

# For Creative Minds

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## Paiute Culture and History



The Paiute have lived in southwestern North America for a long time. Paiute legends say they have always been there. This area is now part of Utah, Arizona, Nevada and California.

The Paiute lived in the high desert. They stayed on mesas, plateaus, and mountains. They also lived in the river valleys between these plateaus.

Archeologists are scientists who study how people lived long ago. They have found arrow points in Paiute lands that are 10,000 years old. These likely came from the Paiute's ancestors. There are pithouses and pottery pieces from 2,000 years ago.

**Altitude:** height above sea-level

**High desert:** an area at high altitude with little rain

**Mesa:** a small plateau with steep sides

**Plateau:** a large area with a flat top and steep drop on at least one side

In this desert environment, the summers were hot, more than 100° F (38° C). The winters were well below freezing.

The Paiute traveled throughout the year to farm and hunt. But they didn't have far to go to follow their food sources. Instead of traveling long distances, they moved up and down. In the summers, they lived in wikiups high in the mountains where it was cool. In the winters, they lived in warm caves near the canyon floor. The Paiute take their name from this seasonal journey. Paiute means, "traveling back and forth" in their own language.



The Paiute relied on the plants and animals in the high desert. All year long, the Paiute hunted rabbits and quail with traps and on drives. At high altitudes, they hunted deer, desert big horn sheep, elk, and pronghorn antelope. They dried the meat for winter and used the skins for clothing and blankets. They ate beans of mesquite trees, wild rice, berries, prickly pear cactus, sage, skunk bush, and watercress. The Paiute grew corn and developed irrigation for their crops. They made shampoo from yucca root and used the sharp needles of the yucca leaves to sew. They made rope, moccasins, and bowstrings from the yucca fiber.



The Paiute picked pine nuts in the fall. They shelled, roasted, and ground them into flour. This flour was easy to carry and store through the winter. They used the flour to make cakes or paste. They could eat the pine-nut paste like oatmeal or make it into a drink like a protein shake.



The elders told stories. These stories could go on for hours or even days! Through the stories, the elders taught the importance of taking care of the land. They passed down their history and culture through the generations. And they taught morals (character lessons). Some legends focused on summer customs and that's when they were told. Others were told in winter.

The legend of the hoodoos tells how the trickster god, Sinawav the coyote, turned the Old Ones into rocks. This story teaches that those who do wrong will be punished. It also explains the hoodoos, tall rocks created by erosion. Vivian's grandmother uses the word *hoodoo* to remind Vivian of the story and to get her to behave.



Is there a word or a story that elders in your family use to get you to behave?

Vivian's people depended on their environment. The high desert only had enough food for a few people in an area. So the Paiute lived in small bands. Paiute bands always helped each other because they knew that someday they might need help too. They were a very welcoming and peaceful people. Families and individuals often visited other bands. They sometimes stayed for long periods before returning to their homes.

In the 1800s, American settlers came to the Paiute lands. The Paiutes welcomed the visitors as they did other Paiute bands. But the settlers never left. And they never gave back or helped the Paiute. Instead, they took over Paiute land and left the Paiute without resources.

Today there are five bands of the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah (PITU): Cedar Band of Paiutes, Indian Peaks Band of Paiutes, Kanosh Band of Paiutes, Koosharem Band of Paiutes, and Shivwits Band of Paiutes. Most of the Paiute live on PITU Tribal Reservations in Utah. Their government is the Tribal Council. Each band has its own Band Council and sends a representative to the Tribal Council.

To learn more about the Paiute, visit the Shivwits Band of Paiutes at [www.shivwits.org](http://www.shivwits.org) or [www.utahpaiutes.org/bands/shivwits](http://www.utahpaiutes.org/bands/shivwits).

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# Water Shapes The Rock

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Weathering and erosion change rocks and mountains. They change our earth.

**Weathering** breaks down rocks and minerals. There are two types of weathering: mechanical and chemical. Mechanical weathering is caused by water, ice, wind, and changes in temperature. These forces break off pieces of larger rocks. Chemical weathering is caused by water, carbon dioxide, and oxygen. They change the minerals in the rock into different, softer forms.

**Erosion** happens when water, wind and gravity move the weathered pieces away from the mother rock.

Weathering and erosion make many kinds of changes to the land. Rushing water carves ruts, ditches, washes, and canyons. It smooths out hollow places. Rushing water can come from floods, heavy rains, and melting snow. Dripping water seeps through a crack on a rock and carries away grains of sand. Dripping water can make caves, windows, or pockets. It can even make an arch.

Water fills cracks in the rock. When the temperature drops below freezing, water turns to ice. The ice expands in the crack. The crack becomes wider and deeper. When a crack is wide enough and deep enough, it causes a piece to separate from the mother rock. This process is called **ice wedging**.

Weathering and erosion shape the landscape.

## Ice Wedging Experiment

For this experiment, you will need:

- flour
- water
- a mixing bowl and fork
- a balloon
- two disposable cups

Take the balloon and fill it with some water. It should be able to fit inside your cup, so don't overfill it. Tie the balloon off and set it aside.

In your bowl, mix three cups of flour with two cups of warm water. Stir with the fork until there are no lumps left.

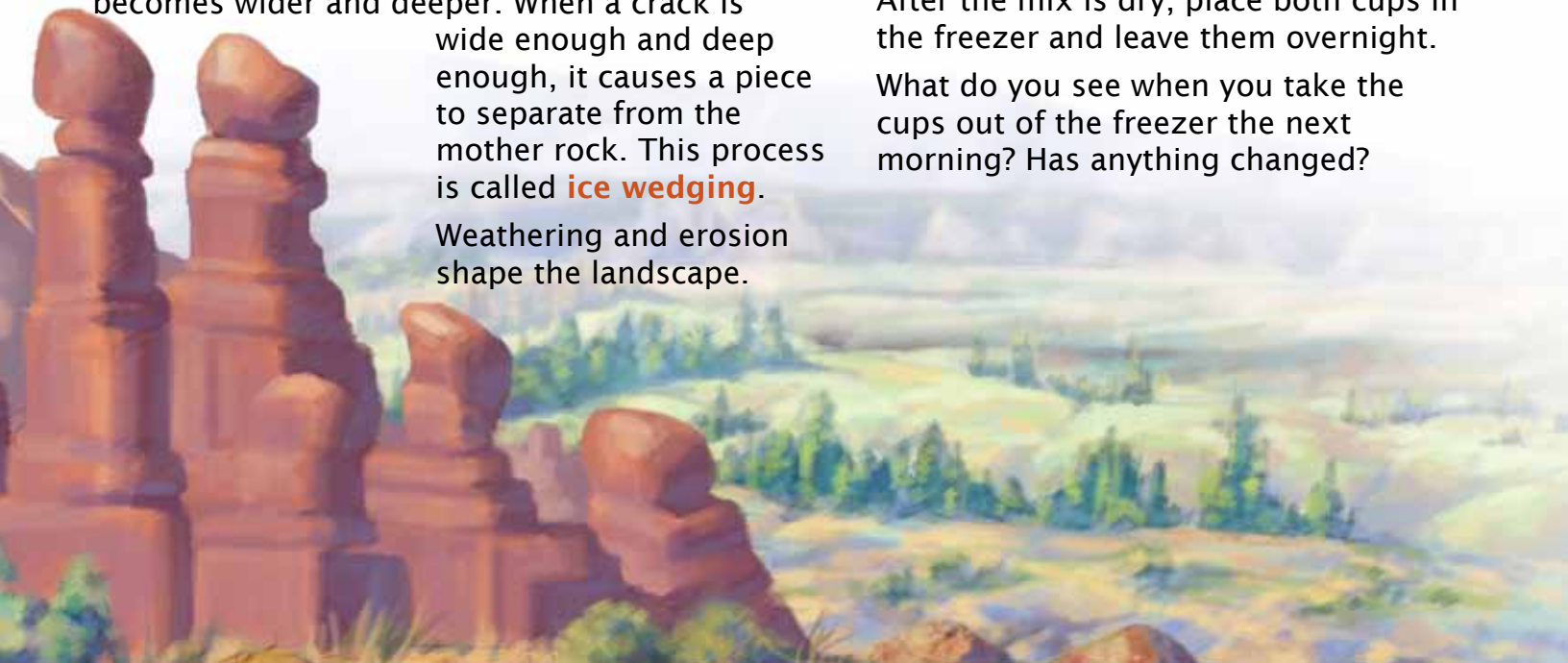
Pour some of your flour mix into the bottom of one cup. Once the bottom is covered, place your balloon in the cup. Then add more mix to cover the balloon.

In your second cup, pour in your flour mix until it is level with the mix in the first cup.

Allow the flour mix to dry and harden completely.

After the mix is dry, place both cups in the freezer and leave them overnight.

What do you see when you take the cups out of the freezer the next morning? Has anything changed?



# Hoodoos

A hoodoo is a tall, skinny column of rock. Hoodoos can be as small as a person or as tall as a building. Some hoodoos are taller than a ten story building (150 feet, 45 meters). Hoodoos and similar rock structures have many names—goblins, chimneys, columns, and spires. They are all formed in a similar way, by millions of years of weathering and erosion. There are four stages in the making of a hoodoo. Put the following stages in order to unscramble the name of the modern Paiute tribe. The answer is below.

I

When canyons run in roughly the same direction, they form **fin**s—freestanding rock walls between the canyons. Water can collect in cracks (joints) across the fins. When water freezes and ice forms in the joints, the cracks expand.



T

After many cycles of freezing and thawing (ice wedging), cracks in the fin become deeper and wider. Water can seep down the rock and create **windows**.



P

A **plateau** is a high, flat landform. Rushing water weathers and erodes the plateau. This creates ruts and washes on the earth's surface. Over millions of years, the washes can deepen to canyons.



U

Over time, the window collapses or the fin separates into individual spires. This leaves a freestanding column: a **hoodoo**. Hoodoos will continue to weather and erode. Eventually, the once-tall hoodoo will be a mound of soil.



The Colorado Plateau is a large landform that covers parts of Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico.

Bryce Canyon is in a part of the Colorado Plateau that used to be Paiute territory. Soft limestone layers and more than 200 days of freeze-thaw cycles each year make this a perfect place for ice wedging and erosion. At Bryce Canyon, many hoodoos formed in a bowl-shaped basin. It looks like a sunken city of hoodoos. This is likely where the legend of the hoodoos originated.



Answer: PITU (Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah)