, Dine' College, 1999)
Hence, prior to the coming of the Mormon settlers in 1847, the Numic and Athabascan speaking cultures thrived throughout what has come to be called the State of Utah. The Utes, for which the State of Utah is named, occupied the Provo Valley area down into Sanpete County and beyond. The Shoshoni occupied the areas north of the Salt Lake Valley. While the Goshute occupied primarily the areas west of the Salt Lake Valley. The Paiute occupied the areas directly south/southwest of Utah Valley. Further south/southeast was the home of the Navajo (the Dine'). (Source: Utah Historical Society, Robert S. McPherson)

**Post Contact - Transitional Period:**
The Spanish were the first Europeans to enter Utah. Their physical presence was limited to an occasional entrada of exploration, Juan Maria Antonio Rivera (1775) and Catholic Fathers Fray Francisco Anastasio Dominequez and Fray Silvestre Velez de Escalante (1776). It was from the Spanish that the Utah Indians first acquired the horse. The Utes were some of the first American Indians to acquire the horse, possibly as early as the 1650’s. By the early 1700s, all the tribes in Utah had access to the horse, some adopting it as a means of transportation, primarily the Ute and Shoshoni, others accepting it as a source of food.

A year before the area that is now Utah switched from Mexican control to that of United States control (1848 Treaty of Guadalupe de Hidalgo), a large contingent of Mormon pioneers entered the Salt Lake Valley. Up until this time, the region had been a place through which white travelers passed, but few remained. Now, this territory, which had been shared by both the Shoshoni and Utes, came under the plow of a determined lot of people.

The state of Utah is named after the **Utes**, or Yutas, a Spanish derivative. The Utes know adversity well. Following several armed conflicts with Mormon settlers in 1861, at the request of the Mormons through the Treaty of Spanish Fork, the Utes were forced by Executive Order of President Abraham Lincoln to leave their beloved, beautiful Provo Valley and relocate in the arid, bleak Uintah Basin. In 1881, another reservation, the Uncompagre Reservation was established adjacent to the Uintah Reservation and two other bands from Colorado were removed to Utah. The Utes (Tribal membership of 3,300 members) operate their own tribal government and oversee approximately 1.3 million acres of trust land. Tribal headquarters are in Fort Duchesne, Utah. The Ute Tribe is developing its resources and pursuing its own destiny in cooperation with various government entities in the Uintah Basin,
including the state of Utah. (Source: A History of the Northern Ute People and Ute Indian Tribe, 1997)

The Dine' (or Navajo) developed a rich and complex culture centered around the area of Dinétah, in northwestern New Mexico. They moved into northeastern Arizona and southeastern Utah during the 1700s. Hostilities increased between the Dine' and the Spanish, Mexican and American colonists, as well as among neighboring tribes. Raiding and enslavement of women and children were common on all sides. The U.S. Army, under the command of Kit Carson forced the surrender of the Dine' which culminated in the infamous Long Walk from the Navajo homeland to Fort Sumner in central New Mexico in 1864. More than 8,000 Navajos were incarcerated for four years in the most deplorable conditions.

In 1868, a treaty was signed and the Dine' were allowed to return to their original homeland. The Navajo Reservation, set aside by the Treaty of 1868, has subsequently been enlarged through executive order and special legislation. Oil and gas discoveries on the Utah portion of the reservation have enriched the Navajo Nation and State of Utah. Today there are approximately 7,000 Utah Dine' living on and off the reservation. (Source: Dine' College, Maryboy and Begay, 1999)

The Goshute people exemplify the historic Great Basin desert way of life perhaps better than any other group because of the nature of their territory. They have both benefited and suffered from their desert isolation. There are two Bands of the Goshute Nation, the Skull Valley Band of Goshute (tribal membership of 127) and the Confederated Tribes of the Goshute (tribal membership of 409). The Skull Valley Band has steadily clung to its 1863 treaty relationship with the federal government and refused any form of Federal aid. This Band has headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah. The Confederated Tribes have accepted lands designated through Executive Order (approximately 112,085 acres) and organized its government under the Indian Reorganization Act. The Confederated Tribes of the Goshute operate their tribal government in Ibapah, Utah. Both tribes are pursuing all avenues available to them to grow and develop their potential. (Source: Utah Historical Society, Division of Indian Affairs Tribal Profiles, 1997)

The Paiute Bands in Southern Utah consist of five Bands: the Shivwits Band, Indian Peaks Band, Kanosh Band, Koosharem Band, and Cedar Band. Reservations were established between 1903 and 1929 for all but the Cedar Band, whom the Federal
Government overlooked. During the Termination Era of the 1950s, the Paiute were released from Federal supervision. Following years of bitter neglect and poverty, in 1980, through the efforts of Utah Senator Orrin Hatch, the Paiute were restored to Federal Recognition by the U.S. Congress. The Southern Band of Paiute now number approximately 709, and they are making great strides in economic development to return to their previous stature in Utah history. The Southern Bands have their headquarters in Cedar City, Utah. (Source: Utah Division of Indian Affairs - Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah Tribal Profile, 1997)

The Shoshoni Nation once covered a five state area, including Northwestern Utah. When they obtained horses from their cousins the Commanches, they were referred to as the dreaded Snakes, and they dominated the Plains and Southern Canada. (Source: Sacajewea Center, Abrahamson, 1999) The Northwestern Band of the Shoshoni of Utah were a part of this great nation, but in contrast to the other bands, they suffered greatly. In many ways, the Northwestern Band of Shoshoni are still recovering from the 1863 Bear River Massacre in which over 250 Shoshoni, mostly women and children, were massacred by Colonel Patrick Edward Conner and his California volunteers from Fort Douglas, Utah. This small Band of the Shoshoni Nation has only recently (1980) been recognized by the Federal Government. It owns only 187 acres (donated by the LDS. Church), and some private land held in trust by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, of its once immense land base. Of this land, 75 acres or 40% of its land base, is a cemetery. The Northwestern Band of the Shoshoni Nation are pursuing land acquisition efforts in cooperation with the state and federal government. There are approximately 383 enrolled members in Idaho and Utah. The Northwestern Band have offices in Brigham City, Utah, and Blackfoot, Idaho. (Source: Junction, January 1998 edition, and Utah Division of Indian Affairs - N.W. Band of Shoshoni Nation Tribal Profile, 1997)

In summation, by the end of the 19th century: the Utes were forced to leave their beloved Utah Valley as a result of the Spanish Fork Treaty of 1865; the Dine’ had suffered the Longest Walk and, after four long years in exile, were finally returned to their homelands; the Paiute and Goshute suffered peril from both sides; and the Shoshoni suffered one of the most brutal of all attacks in U.S. history, the Bear River Massacre, and had lost all of their homelands.

Five major tribes continue to inhabit Utah: 1) Ute; 2) Dine’; 3) Paiute; 4) Goshute; and 5) Shoshoni. All five tribes have managed
not only to survive, but to progress despite their tragic past. We encourage you to learn more about the history of the Utah American Indian Tribes. For further information, contact the Division of Indian Affairs at (801) 538-8808.