



THE PAIUTES

AT A GLANCE: THE SOUTHERN PAIUTES AND TERMINATION

In the middle of the twentieth century, the federal government's American Indian policy shifted dramatically. From the 1930s to 1952, the federal government sought to improve American tribal life by enacting policies that facilitated self-government and cultural renewal. However, in the 1950s, the federal government changed course and began to sever important political relationships with certain American Indian tribes and to attempt to relocate Indians to urban areas without strong native political communities. (For a more detailed explanation of the evolution of U.S. Indian policy, see Appendix B, "Understanding the Political Sovereignty of the American Indian Nations.")

In August 1953, House Concurrent Resolution 108 mandated that the U.S. government abolish federal supervision of Indian tribes. This policy, which came to be known as "termination," was justified based on the idea that Native Americans should assimilate with mainstream American society, but it essentially meant that the United States would no longer uphold its treaty agreements with tribes. Though not all Indian tribes ended up being terminated, the Southern Paiutes of Utah became one of the first targets of the policy.

In 1954 Congress passed Public Law 762, an act that "terminated" the federal government's responsibility to the Southern Paiute tribes in Utah and left the Paiutes in an unrecognized political status within the United States and Utah. Once terminated, the land held by the Paiutes became taxable and fell under the jurisdiction of the State of Utah, and the Paiutes could no longer

govern their own affairs without the interference of both federal and state governments.

Denied federal welfare, education, health, and employment assistance, the Paiutes were plunged into deep poverty and despair. Alcohol use increased. A medical consultant's report listed obesity, tuberculosis, an "extreme degree" of malnutrition among young infants, sanitation, and sewage-disposal problems as major health issues among the Paiutes. Without basic health and sanitation services, almost one-half of Utah's Paiutes died during the termination period.

In an interview for *We Shall Remain: The Paiute*, Glenn Rogers, Chairman of the Shivwits Band of Paiutes, discusses the effects of termination policies upon the Paiutes and their relationship to their traditional lands. Rogers says that one of the reasons they were singled out for termination was that Paiute land held valuable minerals that private industry was interested in mining. Rogers describes the process of land dispossession under termination: "So we didn't have it [legal assistance] back then, so they took advantage of us as a little scattered tribe and they took over the land and they said well, they can pay for their land through taxes, um, how were we going to pay for our land . . . what we have through taxation and taxes? And that's how a lot of these little tribes, for instance Kanosh and Indian Peaks lost a part of their reservation is because they couldn't pay their taxes."

By the late 1960s, the federal government ended termination due to the overwhelming evidence that it failed to facilitate American Indian tribal



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sovereignty or better the lives of Indian people. For twenty-six years, the Southern Paiutes fought to regain their recognized status as an American Indian tribal government, and in 1980, the United States federal government restored the Southern Paiutes as the Paiute Tribe of Utah, with five bands also recognized as sovereign entities. In her interview for *We Shall Remain: The Paiute*, Karman Grayman, member of the Shivwits band of the Paiute tribe, explains the improvement in Paiute life after restoration: “When we first started with restoration and we had health coverage then more of our people started living. . . . We didn’t have so many deaths. Our age went up.” Because it restored federal services, restoration improved the physical health of the tribe.

Since restoration, the Paiutes have worked to reestablish cultural traditions and gain and develop land. A new cultural activity is the

Restoration Powwow, which is held every year to celebrate the return to recognized tribal status and the pride that came with it. As historian Gary Tom points out, “One of the primary benefits of the [Restoration] Gathering is its visibility; it provides an opportunity for the Paiutes to express their ethnic pride and say to the Anglo community that they are proud of their accomplishments and of who they are. The Paiute people never left their homeland, nor do they ever intend to leave.” Land development has remained a challenge, as the endangered species status of the prairie dog, for example, complicates tribal land management. On the other hand, with economic growth from endeavors like Suh’dutsing Technologies, the tribe is now in a better position to overcome these challenges than ever before.