

NATIVE NATIONS

WEEKLY ARTICLE FEATURING DIFFERENT AMERICAN INDIAN TRIBES



QUICK FACTS

- **Language** - Shoshone>Central Numic>Uto-Aztecans
- **Enrollment** - 763
- **Location** - Nevada
- **Traditional Name** - Newe (the people)

TRIBAL HISTORY

The Ely Shoshone are descendants of the Western Shoshone bands who have lived in the Great Basin for thousands of years, thriving in a high-desert environment through a sophisticated seasonal round of hunting and gathering. Prior to European contact, they traveled in small family groups to harvest

pinyon pine nuts, hunt antelope and rabbits, and gather seeds, adapting to the harsh climate with deep ecological knowledge. The influx of silver and copper miners in the late 19th century, particularly around the boomtown of Ely, rapidly displaced the Newe from their best water sources and grazing lands, forcing many into wage labor on the fringes of the new settlements.

Despite this displacement, the people remained in their ancestral homelands. In 1931, the federal government officially established the "Ely Colony" on a small 10-acre parcel to provide housing for the Shoshone living in squalid conditions near the city. The tribe reorganized under the Indian Reorganization Act in the 1930s, forming a constitution and tribal council. Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, the tribe has fought successfully to expand their land base, most notably through the White Pine County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act of 2006, which returned thousands of acres of ancestral land to tribal trust status for housing and economic development. Source: Ely Shoshone Tribe Official Website; "The Shoshone People" by Julian Steward.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

One enduring item of cultural heritage is the Pinyon Pine Nut (Tuupin) Harvest. For the Ely Shoshone, the pinyon pine nut is not merely a food source but a sacred gift that sustained their ancestors through harsh winters. The harvest occurs in the late autumn and is historically a time of gathering, where families camp in the mountains to beat the cones from the trees and roast the nuts in the earth. This tradition is spiritually significant, often accompanied by prayers of thanksgiving for the bounty of the land. Today, the tribe celebrates this living heritage alongside others at the annual Ely Shoshone Powwow and Fandango, a festival that revives traditional social dances, hand games, and feasts to ensure the culture remains vibrant for future generations. Source: "Numa: A Northern Paiute History" (Inter-Tribal Council describes regional nutting traditions); *Ely Shoshone Powwow Public Announcements*.



FEDERAL RECOGNITION & TREATIES

The Ely Shoshone Tribe is a federally recognized sovereign nation. They are a signatory to the Treaty of Ruby Valley of 1863. This treaty, signed between the Western Shoshone bands and the US government, was a treaty of "peace and friendship" that granted the US rights to build railways and mines but, uniquely, did not explicitly cede Shoshone land title to the United States—a legal point that has been central to Western Shoshone land claims controversies (such as the Dann Sisters' case) for decades. Source: Bureau of Indian Affairs (Federal Register); Treaty of Ruby Valley (1863) Text.

Relatives & Neighbors

The Ely Shoshone maintain ties with several relatives and neighbors across the region, including the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe to the southwest and the Yomba Shoshone Tribe to the west. They are also related to the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone to the north near Elko, while their neighbors include the Confederated Tribes of the Goshute to the east along the Utah-Nevada border and the Southern Paiute people to the south.

Sources

Online Resources

Ely Shoshone Tribe Official Website (elyshoshonetribe.com) Primary source for current council info, departments (housing, environmental), enrollment, and the tribe's history of the Ely Colony.

Great Basin Indian Archives (gbia.greatbasincollege.edu) Hosted by Great Basin College, this archive features video oral histories, photos, and transcripts from Western Shoshone elders.

University of Utah Shoshone Language Project (shoshoniproject.utah.edu) Offers audio recordings, dictionaries, and lessons for the Shoshone language (Newe Taikwappeh).

National Park Service – Great Basin National Park (nps.gov) Provides ethnographic histories detailing Shoshone connections to the Snake Range and pinyon pine harvesting traditions.

Native American Rights Fund (narf.org) Searchable database containing the Constitution and Bylaws of the Ely Shoshone Tribe, outlining legal structure and membership.

Books

"Newe: A Western Shoshone History" – Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada Essential history written from an Indigenous perspective, focusing on Nevada bands and relying on oral histories.

"The Road on Which We Came" – Steven J. Crum (University of Utah Press) Definitive academic history by a Shoshone historian covering political resilience from pre-contact to the present.

"Basin-Plateau Aboriginal Sociopolitical Groups" – Julian Steward Classic 1938 text detailing pre-contact social structures and "food-named" bands in the Steptoe Valley.

"The Nature Way" – Corbin Harney (University of Nevada Press) Insights into Western Shoshone spiritual worldviews and resistance by a renowned spiritual leader from the neighboring Duckwater tribe.

"Treaty of Ruby Valley 1863" – (13 Stat. 663) The primary treaty text; essential for understanding the "peace and friendship" relationship and modern land claims.