Chapter 3

Nevada’s earliest human remains are over 9,000 years old. These people had a life trying to survive in our desert lands. Artifacts left by these early people help us better understand their way of life. They also remind us that from the very beginning, we peoples have been an important part of Nevada’s heritage.

Thousands of years ago, Nevada’s native people spent much of their time hunting for food.

- **A.D. 1820s** Explorers begin entering the region.
- **A.D. 1840**
- **A.D. 1860** The U.S. government establishes reservations in Nevada.
- **A.D. 1860–1890**
- **A.D. 1880**
- **A.D. 1895** Dat-So-La-Lee’s friends begin to document her baskets as works of art.
- **A.D. 1895**
- **A.D. 1883** Sarah Winnemucca publishes her book, *Life Among the Pintes*.
- **A.D. 1925**
- **A.D. 1920**
- **A.D. 1920**
- **A.D. 1930**

- **A.D. 1859** Thousands of white settlers begin coming to Nevada.
- **A.D. 1883** Sarah Winnemucca publishes her book, *Life Among the Pintes*.
- **A.D. 1925**
- **A.D. 1920**
- **A.D. 1930**
- **A.D. 1940**

**Spirit Cave Man** remains a discovered in cave near Fallo
Nevada's Historic People

Five native tribes, or groups, once made their homes in what is now Nevada. Historians call these people historic groups because written records were kept about their lives. Sometimes people kept records of their own lives. Sometimes people kept records about the lives of others.

When explorers and traders first came to the Great Basin, native groups had no written language. They passed their history on by talking to one another and by telling stories.

Our first written records of historic native people come from the records of early explorers and traders. Historians study these records to learn more about historic groups. They also learn about them by hearing the stories they have passed down.
A Tribal Way of Life

Each of Nevada’s five main tribes were different in some ways and alike in other ways. They spoke different languages and had different customs. They lived in different places and ate different foods.

One of Nevada’s smallest historic groups was the Washoe. They lived near the Nevada-California border in the Lake Tahoe area. Before the white man came, the Washoe had rich hunting and fishing lands. Acorns were a major source of food for them. Washoe women were skilled basket-makers. Washoe men believed killing a bear was a sign of great bravery.

The Northern Paiutes settled in western Nevada and parts of California, and Oregon. They called themselves the pine nut eaters. More than 20 different bands, or groups, lived in the area when the first explorers came. Northern Paiutes were usually a peaceful group, often sharing what they had with other groups.

The Western Shoshone lived mostly in eastern Nevada and in parts of Utah and Idaho. Some believe these native groups were the first people explorers and trappers met when they reached the Great Basin. The Shoshone moved often, eating mostly roots, plants, and small animals.

The Southern Paiutes were at home in the southern regions of Nevada and in parts of California, Utah, and Arizona. These groups planted a few simple crops. Sometimes they traded goods with other groups. Many people think these were the first native people seen by Jedediah Smith as he crossed the southern tip of Nevada.

A group called the Mohave spent time along the Colorado River near the southern tip of Nevada. These people were Nevada’s best gardeners. They planted corn, melons, beans, and pumpkin near the river. Spring floods would then water and fertilize their crops.

Nevada’s main tribes were alike in some ways. All of them were nomadic at least part of the time. Nomadic people move from place to place. Nevada’s nomadic people moved in search of food as they struggled to survive in the harsh desert land.
Who Were the First People?

The earliest people to reach what is now Nevada came to this region more than 10,000 years ago. We call them Desert Archaic people. Sometimes, we also call them prehistoric people because they lived before written records were kept. These early people lived all over the southwestern United States in caves and small family groups. Archaeologists have discovered many cave homes in our state. Archaeologists are people who study the clues left by people from long ago. Some of these caves are near the shores of Lake Lahontan. Archaeologists search caves for clues about people who might have lived there. By studying things left by ancient people, we can learn much about their way of life.

Discovery at Spirit Cave

More than 60 years ago, near the town of Fallon, the mummy of a man was found in a place called Spirit Cave. A mummy is a body that has been wrapped for burial. Some archaeologists think the man died over 9,000 years ago. His skeleton was found wrapped in matting and a rabbit-skin blanket.

This is a model of what scientists believe the Spirit Cave Man might have looked like.

Nevada, Our Home
The Lovelock Cave People

The Lovelock Cave is another important archaeological site in our state. Artifacts made of bone, stone, and wood have been found there. Scientists call the people who left these remains the Lovelock Cave People.

One special artifact found at this site and in other parts of Nevada is called a Clovis point. Clovis points are hand-made stone darts. They were often tied to sticks to make spears and used for hunting.

Over time, early people created new tools to make hunting easier. The **atlatl** was a tool that made it easier to throw a spear harder and faster.

The Lovelock Cave People also made duck decoys from tule reeds. They pulled the long, skinny reeds from the water and then wrapped them into the shape of a duck. Sometimes cave people painted and decorated their ducks with feathers to make them look real. Duck decoys were a good hunting tool for cave people, just as they are for hunters today. Once a decoy was complete, it was sent floating out into the water to attract live ducks. Decoys made it easier for cave people to kill live ducks for food.

The Lovelock Cave People were **hunter-gatherers**. This means they spent most of their time hunting and gathering food. They made nets and clothing from rabbit fur and other animal skins. They also fished and gathered wild plants and berries.

Sometimes cave people made baskets out of tule for storing food and for carrying things. Pieces of tule baskets were uncovered in the Lovelock Cave.

**The atlatl** was a small, narrow early people attached to the end of a spear. It helped hunters throw much farther and faster.
These rock carvings in Nevada’s Valley of Fire State Park tell stories about some of Nevada’s earliest people.
Writings on the Walls

Some of Nevada's earliest people left carvings called petroglyphs on rocks and cave walls. Archaeologists study these carvings to learn more about our state's first people. Some rock carvings are of animals. Some are of people and events. Many archaeologists believe early people carved pictures of deer on rocks or walls so their hunts would go well. Petroglyphs have been discovered all over Nevada. Nevada's most famous carvings are in the Valley of Fire State Park, north of Las Vegas. Many are thought to be more than 1,500 years old.

Activity

Petroglyphs

After looking at the picture of petroglyphs on page 50, design your own petroglyph on a piece of paper. Then find a few medium-sized rocks with at least one flat surface. Lightly draw your petroglyph on the rock with chalk. Carefully paint over your drawing with craft paint to make your petroglyph permanent. Create more than one design, or find a bigger rock and create a whole story. Tell your class why you picked your specific design.

Remember! Drawing or painting on small rocks you collect or have at home is alright. But writing or drawing on cave or rock walls is against the law. Writing or drawing things on canyon walls or someone else's property is called graffiti.

Memory Master

Lesson 1

1. What do archaeologists do?
2. What did the Lovelock Cave people use to make duck decoys?
3. Where are some of our state's most famous petroglyphs found?

The First People
The Anasazi

About 2,000 years ago another group of people settled in the southern part of our state. We call them the Anasazi people. Anasazi is a Native American term that means old or ancient ones. The Anasazi built settlements in Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Arizona. Ruins of Anasazi homes near the Virgin and Muddy Rivers tell us much about their lives. Ruins are what is left of a place after the people living there have gone.

The Anasazi built a large community known today as Pueblo Grande de Nevada, or the Lost City. This early community was made of pit houses. Some were built partly underground while others were built above the ground. Some pit houses had only one or two rooms while others had more than 100 rooms.

The Anasazi did more than hunt and gather. They were also farmers who grew corn, beans, and squash in their fields. They grew cotton and used it to make clothing. They dug irrigation ditches to bring water to their crops. Irrigation is a way of watering dry land through pipes, ditches, or canals.

Farming allowed the Anasazi to spend more time in one place. They did not have to move to follow animals or hunt for food. Staying in one place gave them time to improve their way of life and develop other skills.

The Anasazi also made beautiful baskers and pottery. They used most of them for storage. Some of their most
beautiful pieces were used for trade. Pieces of baskets and pots have been found in many Anasazi ruins.

The Anasazi were also our state’s first miners. They dug salt and a bluish-green mineral called *turquoise* from the nearby hills. Salt was very important to the Anasazi. They used it to dry food to keep it from spoiling. The turquoise they found was often traded or used to make jewelry.

The Anasazi traded with people in Utah and Arizona. Trade was very important for their community. They gained new ideas, skills, and goods from other people.

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**The Three Sisters**

Corn, beans, and squash were life-giving plants for early Nevada people. Sometimes they called these plants the Three Sisters because they helped other grow. As cornstalks grew tall, they work like a pole to support the beans. The beans help feed the soil. The squash leaves spread out keeping the ground moist and weed-free. Ask your parents to help you plant a Three Sisters garden.

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*Pit houses were sometimes built partly underground. This helped keep people cooler during the hot summer months.*

*Pottery made by the Anasazi was often covered with beautiful designs.*
Mystery of the Lost City

No one knows why the Anasazi left their homes in Pueblo Grande Nevada. Some people think they may have been forced out because of war with other tribes. Some believe disease or changes in the climate made it difficult for the Anasazi to stay in Nevada. Others believe these early people moved to find more food and water.

Many scientists think there was a long dry spell, or drought, about the same time the Anasazi left their homes here. They learned this by studying tree rings. Clues found in the rings of trees led scientists to believe that the drought may have lasted more than 20 years.

Thousands of years after the Anasazi left the Grand Pueblo Nevada, people began finding remains of the city. Scraps of pottery, called shards, and other small items were found along the banks of the Muddy River.

These ruins are part of the Lost City that was uncovered by archaeologists in 1926.
Can you imagine what it must have been like to live in homes like this?

Activity

Write a Story About Anasazi Life

Now that you have read a little about the Anasazi, write a story about what life might have been like. Imagine yourself a young Anasazi boy or girl. What was going on in your village? What kinds of things did you do each day? What did you do for fun? These are just a few of the things you could write about. You could even draw a picture to go with your story.

Memory Master

1. Which three plants did Nevada's early people use to create a three sisters garden?
2. What minerals did the Anasazi mine?
3. The ruins uncovered along the Muddy River have been called by two different names. Name one of them.
Hunting and Gathering

Nevada’s historic groups were also hunter-gatherers. Tribes that lived near lakes and rivers ate fish and ducks. Some gathered natural plants like raspberries, wild carrots, and seeds.

Tribes in more wooded areas used the nuts from the Piñon pine to make many foods. The pine nut became a staple, or main food, for many tribes. To gather the nuts, tribes used long poles to hit the tree branches. After the pine cones fell, they were gathered, and the nuts were removed. Sometimes people made pine nut flour by grinding the nuts between two rocks.

Gathering nuts was so important for Nevada’s historic tribes that at harvest time they gathered together for pine nut festivals. They celebrated with singing and dancing. Some people even taught their skills to members of other tribes.

Historic groups gathered nuts, seeds, roots, and berries for food.
Early mapmakers and explorers called some native groups digger Indians. Digger Indians dug up grubs and other insects to eat. They also used sticks to beat grasshoppers into a paste they could eat.

Other native groups had hunts called rabbit drives. A rabbit boss organized the hunt, and the main tool for the hunt was a large net. Tribe members walking in a line beat bushes with sticks and clubs. Frightened rabbits were then chased by hunters into a narrow canyon. A large net was stretched across the canyon opening to keep the rabbits from escaping. Hunts like this helped hungry tribes feed their families because they could catch so many rabbits at once.

Rabbit skins and meat were very important to early native groups. Most meat from their hunts was eaten quickly so it wouldn’t spoil. Some of it was dried and stored for later. Rabbit skins were also used to make soft robes and warm blankets.

Baskets like this were used to store food and other important things. Most baskets were even woven tightly enough to hold water.

Rabbits were a source of food for Nevada’s early native people.
Native Life and Customs

Life for native groups was not all work. Young girls often played a stick game called shinny. It was a mix between hockey and soccer. Players used sticks and a ball stuffed with deer hair. The object of the game was to get the ball into the other team’s goal.

Gambling games were also very popular. In one game, called the hand game, players tried to guess who was holding the animal bones. Players often bet rabbit skins on who they thought might win.

Nevada’s native people also believed in a Great Spirit or Creator. They taught their children that all creations have spirits. They believed some animals were messengers from the Creator or a sign of good luck. Native people also believed that people who die go to live in a better place.

Nevada’s native people lived in simple shelters. In warmer months, their shelters were built from mesquite branches. Desert breezes could blow through these branches to cool them. When it turned cold, they covered pole frames with grass, reeds, or bark. Both shelters were easy to leave behind and build again when native groups moved to find food.

Native groups believed that people, animals, plants, and even the wind and the stars would live forever with the Great Spirit after they died.
Have you ever had your picture taken in a photographic studio? Is this early photograph of Paiute children a lot different than photographs people have taken today?

Photographing Native Peoples

Not long after the camera was invented, a few photographers came west to take pictures of native peoples. Sometimes they took pictures of native people in a studio and dressed them in fancy clothes or costumes. What do you think about the way the Paiutes are dressed? Do you think they wore clothes like these everyday?
Learning From Legends

Historic native peoples taught their children about their world through stories and legends. Legends are stories that tell how something came to be. Some legends explain things, like why there are stars in the sky. Legends can also teach children important lessons. Native tribes used legends to teach their children respect for all living things.

Sarah Winnemucca
1844–1891

Sarah Winnemucca was a writer and storyteller for the Paiute people. She grew up in northern Nevada and was called "Shell-Flower" by the Paiute people who did not call her her name, "Sarah." She was the daughter of Old Chief Truckee and the granddaughter of Chief Truckee. Chief Truckee wanted her educated so she could survive in the white man's world. He sent Sarah to school in California. She, however, was treated like other students and parents. After a month, Sarah and her sister were ordered to return to Nevada, and she began speaking out about the treatment of her people. She spoke about being forced to live on reservations.

In 1883, she gave more than 400 speeches for the rights of her people, all the nation. She went to visit the White House in Washington, D.C. to see if she would help. Later, she started a school for Indian children in Nevada. She was also the first Native American woman to write a book. It was called Among the Piutes.
Paiute Creation Legend

In the beginning, there was a great land between the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevadas. The people who lived there were beautiful giants. They were always trying to protect themselves from outsiders.

One woman gave birth to a disfigured child who was treated badly by the other giants. The Great Spirit was angry because of this, so he brought fire and lightning down on the land. The land became hot and barren.

The Great Spirit also allowed the giants to be beaten by their enemies. Only two giants were left, a man and a woman. The man’s name was Paiute, and the woman was his wife. They were burned dark brown and made to live in a land where only a few birds could be found for food. The land they lived in was called Nevada.

What do you think?

Nevada’s historic people did not read or write, so they didn’t keep written records. Do you think their stories and legends would be different today if they had written them down?
Reservation Life
Life became harder for native people as the problems of living with white settlers grew worse. Soon the U.S. government stepped in and began forcing native tribes to move to reservations. Reservations are pieces of land set aside by the government. However, native groups did not want to live on reservations. Life there was not as good as the government told them it would be.

Reservation life left native people very poor. Even though they were promised food and clothing, the clothes they got were often old and worn. Sometimes the food they were sent was not good quality. Farming and hunting on reservation land was not good either. But the government wouldn’t let them hunt outside of the reservation. Native people were angry about how they were treated. They were angry about having to live on reservations.

Linking the Past to the Present

Native peoples and white settlers had a hard time getting along. Their ways of life were very different. How do people from different cultures treat each other today?

These Native American homes are on Nevada’s Moapa reservation.

Many of Dat-So-La-Lee’s baskets had beautiful patterns and designs.
Native Americans Today

Today's Native Americans no longer have to live on reservations. Many live in towns and do the same work as other Nevadans. Some live in rural areas, where they own ranches and farms.

Many of Nevada's Native Americans work together with other tribe members to improve their lives and the lives of other Nevadans. They own and operate hotels and casinos. They run their own stores and restaurants. Some sell handmade crafts or operate fisheries, campgrounds, or marinas.

Some Native Americans now choose to live on reservations. Living there is just like living in a small state. Reservations have their own governments that provide services, enforce laws, and collect taxes. People work hard to help improve reservation life. They help each other solve day-to-day problems. Today, the Paiute, Shoshone, Washoe, and Goshute tribes have reservations in Nevada.

Keeping traditions alive is another important part of Native American life in our state. A tradition is a way of life passed down from parent to child. Each year Nevada's Native Americans hold festivals and powwows. They dance and celebrate with traditional music, food, and costumes. These events help young Native Americans and others learn more about Native American culture. Culture is the way a group of people live.

What do you think?

What are some of your family's traditions? What are some of your community's traditions? What do these traditions tell people about your culture?

Memory Master

1. Name the five main tribes that lived in Nevada before white settlers came.
2. Name two ways Nevada's native people used pine nuts.
3. Describe some of the problems native people had on reservations.
Consider Character

Did you notice how early Nevada people had to cooperate to live together? They had to work together to get food, clothes, and shelter. Look back through the chapter and find one example of cooperation. Now imagine if someone in that example was not responsible and did not want to cooperate. Talk with your class about what happens when someone is not responsible.

Geography Tie-In

Many Native Tribes

When early explorers came to North America, there were over 500 native groups living here. Each group had a different culture, a different language, and a different set of beliefs. Each group lived in ways that were unique. Take a few minutes to read about these groups. Then see if you can name the region where each group lived. If you need help, go back and review the land regions in chapter 2.

Native peoples living in the Northwest carved totem poles from tall tree trunks. They used animals and birds as symbols.

Native peoples of the plains often lived in tipis made from buffalo hides. Hides were also used to make clothing. Sometimes people decorated their tipis or clothing with special symbols or drawings.

Native peoples of the Northeast used trees to make canoes, boxes, baskets, and walls for their homes. They often ate wild cranberries.

Western natives carried their water in tightly woven baskets. They lived in parts of what is now Nevada and California.

Southeastern natives wove baskets of cypress and cane that grew in their lush green swamp lands. Brightly colored beads in zigzag patterns were sometimes added to baskets and clothing to make them more interesting.

Native desert peoples of the Southwest built stone and adobe houses. They made pots from sandy red clay, which were often brightly painted.
Technology Tie-In

Can you imagine what it must have been like for early explorers and traders who first came to Nevada? What did they think about the native groups living in the area? What kinds of experiences did they have with them? How did they communicate with these groups? Many early traders and explorers wrote down what they saw and felt. Research online sources to find one of these early records. Remember, the records and journals of traders and explorers are primary sources. Records written by others about their experiences are secondary sources. (Hint: historical societies and museums have many early records.) After you have chosen and read one record, make a chart or diagram to show what you learned. The chart below is only one example of something you could make. Don’t forget to make your own chart on a separate piece of paper.

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<th>Explorer</th>
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Activity

Create Your Own Game

Native people used what was around them to make the things they needed. They didn’t have stores where they could buy things. They didn’t have computers or board games. Look around your room and in your desk. Invent a game using the things you find around you. Be creative! Make up the rules of the game. How do you know who wins? Try playing the game with your classmates.
encamped on the shore and ate a very remarkable fish at the lake, ... [about] 600 yds. from the lake. ... It is a hill that has a deep crack running through the center, and I thought it a mountain. I called it Pyramid Lake...”

—John C. Fremont

**Timeline of Events**

- **1500s** Spain seeks new lands north of Mexico.
- **1502** Christopher Columbus finds the New World.
- **1610** Spain opens the first mission (Santa Fe) in the new territory.