

THE PAIUTES

FEMALE LEADERS THROUGHOUT PAIUTE HISTORY

TEACHER BACKGROUND

This lesson examines the experiences of women leaders in Paiute culture. The activity begins with Sarah Winnemucca, the daughter of a chief who lived in the second half of the nineteenth century. She became a leader and fought for Native American rights through peaceful negotiations with the United States. She was also the first American Indian woman to write and secure copyright to an autobiography, *Life Among the Piute: Their Wrongs and Claims*. At a time when neither women nor Native Americans were regarded as political equals with white men, Sarah Winnemucca stood her ground, becoming a forerunner of later leaders who fought for the rights of women and American Indians.

The lesson draws connections to present-day women leaders of the Paiute Tribe of Utah, such as former chairwomen Lora Tom and Geneal Anderson, current chair woman Jeanine Borchart, and cultural leaders Eleanor Toms, Karman Grayman, and Shanana Martineau.

OBJECTIVE

The student will understand the life of Sarah Winnemucca and be able to draw connections between Winnemucca's beliefs and accomplishments and the beliefs and impact of contemporary Southern Paiute women leaders.

TEACHER MATERIALS

At a Glance: Southern Paiute Women as Leaders

We Shall Remain: The Paiute (chapters 6, 10:55–11:44; 7, 13:35–15:21; 11, 24:12–24:54)

STUDENT MATERIALS

Sarah Winnemucca, American Indian Leader

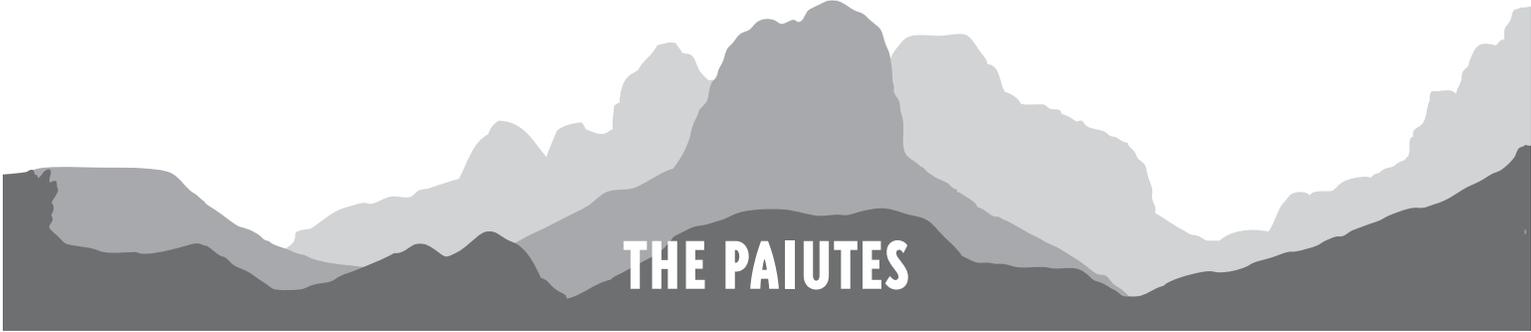
TIME FRAME

Three thirty-minute periods

PROCEDURE

Have students brainstorm a list of women in politics or positions of power in society. Discuss their answers as a class. Ask the students if they would have had an easier time identifying men in politics or positions of power in society. Discuss the reasons that they think this is the case. Ask whether students believe a person's gender influences the type of leader they are. If so, is this true for women and men? Ask the students if they think their list of women leaders would have been easier or more difficult to fill in if they were talking about the "Old West." Ask students to volunteer any examples of women leaders from the "Old West." Review any answers you get, or discuss why there are not a lot of examples of nineteenth-century female leaders that they have learned about.

Pass out the "Sarah Winnemucca, American Indian Leader" student sheets. Have students make two lists as they read, one listing the challenges that Sarah Winnemucca had to overcome and one detailing the things she was able to accomplish. (This can be classwork or a homework assignment.)



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PROCEDURE (CONT.)

Show the students *We Shall Remain: The Paiute* (you may choose to have the students watch the full documentary or just the clips listed above). As they watch the film or clips, have the students take notes on leadership. What types of leaders are portrayed in the film? Cultural? Political? Are there women in these leadership roles? Who are they and how do they lead? What issues do they focus on? What role does their gender play in their leadership?

Using their Sarah Winnemucca lists and their film notes, have the students write an essay or make a chart or Venn diagram comparing the modern examples of Paiute leadership with the example set by Sarah Winnemucca.

ASSESSMENT / PRODUCTS

Sarah Winnemucca lists
Film notes on leadership
Comparative project of your choice

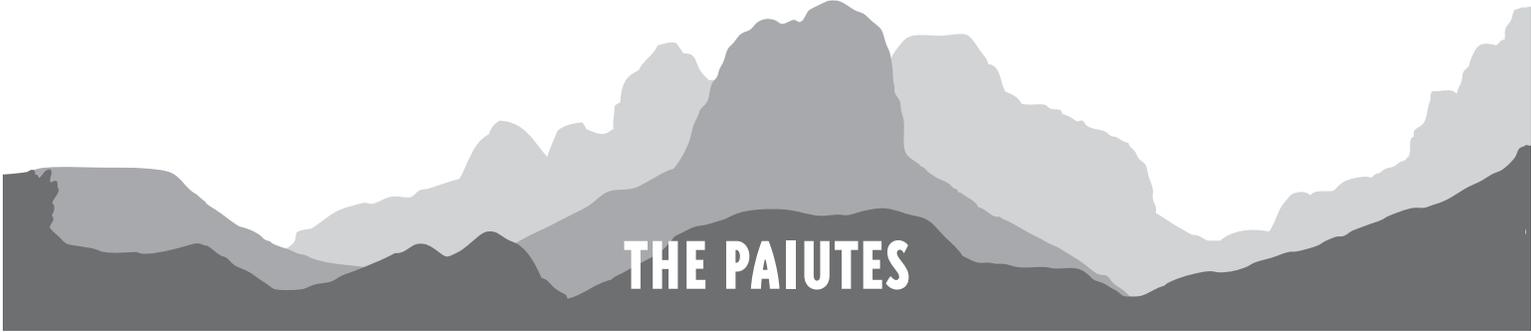
VARIATIONS / EXTENSIONS

Show students additional clips from *We Shall Remain: The Paiute* available online at www.kued.org. Some suggestions include:

Eleanor Tom making a cradle board,
<http://www.kued.org/productions/weshallremain/paiute/culture>
Eleanor Tom telling the Paiute creation story,
<http://www.kued.org/productions/weshallremain/paiute/language>
Alexis Ortega speaking on being a young Paiute woman,
<http://www.kued.org/productions/weshallremain/paiute/culture>

Have students write a take-home essay about one of the leaders in the film. Some possible essay questions include: “What does Lora Tom see as the Paiutes’ recent successes and what does she see as some of the difficulties in Paiute tribal life?” or “How does Shanan Martineau view the importance of raising children with Paiute cultural knowledge? How does she believe they benefit from being Paiutes?”

Students can explore the Utah American Indian Digital Archive at www.UtahIndians.org for further information about the Southern Paiutes.



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ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

Hopkins, Sarah Winnemucca. *Life Among the Piute: Their Wrongs and Claims*. Ed. Mary Tyler Peabody Mann. Boston: Cupples, Upham; New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1883.

Martineau, Shanana. Interview. Sept. 26, 2008. *We Shall Remain*, KUED Public Television.
<http://www.kued.org/productions/weshallremain/pdfs/ShananaMartineau.pdf>.

"Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah: Tribal Government." <http://www.utahpaiutes.org/about/government/>.

Tom, Gary, and Ronald Holt. "The Paiute Tribe of Utah." In *A History of Utah's American Indians*. Ed. Forrest Cuch. Salt Lake City: Utah Division of Indian Affairs and Utah State Division of History, 2000.

Tom, Eleanor. Interview with Forrest Cuch. Mar. 7, 2008. *We Shall Remain*, KUED Public Television.
<http://www.kued.org/weshallremain/pdfs/EleanorTom.pdf>

Tom, Lora. Interview with Forrest Cuch. Mar. 6, 2008. *We Shall Remain*, KUED Public Television.
<http://www.kued.org/productions/weshallremain/pdfs/LoraTom.pdf>.

Utah State Office of Education, "Lora E. Tom."
<http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/indianed/teacher/lessons/Leaders/LoraTom.htm>.

Zanjani, Sally. *Sarah Winnemucca*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001.

STANDARDS ADDRESSED

State Standards

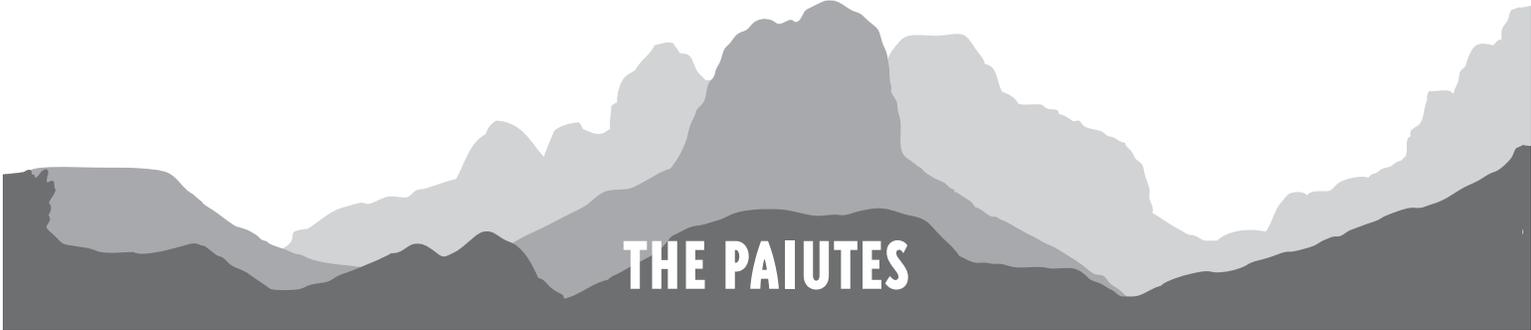
Seventh Grade Social Studies – Utah Studies: 2/1/d; 3/3/c; 5/2/ac

Accreditation Competencies

Social and Civic Responsibility/Demonstrates an appreciation of diversity and interdependence of all people/Understands the history, people, and traditions that have shaped local communities, nations, and the world

NCSS Standards

Middle Grades: 1/a; 3/i; 5/a&g; 6/a



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AT A GLANCE: SOUTHERN PAIUTE WOMEN AS LEADERS

The Paiute people have a strong tradition of female leadership, personified most famously by Sarah Winnemucca. In the second half of nineteenth century, at a time when politics was generally dominated by men, Sarah Winnemucca served as a political and cultural leader of the Northern Paiutes. The daughter of Chief Winnemucca, a leader of Paiutes who lived around Pyramid Lake, Nevada, Winnemucca worked for peace between the Northern Paiutes and American settlers.

Although the Northern and Southern Paiute are distinct tribes, contemporary Southern Paiute leaders have taken inspiration from Sarah Winnemucca's example. Winnemucca paved the way for Indian women leaders, and *We Shall Remain: The Paiute* offers several examples of Southern Paiute women with important leadership roles. Today, Paiute women are working in the official political life of the tribe and seeking to preserve and teach important Paiute cultural practices.

Lora Tom, current vice-chairwoman of the Paiute Tribe of Utah, serves as an example of female political leadership and cites Winnemucca as one of her influences. Tom attended the Intermountain Indian School in Brigham City, Utah, where she served as vice president of her senior class, developing leadership skills that she would use later in life. Following in the footsteps of previous tribal chairwomen, such as her aunt Geneal Anderson, Tom understands the importance of young people learning about their culture and history so that they will be able to carry on the traditions of the tribe. She has worked especially hard to keep the Paiute language alive, as she explains in her interview for *We Shall Remain*: "Language is certainly one focus in which the tribal council has looked at over several years. We've looked at, as far as traditions are concerned, the way that young men, young women are brought up in the tribe learning the different stories, learning the different types of ways that you endure in life . . . and [interruption] what was told from your elders." Language and tradition

will remain a focus for the tribe under the leadership of the new tribal chairwoman, Jeanine Borchart.

Other Paiute women in the film do not necessarily exercise political power in the same way that Tom does, but they are cultural leaders who work for the preservation of Paiute traditions and practices. Eleanor Tom and Karman Grayman, for example, have worked to preserve Paiute dignity by contradicting long-held beliefs about the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Shannon Martineau seeks to inspire children to become active in Paiute culture. For Martineau, traditional songs and dances are especially important, and in her interview for *We Shall Remain*, she argues that practicing songs and dances again would help strengthen the Paiute people:

My sister and I have sooooo many ideas on how to bring back the bear dance circle dance and all these . . . quail dance. I want to make mountain sheep horn dress for my son so he can do that for shows and there's quail dancing and coyote dancing and there's just all a big variety and my dad preserved all that he knew about the dances so we have pretty much enough information to bring it back, and I have old recordings that he'd done back in the '60s of all these old people that have passed away now that had sung songs, quail dance songs and mountain sheep horn songs that I have on recordings, so we can relearn it and bring it back.

Similarly, Eleanor Tom recognizes the importance of relating traditional stories to younger generations because she herself finds strength from her knowledge of Paiute culture. She explains, "Well, I'm going to say that I am proud being a Paiute woman because I was taught the traditional ways."

The Southern Paiute leaders who are working to make a difference in tribal life are following in the footsteps of Sarah Winnemucca. The study of the ingenuity of Paiute women leaders through time elucidates how tribal culture is maintained and strengthened.

SARAH WINNEMUCCA, AMERICAN INDIAN LEADER

Sarah Winnemucca



There are two branches of the Paiute people: the Southern Paiutes in Utah, Arizona, and Nevada and the Northern Paiutes in Nevada, California, and Oregon. Though these two groups have different governmental structures, the members of these various tribes share a similar language and culture. Sarah Winnemucca was a Northern Paiute leader, teacher, and writer in the second half of the nineteenth century. She faced trials and tribulations that brought her a degree of controversy. Ultimately, though, she was a remarkable person. We should remember her as a leader who argued for the rights of her people and Native Americans more generally.

Winnemucca was born in what is now western Nevada. She was daughter of Chief Winnemucca, an important American Indian leader at the time of white settlement. When she was a young child, her grandfather sent her to be educated, first in Mormon Station, Nevada, and then San Jose, California. She learned to read and write in English. She also spoke three Indian dialects and Spanish. As an adult, she used these skills to enter a conversation with the United States government to bring peace between the Northern Paiutes and Americans who were settling on Paiute lands.

During the Bannock War of 1878, Winnemucca acted as a translator between the United States and the Paiutes. Since she was fluent in Paiute and English, she tried to have her father and fellow Paiutes freed from United States custo-



Shanan Martineau

dy. While trying to free the prisoners, she helped the U.S. military scout Bannock Indian territory. Although her intent was to seek peace, her work as a translator is controversial because she aided the U.S. military.

Later in life, Winnemucca wrote an autobiographical account titled *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims*, the first copyrighted book by an American Indian woman writer. *Life Among the Paiutes* explained the Paiute community's historic struggle with the United States as non-Indians expanded into what is now Utah, Nevada, Oregon, and California. This book brought Sarah Winnemucca and the Paiutes a degree of national attention. Later, she toured throughout the United States lecturing on the rights of Native American people. Then she returned to Nevada to build a school where Paiute children could learn their culture and language.

Sarah Winnemucca's lifetime commitment to American Indian sovereignty and to the Northern Paiute way of life is a shining example of political activism and leadership. Her struggle is even more amazing because she lived in the nineteenth century, when American culture dictated that women should not assume leadership positions. She serves as an example of Native American leadership and as a pioneer for women as political leaders in America. Today, Southern Paiute women like Lora Tom, Karman Grayman, and Shannon Martineau are following in Sarah Winnemucca's footsteps and working for the betterment of their people.

Lora Tom

