

THE WASHOE INDIANS
OF
NEVADA AND CALIFORNIA

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WA-SHE-SHU

The Washoe Indians are called Wa-She-Shu in their native language. Wa-She-Shu means “the people of the tribe.” The word Washoe originally meant “one person,” but now represents all the people of the tribe.

The Washoe people lived in the area from Honey Lake in the north to Markleeville in the south. They also lived on both the eastern and western areas of Lake Tahoe.

The Washoe were divided into three different groups according to where they lived. Each group was identified by land areas.

The *North Washoe* occupied Honey Lake, Sierra Valley, Donner Lake, Truckee Meadows, Washoe Valley, Eagle Valley (Carson City).



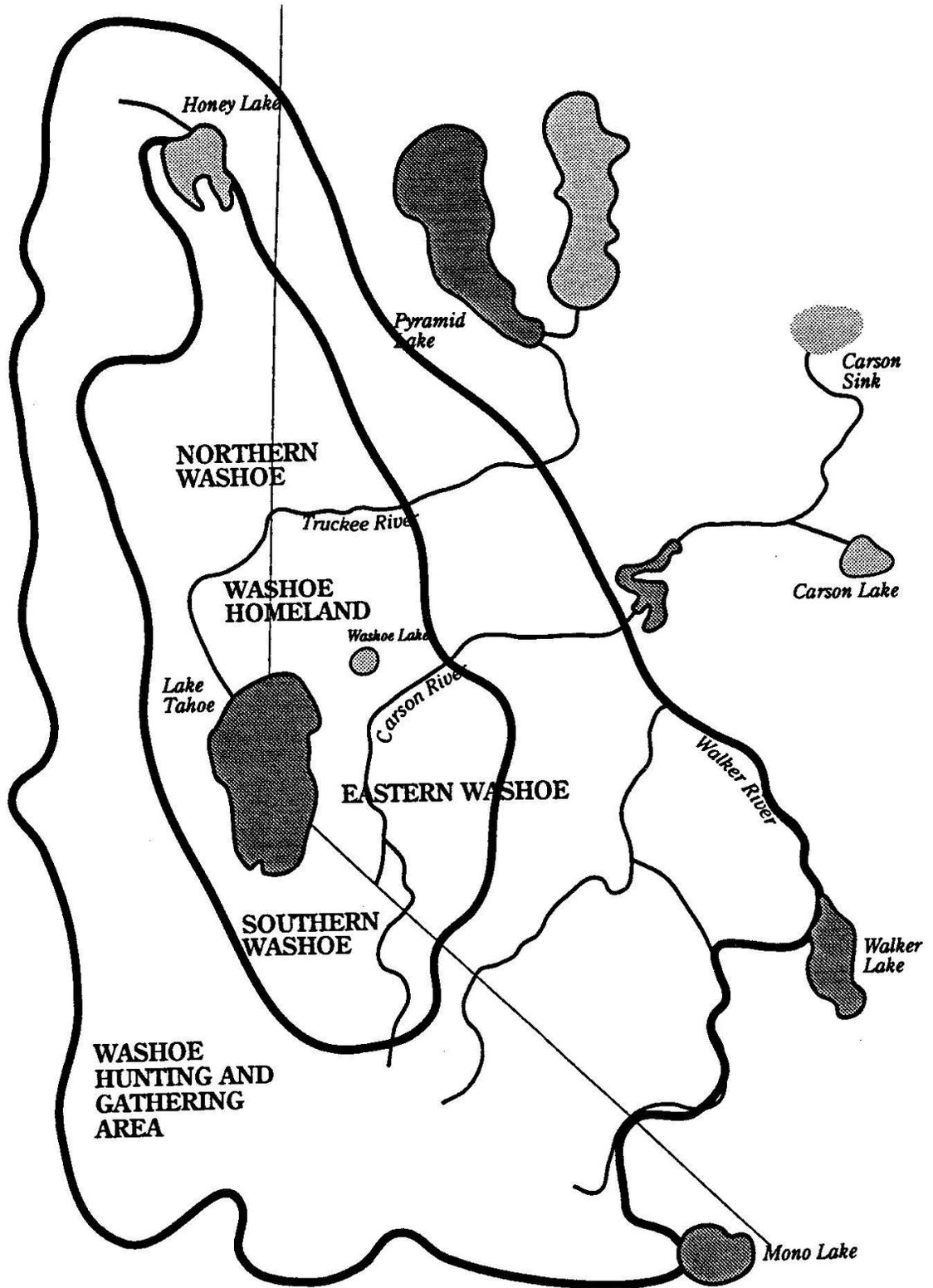
The *Eastern Washoe* lived in the area around Carson Valley (Gardnerville, Minden).



The *Southern Washoe* made their home in Woodfords and Markleeville area and south of Lake Tahoe.



WASHOE TERRITORY





Washoe Indians lived in the Arid Basin,



snow covered mountains,



and the fertile valleys.

The Washoe knew the land well, and they used the resources available. They showed respect for the earth by using only what was needed.

A seasonal cycle was followed from year to year. The cycle was a pattern of travel that led the Washoe to areas that had plenty of food.

SPRING

The beginning of spring was a time of renewed life. Plants were starting to sprout the whitefish and trout were plentiful. The Washoe gained strength from the coming of spring.

PLANTS THAT WERE HARVESTED

Watercress	Tiger Lily Seeds
Wild Potatoes	Sand Seeds
Wild Carrots	Wild Mustard
Mountain Onions	Sego Lily
Wild Onions	Cattails
Elderberries	Tule Roots
Sunflower Seeds	Wild Spinach
Chokecherries	Wild Rhubarb
Buckberries	Wild Sweet Potatoes
Raspberries	Wild Celery
Indian Tea	Wild Turnips
Wild Mushrooms	Sweet Elderberry Roots
Indian Rice Grass	Wild Gooseberries
Wild Strawberries	Wild Rose Tea

The Washoe women gathered the plants for food and medicinal purposes. Some were eaten as soon as they were collected. Others were prepared for winter use. All parts of the plant including the seeds, bulbs, stalks, leaves, and roots were used.

SUMMER

The Washoe traveled to Lake Tahoe at the beginning of summer. When they arrived at Lake Tahoe, they gave thanks for another year of life.

The three Washoe groups stayed in their own areas around the lake. The Northern Washoe stayed on the north end, the Eastern Washoe spent their summer on the eastern shore, and the Southern Washoe remained on the south end.

During the summer, the men fished, the women gathered plants, and the different groups appointed “bosses” to search for areas that had abundant food.

For shelter in the summer, a shade was made from willows, sagebrush, or any other brush type material that was readily available. The shelters were circular enclosures, about five feet high, without a roof. It served mainly as a windbreak.



FISHING TECHNIQUES

The Washoe Indians had many techniques for catching fish.

Blinds were made by pulling willows together.

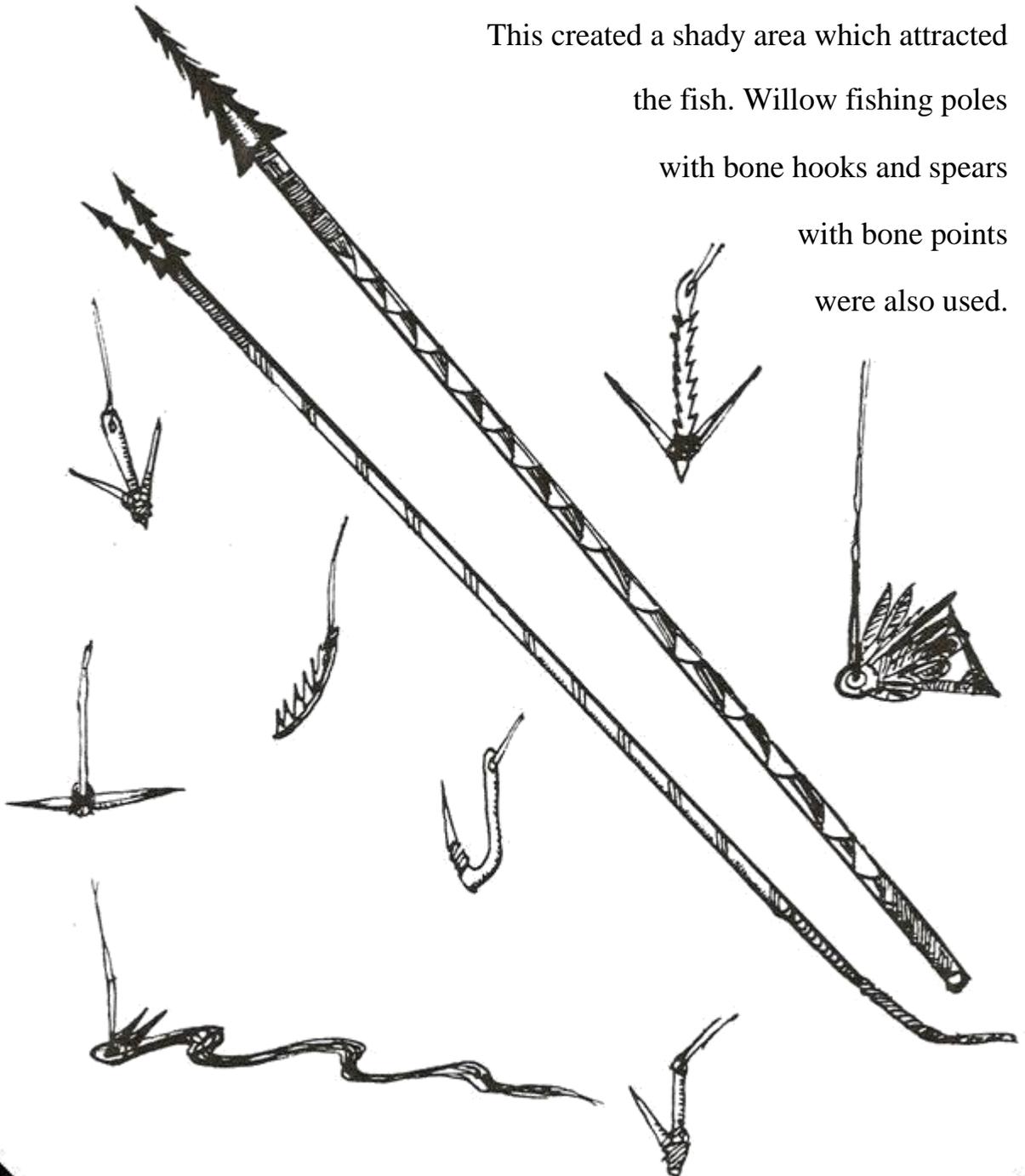
This created a shady area which attracted

the fish. Willow fishing poles

with bone hooks and spears

with bone points

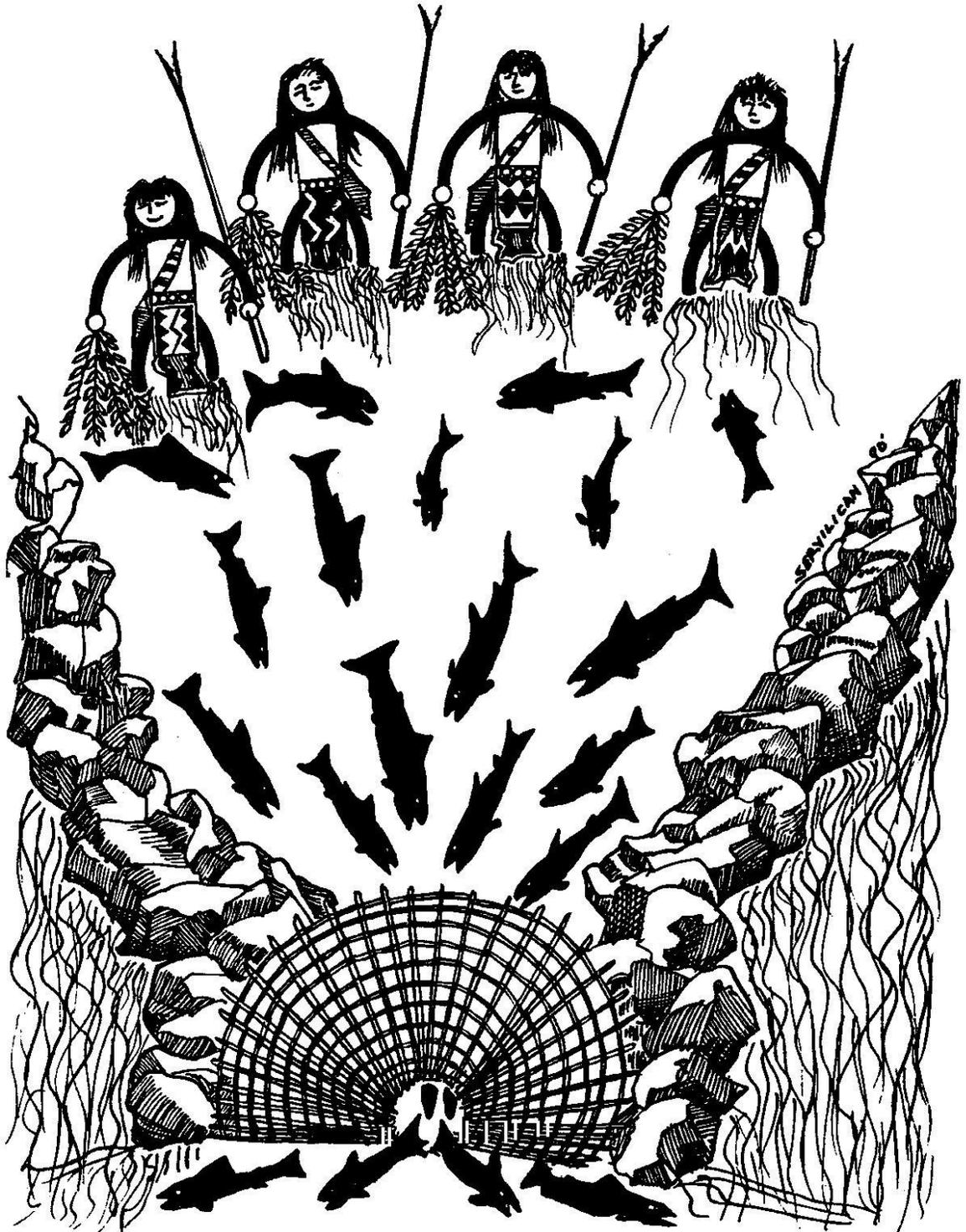
were also used.



The fish were many times caught by hand when the water was low.



Fish were trapped in cone-shaped baskets and nets strung across the stream.



Diversion dams were used to create small pools which would make it easier to catch fish.

FALL

When fall arrived, the Washoe groups traveled to the pinenut hills to gather pinenuts. The pinenut crop was one of the most important crops to the Washoe people. It provided food for the Washoe through the coming winter months.

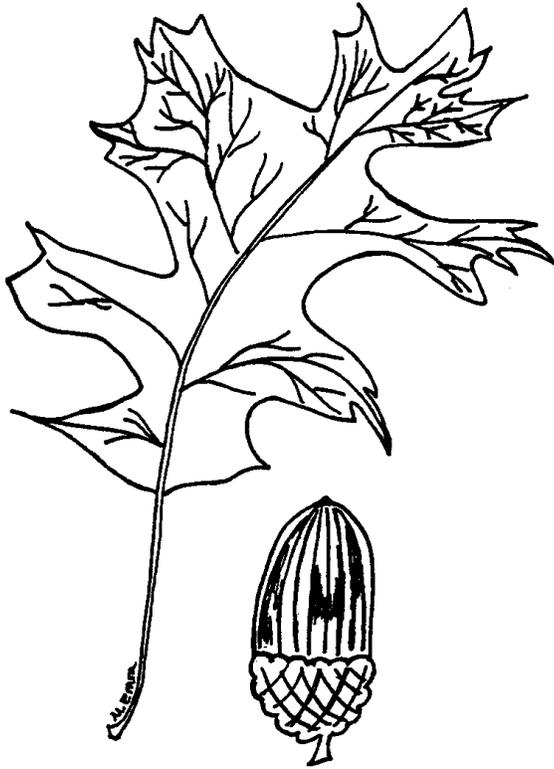
A special ceremony was held. The people gathered together to share food, dance, and enjoy games together. Prayers of thanks were given and then the people went to a stream to bathe and cleanse their spirits.

The pinenuts were gathered for four to six weeks after the ceremony. A long pole with a curved hook was used to knock down the cones. They gathered the cones in burden baskets and carried them back to camp.

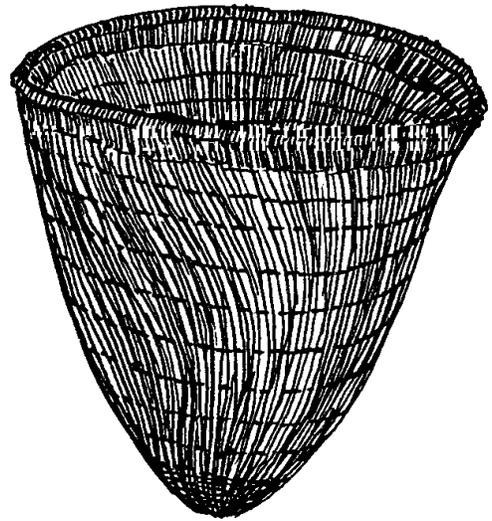


ACORNS

Black Oak Acorn



Burden Basket



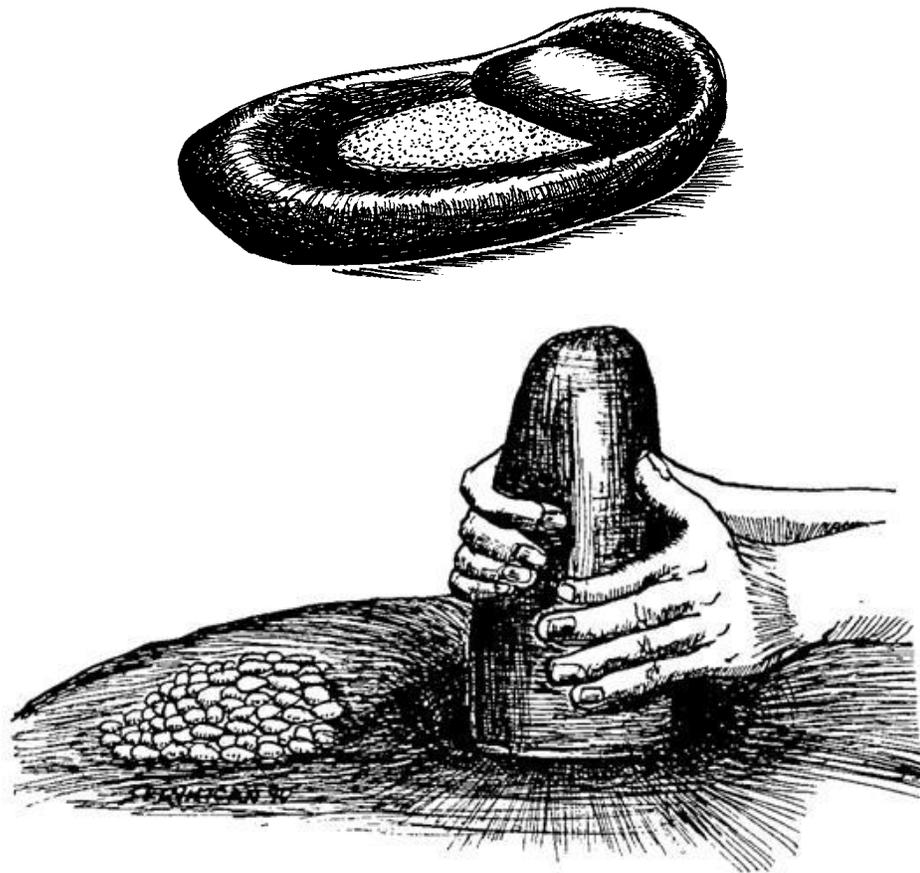
The Washoe traveled the western Sierra foothills (California) to collect acorns. The acorns were picked from the ground, placed in burden baskets, and carried back to the Washoe homeland for preparation.

The acorns were then cracked open. The red skins were removed by sprinkling the acorns with water and winnowing them in a special basket. They laid the shelled and cleaned acorn in the sun to dry.

ACORN PROCESSING

1. Crack, shell, and dry acorn.
2. Grind the nut meat into a fine flour
3. Place the nut flour into a prepared sand basin that has a covering to filter the bitterness from the flour.
4. Pour water over the flour several times as the water seeps through the sand basin.
5. Continue pouring water over the flour. On the fourth time begin using warm water.
6. Mush is made from the fine acorn mixture using two quarts of acorn mixture to seven quarts of water.
7. Small patties are made by putting hot rocks into the cold mush mixture. The coarse acorn mixture would stick to the rocks and create a patty.

Grinding Stones





HUNTING

Fall was the most important season to hunt animals. The animals were fat and healthy after grazing all summer. The Washoe only hunted the animals they needed for food. They were not wasteful. They used much of the animal to make many items they needed.

Before the hunt, the Washoe men would pray for a good hunt. They would also bathe and prepare themselves with sagebrush so that the animals could not smell the human scent.

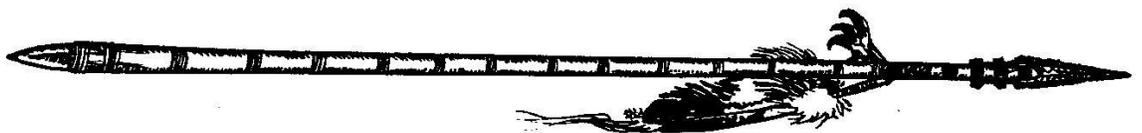
After their successful hunt, the Washoe men would pray for a good hunt. They would also bathe and prepare themselves with sagebrush so that the animals could not smell the human scent.

ANIMALS THAT WERE HUNTED

Rabbits	Ground Hogs (Spring)
Mountain Goats	Antelope
Sagehens	Quail
Woodchucks (Spring)	Ground Squirrels (Spring)
Water Fowl (Ducks, Mudhens)	Deer

The Washoe men used bows and arrows for hunting. The arrows were made from rose shoots and the arrowheads were tipped with obsidian. It took great skill and knowledge of the terrain to hunt. Many times the hunters would disguise themselves as animals and imitate animal sounds. Another method for hunting was to drive animals into nets.

The animals provided food, clothing, and tools.



WINTER

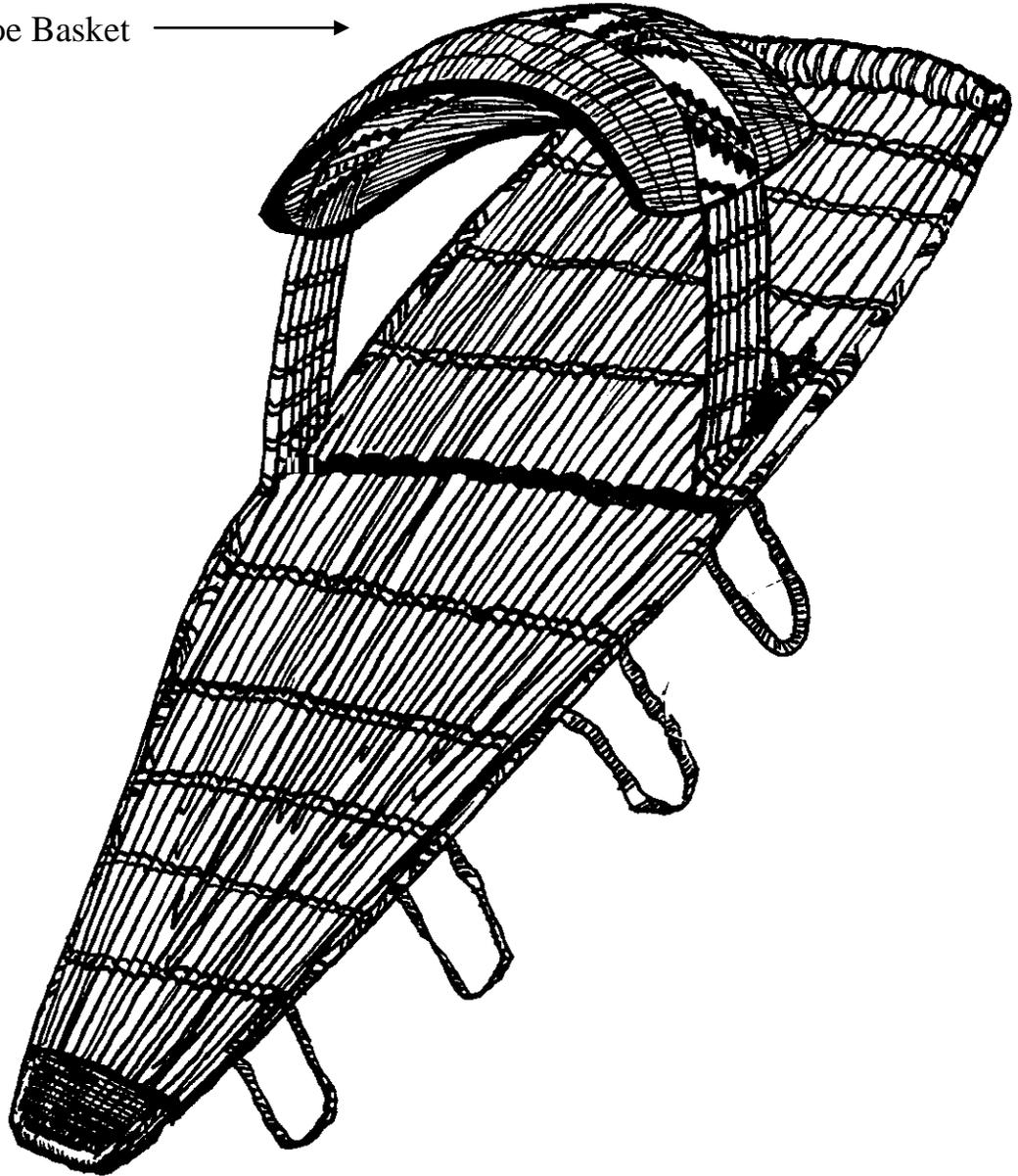
When winter arrived, the Washoe had food stored to provide for the long winter. Men would fish and hunt during warm weather spells. In the winter they would also break holes in the ice to fish. The people repaired and made tools, clothing, baskets and housing. Winter became very long with the cold, harsh weather. The people kept very busy doing their work. The winter house was usually located near a spring for water. The house was round with a smoke hole in the center. The house was usually 12 to 15 feet in diameter. The door always faced east so that when the Washoe people came out of their home in the morning they would see the rising sun.



FAMILY LIFE

The new baby was kept in a scoop-shaped baby basket. A bigger basket was made when the baby grew bigger.

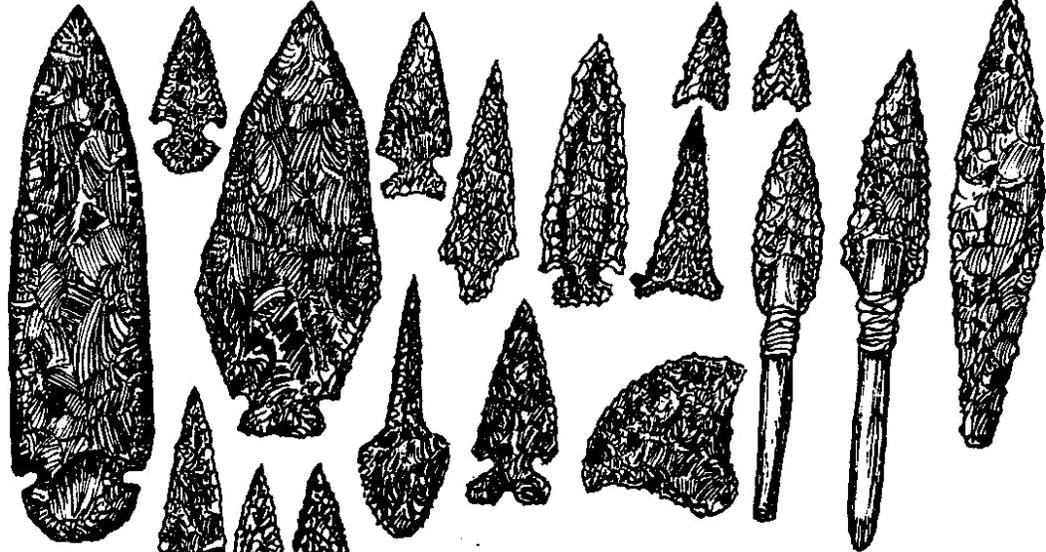
Washoe Basket →



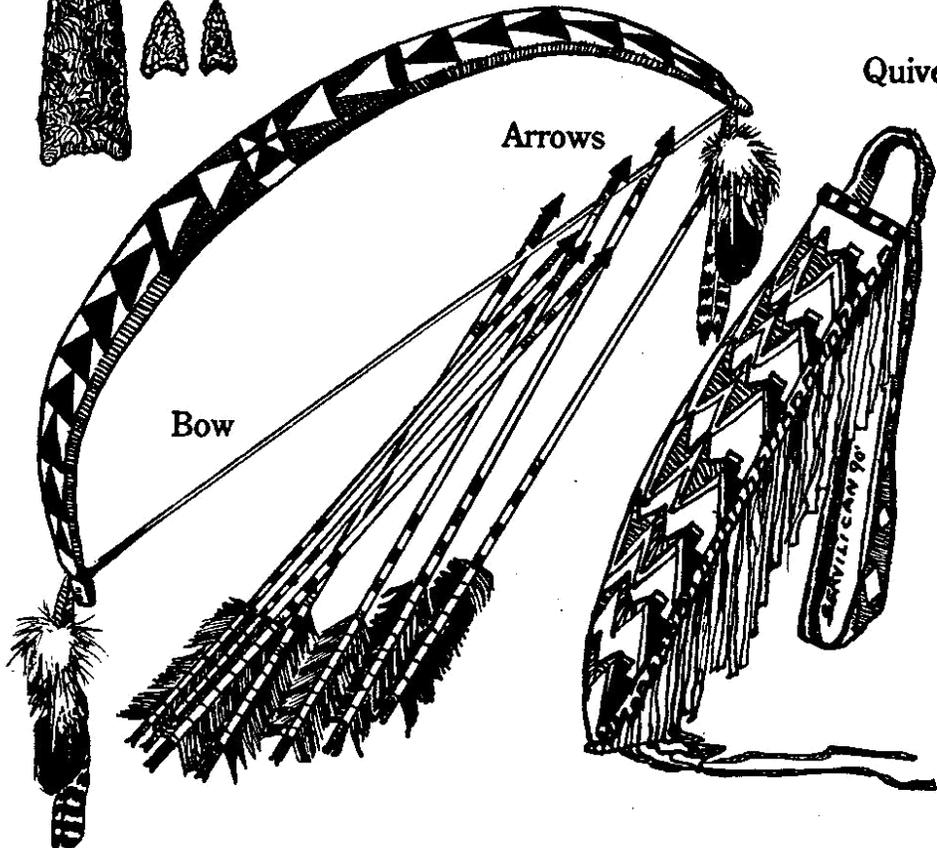
The boys were taught to hunt. They were also taught to make the tools needed for hunting. Boys had to give away their first animal killed. When they killed a deer, they were considered a good hunter and earned the respect of men.

Arrowheads

Spears



Knife



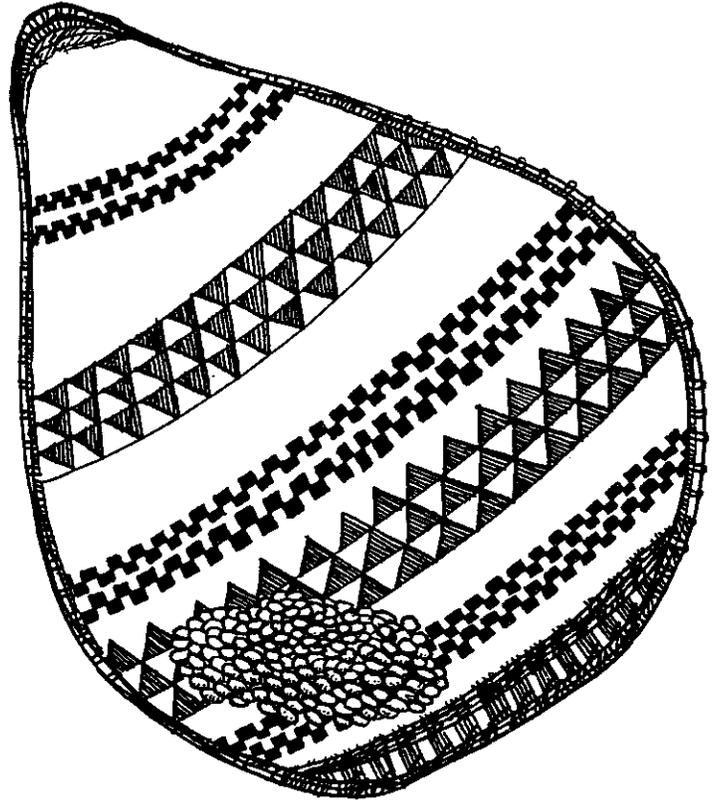
Arrows

Quiver

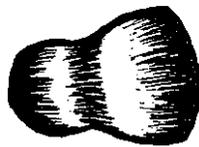
Bow

When girls became women, a ceremony of fasting for four days took place. If the girl failed to keep the fast, it was said she would go hungry in later life, if the girl fasted well, it was said she showed strength to gather food and would enjoy a long life.

Winnowing Basket



Whisk





The family was the most important unit for the Washoe existence. Family members had to each take part in the work to be done in order to survive.

The elder Washoe people were shown dignity and respect. They were considered the ones with knowledge and wisdom to survive. They taught the younger people about the world they lived through story telling or legends.



DAT-SO-LA-LEE

Dat-So-La-Lee was born about 1835 near Sheridan, Nevada. She was given the name Dabuda when she was born. Being raised in the Washoe culture, she learned to gather food, cook, and weave baskets.

During her life, Dat-So-La-Lee made a living by washing clothes and cooking for the miners.

Dat-So-La-Lee's name became Louisa Kizer when she married Charley Kizer.

In 1895, when Louisa was about sixty years old, she walked into Carson City to show the owner of the Emporium four willow covered flasks that she had made. Abe Cohn, the owner, was very impressed and encouraged her to make more. He said he would sell the flasks for her.

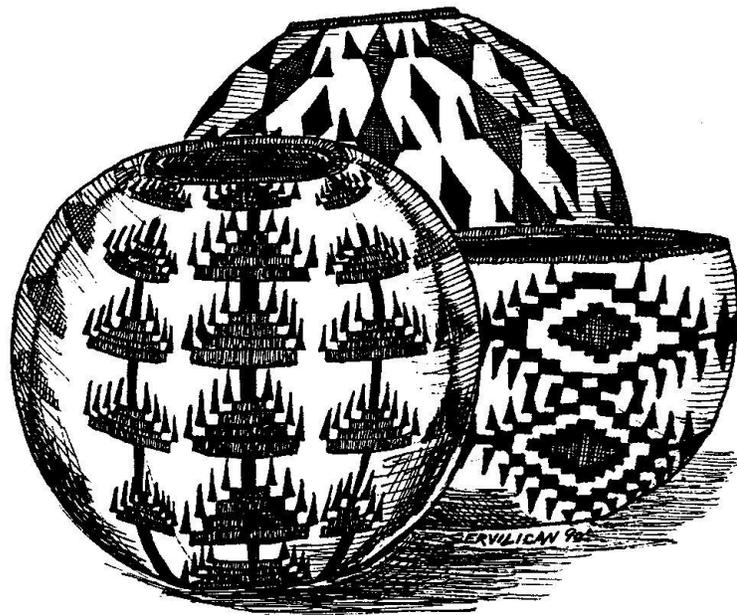
Abe Cohn wanted Louisa to continue making baskets, so he provided she and Charley with a house and any necessities they needed. Her house was located on the corner of Proctor and Division streets in Carson City and is still standing today.

In 1919, Abe Cohn took Dat-So-La-Lee to the St. Louis Arts and Crafts Exposition where she became very widely known for her basketry. In later years, it became evident that Mr. Cohn took advantage of her skills as a basketmaker and did not compensate Dat-So-La-Lee for what her baskets were really worth.

Some of Dat-So-La-Lee's baskets were made with such fine weaving that she achieved 34 stitches in one inch. Her most famous basket is the "Ceremonial Basket" It took her two years to complete the basket and it contains 84,000 tightly woven stitches. In the 1890s, her baskets sold for fifty dollars. Today, they are worth tens of thousands of dollars.

BASKET WEAVING

1. The colors found in the Dat-So-La-Lee baskets are from the aging process in the willow, the mountain fern, and the western rosebud.
2. In the fall, willows were gathered and the bark was striped from the willows.
3. Good straight shoots for foundations rods were tied into sheaves and allowed to cure.
4. The inner fiber, below the bark and above the pith, provided the tan threads for sewing the foundation coils together. The stalk was split three ways and scraped to make the thread.
5. The stripped willows were coiled in bunches until they were going to be used.
6. The willows were kept moist once the weaver started. This made the willows easier to work with.
7. For the finely woven three willow coiled baskets, the weaver makes a hole in the foundation willow and sews through the willow rather than weaving around the willow.



Cooking baskets



Other well-known Washoe basketweavers:

Lizzie Toby Peters

Sarah Jim Mayo

Jennie Bryant Shaw

Maggie Mayo James

Tillie Snooks

Lena Frank Dick

Some present day Washoe basketweavers;

Joanne Smokey Martinez

Theresa Smokey Jackson

Marie Simpson Klzer

Florene Wyatt Conway

Juanita Snooks

Margie George
(granddaughter of Maggie James)



Baskets shown are BURDEN BASKETS

WASHOE LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

Illustrate the following numbers and words.

Make flash cards for the Washoe numbers. Write the Washoe number or word on one side of the card and write the English number or word and illustration on the opposite side.

WASHOE NUMBERS

one	Loc-kah'
two	Hes-geh'
three	Hel-ma'
four	Hah-wha'
five	To-bal'-deh
six	To~bal'~deh~loctkah
seven	To~bal'~de~hestgeh
eight	Ha-wah'-wah
nine	Ha-wah'-wah-loc'-kah
ten	Lovk'-a-moh'-tsum

WASHOE WORDS

boy	Me-hu (May'-hu)
girl	Sho'-lum-ho
rabbit	Pah'-lo
fish	Ot'-ta-bee
deer	mem'-deh-we
house	deng'-uhl
spring	um' shuk
autumn	ah' osh
winter	gol' iss
summer	tsig ah'but

FAMOUS WASHOE PEOPLE of the 1800s

CAPTAIN JIM

Captain Jim was known as a leader of the Eastern Washoe in the 1850s. He spoke some English and was considered an interpreter for both the white settlers and the Washoe people.

Captain Jim was a man of genuine concern for the interests of his people. He realized how defenseless the Washoe people were against the guns and aggressive expansion of the white settlers.

In 1868, he was noted in history as urging his people to become allies with the white settlers.

DAD OKOYI

Dadokoyi was a leader of the Northern Washoe.

He was concerned for the welfare of the Washoe people and encouraged his people to preserve their heritage. He also faced the reality about the changing times and attempted to find ways to help his people deal with the new world.

One of his efforts to help his people was to organize a fishing business. He and other members of his tribal group caught and sold fish in the Reno area and in other towns in the region. They became well known as fish peddlers during these times.

Dadokoyi died in the 1890s. He was believed to be ninety-some years old.

GUMALANGA

In the 1870s, Gumalanga became known as a leader to the Washoe people. He worked for the preservation of fish in Lake Tahoe and also for the preservation of the pinenut trees in the pinenut hills. He was known to the governors of Nevada and California and other government officials in the area. Gumalanga was well known for his constant requests for appointments with these government officials to discuss the needs of the people.

Gumalanga became a “familiar” figure. He was a small man with a wide brimmed hat and he wore a dusty military coat. Everywhere he went, he carried a tattered briefcase in which he kept his important documents.

FAMOUS WASHOE PEOPLE 20TH CENTURY

RICHARD E. BARRINGTON

Richard Barrington was born at Boca on the Truckee River in 1880. He was kidnapped as a boy from a pond and taken to the Carson Indian School to be taught the ways of the white settlers. He was the first Indian student to be enrolled. He was also a member of the first graduating class. In 1927, his son Lloyd Barrington was the first Indian graduate from the University of Nevada

As an adult, Richard organized an Indian band to play at the Forty-Niner concession at the San Francisco World's Fair. He also organized other bands in San Francisco and earned considerable acclaim for his ability. For 25 years, Richard and his son Lloyd operated lumber mills in Quincy and Sierraville, California.

He worked for the welfare of Native Americans throughout his life by being involved in acts to help Native Americans. In 1964, Richard E. Barrington was awarded a Distinguished Nevada title by the University of Nevada, Reno during the Centennial Year commencement exercises. He was 84 years old at the time. Mr. Barrington died in 1967 at his home in Sierraville.

HENRY MOSES RUPERT

Henry Moses Rupert was born in Genoa in 1872. He spent most of his life in the Carson Valley area. One day when Henry was a boy, a flash flood occurred while he was hunting. He found himself in the path of a huge torrent of water. The water suddenly parted at his feet and passed beyond him. From then on, his middle name was "Moses."

He attended Stewart Indian School and learned typesetting. He was the third student to graduate from the school. He worked as a pressman and typesetter for the Reno Evening Gazette. In 1972, Mr. Rupert headed the Nevada Day ceremonies as a Grand Marshal. He was then one hundred years old.

Henry Rupert was known as an Indian doctor to the Indian community. He was considered a man of great spiritual gifts, wisdom, and understanding.

JOHN HENRY DRESSLER

John Dressler was born in 1916 in Sheridan, Nevada. He attended the Stewart Boarding School and demonstrated great leadership abilities. As a result, he was elected the first Student Body President of the school.

He was actively involved in organizational throughout his life. He was a boy scout master and formed the first Indian Boy Scout troop in Reno. John Dressier was involved in the railroad union. He was appointed a negotiating steward for the steelworkers union.

In 1963, Mr. Dressler initiated the organization of the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada. From 1958 to 1969, he served as chairman of the Inter-Tribal Council, Chairman of the Reno-Sparks Indian colony, and Chairman of the Washoe Tribe.

Dressler helped to get a bill passed in the Nevada legislature which created the Nevada Indian Affairs Commission. He felt this agency would help the Indians communicate with the other state agencies.

He serves as chairman of the Phoenix Area Health Board, member of the Surgeon Generals Indian Advisory Board, and a member of the Nevada Equal Rights Commission.

Four days before his death, he was cited as a Distinguished Nevadan by the University of Nevada for his significant achievements and contributions to mankind. John Henry Dressier died in 1970.

PRESENT TRIBAL GOVERNMENT

Tribal Chairman - This elected official is the head of the entire Washoe Tribal Community and makes decisions about tribal business affairs.

Tribal Council - Each local Washoe community elects representatives to attend monthly meetings and assist the Tribal Chairman in making decisions about the Washoe Tribal business.

Local Community Councils - Each local Washoe community has monthly meetings to discuss and make business decisions about its own local community.

The following Washoe communities have Local Community Councils and representatives are sent to the Washoe Tribal Council meeting.

Dresslerville

Carson Colony

Woodfords Community

Reno-Sparks

Stewart

Off Reservation Members

Current Business Developments

Smoke Shops in Gardnerville and Carson City

Washoe Ranch and Feedlot in Jacks Valley and Gardnerville

Housing Developments

Tribal Health Clinic and Dental Office

Tribal Police and Judicial System

Education Programs: Headstart, Tutoring, Scholarship

Fire Fighting Program

Senior Citizens Program Cultural Preservation

Hunting and Fishing

IMPORTANT HISTORICAL EVENTS

- JANUARY 28, 1844 Fremont recorded seeing the Washoe Indians and discussed their generosity with other white explorers.
- 1848 The gold seekers that did not find wealth in California began settling in the Washoe land areas.
- 1849-1850 Mormon Station, a trading post, was established in Genoa.
- 1851 John Reese established a permanent trading post at Mormon Station. Stores, businesses, and homes began to appear on Washoe land.
- Soon the settlers began complaining that the Washoe people were trespassing on their land.
- White settlers claimed that they bought Genoa from the Washoe people for two sacks of flour. However, no record of this purchase has been found.
- 1851 A trading post was established in Eagle Valley (Carson City). Miners poured into the area, and farmers and settlers continued to move in and force the Washoe people from their ancestral land.
- The pinenut trees which were abundant and provided food for the Washoes were cut down and used as timber to build homes, stores, shore up mines, and provide fuel.
- 1858 The Carson Valley Agency was founded in the Washoe Territory. Frederick Dodge was the first agent
- It was recommended that the Washoe be moved to Pyramid Lake and Walker Lake to live with the Paiutes.
- Governor Nye saw how impractical this was since the two tribes spoke different languages and had different customs.

February 8, 1887 General Allotment Act went into effect Washoe Tribal Members began receiving 160 acre land claims.

Injustices continued to occur. The land that was available was rocky and barren. The fertile land in the valleys and around Lake Tahoe was already claimed by settlers.

1893 - 1910 Allotments were made to the Washoe people.

1890 The Carson Indian School (Stewart) opened. Senator William Stewart introduced the legislation that made the school possible. The school occupied 240 acres.

1901 The first class graduated from the Carson Indian School

May 18, 1916 An act was passed authorizing purchase of land for the Washoe Indians at the Carson City Indian Colony.

An act authorized purchase of land and water rights for support and civilization of said Washoe Indians at Dresslerville.

June 2, 1924 All Native Americans became citizens of the United States by an act of Congress.