



# THE GOSHUTES

## GOSHUTE ADAPTABILITY IN A DELICATE HOMELAND AND THE IMPACT OF WHITE ENCROACHMENT

### TEACHER BACKGROUND

Prior to contact with Europeans, the Goshutes showed remarkable ingenuity in their ability to live in the harsh environment of the desert and mountains south and west of the Great Salt Lake. In their attempts to survive and maintain their traditional homeland after whites started moving into Utah, they displayed that same adaptability. However, while prior to the arrival of whites, they constructed a complex culture rooted in deep ethnobotanical knowledge of their homeland, white incursions placed the Goshutes on the brink of extinction. To persevere, they relied on both their ties to their land, some of which they still occupy, and their culture.

### OBJECTIVE

The student will be able to relate the ingenuity and adaptability of the Goshutes to the environmental conditions and historical events that characterized the Goshute experience in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

### TEACHER MATERIALS

*At a Glance: Goshute Ingenuity in a Challenging Desert Ecosystem*

Goshute Interactive Map (available online at [www.UtahIndians.org](http://www.UtahIndians.org))

*We Shall Remain: The Goshute* (chapter 2, 0:23–4:25; chapter 3, 4:25–6:15; chapter 4, 14:42–17:00; and chapter 5, 22:00–24:00)

### STUDENT MATERIALS

Jedediah Smith Travels through the Goshute Homeland in 1827  
Goshute Elder Maude Moon Talks about Goshute Plant Use  
Scientist Ralph Chamberlin Writes about Goshute Ethnobotany  
Goshute Worksheet

### TIME FRAME

Forty minutes

### PROCEDURE

Describe the objective of this lesson to the students; then either distribute copies and have students read or read aloud the excerpt from *The Travels of Jedediah Smith*. Show students where Smith was. Ask students what sort of environment Smith encountered. Remind them that the very same desert is a place of extremes in the winter as well as in the summer.



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## PROCEDURE (CONT.)

Brainstorm on the following questions. What would people need to survive, and what would they value if they lived in such a place? What would they eat and drink—and where would they get it from? Where would they want to live? Do seasons make a difference? What about mobility? Would they need to move around for food and water? If so, how would they move their homes? What skills and personal characteristics would they need to live in such a place, and how would they learn these skills?

Maude Moon, a Goshute elder, and Dr. Ralph V. Chamberlin, a renowned ethnobotanist, answer some of these questions for us. Distribute the excerpt of Moon’s oral history to half the class and Chamberlain’s *The Ethno-Botany of the Gosiute Indians of Utah* to the other half of the class. Have these two groups prepare a mini-report on their source based on the question: what do Moon and Chamberlain tell us about how the Goshute survived?

*We Shall Remain: The Goshute* provides even more answers to the question of what traits characterized the Goshutes. Show clips from chapter 2, 0:23–4:25; chapter 3, 4:25–6:15; and chapter 4, 14:42–17:00. Ask students what traits characterize the Goshutes. (Teachers: a good summary of these traits is found at the end of the film, chapter 5, 22:00–24:00.) Then ask them what they think would happen if the delicate balance of Goshute life was disrupted. Could ingenuity and adaptability carry the day even in such a challenging environment?

The answer is YES and NO. Either use the Goshute Interactive Map or lecture from the *At a Glance* to tell the story of the arrival of whites in the Goshute homeland and how the Goshutes attempted to adapt. Ultimately, they did survive, but their cherished way of life, with its seasonal movement and use of all parts of the land, did not.

Have students complete the Goshute worksheet.

## ASSESSMENT/PRODUCTS

Goshute Worksheet

## VARIATIONS/EXTENSIONS

Teach this lesson plan using the Goshute Interactive Map that corresponds with this material and is available on [www.UtahIndians.org](http://www.UtahIndians.org).

Have students look up articles about the fish, water, and nuclear waste issues facing the Goshutes over the last three decades and give a presentation on how these issues tie to the story of Goshute ingenuity, adaptability, and love for their land.

Extend the lesson to two class periods and show the entire Goshute documentary, asking students to concentrate on Goshute values.



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## ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

Allen, James B., and Ted J. Warner. "The Gosiute Indians in Pioneer Utah." *Utah Historical Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (1972): 162-77.

Defa, Dennis R. "The Goshute Indians of Utah." In *A History of Utah's American Indians*. Ed. Forrest S. Cuch. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2000.

Lewis, David Rich. "Skull Valley Goshutes and the Politics of Nuclear Waste." In *Native Americans and the Environment: Perspectives on the Ecological Indian*. Ed. Michael Harkin and David Rich Lewis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007.

Madsen, Brigham D. *Glory Hunter: A Biography of Patrick Edward Conner*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990.

Malouf, Carlin. *The Goshute Indians: The Indian Claims Commission Reports*. 1951. Reprint, New York: Garland Publishing, 1974.

Simpson, James H. *Report of Explorations across the Great Basin in 1859*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1983.

## STANDARDS ADDRESSED

### State Standards

Seventh Grade Social Studies – Utah Studies: 1/1/c; 1/2/c; 1/3/a,c&d; 2/1/a&b

### Accreditation Competencies

Social and Civic Responsibility/Demonstrates social and environmental responsibility/Analyzes diverse viewpoints of social and civic issues in local, regional, and global events

### NCSS Standards

Middle Grades: 1/a,b&d; 2/c; 3/h,i&j; 6/b&h



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### **AT A GLANCE: GOSHUTE INGENUITY IN A CHALLENGING DESERT ECOSYSTEM**

One of the hallmarks of Goshute history is the tribe’s adaptability to the natural world and, more recently, to the difficulties presented by encounters with other peoples, particularly white colonists. Kuttuhsippeh, the name Goshutes use for themselves, means “people of the dry earth.” For centuries prior to white incursion, Kuttuhsippeh lived in a delicate balance with nature on the high arid desert and mountain lands south and west of what we now call the Great Salt Lake. The entire Great Basin, of which the Goshute homelands are only one part, has less abundant plant and animal life than other areas that were home to indigenous peoples. However, as Dennis R. Defa notes, due to a combination of extremely hot temperatures in summer and extreme cold in winter, poor soil composition for plant life, and a lack of water, the Goshute area of the Great Basin “is among the most forbidding in North America and offered the resident Indians few resources needed for survival.” Goshute creation stories place them in this, the most challenging environment faced by any of Utah’s native nations, from time immemorial. Goshutes relied on ingenuity and on a remarkable knowledge of the natural world, passed on from generation to generation, to survive in a place that others found inhospitable.

The Goshutes dealt with their homeland’s temperature extremes and minimal vegetation by moving around the region to make the greatest use of its resources; as historian David Rich Lewis notes, they were “flexible by necessity given the dispersion and variability of resources from season to season and year to year.” In spring,

summer, and fall, the Goshutes grouped together as extended families rather than as a single tribe. These families moved through valleys and canyons in response to the availability of water sources and to the growth patterns of the plants they gathered and ate. Their diet encompassed forty-seven different species of grass seed, eight different types of roots, twelve types of greens, and twelve different berry types. Perhaps the most important of these was the pinyon—or pine—nut. To supplement this plant-centered diet, Goshutes collected insects and insect larvae. The Goshutes also hunted animals for food, again according to a seasonal pattern, and relied on a deep reservoir of knowledge about desert wildlife passed on from generation to generation. Extended family groups hunted small mammals, birds, and reptiles. Most summers and falls, multiple extended families gathered for larger hunts, which focused on pronghorn antelope and, especially, jackrabbits. In the winter, Goshutes moved to more established camps in lower parts of valleys, including the Skull, Rush, Tooele, and Deep Creek. These sites held pre-positioned food caches and provided access to water throughout the winter. Although Goshute people moved around a great deal, these valleys were places of particular cultural, spiritual, and material importance. In spring, when stored food began to run short, the Goshutes would once again begin to move through the homeland in which they lived in such a balanced and symbiotic manner.

Because only the Goshutes seemed willing and able to adapt to this harsh landscape, they lived



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independently for a long time, although they did experience some encounters with other Indian groups and with Spanish colonial forces. Indeed, subsequent to the creation of a southwest Indian trade network and the establishment of the Old Spanish Trail, some Goshutes were captured as slaves by Ute and Mexican raiders. This devastating experience, Defa contended, encouraged the tribe to “avoi[d] contact with outside people whenever possible,” marking another Goshute adaptation to difficult circumstances. Still, while outsiders increasingly entered the Goshute homelands, until 1849 the region remained too challenging for non-Goshutes to attempt to settle.

At that point, however, white people began to arrive in and settle portions of the Goshute lands, generating a significant disruption of tribal ways. In 1849 the establishment of a United States Corps of Topographic Engineers facility in the Tooele Valley and of a nearby timber mill by Mormon Apostle Ezra T. Benson and other Latter-day Saints signaled a decisive change in the disruption of Goshute ways by outsiders. Between 1849 and 1860, Mormons occupied the prime lands in Skull, Rush, Cedar, and Deep Creek valleys. They took control of vital Goshute water resources, farmed in a way that harmed native vegetation and the soil, and overgrazed and overhunted the delicate ecosystem. Thousands of California gold rush participants also helped themselves to the limited resources available on Goshute land. Brigham Madsen concluded that “the herds of draft animals and cattle of the emigrant trains and the efficient farming operations of the Mormon farmers in Utah destroyed the grass seeds and roots the Shoshoni [and the Goshute] had counted on for survival.” The Pony

Express, along with twenty Overland Mail stations, drove the Goshutes from many of their remaining critical resource sites. By the end of the 1850s, whites in the area outnumbered Goshutes.

Driven by the interlocking motivation to stay on their homelands and to sustain themselves, the typically non-confrontational Goshutes responded to white encroachment by adopting the tactics of other indigenous groups under duress. As BYU professors James B. Allen and Ted J. Warner argued, “When food was scarce it seemed only reasonable to take the white man’s cattle or to raid mail stations and establishments where provisions could be found.” Such maneuvers opened up all Goshutes to harsh retribution: in one of the most horrific examples, Captain Samuel P. Smith and his detachment of California Volunteers exterminated fifty-three Goshutes in May 1863 as punishment for suspected raids on the overland route by other Goshute tribe members.

Not all whites supported such attitudes toward the Goshutes, and, once again showing adaptability, some Goshute people sought out alliances with white people who wanted to address the tribe’s loss of resources, including government agents and Mormon settlers who proposed western-style farming as a way to provide the Goshutes a livelihood and stop their raiding. With the support of federal agents, some Goshutes began raising crops on what would come to be known as Deep Creek Farm. But other Goshutes rejected farming as incongruent with Goshute values or ways of life; in compelling the Goshutes to stay in one location and accept white



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assistance, farming undercut traditions of mobility and familial independence.

Goshute members who did attempt to farm encountered difficulties. Within a few years, the government-sponsored farming experiment failed due to a lack of federal support and because as one local white official reminded the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1862, “much of the tillable portion of the desert-like country had been occupied by whites.” In 1863, in another effort to survive the invasion of their homeland, the Goshutes signed a treaty with the U.S. government that affirmed the tribe’s sovereign land rights. By 1870 a number of Goshutes had resumed farming operations at both Deep Creek and Skull Valley. Yet even with this success, the support of the new local Indian superintendent, and the 1863 treaty, the Goshutes found that white settlers were still encroaching on the few decent pieces of farmland remaining in tribal control.

The next decade saw the Goshutes fighting on another front. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs failed to appreciate the tribe’s effort to adapt to white ways and called for the removal of the Goshutes to the reservation the government was establishing in the Uintah Valley, over two hundred miles east of the Goshute homeland. Of all Utah’s tribal nations, the Goshutes appeared most resistant to displacement. William Lee, a Mormon farmer who served as both translator and frequent advocate for the Goshutes, reported that “They are willing to do anything on their own land, the land of their fathers . . . they are not willing to go to the land of the stranger.” That reasoning did not convince government representatives, who in 1872 and 1873 recommended moving the Goshutes to the

Uintah Reservation, Fort Hall, Idaho, or Indian Territory in Oklahoma. These efforts prompted yet another adaptive strategy on the part of the Goshutes. Skull Valley leaders attempted to shape federal policy by seeking the support of officials with leverage in Washington; in the end, they successfully avoided a variety of relocation efforts.

Through ingenuity and an unswerving dedication to the place they called home, the Goshutes made it into the twentieth century still in control of some of their homeland. However, their adaptive skills could not overcome all the challenges brought by the presence of so many outsiders. The Goshutes were unable to sustain their traditional mobile way of life, and, reflecting a trend initiated with the arrival of white settlers, the Goshute population continued to dwindle. But remaining tribal members kept fighting for their own and their tribe’s survival. Around World War I, the federal government finally reacted to persistent Goshute efforts by creating reservations at Skull Valley and Deep Creek, and the Goshutes subsequently negotiated with the government to increase these land holdings.

Goshute adaptability still is evident today. At the end of the twentieth century, the Skull Valley Goshutes asserted their sovereignty in a unique and ingenious way in order to persist as a people. To learn more about the Goshutes’ twentieth-century land right and sovereignty issues, see the “Skull Valley Goshute and the Nuclear Waste Storage Controversy” lesson plan and *We Shall Remain: The Goshute*.

More about Goshute land issues!

## JEDEDIAH SMITH TRAVELS THROUGH THE GOSHUTE HOMELAND IN 1827

*June 24th N E 40 Miles.*

*I started verry early in hopes of soon finding water. But ascending a high point of a hill I could discover nothing but sandy plains or dry Rocky hills with exception of a snowy mountain off the N E at the distance of 50 or 60 miles. When I came down I durst not tell my men of the desolate prospect ahead, but framed my story so as to discourage them as little as possible. I told them I saw something black at a distance, near which no doubt we would find water.*

*While I had been up on the hill one of the horses gave out and had been left a short distance behind. I sent the men back to take the best of his flesh, for our supply was again nearly exhausted, whilst I would push forward in search of water.*

*I went on a shorter distance and waited until they came up. They were much discouraged with the gloomy prospect, but I said all I could to enliven their hopes and told them in all probability we would soon find water. But the view ahead was almost hopeless.*

*With our best exertion we pushed forward, walking as we had been for a long time, over the soft sand. That kind of traveling is very tiresome to men in good health who can eat when and what they choose, and drink as often as the desire, and to us, worn down with hunger and fatigue and burning with thirst increased by the blazing sands, it was almost insurportable.*

*At about 4 O Clock we were obliged to stop on the side of a sand hill under the shade of a small Cedar. We dug holes in the sand and laid down in them for the purpose of cooling our heated bodies. When morning came it saw us in the same unhappy situation, pursuing our journey over the desolate waste, now gleming in the sun and more insuportably tormenting than it had been during the night. [About] at 10 O Clock Robert Evans laid down in the plain under the shade of a small cedar, being able to proceed no further. [We could do no good by remaining to die with him and we were not able to help him along, but we left him with feelings only known to those who have been in the same situation and with the hope that we might get relief and return in time to save his life.]*

Maurice S. Sullivan, *The Travels of Jedediah Smith* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992, 19–23) .

## GOSHUTE ELDER MAUDE MOON TALKS ABOUT GOSHUTE PLANT USE



*Goshute Woman*

***Goshute elder Maude Moon discusses traditional use of plants by her people. Moon's comments were translated into English from her native Goshute language.***

I will share a story with [you]. This plant which is used by us when we have stomach ailments, pain. Wherever we have pain, this medicine is used as a poultice and it is rubbed on the skin. This poultice can be used anywhere on the body where there is pain. . .

There is another plant that is known as the h)aaazii'... it is gathered in the fall and the seeds are consumed by the people. When my paternal grandmother gathered this plant, it looked very good. . . The people would eat the seeds of the h)aaazii', like this in the fall. My paternal grandmother would do that to it. She would also gather eapa\_\_i\_\_ in the fall and she would prepare only the seeds of this plant. She would put water into a bowl, place some of the seeds, then grind it, like this. Once the seeds have been grinded, then it looks very good.

There is another plant that we know as waada... but that plant does not grow around here. The waada grows up towards the north, a place known as Bee Canyon. I have seen it growing up there. That plant is very dark, but when it becomes ripe in the fall, it becomes much darker. . . The people harvest that plant, prepare and eat only the seeds.

There is another plant that we call izha'an namba\_\_i\_\_, but this plant is used for medicine and not taken by mouth for consumption. The people do not eat any part of that particular plant. Izha'an namba\_\_i\_\_ is a one of the best medicines that we have. This medicine is used to cure those who are extremely ill. I have never seen anyone drink this medicine. I have seen people with extreme pain, smash this medicine, make it into a poultice and place it on their skin, where they are having pain. I have also seen people clear their throats by poking, along with this medicine.

There is another plant, the watercress, that is another medicine used by the people, I almost forgot to

mention this medicine. This plant has a covering around the... the covering around the plant's root... The root of this plant is the seed and it is hidden by a covering around the root, which looks somewhat like a lampshade, that is where one can find the seed.

This plant grows apart from other plants, it grows along here. That is what I remember from my observations of the preparation of this particular plant. In preparation of this particular plant, my paternal grandmother would break off a piece of the plant and throw it away. My paternal grandmother would tell me that when the plant is stored along with that part of the plant still attached, after it is dried, will change the taste, making it taste bad. But, when one breaks off that particular part of the plant and throws it away, store it, then the taste is very good. . . .

There is another plant that grows along a ravine known as dutsi'ape, its stem is also used by the people and it is very good. The stem of the dutsi'a is very sweet. The dutsi' tastes somewhat like that of the sagebrush. I remember when we would go to the other side of cedar mountain to gather, prepare and eat sagebrush stem. We would go there and gather these plants. As young child, I would go there and gather the plants, sometimes I would roast them and boil them, this is my experience with that plant. I did not realize how important this plant was to my paternal grandmother. Some of the women would travel on horseback to gather the dutsi'a stem and return with a lot. The women would come home with the stem of the dutsi', prepare them and boil them.

I have observed the ways of the old people, with my own eyes. I have experienced collecting the bark from the sagebrush, south of here, walking among the sagebrush. A small sagebrush was another plant that had a good taste... it was delicious. I have also observed how the people used the small sagebrush plant. We would go to the other side of waade'i and collect the small sagebrush and eat the stem. We would roast them and boil them and sometimes we would eat them raw. That is what we used to do when we were children.

We would also collect the (siigoo') and eat them. The sego lily grows where the sagebrush plants have burned, that is where these plants grow. The sego lily plants grow to be larger than normal. We would take our maternal grandmother's and our mother's digging stick and go to that place and dig for the sego lily roots and eat them. We would gather what we had dug up, bring them home and spread them out to dry. (We would do the same with the other plants that we went out and gathered.) We had abundant knowledge of all the traditional foods and medicine.

Maude Moon interview, tape 22, section 3, Wick R. Miller Collection, Center for American Indian Languages, University of Utah.

## SCIENTIST RALPH CHAMBERLIN WRITES ABOUT GOSHUTE ETHNOBOTANY



*Goshutes Growing Alfalfa*

### *VEGETAL PRODUCTS USED AS FOOD*

It was, however, on the products of the plant kingdom, as available in the flora in some features touched above, that the Gosiute placed their chief dependence for food, a fact that in trapper and pioneer days led to their being included under the omnibus and odious designation of “Diggers,” or “Root Diggers.” Living close to nature and impelled by strict necessity, they knew the plants of their region with a thoroughness truly surprising. From root to fruit they knew the plants in form and color, texture and taste, and according to season and habitat. Whatever portion of a plant could serve in any degree for food they had found out; and what would poison or injure they knew to avoid. From plants, too, they obtained most of their medicines, which were many, as well as the materials for making most of their household and other utensils. The education of the Gosiute children in a knowledge of these and other matters important to them in their original state was formerly given with much care by the grandparents; but since the change in mode of life consequent on the coming of the white race, this education, or drill, is much neglected. As a result the knowledge concerning plants and their properties possessed by the younger generations is very inferior to that of the older men and women now fast passing away.

The Gosiute ate the leaves and stems of many plants as “greens” after boiling them in water according to the usual custom. Some members of the Curciferæ and Compositæ containing acrid or otherwise distasteful oil or other principles were sometimes taken through a preliminary course of repeated washings to remove the objectionable taste so far as possible, after which they were cooked and eaten as usual. The leaves and petioles of the arrow-root (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*), termed ku’-si-a-kěn-dzīp, furnished one of the most used and dependable foods of this type. This is an abundant and conspicuous member of the early season flora throughout the region. The hastate leaves of this plant, mostly radical and forming a tuft, are eight or nine inches long with the still longer petioles and the flowers are large yellow heads like those of the sunflower. *Cymopterus longipes* (an-dzūp’) is an umbellale, widely distributed and abundant like the preceding form. It is an early spring plant with more or less tufted leaves of pinnately decompound form, and with umbels of yellow flowers. The leaves

of this plant in season furnished a standard and favorite dish. The leaves of the closely related *Cymopterus montanus* were not eaten, but the caudex and basal portions of petioles occasionally were. . .

Of the plants that furnished food to the Gosiute in the form of roots, root-stocks, tubers, and bulbs, none is popularly so well known as the beautiful *Calochortus nuttallii* - si'go to the Indians and hence "sego" the common name among the white residents of Utah. It is the State flower. The bulbs of this lily were formerly gathered and used for food. Not only were they eaten in season, but they were preserved in quantity for winter use by being dried and placed in pits, like those hereafter to be described, from which they were taken as needed, and were then most commonly cooked with meat in the form of stews. When the Mormons first arrived in Utah and the struggle for food was so severe with them, they learned from the Indians the value of this article; and the digging of sego bulbs in the spring did much in many families to ward off starvation. . . .

## *MEDICINAL PLANTS*

. . . . The great majority of the many medicines used by the Gosiute were products of the plant kingdom, though to a limited number of animal substances and preparations curative qualities were attributed. As above stated, some were of unquestioned service, containing active principles identical and related closely in not a few cases to those of plants used or formerly used by our own practitioners. Often several different medicines might be used for the same ailment, or what was regarded as the same, the one selected depending on season, availability, or personal preference. In some cases medicines were combined and given as a mixture, in which case each constituent is supposed to exercise its own peculiar virtue. Medicines were classified according to use, the classification being in correspondence with the categories of disease. Thus medicines for wounds and cuts were classed as i'-a-na-tsu; for bruises and swellings, bai'-gwi-na-tsu; for burns, wai'-a-na-tsu; for coughs and colds, o'-ni-na-tsu; for bowel troubles, koi'-na-tsu; for "worms," wu'-i-na-tsu; venereal diseases, tim'-bai-na-tsu; for rheumatism, tso'-ni-na-tsu; for the blood, bu'-i-na-tsu; for bladder and kidney troubles, si'-na-tsu; etc. . . .

# GOSHUTE WORKSHEET

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

Answer each short answer question with at least one complete sentence. Answer each short essay question with at least one paragraph.

## SHORT ANSWER:

Would you rather be there in the summer or the winter?

What would you eat and drink?

What would you do for shelter?

How would you get around?

What kind of shelter would you need, and how would you make it mobile?

What tools would you need?

What knowledge would you need?

What skills would you need?

If you didn't have the skills and knowledge that you needed, how would you gain them?

**SHORT ESSAY:**

Jedediah Smith used some interesting words to describe what he saw and experienced in the Goshute homeland. Knowing what you know about the environment of the Goshute homeland, what terms would you use to describe this area?

What did you learn from the reading (either Moon or Chamberlin) about Goshute values and how the Goshutes survived in the environment that Smith and so many others found inhospitable?

The Goshutes developed a way of living that allowed them to thrive in their unique environment. Based on the film, the Goshute Interactive Map, and/or comments from your teacher, how did the Goshutes adapt to their changing situation after 1849?