



THE GOSHUTE INDIANS

The Goshute Indians are a part of the large group of Shoshonean-speaking peoples that reside in the Intermountain West. The name Goshute comes from the native word Ku'tisp or Gu'tisp, which means ashes, desert, or dry earth. The Great Basin area contains some of the most arid conditions on the continent, as well as one of the most varied regions in terms of climate, topography, flora, and fauna. These types of conditions have shaped the Goshutes into an ever resilient and resourceful people.

History and Culture

The Goshute people entered the Great Basin from the Death Valley region of California, but it is unclear when this migration happened. The Goshutes, like the Shoshones, have a clear understanding of the area's growing cycles, variations in climate, and animal distribution patterns. The hard conditions of Goshute life often led the people to find resourceful ways to sustain themselves. A good example of their resourcefulness is their ability to make use of the native plants in the area. The Goshutes used eighty-one plant species. Among these different plants, forty-seven yielded edible seeds, twelve yielded berries, eight provided roots, and twelve were used as greens. Grass seeds were gathered in a flat tray-like basket by knocking or raking the grass with beaters. Surplus seeds were saved for later use and stored near the harvest area. One of the most important foods used by the Goshute people were pine nuts. In addition to gathering plants, seeds, and insects, the Goshute men hunted game such as antelope and deer.



Goshute woman and child

The Goshutes were isolated from the initial onslaught of White colonization due in large part to the harshness of the desert region and the scarcity of material wealth in the area. Spanish and Mexican people may have entered Goshute territory before the 19th century, but it was not until 1826 that the first documented White incursion was made. It was Jedediah Smith who made the first written account of the Goshute tribe, while traveling with two companions on a return trip from California to Bear Lake. For two decades following this documentation there was little contact between the Whites and the Goshutes. Not until 1847, when Mormon pioneers entered the Great Basin and settled in the area, did continual and prolonged contact with Whites begin.

The Mormons established communities in Tooele, Grantsville, and Ibapah. With the Pony Express, transcontinental telegraph, and overland stage running through Goshute lands, the Goshute people quickly found themselves in direct competition with Whites for the Great Basin's scarce resources. The Goshutes did what they could to retain their land and traditional way of life. They responded to threats against their livelihood by attacking White stations and farms. Conflict ensued between the two, and eventually the Goshutes were subdued, first by local militias and later by the United States army. Many were killed, and the remaining Goshutes were forced to sign a treaty in 1863. The treaty did not constitute a cession of Goshute land or sovereignty; rather, it was an agreement to end all hostilities toward Whites and to allow several routes of travel to pass through Goshute



country. The federal government, in turn, agreed to pay the Goshutes \$1,000 a year for twenty years as compensation for the destruction of their game. The treaty was signed on 13 October, 1863, and was ratified in 1864 and announced by President Lincoln on 17 January, 1865.

The Goshute people adopted a farming lifestyle as they settled on farms at Deep Creek and Skull Valley. There were attempts to relocate the Goshute people to other Indian reservations; however, all attempts failed, and the United States government stopped the annuities promised in the treaty of 1863.

The following years were turbulent times for the Goshute people. The federal government continued to default on its treaty responsibilities, and more changes were made concerning the Goshutes' reservation. Two reservations were set up as permanent Goshute settlements. The larger of the two is on the Utah-Nevada border at the base of the Deep Creek Mountains, while the smaller reservation is located in Skull Valley. Today, the Goshutes reside on these two reservations and in the surrounding communities.

Government

The Goshute tribal government was organized under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. On November 25, 1940, the Confederated Tribes of Goshute Reservations adopted a constitution and by-laws to govern the reservation. Five council members were elected by the tribe to serve for three consecutive years. The tribal council then chose one of its five members to hold the position of tribal chairman. Elections are held annually.

The Tribe, under PL-638, contracted with the Bureau of Indian Affairs to administer key programs and services. On October 1, 1997, the Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation contracted with the Bureau of Indian Affairs to form their own court system. The tribe also has a Tribal Police Department, Volunteer Fire Department, and Housing Authority.

Demographics

The Goshute Tribe has an enrollment office that conducts tribal affiliation affairs. Federally recognized Indian Tribes in the United States have their own requirements for being an enrolled tribal member, which are usually based on "blood quantum." The Goshute Tribe requires a blood quantum of one-fourth for a person to be enrolled as a tribal member. There are 463 enrolled members. Presently, 80 live on the reservation.

Economy

The Goshute Business Council serves as the principal governing body of the Tribe's business and economy. Presently, the Goshute Tribe derives its income largely from ranching and from the leasing of rangelands. The Tribe has a large population of deer, elk, turkeys, antelope, mountain



Jingle Dance Performance by Goshute girl.



sheep, mountain lion, and various small game animals. These game animals also generate income for the tribe. Hunting permits are issued to outfitters for elk and other wild game hunting. In addition to hunting and leasing rangeland, the Goshutes have springs suitable for fish hatcheries. The Goshutes raise both Bonneville and Lahonton cutthroat trout for planting in lakes and reservoirs throughout the Intermountain West to meet recreational fishing needs.

The Tribe is presently seeking new economic development projects, such as cultivating a 34,410-acre plot within the reservation.

Current Livelihood

Many Goshute people participate in the services of the Native American Church; others attend the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. They enjoy visiting different reservations to participate in handgames and other activities. Some of the people do beadwork and make willow and winnowing baskets and cradleboards. Some artisans scrape and tan deerskin to make buckskin gloves and other items.



Goshute Basket and Cradle

The Tribe has an annual powwow and handgame tournament during the first weekend in August. The Goshute people are working to keep their culture alive and active.



A panoramic photograph of the Goshute Reservation at the base of Deep Creek Mountains