



Reading #2 Cesspooch Interview

Unit 1 Lesson 5

Interview With Larry Cesspooch, Ute Storyteller

FORREST CUCH: And the Mormon settlers, when they came, how did they treat us?

LARRY CESSPOOCH: Well, when the settlers came they were different than the other people that came through Ute country. They stayed. For our people, we'd stay for a little while and move about so we didn't take anymore than we needed. But for the Mormons when they came here, they stayed in one place and they had their livestock and everything ate up from there and they killed all of our game and everything that they needed for themselves, for native people we stayed in one place. And to see it, you wouldn't think anything was, was out of the ordinary because it was all in harmony. But for them, they just ate from the center out. And more and more came and ate up more and more. And our people were just in the way. We kept getting pushed and pushed and pushed to where we couldn't be pushed anymore so they petitioned Abraham Lincoln to create a reservation. Brigham Young sent out all his surveyors* to check out the lands in Utah. And the ones for the Uinta basin returned back home and said "This land, that land, was only good for coyotes and holding the earth together." So when they created the reservation, they put us out here in Uinta basin. And [sighs] because Abraham Lincoln did that by executive order, Congress never ratified that. So Ute people have never seen any compensation* for all that was taken here in Utah.

FORREST CUCH: Larry, tell us your version of what caused the Meeker incident.

LARRY CESSPOOCH: Well my understanding is that the Nuchu, the Ute people, had many horses. And Meeker the Indian agent -- who also made himself agent, rather than somebody asking him





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to, made himself agent—wanted our people to kill their horses so that they could use grazing lands for farm land. He wanted to make us farmers. And we weren't that way; we weren't farmers. We were hunters and gatherers and we just listened to him until he started having his workers plow up our racetrack. And then the Indian people, Nuchu, they got mad! And that was it. Weren't going to take it anymore. And so they confronted Meeker and as things happened he was killed and the way that they drove their point home with him was they put a stake in his mouth and said, "We're going to silence this man forever." It's the way Ute people were, they were hard people. When they said something, there was a reason for it and that's what they did to Meeker. And all of that was the Meeker incident. And the army was called in and some captives were taken; Meeker's wife and, and daughter. And the army was sent in and the Ute people had to decide—we going to live this way rest of our life or are we going to fight? And we've been pushed so much. We were told this was yours and they took more and more and more. So we decided to fight and the result of that fight, we defeated the army but the result of the fight meant the removal of our people over from Colorado to this reservation here today.

*surveyor - someone whose job is to measure and examine an area of land

*compensation - something good that acts as a balance against something bad

Source: This interview was excerpted and used with permission from KUED, the University of Utah. We Shall Remain: The Ute. Cuch, F. (Interviewer) & Cesspooch, L. (Interviewee). (n.d.) Interview Larry Cesspooch, Ute Storyteller [Interview transcript].

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