

An ethnohistory of the utah paiutes

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Dr. Ron Holt is a dignified socio-cultural anthropologist specializing in applied fieldwork and tribal politics. He currently resides in northern Utah as a professor (among many other things) at Weber State University where he educates young minds on the world of anthropology. The collection of information in this text covers every important aspect of the life of the American Indian Paiute tribe with a main emphasis on their introduction to the Anglo-Americans.

Throughout the text Dr. Holt emphasizes many occurrences regarding the co-existence of American Indians and Anglo Americans and despite a few positive outcomes, nearly every influential aspect of the whites is to be understood as a negative one. Dr. Holt vividly depicts the introduction of the white man and makes a valid point in designating who the instigator of the degradation of the Paiutes was. A main emphasis on his writing of this book is to display the truth behind the Paiute struggles and reveal what they went through as a people. Before the publishing date of this text in 1992 the life of the Paiutes had been vaguely documented.

Through personal field work, material in the LDS archives, the Smithsonian Institute and many other sources such as journals and university archives, Dr. Holt was able to obtain a topical and chronological collection of information regarding the entire known existence of the Utah Paiutes since the year they were first witnessed in 1776. In 1981 while teaching at Southern Utah College (now Southern Utah University) Dr. Holt was asked by a local Paiute tribesman to research a potential reservation plan for the Utah Paiutes, an American Indian band of that area. This being an opportunity for Dr.

Holt to produce a dissertation for his schooling he took the offer and ultimately produced a one-of-a-kind collection of American Indian knowledge. Through extensive field work and research, material was gathered and organized into data pertaining to the lives of the Paiutes. From this collection the text BENEATH THESE RED CLIFFS was produced. The beginning of the first chapter in this text introduces the reader to a specific way of life for a specific kind of people. After obtaining a feeling of understanding and curiosity about the Paiutes, the text throws the reader into an eternal downward spiral of bad news and depression.

As documented, within a very short one hundred and fifty year p, the proud native people of southern Utah were greatly reduced in numbers and transformed from successful hunter-gatherers into beggars and seasonal or part-time workers. The main cause of their depression is seriously attributed to the settlement of the Mormons in the southern Utah area. The Paiutes were a dark skinned people that had a historical religious meaning to the Mormons known as Lamanites. From this historical belief the Mormons decided the Paiutes needed to be educated and “ saved” from whatever their previous way of life was.

Although the church believed they were doing good by taking over control of the Paiutes they conveniently turned a blind eye to the side effects of assimilation and paternalism which ultimately led to the downfall of the Paiute Nation. They were forced to beg for much of what they lived on because their foraging lands were being dominated by grazing cattle and incoming settlers. To add to their list of troubles in the 1800's the Paiutes

had to deal with population declination due to NewMexicanand Ute slave trafficking.

Targeting mainly female children and women, the reproduction rate of the Paiutes was severely crippled. With ratios of nearly two-to-one for men to women, the Paiutes had limited means of procreation. Without women to gatherfoodand mate with the tribe was staring death in the face. After the catastrophic introduction to whites and slavery pre 1900s, a surviving life style for the Paiutes started to become a little more manageable. Ironically during the Great American Depression in the 1930's and 1940's the Paiutes struggled a little less because the rest of the American nation had it so hard.

Through manual labor for the Mormons and seasonal foraging for Pine Nuts and other edibles, the Paiutes survived living one day at a time, but this was to be short lived. In the 1950's the government decided to " Terminate" all American tribes deemed capable of surviving on their own. Termination was a swift process that was intended to initiate capable American Indians to the stature of a Citizen of The United States of America; the Paiutes were not prepared for the termination bill, but in 1957 it happened anyway.

The bill organized a support system for the new way of life that all terminated American Indians would have to assist them with the transformation. The structure of this ingenious plan consisted of three support organizations: The BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) withdrawal office, an educational and vocational training program held by the University of Utah and the BIA relocation program. The Paiutes were now no longer part of a tribe; they were instead " Citizens of The State," who were subject to state

laws, federal taxes and state taxes. After termination the Paiutes were desperate for a substantial income.

Their bands had inhabited over nearly 30 million acres of land in areas including four states: Arizona, California, Utah and Nevada; this was without a doubt their most valuable asset. In 1965, after a long demeaning process, the Paiutes agreed to sell 26.4 million of these acres for 27.3 cents per acre. With the sale of tribal lands the Paiutes had their substantial influx of money and were able to become a self-sustaining people again. The 1970's initiated the restoration process which turned the Paiutes back into a recognized American Indian group, but their struggle to recover from termination continues today.