

“THE CHIEFTAIN’S WEARY DAUGHTER”:
THE FEMINIST LEGACY AND MAINSTREAM
APPROPRIATION OF SARAH WINNEMUCCA

by

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To say the least, Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiute was controversial: she was a collaborator with the United States Army, she was an outspoken Native American rights activist and public figure, and she was, of course, a woman. This project investigates the political legacy of Sarah Winnemucca through the lens of her womanhood, employing as comparative tools the often-contrasting critical theories of "mainstream" feminism and Native feminism(s). Relying upon the understanding that Sarah Winnemucca constantly juggled a series of conflicting identities—and utilizing the theory of intersectionality to investigate those identities and their impact on her work—this research effort emphasizes the aspects of her identity that are often overlooked in the assumption that she was a "feminist heroine."

Popular imaginings of Sarah Winnemucca—like those found in the writings of her contemporary biographers—are often idealistic, oversimplified, and heavily influenced by feminist modes of thought that are distinctly white. Including the voices

of Native feminists in the ongoing scrutiny of Sarah as an indigenous woman and thinker is necessary, both in understanding the real implications of her actions, and in doing justice to the narratives and perspectives of the Northern Paiute. Sarah Winnemucca was a mediator between settler society and the Paiute community, between the public realm and her traditional heritage, and between political assertiveness and conventional forms of femininity. Thus, in comparing mainstream feminism's and Native feminism's perceptions of Sarah Winnemucca, the complexity and contentiousness of her political legacy and modes of advocacy offer distinctive insight into what it means to be Native, female, and radical.

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Introduction: In Like a Lion

It is the late autumn of 1848, and on the banks of the Humboldt River in present-day Nevada, the Northern Paiute are fleeing their ancestral homelands.¹ The Great Basin is comprised of arid desert—open, unending expanses of beige-grey soil indelibly marked by the silver-green growth of sagebrush for miles on end. The Northern Paiute have made these regions of Nevada, Oregon, California, and Idaho their home for thousands of years, inhabiting it as profoundly and ubiquitously as the sagebrush itself. The shrubs speckle the broad, flat tract of desert, from the riverbanks to the purple-grey mountains in the distance, to which the Paiutes now make their escape. In the opposite direction, a dust cloud rises slowly and irrevocably, shrouding white intruders. A little girl called Thocmetony, however, has been left behind.²

All around her, the Northern Paiute are running, bobbing and weaving between the pockets of sagebrush, sending grouse scuttling from their hiding places. But Thocmetony, terrified and only four years old, cannot bring her feet to move. Her mother, Tuboitony, with Thocmetony's infant sister strapped to her back, knows that if her daughter cannot move quickly enough, the white intruders will show no mercy.³ Tuboitony begins to dig a hole. She scoops up the sand and, ordering her daughter to lie down, covers Thocmetony's small body with the loose earth. She replants a sage

1. Sally Springmeyer Zanjani. *Sarah Winnemucca*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 5. Zanjani takes care to point out that the precise date of this particular settlement group's arrival is not known definitively. By using other sources, however, Zanjani makes an estimate of the year to be 1848.

2. Gae Whitney Canfield. *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), 4. Thocmetony, Sarah Winnemucca's Paiute name, means "shellflower."

3. *Ibid.*

shrub next to Thocmetony's head, so that the branches shade her bewildered face from the overhead sun, and Tuboitony leaves her there, with nothing but a warning to remain silent at all costs.⁴ As Thocmetony's family retreats into the foothills, she lies still—immobilized, buried alive, waiting for nightfall.

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As risky as it was, Tuboitony's plan worked. In the dead of night, she returned to the makeshift hiding place and retrieved her daughter. Much later in life, Thocmetony would write of these events, recalling how the white settlers came "like a lion, yes, like a roaring lion, and have continued so ever since."⁵ Indeed, the young girl had hardly seen the last of the white people. Before she reached the age of thirteen, Thocmetony had taken the Christian name of Sarah and started using her father's name—Winnemucca, meaning "The Giver"⁶—as a surname. Today, Sarah Winnemucca is the name by which she is most widely known, the name that has inspired multiple biographies, and the name that continues to provoke deeply-felt resentments among the Northern Paiute, Sarah's own people. Over the course of her brief and busy lifetime (ca. 1844—1891), for reasons both good and bad, Sarah earned herself a reputation that remains immovably embedded in the Northern Paiutes' cultural identity. To say the least, Sarah was controversial: she was a collaborator (some might

4. Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins. *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims*. Edited by Mary Peabody Mann. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1994), 11-12.

5. Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 1.

6. *Ibid.*, 3.

even say a conspirator) with the United States Army, she was an outspoken Native rights activist and public figure, and she was, of course, a woman.

This project investigates the political legacy of Sarah Winnemucca through the lens of her womanhood, employing as comparative tools the often-contrasting critical theories of “mainstream” feminism and Native feminism(s).⁷ It is a well-documented fact that mainstream (i.e. white) feminists often oversimplify women of color’s experiences in the name of “unity,” appropriating those experiences in order to fit a specific political agenda.⁸ In Sarah’s case, both practices have occurred. The purpose of this project is *not* to uncover the reasons or motivations behind Sarah’s cooperation with the U.S. Army, nor is it to produce some form of judgment on if she was a “good” or a “bad” feminist—or if she was a feminist at all. On the contrary, my research is centered on the notion that mainstream definitions of feminism are, more often than not, exclusive of Native women and their experiences.⁹ Thus, Sarah Winnemucca makes for

7. The term “Native feminism”—rather than “indigenous feminism” or “tribal feminism”—is used in this paper to deliberately denote the decolonization efforts of Native women in the United States. If the reader is confused or unsettled by the use of the word “mainstream” in describing a particular brand of feminism, the reason for doing so concerns the tacit assumption that the blanket term “feminism” truly addresses and serves *all* women. Often, when comparing what is here called “mainstream” feminism with other feminist modes (Native feminism, Black feminism, postcolonial feminism, etc.), the latter is presumed to be only a subset of the former. It is as though “feminism” is the river, and Native feminism (in this case) is merely one of the streams that flow into it. In more colloquial terms, then, “mainstream” feminism refers to white feminism. This is not to say, of course, that white feminism (or whiteness) is “mainstream” in the sense that it is universal, but that dominant systems of knowledge and socialization have routinely presented the white experience as normative.

8. Teresa Zackodnik, “Reaching Toward a Red-Black Coalitional Feminism: Anna Julia Cooper’s Woman versus the Indian,” in *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture*, ed. Jean Barman et al. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), 110.

9. The argument that white feminist theories are not always applicable to the lives of Native women comes from interviews that I conducted with women of the Northern Paiute and Wasco tribes at the Warm Springs Reservation in central Oregon. In exploring this argument in my paper, I do not intend to suggest that Native women do not “fit” with feminism, but rather that mainstream white-centric definitions of feminism have routinely disregarded Native women’s experiences.

a compelling case study, in that two very different perspectives on her life and legacy exist at odds with each other. This tension between white feminist historians' and Native women's understandings of Sarah is neither accidental nor insignificant. Rather, it suggests that Native individuals have not been consulted in the academic writing of their own histories, and thus, Native voices have been left out of the historical narrative. This project aims to examine this disparity in opinion and expose its harmful implications, while constructing a Native-centered representation of Sarah Winnemucca, as told by contemporary Northern Paiute women.

First and foremost, we will explore the events of Sarah Winnemucca's life, from an upbringing spent between her tribal community and white settlement towns, to her highly-attended lectures in the eastern United States. In considering the timeline of Sarah's life, gender will play a special role; how, this project asks, did Sarah's womanhood influence the opportunities available to her, the criticisms and praises that she received, and the context through which she is understood today? Of particular importance in this inquiry is the role that white women played and continue to play in Sarah's life and legacy. Although this trend can be traced back to her childhood, it was Sarah's collaboration with the Peabody sisters—and the influence that these white female reformers had in the writing of her autobiography—that is especially significant here. While this paper does not delve into a comprehensive literary analysis of the autobiography, it does explore how a white female editorship impacted Sarah's story and legacy. Following this pattern to the modern day, we will also examine the more recent works of white female historians, who almost universally hail Sarah as a “strong woman” and often liken her to Pocahontas or Sacagawea. Most notably, these

contemporary writers utilize the rhetoric of mainstream feminism as a framework for telling Sarah's story. Problems arise, however, when that framework exists directly at odds with the perspectives of Northern Paiute people, and particularly Northern Paiute women. The final portion of this project will utilize the testimonies of Myra Johnson-Orange and Shayleen Macy, both members of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, in attempting to delineate how this misunderstanding and misappropriation can (and does) impact Native communities in very real ways. Rather than relying upon historical documents or white-authored biographies, this paper places priority on Native women's version of the story, as their perspectives are uniquely informed by oral history and lived experience. In an extremely idealistic sense, then, this project aims to serve as an answer to the problematic practices of non-Native historians who have written previously about Sarah Winnemucca.

In working to re-center Native voices in this dialogue, a historical methodology of decolonization is essential. During the fall of 2015, I was fortunate enough to take part in the Northern Paiute History Project, a course taught by Professors Kevin Hatfield and Jennifer O'Neal at the University of Oregon's Clark Honors College. Now entering its fifth year, the Northern Paiute History Project is centered on an ongoing partnership between students, scholars, and Northern Paiute tribal members, with the goal of fostering authentic discourse and collaboration between these parties. Each fall, students conduct a field research trip to the Warm Springs Reservation in central Oregon, where they meet with tribal elders, educators, and scholars, who help them to select and develop a research topic on the Northern Paiute tribe's history. As a participant in the third year of the program, I completed my first draft of this project

utilizing the methodology of decolonization that Professors Hatfield and O'Neal taught to and expected of their students.

First and foremost, this methodology of decolonization is community-based. Students work alongside Northern Paiute course partners to select research topics that are of importance and relevance to the tribe, listening to their guidance and advice on where to focus. Secondly, the decolonizing methodology draws meaning from oral histories and traditional knowledge forms, rather than raw data or academic jargon. With the understanding that Native worldviews and ways of knowing are greatly underrepresented in academia, the structure of the course deliberately subverts traditional modes of historical education in favor of a people-first approach. Participation in the course also necessitates a sense of commitment to reciprocity and collaboration between Native and non-Native parties; thus, after finishing their papers, students return the products of their research to the tribal members who aided in the process. In my case, this also involves the return of my completed thesis research and writing to the Warm Springs Culture & Heritage Department, as acknowledgement of the generous contributions that tribal women have made to this project. Additionally, in February of 2016, I presented my research to Myra Johnson-Orange's students at Madras High School, which allowed me to share my findings with a younger generation of Northern Paiute community members. Practices like these are meant to counteract the trend of non-Native scholars being the primary recipients of praise and compensation for studies of Native American history, while Native individuals often receive next to nothing, or are not consulted in these studies at all.

Furthermore, the decolonizing methodology requires the researcher to reject the notion of objectivity, which is valued so highly in academic writing. As Myra frequently reminded me during my research process, *everybody* has a stance. There is no “unbiased” way to write history; every writer’s approach is informed both by the legacy of their ancestors, as well as the writer’s own beliefs and actions. As a non-Native person, acknowledging my own stance—and the privileges that come along with it—has been a base-level requirement of this project. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the methodology of decolonization places as much (if not more) importance on the *process* as on the *product*. In other words, the ways in which we conduct our research are just as significant as the knowledge we ultimately uncover. Researchers who hope to utilize a decolonizing methodology must actively work to unlearn the white supremacist foundations of academia that systematically exclude Native perspectives and participants. As Shayleen Macy put it, “It’s not going to be easy... If you’re trying to help Natives have a voice, that struggle is going to be really hard... You have to understand that if it’s frustrating for you, then you’re probably doing the right thing.”¹⁰ In this particular research, adding the field of Women’s/Gender/Feminist Studies to the mix made the decolonizing methodology all the more vital. As Choctaw historian and writer Devon Abbot Mihesuah states, “Without the inclusion of feelings and an understanding of motivations, histories of Native women—of all Natives—are boring, impersonal, and more importantly, merely speculative and not really history.”¹¹

10. Shayleen Macy, interview by author, phone, May 1, 2017.

11. Devon Abbott Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 4.

Thus, this project relies heavily upon interviews with female members of the Northern Paiute and Wasco tribes, in an effort to “decolonize” history and prioritize Native voices where Native issues are concerned. Including the voices of Native women in the ongoing scrutiny of Sarah Winnemucca and her legacy is absolutely necessary, both in understanding the real implications of her actions, and in doing justice to the narratives and perspectives of the Northern Paiute.



Figure 1: Sarah Winnemucca

Throughout her life, Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiute worked as an interpreter, schoolteacher, Army scout, lecturer, and activist. Likely taken on a visit to San Francisco, this image depicts Sarah wearing one of her stage costumes, which she designed herself. (Courtesy of Nevada Historical Society)

From her early introduction to white colonizers, to her career in the spotlight of white audiences and subsequent veneration by white feminist historians, Sarah Winnemucca's life and legacy are fundamentally linked to settler society. Perhaps what has made Sarah so attractive to white feminist historians is her plurality: her existence at the intersections of settler society and the Northern Paiute community, of the cherished past and the imminent, seemingly unstoppable future. To this day, many popular

portrayals of Sarah—from academic biographies to children’s books—idealize her actions and oversimplify their immense impact on the Northern Paiute. In particular, the notion that Sarah was a paragon of the feminist project flies in the face of Native women’s perspectives, indicating that it is heavily influenced by modes of feminism that are distinctly white. Sarah Winnemucca’s life was a balancing-act of conflicting identities and obligations. In her lifetime, she was a mediator between settler society and the Northern Paiute community, between the public realm and her traditional heritage, and between political assertiveness and conventional forms of femininity. Likewise, the modern dissonance between white and Native perceptions of Sarah’s character demonstrates the complexity and contentiousness of her political legacy. Utilizing the theory of intersectionality to investigate these conflicts, this project emphasizes the aspects of Sarah’s story that are often overlooked or ignored in the assumption that she was a feminist heroine of sorts.

One Foot in Each Camp

The incident in the fall of 1848 was far from the first time the Northern Paiute had encountered or interacted with white settlers, but their sustained arrivals to the Great Basin and beyond posed a devastating threat to the tribe's traditional ways of being. A nomadic people, the Northern Paiute lived at the time in family-based bands of about one or two hundred individuals, migrating in accordance with seasonal food supplies.¹² Each Paiute band was named for the primary source of food in its corresponding territory. Sarah Winnemucca grew up in the area surrounding Pyramid Lake in present-day Nevada. Her band, the Kuyuidika-a, derived their name from the cui-ui, a prehistoric fish that inhabited the waters of Pyramid Lake and provided the band with a dependable source of sustenance.¹³ The Kuyuidika-a's reliance on the ancient cui-ui is a testament to the length of their existence on—and their rightful claim to—the lands of the Great Basin.

Sarah Winnemucca's maternal grandfather, Captain Truckee, was a Northern Paiute leader who dealt amicably and diplomatically with the white emigrants. Along with his son-in-law (and Sarah's father), Chief Winnemucca, Truckee often served as a guide to the exploratory parties that passed through the Great Basin on their way to California; in 1846, for instance, Truckee aided General John C. Frémont over the Sierras and later participated in the Bear Flag Revolt to seize California from Mexico.¹⁴

12. Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 8.

13. Cari M. Carpenter. *Seeing Red: Anger, Sentimentality, and American Indians*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2008), 88.

14. Frederick E. Hoxie. *This Indian Country: American Indian Political Activists and the Place They Made*. (New York: Penguin, 2012), 146. Print.



Figure 2: Northern Paiute Territory

The shaded portion of this map represents the traditional homelands of the Northern Paiute. This region of present-day Oregon, Idaho, California, and Nevada is known as the Great Basin. (Courtesy of James Gardner)

Captain Truckee was, in essence, a proponent of friendship and cooperation between the Northern Paiute and the white settlers. For the most part, their social structure of nomadic bands precluded the Paiutes from selecting single “chiefs” that presided over the tribe in the manner of the archetypal Native American community. Nellie Shaw Harnar, a member and historian of the Northern Paiute tribe, claims that Winnemucca,

though certainly prominent among his people, “was not considered the chief of the tribe” in the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁵ Today, many of Sarah’s critics argue that the Winnemuccas were considered leaders “simply because they were the ones, beginning with the amenable ‘Captain Truckee,’ who had the closest ties with the whites.”¹⁶

15. Nellie Harnar Shaw. *The History of the Pyramid Lake Indians, 1843-1959, and Early Tribal History, 1825-1834*. (Sparks, NV, Dave’s Printing and Publishing, 1974),104.

16. Carpenter, *Seeing Red*, 93.

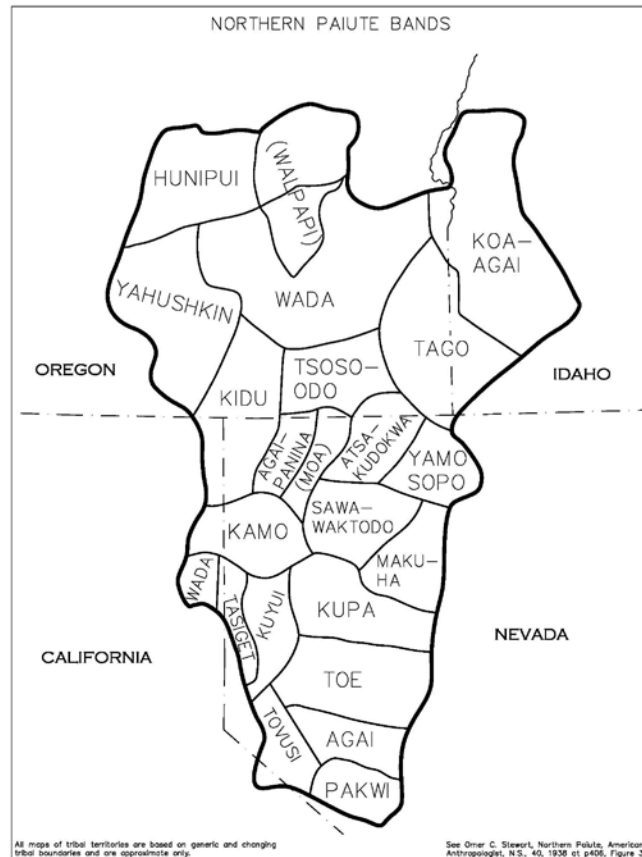


Figure 3: Northern Paiute Bands

The Northern Paiute dispersed themselves throughout the Great Basin in familial bands. Each band was named after its primary source of food. (Courtesy of James Gardner)

Indeed, it is likely that Chief Winnemucca established and maintained his position of influence in the tribe via a combination of his wealth, his familial ties to Truckee, and later, Sarah’s fluency in English.¹⁷ All three of these assets would have made Winnemucca an easily accessible liaison in the eyes of government officials—and by extension, an obvious choice for the singular, distinguished “chief” that white Americans expect to find in virtually all Native American tribes.

17. Hoxie, *This Indian Country*, 148.

Sarah Winnemucca later noted, however, that the willingness of her father and grandfather to welcome white settlers often “intruded” upon her otherwise happy childhood.¹⁸ Her birth and upbringing coincided with the era in which the Northern Paiute had begun to interact on a more regular basis with the white settlers, who often passed through their territory seeking gold and glory in California. For Sarah, the result was a childhood spent between two worlds. As a young girl, she was lucky enough to experience the Northern Paiute’s ancient life-ways before they were all but decimated by the onset of settler-society. Truckee’s daughter, Tuboitory served as Sarah’s model of Paiute womanhood: gathering fuel, constructing brush shelters, digging roots and collecting seeds, and weaving baskets for food storage and transportation.¹⁹ On the other hand, it was traditionally the role of Paiute men—like Sarah’s grandfather, Truckee—to handle relations with outsiders.²⁰ After each of his excursions with white settlers, Truckee would return to Northern Paiute territory with stories of his “white brothers” and their beautiful clothes, enormous houses, and powerful guns; that winter, Sarah recalls, Truckee taught everyone how to sing the tune to “The Star-Spangled Banner.”²¹ It was on Truckee’s volition, likely sometime in 1850, that Tuboitory, Sarah, and her siblings accompanied the patriarch and a party of Paiute travelers to California.²² Much to her grandfather’s dismay, young Sarah was initially reluctant to

18. Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes*, 6.

19. Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 9-10.

20. Hoxie, *This Indian Country*, 145.

21. Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 20.

22. Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes*, 6.

engage with her surroundings. In fact, the degree to which Sarah was painfully indisposed to interact with white settlers is evident in the anecdote that details her first sustained encounter with white settlers in California. Fearful of the white people, the six-year-old girl “hid under her blanket and cried,” frustrating the efforts of her diplomatic grandfather.²³ These dynamics between granddaughter and grandfather suggest that Sarah possessed less agency in her assimilation than is often presumed.

Sarah’s resistance to settler society, however, seemed to wane with the passing of time. In her autobiography, *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims*, she provides an anecdote of her growing comfort in white-centered spaces. During a stay in Stockton, Sarah fell ill with a severe case of poison oak; moving in and out of consciousness, she remembered a “pretty sweet voice” and a soft touch that tended to her every day for the duration of her sickness. When she had recovered, Sarah’s grandfather explained that it had been a “good white woman” visiting her, and when the emigrant woman came that day to see Sarah, “the first thing she did she put her beautiful white hand on [Sarah’s] forehead. [Sarah] looked at her; she was, indeed, a beautiful angel.”²⁴ Gae Whitney Canfield, one of Sarah’s biographers, notes that this experience provoked Sarah to find “a new trust in the white race.”²⁵ Of this experience, Sarah herself writes, “So I came to love the white people.”²⁶ It was around this time that

23. Ibid., 7.

24. Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 32.

25. Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes*, 7.

26. Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 33.

she shed her Paiute name, Thocmetony, and began using the name Sarah; some have credited Hiram Scott, a white friend of Truckee's, with bestowing the name upon the young girl. In 1857, Truckee arranged for Sarah and her sister, Elma to begin living with and working for the white family of Major William M. Ormsby in Genoa, Nevada.²⁷ During this time, Sarah served as a playmate to the Major's daughter, Lizzie, and helped with household chores; she earned her keep and learned to read, write, and speak fluently in both English and Spanish. Sarah's autobiography, written twenty-five years after her arrival in Genoa, reflects a deep sense of familiarity with virtually all of the town's white residents. She was able to recall each family's name, where their home was located, and how they made their living. From a young age, Sarah had taken a liking to the luxury items found in white settlers' homes—from fine china to red upholstered chairs—and now, they had become a fixture of her world. When she left the Ormsby home, likely sometime in the first half of 1858, Sarah's early and efficient assimilation was well underway.

To be sure, Sarah's introduction to settler-society was far more privileged (and far less violent) than most of her fellow Paiutes', and she later made decisions that served to sustain her involvement with and ingratiation among white people. But the influence of her grandfather's actions—and the early age at which they took place in Sarah's life—should not be disregarded in examining her dealings with white actors. The critical theory of *intersectionality*, coined by Black feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, holds that overlapping social identities—such as race, gender,

27. Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes*, 11.

socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, and more—exist within a complex matrix of interactions and, therefore, produce individuals’ diverse experiences of oppression and/or privilege. In other words, no single element of one’s identity can be isolated from the others. An examination of Sarah Winnemucca’s intersecting identities must not only take into account her womanhood and Native ancestry, but also her position of power within the Northern Paiute tribe itself. As the granddaughter of Captain Truckee and the daughter of Chief Winnemucca, Sarah was born into eminence. Sarah’s upbringing afforded her many opportunities to engage with (and become “acceptable” to) white settlers. These opportunities included brief attendance at a prestigious and predominantly white convent school in San Jose, where Sarah continued her education and thrived in a scholastic setting. Unfortunately, upon learning of Sarah and Elma’s arrival, the wealthy parents of the white girls who were enrolled in the school complained of the girls’ admittance, Paiute “royalty” or not. Sarah and Elma were quickly dismissed.²⁸ Shayleen Macy, a 31-year-old Wasco member of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, notes that obtaining an education has always been a method for Natives to gain “a higher status among the whites,” which is, in turn, a way of protecting oneself from harm.²⁹ While her education and fluency in English later made Sarah a viable candidate for her positions as a translator, schoolteacher, and scout, it is unclear if she viewed these assets as tools for survival, as Shayleen does. Whether or not she did, Sarah’s extended visits to white-populated frontier towns often resulted in

28. Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 70.

29. Macy, interview by author, May 1, 2017.

her fortunate absences during the incidences of escalating violence between the Northern Paiute, the white settlers, and the U.S. Army.

In 1859, the discovery of the Comstock Silver Lode brought a new influx of settlers to the region. That winter was particularly harsh; while the white settlers remained warm, dry, and well fed in their log cabins, large numbers of Northern Paiute perished in the snow.³⁰ The white occupation of Paiute lands had decimated tribal food stores, and the settlers' cattle herds had displaced the game that the Paiutes had always relied on for winter sustenance. Several instances of interpersonal violence between the Paiutes and their white neighbors—including the murder of a white male settler, the kidnapping and abuse of two twelve-year-old Paiute girls, and the subsequent murder of their captors—further added to the tensions and soon engendered armed conflict.³¹ The brief Pyramid Lake War in the spring and early summer of 1860 resulted in the Paiute's impressive defeat of four companies of U.S. troops and over five hundred volunteer soldiers. In response, the U.S. government established Fort Churchill on the Carson River, bringing the threat of war ever closer to the Paiutes' home.³² Hard times lay ahead. Surrounded by “the signal-fires of death on every mountain-top,” Captain Truckee passed away shortly after the hostilities had ended, in October of 1860.³³

30. Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes*, 20.

31. Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 56-59.

32. Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes*, 25-27.

33. Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 66.

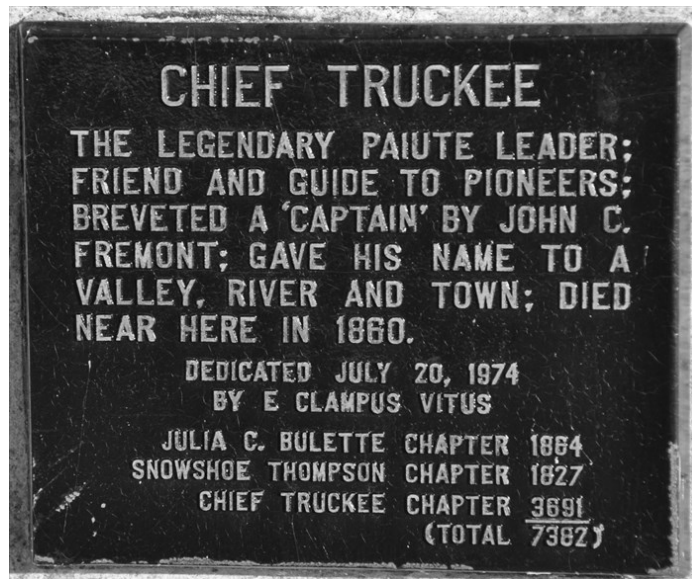


Figure 4: Captain Truckee's Memorial

Sarah's grandfather, Captain Truckee, was known for his attachment to the white settlers who frequently passed through the Great Basin. This memorial plaque in Dayton, Nevada praises Truckee's role in the settlement of the West. (Courtesy of Waymarking.com)

After her grandfather's death, Sarah began adopting more agency in her dealings with white settler-society, though she did remain under the guidance of her father. If Captain Truckee's method for fostering relationships with white settlers was to guide them on expeditions and provide them with resources, Chief Winnemucca's method was more entertainment-based. Between 1864 and 1865, Winnemucca began traveling on a circuit of frontier towns, bringing Sarah and her siblings along with him. During this brief stint on the stage, Winnemucca and his children came to be known as the Paiute "Royal Family," a denotation invented entirely by white audiences and newspapers.³⁴ "Princess Sarah," at only twenty years old, found herself at the center of

34. The Northern Paiute culture, like most Native cultures in the United States, does not include any concept of "royalty" among its members. In the case of the Winnemuccas' performance circuit, the term "Royal Family" was created by white newspapers—but not entirely shunned by the Winnemuccas themselves—in order to garner publicity for their appearances on the stage.

attention. Appealing to the white settlers' fascination with all things Native, the routine often included performances of tribal ceremonies that bore little resemblance to the real cultural traditions of the Northern Paiute.



Figure 5: Chief Winnemucca

Sarah's father, Chief Winnemucca, was a leader of the Northern Paiute who, like his father-in-law, interacted frequently with white settlers, although he kept more of a distance than Captain Truckee. His name means "The Giver" in the Paiute language. (Courtesy of the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration)

Chief Winnemucca would accompany the theatrics with appeals to the settlers, and Sarah would translate, asking for their sympathy and support during the tribe's time of struggle. They told of the devastation of tribal lands and the acts of incoherent violence committed against their people, but the routine failed to produce any real benefits for the tribe.³⁵ It was, however, instrumental in establishing Sarah's comfort in the spotlight. She had, according to one of her biographers, a "forceful" personality, and "throughout her life, she was something of a performer."³⁶

Given the early age at which it began, Sarah Winnemucca's involvement in white settler society may have been a deliberate choice, or it may have been a necessary adjustment based on familial pressures. In all likelihood, it was some combination of the two. Although her ties to the encroaching whites remained strong thereafter, it is unclear if Sarah's involvement in future years was entirely a result of her own proclivities for assimilation.

The actions of an adult cannot be wholly excused by the events of his or her childhood, but those events certainly should not be regarded as inconsequential. Myra Johnson-Orange, a 68-year-old Northern Paiute elder and a member of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, identifies the "overwhelming curiosity of childhood" as a factor that may have contributed to Sarah's relatively easy introduction to non-Native society. She does not, however, regard it as an excuse for her cooperation and collaboration with the U.S. Army. Sarah may have "lost her Native-ness sooner than

35. Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes*, 36-43.

36. Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 72.

most,” Myra points out, but that does little to exculpate her of the harms she later brought unto her people.³⁷ In that sense, Myra’s unwillingness to pardon Sarah is understandable. It is also indicative of the genocidal, cultural, and historical trauma that renders many Northern Paiute people incapable of understanding Sarah Winnemucca as anyone other than the woman who betrayed them.³⁸

37. Myra Johnson-Orange, interview by author, University of Oregon, December 3, 2015.

38. Myra Johnson-Orange holds negative feelings towards Sarah Winnemucca, and she firmly believes that most Northern Paiute people living on the Warm Springs Reservation do, too. It is worth noting, however, that members of different Paiute bands and/or reservations may understand and remember Sarah in other ways. These variations in perspective could have to do with how each band uniquely experienced the impacts of Sarah’s actions or, more broadly, the arrival of white settlers. As we will explore later, some members of the Pyramid Lake Reservation in Nevada even revere Sarah, which may stem from the fact that Sarah was born and raised in that area. In essence, there is not one universal “Paiute” perspective on Sarah Winnemucca.

The Traitor-Heroine Complex

Indeed, Sarah Winnemucca's name is, to this day, a painful one to fall on the ears of Northern Paiute descendants. In her foreword to Sarah's autobiography, Catherine S. Fowler accurately points out that many contemporary Paiute people "see [Sarah] as a tool of the military... and even worse, as a traitor who caused members of her own tribe to be killed and captured in various campaigns."³⁹ Sarah's career was long and her influence was far-reaching, but in the view of her people, one event often stands out as the single defining moment of her legacy. To this day, Sarah's involvement with the U.S. Army remains at the core of the contrasting and conflicting perceptions of her legacy. This portion of her career has allowed Sarah to "fit into a storyline of famous American Indian women who made personal sacrifices on behalf of Anglos"—a narrative that is, for obvious reasons, more appealing to her white supporters.⁴⁰ On the other hand, these same events have also served to solidify her label as a "White-man's Indian" who betrayed her people.⁴¹ Nevertheless, as Sarah entered maturity, her childhood spent alternating between two worlds began to illuminate a wealth of opportunities. The experiences that had terrified Sarah as a child had now become assets. They made her unique and, in other words, employable.

39. Catherine S. Fowler, foreword to *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims*, by Sarah Winnemucca-Hopkins, ed. Mary Peabody Mann. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1994), 4.

40. Carpenter, *Seeing Red*, 92.

41. *Ibid.*, 93.

Between the years of 1869 and 1873, Sarah worked as an interpreter at Camp McDermit on the Nevada-Oregon border.⁴² Aiding government officials and military commanders, she earned herself a reputation of eloquence and cooperation. It was during this time that Sarah met and married her first husband, Edward C. Bartlett, a white former First Lieutenant who habitually borrowed Sarah's money and was, in her words, "nothing but a drunkard."⁴³ They were married in Salt Lake City on January 29, 1871, but her marriage to a white man caused Sarah to fall out of favor with her father; within a few months, the relationship had dissolved. In 1875, Sarah reluctantly took a job as an interpreter and schoolteacher at the Malheur Reservation in eastern Oregon. The Reservation had been established by executive order in 1872 as the only Paiute-specific reservation in the state. The Indian Agent at the time of Sarah's arrival, Samuel Parrish, was well-liked by the residents. Parrish was committed to an assimilationist agenda of teaching the Paiutes how to "do like white people," but he was also relatively progressive—as far as Indian Agents go.⁴⁴ Sarah herself referred to him as "our white father."⁴⁵ In late June of 1876, however, Parrish was dismissed from his post. He was replaced by Major William V. Rinehart, a proponent of extermination-style warfare who took pleasure and pride in his abuse of the Northern Paiute during his time at Malheur. By the end of his first week as Indian Agent, Rinehart had told the Paiutes,

42. Cari M. Carpenter and Carolyn Sorisio, eds., *The Newspaper Warrior: Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins's Campaign for American Indian Rights, 1864-1891*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), xv-xvi.

43. Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes*, 79.

44. Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 107.

45. *Ibid.*, 117.

“Nothing here is yours. It is all the government’s.”⁴⁶ He declined to pay the Paiutes for their labor, refused to let them keep the crops they raised, and was rumored to sell the Reservation’s supplies to nearby white settlers.

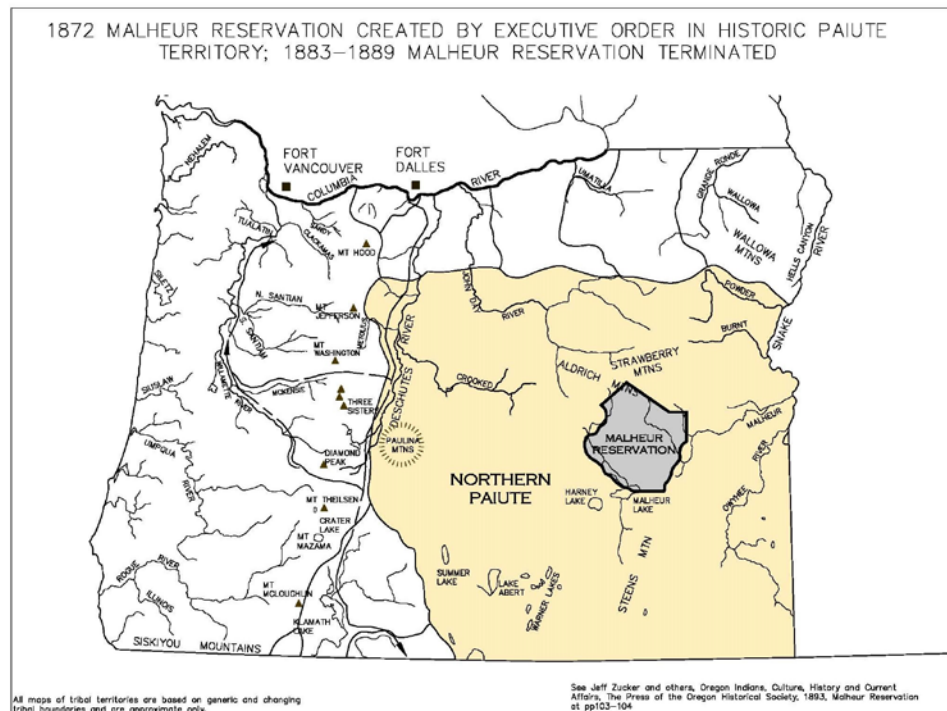


Figure 6: The Malheur Reservation

After its creation in 1872, the Malheur Reservation became the site of much conflict and suffering for the Northern Paiutes. (Courtesy of James Gardner)

As tensions on the Malheur Reservation continued to rise, Sarah was often asked to serve as the Paiutes’ advocate, going between the Reservation’s white administrators and her own people. In response to her reports of mistreatment—which she directed to Rinehart himself, to Army commanders at nearby Camp Harney, and reportedly, to

46. Ibid., 133.

Washington D.C. in the form of a letter—Agent Rinehart dismissed Sarah from her position in late 1876.⁴⁷

In mid-November of that year, Sarah married her second white husband, Joseph Satewaller, in Canyon City, Oregon. Very little has been recorded about this marriage, and like that of Sarah and Edward Barlett, it was short-lived.⁴⁸ In June of 1878, about a year and a half after her departure from Malheur, Sarah returned to the Reservation. In the two months prior, several Malheur residents had trekked to John Day three times to ask Sarah for her assistance in defending their rights on the Reservation, where conditions had become unbearable. Agent Rinehart continued to withhold rations and resources from the residents, and many Paiutes had fled the Reservation, taking refuge at Steens Mountain to the south. There, they were joined by about fifteen families of Bannock people, who were fleeing similarly abysmal conditions on the Fort Hall Reservation in eastern Idaho.⁴⁹ Like the Paiutes, the Bannocks had witnessed the dwindling of their traditional food stores and the devastation of their prairie homelands at the hands of encroaching white settlers. In order to survive, the Bannocks had turned to raiding white frontier towns, but Paiute leaders had, for the most part, declined their entreaties to join in the rebellion. Sensing an opportunity, Sarah told Captain Reuben F. Bernard, “If I can be of any use to the army, I am at your service, and I will go with it

47. *Ibid.*, 134.

48. Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 143. Zanjani notes in her account that less than four months after Sarah’s marriage to Satewaller, a local newspaper reported that Sarah had married Bob Thacker, who had been a member of Sarah’s father’s tribe and an interpreter at Camp McDermitt. No official records of this event have ever been recovered, although the marriage may have taken place by way of a traditional Paiute ceremony.

49. Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 137-138.

till the war is over...I will go and do all I can for the government.”⁵⁰ In a matter of days, the tensions had crystallized into tangible military conflict—the Bannock-Paiute War of 1878—and shortly after electing to assist the whites, Sarah learned that her father’s band had been captured and held hostage by the Bannocks.⁵¹ She immediately enlisted as an Army scout under General Oliver O. Howard and set out for Juniper Lake, Oregon, where she successfully assisted her father and some 160 Paiutes in escaping the rebel Bannock camp. When all was said and done, Sarah recalled:

This was the hardest work I ever did for the government in all my life... From 10 o’clock June 13 up to June 15, arriving back at 5:30 P.M., having been in the saddle night and day; distance, about two hundred and twenty-three miles. Yes, I went for the government when the officers could not get an Indian man or a white man to go for love or money. I, only an Indian woman, went and saved my father and his people.⁵²

Sarah’s primary contribution to the Army’s efforts, however, is often considered her assistance in locating and rounding up a number of itinerant Paiute bands after the conflict’s end. Because the Bannock-Paiute War was brief, lasting only 30 days, it was the capture of these bands, which Sarah called “small parties of hostiles,” that ultimately proved most harmful to the Paiute people.⁵³ As she helped the Army to trace and assemble these groups that had dispersed themselves throughout eastern Oregon,

50. *Ibid.*, 149-150.

51. The chronology of Sarah’s own account reflects that she pledged her support to Captain Bernard *before* learning that the Bannocks had taken her father hostage. The biographies of both Canfield and Zanjani also adhere to this timeline. To some, this chronology will suggest a sense of willingness on Sarah’s part to assist the Army without needing a pressing or compelling reason to do so. On the other hand, if Sarah had learned of her father’s capture and *then* offered her services, it would certainly be easier to portray her involvement as a matter of familial safety and wellbeing.

52. Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 164.

53. *Ibid.*, 185.

Sarah was reported to reassure her frightened people that the roundup was for good reason, that the Paiutes would be reunited on their homelands and protected from future conflicts.⁵⁴ It was to the Paiutes' great surprise—and, by some accounts, to Sarah's, as well—that Army officials then ordered them gathered at Fort Harney, near Burns, Oregon, and subsequently moved to the Yakima Reservation in southern Washington.⁵⁵

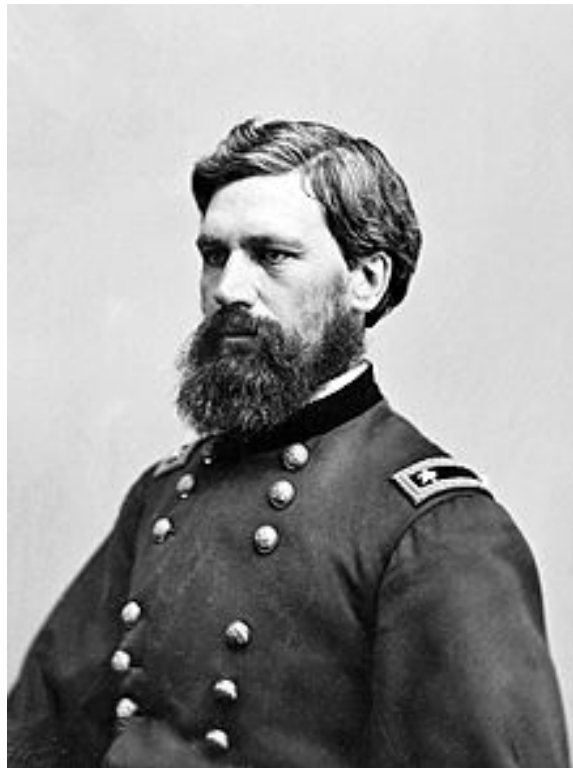


Figure 7: General Oliver O. Howard

During her work with the U.S. Army, Sarah served under General Howard, who later praised her dedication to the government's cause. (Courtesy of the Library of Congress)

Many regard this removal as the Paiutes' very own Trail of Tears: a 350-mile trek through knee-deep snow, forcefully evacuating the Northern Paiutes from their

54. James Gardner, *Oregon Apocalypse: The Hidden History of the Northern Paiutes*, (Corvallis, Oregon: Oregon State University Press, publication forthcoming), 567.

55. Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes*, 152.

ancestral homeland. Today, sources differ in their estimation of whether or not Sarah knew of the fate that followed for the Paiutes; strangely enough, most of her white biographers tend to join Sarah herself in the assertion that she was left out of the decision. Canfield insists that Sarah surely “would not have worked so industriously gathering together the Paiute stragglers if she had known what her ‘kind’ soldier fathers were planning.”⁵⁶ In a similar vein, Zanjani asserts that Sarah was blameless, and “had no way of knowing” what was coming.⁵⁷ To Myra Johnson-Orange, however, the matter is not so clear-cut, and Sarah is not so easily absolved:

I’ve always thought of her to be a traitor... Maybe she thought she was going to do a good thing for the Native people... If she knew where we were going as Native people, as Paiute people, if she would have known the ramifications of some of the things she [did], of contributing to the genocide of the Northern Paiute people, then maybe she wouldn’t have done that. But she did do it.⁵⁸

Whether or not she knew of the result, Sarah’s willing participation in the rounding-up of her people during the Bannock-Paiute War is evidenced in the appendix to her autobiography, which contains the letters of Army officials who commended her involvement. General Howard’s aide-de-camp, C.E.S. Wood applauded her “loyalty to the whites,” and her “successful ending of the war in the surrender of the hostile members of [her] tribe, and their subsequent settlement on the Yakima Indian Reservation.”⁵⁹ Likewise, General Irvin McDowell relayed in an Army report that Sarah

56. *Ibid.*, 151.

57. Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 187.

58. Myra Johnson-Orange, interview by author, Warm Springs Reservation, April 30, 2017.

59. Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 261

and her father “perilled their lives and were indefatigable in doing everything for the whites and the army.”⁶⁰ Captain Bernard reported that Sarah furnished “exceedingly valuable information concerning [the Paiutes’] number, location, intentions, etc.”⁶¹ This detailed list of Sarah’s contributions goes on. In her own account, upon learning of the impending removal to Yakima, Sarah cried out, “Oh, Major! If you know what I have promised my people, you would leave nothing undone but what you would try not to have them sent away. Oh, Major! My people will never believe me again.”⁶² Indeed, the overwhelming sentiment amongst the Northern Paiute, as Myra points out, is that Sarah did knowingly round up her people in order to facilitate their removal to the Yakima Reservation. Her reasons for partaking are—and likely will remain—unclear, but in the perception of many (if not all) contemporary Northern Paiute people, Sarah Winnemucca is an unforgivable and undeniable traitor.

Why, then, have some called Sarah Winnemucca “the eloquent voice of the Paiutes,”⁶³ and “the mightiest word warrior of her time?”⁶⁴ It seems ill-fitting that someone so reviled by her own people should also be known as a prominent voice in the tradition of Native American women’s activism. Like her involvement with the Army,

60. *Ibid.*, 252.

61. *Ibid.*, 259

62. *Ibid.*, 204.

63. Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 3.

64. A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, “Three Nineteenth-Century American Indian Autobiographers,” in *Redefining American Literary History*, ed. A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff et al. (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1990), 261-262.

the years that Sarah subsequently spent as an advocate and lecturer are fundamental to the ongoing inconsistency between white and Native opinions on her legacy.

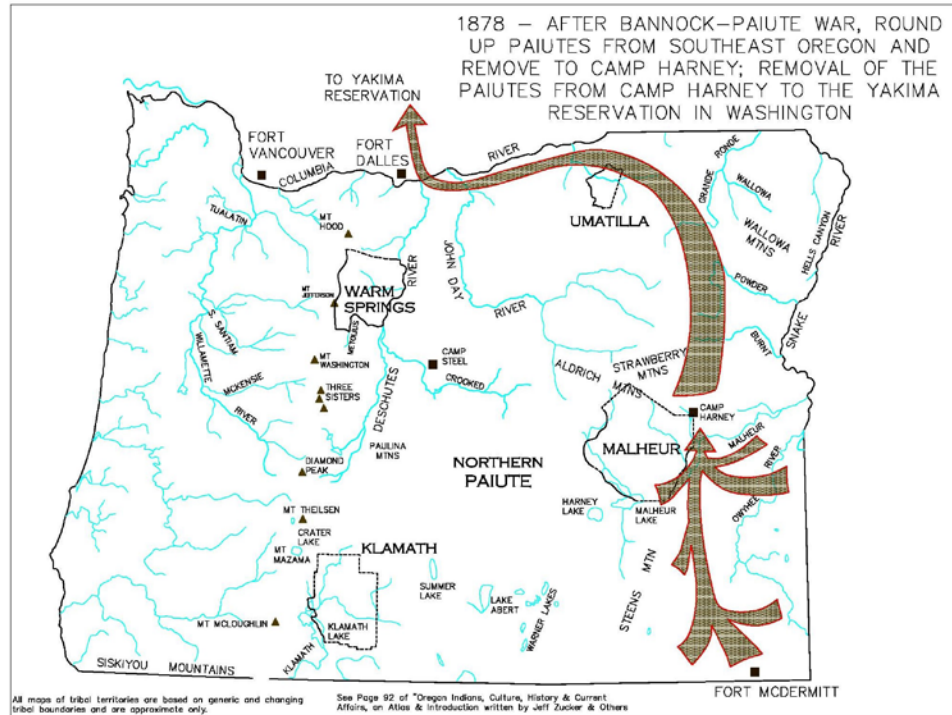


Figure 8: End of the Bannock-Paiute War

This map illustrates the route of the Paiutes’ removal from southeastern Oregon to the Yakima Reservation in Washington at the close of the Bannock-Paiute War in 1878. (Courtesy of James Gardner)

In reading white-authored accounts of Sarah’s life and career, the well-documented fact that she betrayed her people appears to be negated or excused by her later activist efforts. On the other hand, conversations with contemporary Northern Paiute people reveal that Sarah’s collaboration with the U.S. Army eclipses any positive impacts that her advocacy may have produced. As Myra puts it, “You talk about her doing activist things, things that were supposed to be for the better... I’d like to know what those are.

I don't know what they are... I don't think it did any good for our people.”⁶⁵ Indeed, Sarah's advocacy at this time closely reflected her earlier years touring with her father and siblings: the approach was heavier on performance than policy.



Figure 9: Autographed Portrait of Sarah Winnemucca

While traveling on one of her lecture circuits, Sarah sent this photograph to her brother, Natchez. It includes her handwritten message, “Your loving sister Sarah Winnemucca.” (Courtesy of the *Tahoe Weekly*)

Following the Bannock-Paiute War of 1878, Sarah stayed on the Yakima Reservation only briefly. She left in 1879 for a lecture circuit in San Francisco, where

65. Johnson-Orange, interview by author, April 30, 2017.

she was greeted with the fanfare of a celebrity. Her speeches, for which she dressed in elaborate regalia, detailed the Paiutes' history and customs, their interactions with whites, and the numerous mistreatments they had suffered. She pleaded with the wealthy white audience members to help her people in whatever way they could, but especially in the form of teachers and school supplies.⁶⁶ In January of 1880, she traveled to Washington, D.C. with Chief Winnemucca, her brother, Natchez, and another Paiute chief, Captain Jim; there, she met with Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz and President Rutherford B. Hayes, imploring them to send food and supplies to the Paiutes and, most importantly, to allow the tribe to leave the Yakima Reservation and return to their ancestral homelands.⁶⁷ But Sarah and her delegation traveled home to Nevada empty-handed, and the Paiutes remained at Yakima. Meanwhile, Sarah took a job as an interpreter and teacher at Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River, and in December of 1881, she married Lewis H. Hopkins in San Francisco. A few months later, in February of 1882, the Malheur Reservation was finally dissolved, effectively eliminating the only land in Oregon expressly reserved for the Paiute people. The dissolution of Malheur was, in other words, an enormous and egregious loss. Later that year, in October, Chief Winnemucca succumbed to illness and old age, passing away without his daughter, Sarah at his side.⁶⁸

66. Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes*, 164-167.

67. *Ibid.*, 172-175.

68. *Ibid.*, 192-199.

Soon after their marriage, Sarah and her new husband announced their plans to travel to the eastern United States, where Sarah would complete another lecture circuit. This time, her speeches would center on more general topics, like the reservation system and the “Indian Question,” rather than the Paiute people, specifically. In the spring of 1883, when the couple arrived in Boston, they were eagerly awaited; the flourishing of the educational reform and women’s rights movements, as well as the recent publication of Helen Hunt Jackson’s *A Century of Dishonor* in 1881, had excited the liberal sensibilities of the city’s residents.⁶⁹ Among Sarah’s new admirers were the Peabody sisters. Elizabeth Palmer Peabody was a publisher and had played an instrumental role in the establishment of the kindergarten system in the United States; Mary Peabody Mann was a writer and humanitarian, as well as the widow of the educational reformer Horace Mann. Both were proponents of women’s rights and Indian reform. It is not entirely clear when or how Sarah met the Peabody sisters, but somewhere along the way, she began living, traveling, and working extensively with them.⁷⁰ Between 1883 and 1884, Sarah met with army officials and government agents, spoke for women’s groups and reformist organizations, and allied herself with the causes of humanitarianism and first-wave feminism. She lectured extensively on the rights and sovereignty of Native American tribes, and in 1884, she testified to the House Subcommittee on Indian Affairs.⁷¹ Sarah also took part in several talks with national

69. Ibid., 200.

70. Carpenter and Sorisio, *The Newspaper Warrior*, 10-11.

71. Ibid., xvi.

Indian rights advocacy groups, though they largely kept their distance from Sarah and her support of military involvement in Native American policy.⁷² Before the end of 1883, Sarah had written and published her autobiography, *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims*. The book, edited by Mary Peabody Mann, was the first to be published by a Native American woman. Sarah's companionship with the Peabody sisters had enabled the wide circulation of the book, and she found herself propelled into a social circle that included John Greenleaf Whittier, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes.⁷³ To be sure, it was an exciting time in Sarah's life.

72. Gardner, *Oregon Apocalypse*, 571.

73. Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 201.

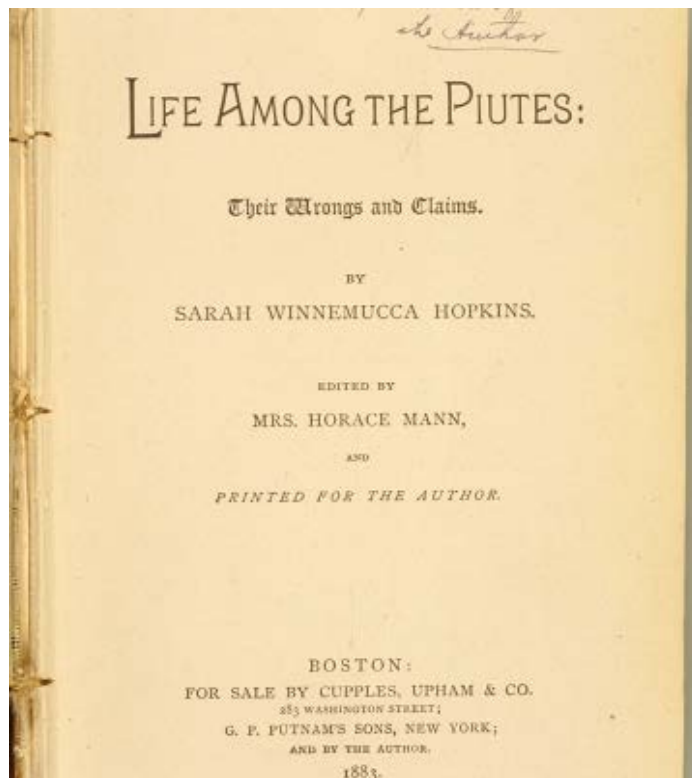


Figure 10: *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims*

When Sarah completed her autobiography, *Life Among the Piutes* in 1883, she became the first Native American woman to publish a book. The title pages of the first edition are pictured here. (Courtesy of University of Nevada: Reno, Special Collections)



Figure 11: The “Princess” Sarah

This studio portrait, taken in 1883, was used to garner publicity for Sarah’s lectures in Boston and other East Coast cities. As with her earlier lectures, on her East Coast tour Sarah appeared on stage wearing elaborate costumes, and newspapers frequently referred to her as the “Princess” of her tribe. (Courtesy of Elmer Chickering)

Sarah returned to Nevada in 1884, single once again, and in 1885, she gave her last public lecture in San Francisco. That year, using the income from her appearances, she founded the Peabody Institute, a multilingual school that served as an alternative to the English-only Indian boarding school system, which forcefully assimilated Native

children and deprived them of traditional tribal knowledge.⁷⁴ The school was built on her brother, Natchez's farm near Lovelock. Sarah taught each morning lesson in both English and the Northern Paiute language, and in the afternoon, the children learned to tend the garden, care for the animals, cook, and sew. Her students produced better work than their counterparts in public school, and before long, Paiute children from a nearby Indian school at Pyramid Lake had started requesting transfers to the Peabody Institute.⁷⁵ Elizabeth Peabody helped Sarah to finance the school during its lifespan of almost four years, but a multitude of logistical problems resulted in its closing in 1889. Few clues exist as to the last years of Sarah's life; at some point, she moved to Henry's Lake, Idaho to live with her sister, Elma. Together, the sisters picked berries for making wine and preserves, wandered the nearby forest, and cared for a pair of white orphan boys. Sarah Winnemucca passed away on October 17, 1891 at the age of forty-seven. Following a traditional Bannock ceremony, she was buried in an unmarked grave about two miles from Elma's home on the shores of Henry's Lake.⁷⁶

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Some people, like Myra Johnson-Orange, have found it relatively easy to assign a label of "good" or "bad" to Sarah Winnemucca. Others, however, find themselves caught between the two poles. James Gardner is the former President of Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon and a historian of the Northern Paiute and the

74. Carpenter and Sorisio, *The Newspaper Warrior*, 13-14.

75. Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 240-247.

76. *Ibid.*, 257-259.

Northern Great Basin. He has meticulously researched and documented the history of the tribe, often in partnership with elders like Myra Johnson-Orange, for his forthcoming book, *Oregon Apocalypse: The Hidden History of the Northern Paiutes*. On the matter of Sarah Winnemucca, Gardner is one of few white researchers who have incorporated the oral history of contemporary Northern Paiute tribal members into his account; he is one of even fewer who, in his text, discuss Sarah in a manner that is reflective of the Northern Paiute standpoint. Gardner's opinion—which does have its differences from that of some Northern Paiute people—is that Sarah exists somewhere between the two extremes of traitor and heroine.⁷⁷ Gardner does not gloss over or attempt to excuse Sarah's participation in the Paiutes' removal to Yakima, and in fact, he refers to Sarah's role in the round-ups as an indisputable fact.⁷⁸ But in Gardner's estimation, the roles of traitor and heroine are not mutually exclusive. In the "Traitor-Heroine Complex" that Gardner describes, it is possible for Sarah to have betrayed her people *and* advocated fiercely on their behalf. Unlike other white historians, Gardner does not suggest that the two concepts cancel each other out, but that they can and do exist independently of each other.⁷⁹ To reiterate, this project tacitly assumes and acknowledges Sarah's full and willing involvement in the Bannock-Paiute War of 1878,

77. James Gardner, interview by author, Warm Springs Reservation, October 16, 2015.

78. Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 149. In her autobiography, Sarah herself readily describes her commitment to General Howard: "If I can be of any use to the army," she pledged to him, "I am at your service, and I will go with it till the war is over."

79. Of course, Gardner's analysis does not and cannot accurately reflect the lived experience of immense generational, cultural, and historical trauma that a Northern Paiute person's would. As a white woman, my own analysis cannot do justice to that trauma, either. The tension between Gardner's perspective and Myra Johnson-Orange's perspective is evident in the latter's assertion (referenced previously in this paper) that Sarah's advocacy produced very few tangible benefits for the Paiute people.

regardless of her motives. As Myra points out, it's possible that Sarah truly *believed* she was helping her people, despite the horrific outcomes of her actions. What is certain is that Sarah's involvement in the Army and her later advocacy on behalf of Native peoples constitute a profound incongruity that is, indeed, consistent with Gardner's theory of the Traitor-Heroine Complex. And in terms of the deeply felt resentment towards Sarah Winnemucca—on the part of both Paiute people *and* her white critics—the role of gender is a distinct one.

As Told by White Women

Both during and after her lifetime, Sarah Winnemucca's womanhood figured heavily into the discourse that concerned her highly sensationalized career. At the height of her fame, she received strident criticism from white audiences, newspapers, and colleagues, often concerning her femininity and propriety. Today, many white female historians regard Sarah as a paragon of Native women's activism and feminist values. Yet at the same time, contemporary Northern Paiute women like Myra Johnson-Orange feel that Sarah fails to meet their culture's ideal of "strong" femininity. James Gardner, summing up the gendered implications of her legacy, notes, "Sarah Winnemucca's first sin was betraying her people. Her second sin was being a woman."⁸⁰ Indeed, this succinct synopsis of Sarah's political career reveals the contentious nature of what it meant (and often still means) for Native women to straddle the gulf between settler society and indigenous cultures. Like Gardner, Catherine S. Fowler also pinpoints this conflict in her foreword to *Life Among the Piutes*. She asks the reader to consider "the role prescribed for a woman, let alone a Native American woman, in the mid- to late 1800's... What could [Sarah] hope to accomplish given that role and what means were available to her? Could speaking out ever go unchallenged?"⁸¹ As if in answer, Sarah's autobiography contains the ominous truism: "Every one knows what a woman must suffer who undertakes to act against bad men."⁸² Thus, Sarah herself identified gender as an integral factor in the outcomes of her life.

80. Gardner, interview by author, October 16, 2015.

81. Fowler, foreword, 4.

82. Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 258.

Without a doubt, the most infamous of the “bad men” that Sarah endeavored to undermine was Indian Agent William Rinehart of the Malheur Reservation. Their relationship often surpassed the typical conflict between an ill-matched employee and supervisor, taking the form of genuine antagonism and hostility. Over the course of Sarah’s years in the spotlight, Rinehart wrote a number of letters to the Bureau of Indian Affairs detailing his “concerns” regarding her fame. In 1880, he wrote:

This woman has been several times married, but that by reason of her adulterous and drunken habits, neither squawmen nor Indians would long live with her... In addition to her character of Harlot and drunkard, she merits and possesses that of a notorious liar and malicious schemer.⁸³

Rinehart also took it upon himself to collect the affidavits of other white men who resided near the Reservation. These men reported that Sarah was “generally regarded by those who [knew] her as a common prostitute... [who was] thoroughly addicted to the habits of drunkenness and gambling,” and could “be bought for a bottle of whiskey.”⁸⁴ It is significant to note that Rinehart’s indictments refer mainly to Sarah’s morality, rather than her abilities as an interpreter, teacher, or guide, and in many instances, the criticism focuses almost exclusively on her sexual proclivities. The identification of Sarah as a “Harlot” and a “prostitute,” whether it was true or not,⁸⁵ is indicative of the time period’s deeply felt attitudes that served to vilify women’s sexuality and alienate the female form. Rinehart’s account of Sarah’s apparent promiscuity, not to mention the

83. Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes*, 173.

84. *Ibid.*

85. Although she grew up hearing primarily negative things about Sarah Winnemucca, Myra Johnson-Orange states that she has never before encountered the rumor that Sarah was a sex worker.

unwillingness of her partners to stick around, is rooted in a brand of misogyny that conceives of the female body merely as a site for men's pleasure, worthless in any other capacity—and especially in the capacity of a distinguished advocate and public figure.



Figure 12: William V. Rinehart

Long after he had stopped working with Sarah at the Malheur Reservation, former Indian Agent Rinehart continued to launch frequent attacks on her reputation. (Courtesy of Frederic James Grant)

In examining the criticisms that Sarah received during her career, it is hardly difficult to conclude that gender played an important and frequent role. The purpose of this project, however, is not to document the many instances in which Sarah's gender has figured into her legacy, but to explore and explain the differences between white and Native women's perception of Sarah. In that regard, the example of Rinehart's testimonies does offer insight on the attraction of white feminists, both then and now, to Sarah's case.

The extensive entanglement of white women in Sarah Winnemucca's political career is pervasive and long-standing. In 1883, when Sarah became the first Native

American woman to publish an autobiography, it was under the counsel and supervision of the Peabody sisters, most especially Mary, who edited the manuscript. It is this very partnership that makes *Life Among the Piutes* so contentious. The power dynamics between author and editor are often fraught with conflicts of authority and autonomy. To make matters even more complicated, Sarah and Mary's collaboration also embodied the contact between Native cultures and settler society: the colonized and the colonizer. In a letter to a friend, Mary described her experience acting as Sarah's editor: "I was always considered fanatical about Indians, but I have a wholly new conception of them now, and we civilized people may well stand abashed before their purity of life & their truthfulness."⁸⁶ Mary's correspondence reveals that even in an attempt to "help" Native women, white women often adopt the language and attitudes of colonialism and ethnocentrism. Her self-identification as "fanatical about Indians" suggests a belief that Native Americans are merely a hobby or interest of white people, rather than sentient human beings. This brand of bias is made possible by the delineation between "civilized" and "savage" peoples, which Mary also employs in her discussion of Sarah's charm. Furthermore, the romanticized "purity of life" that Mary describes serves to exoticize Native people and cultures, highlighting their apparent simplicity as a fascinating curiosity.

Although Sarah and Mary were not the first (and hardly the last) author-editor duo to operate along the axis of colonialism, Sarah's reputation as an "outspoken" advocate of Native American rights makes the women's close partnership particularly

86. Mary Peabody Mann to Miss Eleanor Lewis, April 25, 1883, in *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes*, by Gae Whitney Canfield (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), 203.

problematic. The reader who looks to Sarah as a paragon of Native women’s radical politics must consider the impact of a white editorial influence on her narrative. Cari M. Carpenter contends that many early examples of Native autobiographies are “more appropriately described as *biographies*, since the white editor often turned the Native American into an object of a white reading audience rather than a subject of his or her life story.”⁸⁷ On the whole, it is difficult to determine exactly how much of Sarah’s book is originally hers, and how much of it Mary revised or removed altogether.



Figure 13: Mary Peabody Mann

Mary Peabody Mann served as Sarah’s editor during the writing of *Life Among the Piutes*. (Courtesy of New England Historical Society)

In her preface to the autobiography, Mary asserts that her changes to the manuscript were only technical or grammatical in nature, and that she is “confident that no one

87. Carpenter, *Seeing Red*, 94.

would desire that [Sarah's] own original words should be altered."⁸⁸ In accordance with Mary's note, most critics agree that, for the most part, *Life Among the Piutes* does represent Sarah's own description of events. Heidi M. Hanrahan argues that the editorial relationship between Sarah and Mary constitutes a mutually beneficial exchange of ideas and experiences—that both women “consciously shape *Life Among the Piutes* to make its author and the Northern Paiute cause acceptable and important to white readers.”⁸⁹ Hanrahan is correct in her assertion that a white woman's involvement is what ultimately landed *Life Among the Piutes* in the hands of white audiences—quite literally, the Peabody sisters were responsible for distributing copies of the book to prominent politicians.⁹⁰ Hanrahan is perhaps too quick, however, to oversimplify the realities that rendered Sarah's autobiography vulnerable to appropriation. Rather than emphasizing the value of Sarah's own story, Hanrahan stresses how Mary *made it* valuable. In articulating the necessity of “making” Sarah important to settler society in the late 1800's, Hanrahan perpetuates the (often unspoken) white assumption that Native stories require justification for being told.

Just as it is important to consider the colonialist impacts of the author-editor relationship, it is equally imperative to refrain from underestimating Sarah's ability, as a Native woman, to describe her own experiences. We must keep in mind that Sarah was fluent in English and had previously worked as an interpreter and schoolteacher; she

88. Mary Peabody Mann, editor's preface to *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims*, by Sarah Winnemucca-Hopkins, ed. Mary Peabody Mann. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1994), 2.

89. Heidi M. Hanrahan, "[W]orthy the Imitation of the Whites': Sarah Winnemucca and Mary Peabody Mann's Collaboration," *MELUS* 38, no. 1 (2013): 119, accessed December 1, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42001207>.

90. Zackodnik, "Reaching Toward a Red-Black Coalitional Feminism," 111.

was, without a doubt, an eloquent person wholly adept at articulating herself. That doesn't necessarily mean, however, that Mary (or her sister, Elizabeth) weren't peppering in certain elements that they deemed pertinent to Sarah's story.



Figure 14: Elizabeth Palmer Peabody

The sister of Mary Peabody Mann, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody was perhaps Sarah's most dedicated supporter and patron. She organized much of Sarah's East Coast tour and later financed Sarah's school, the Peabody Institute, in Nevada. (Courtesy of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*)

Likewise, it doesn't preclude that possibility that Sarah herself was writing with a white audience in mind. Indeed, some critics, like Gretchen M. Bataille and Kathleen Mullen Sands, have called *Life Among the Piutes* "acculturated and Christianized," arguing that Sarah's narrative expresses deeper loyalties to settler-society than Native traditions.⁹¹

91. Gretchen M. Bataille and Kathleen Mullen Sands, *American Indian Women, Telling Their Lives* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 21.

Readers of the autobiography will also note that Sarah's account leaves out any real discussion of her marriages or romantic relationships; Carpenter argues that this is probably an attempt by Sarah and/or her patronesses to invoke the Cult of True Womanhood, a nineteenth-century value system that emphasized piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity as feminine ideals.⁹² Despite the fact that multiple marriages were common in the Paiute culture, Sarah's complex marital history likely would have done few favors for her public reputation and political cause. Furthermore, adherence to the norms of sentimentality, monogamy, and chastity would have served the additional purpose of undermining the criticisms of white men like Agent Rinehart.

The dimensions of Sarah's exploitation by first-wave feminists not only include the whitewashing of her narrative, but the co-opting of Paiute culture for white women's own political aims. This is not a new phenomenon, nor is it exclusive to Sarah. On the contrary, the selective inclusion of Sarah in the discourse of mainstream feminism demonstrates how Native women "whose writing, speaking, and activism have been included or lauded by white feminists... are those whose positions can be easily accommodated to that movement's political purposes."⁹³ Indeed, the enthusiasm with which the Peabody sisters and other first-wave feminists took up Sarah's cause is likely related to the utility of *Life Among the Piutes* in furthering their own agenda. Though the bulk of Sarah's lectures centered on Native rights and sovereignty, she also spoke about women's empowerment, and it's quite possible that white first-wave

92. Carpenter, *Seeing Red*, 91.

93. Zackodnik, "Reaching Toward a Red-Black Coalitional Feminism," 110.

feminists exploited Sarah's prestige as an opportunity to subtly promote the movement.

In *Life Among the Piutes*, Sarah peppers her description of the traditional Paiute lifestyle with anecdotes about the woman's role:

The [Paiute] women know as much as the men do, and their advice is often asked. We have a republic as well as you. The council-tent is our Congress, and anybody can speak who has anything to say, women and all... If women could go into your Congress I think justice would soon be done to the Indians.⁹⁴

Sarah's account of the Paiute social structure, though certainly not rooted in falsehood, is highly idealistic. Her use of the words "republic," "Congress," and "justice" appeal to traditional American values, suggesting that the Paiute tribal government—and women's inclusion in it—is inherently democratic. In likening the Paiutes' council-tent to the United States Congress, Sarah not only defends the viability of her culture, but asserts the role of women in the public realm. Thus, it may have been more than Sarah's advocacy on behalf of Native peoples that attracted the Peabody sisters and other first-wave feminists to the "Paiute Princess." To these white women, there was more at stake. It hardly seems coincidental that a Native autobiography edited by one of the nation's leading female reformers should contain testimony advocating for women's advancement in American society. The goals of first-wave feminism, which included voting rights and increased political representation, align quite closely with the council-tent scene that Sarah describes. Furthermore, the fact that the Peabody sisters sent copies of the manuscript to influential politicians only underscores the notion that their support of Sarah's platform was more self-serving than it was charitable. As a result,

94. Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 53.

“the complexity of Paiute tribal structure and practices was reduced to an ideal promoted by white suffragists,” and Sarah’s Native identity was misappropriated as a tool in progressing the white first-wave feminist agenda.⁹⁵

Today, most white-authored accounts maintain the implication that Sarah Winnemucca’s career as an activist and lecturer is only worth acknowledgment because of her contribution to mainstream modes of feminism. Sally Springmeyer Zanjani, one of Sarah’s primary biographers, writes in her prologue, “Now that racism and the effort to crumple Sarah inside the cage of an alien Victorian morality have faded, her achievements stand forth more strikingly than ever.”⁹⁶ Zanjani’s sentiment is a nice one, but—like much of her volume on Sarah Winnemucca’s life and work—it is oversimplified and heavily exaggerated.⁹⁷ Victorian standards of sobriety, propriety, and prudishness have, indeed, diminished with time, but a different benchmark for comparison has taken their place. As feminism becomes increasingly trendy, its critical theories become watered-down, distorted, and superficial. In this brand of “commodity feminism,” the ideology of women’s liberation “is reduced to the status of a mere signifier or signified, so that it may be re-coded... as a sequence of visual clichés and reified signifiers, i.e., it can be worn as a stylish sign.”⁹⁸ A new set of standards has

95. Zackodnik, "Reaching Toward a Red-Black Coalitional Feminism," 111.

96. Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 1.

97. On another note, Zanjani’s assertion that racism has “faded” is misinformed at best and ethnocentric at worst. The fact that racism—both interpersonal and institutional—manifests itself differently today than it did a century and a half ago does not imply its eradication or even its decline, no matter how seemingly inconsequential those manifestations may be.

98. Robert Goldman, Deborah Heath, and Sharon L. Smith, "Commodity Feminism," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 8, no. 3 (1991): 333, accessed December 12, 2015, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.libproxy.uoregon.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=f4215da3-016b-4c8f-9945-5eec9d73e84c%40sessionmgr4002&vid=1&hid=4112>.

emerged concerning the traits, attributes, and aesthetics of a feminist, and the commodification of the movement has, for some women, made those standards easier to meet. It is a fact that white women have always encountered fewer difficulties in obtaining their rights than women of color; by extension, a white woman's perception of what "makes" a feminist is often less complex or nuanced than that of a woman of color. In her book, *Indigenous American Women: Decolonization Empowerment, Activism*, Devon Abbott Mihesuah discusses white female historians who frequently use "Eurocentric standards of interpretation" to analyze their subjects:

While female scholars who study Indigenous women have made significant inroads into their histories, many interpretations remain incorrect and underdeveloped, providing only partial answers to complicated questions about Native women. The majority of writings are devoid of Native voices and are thereby only partial histories.⁹⁹

In Sarah Winnemucca's case, this could not be truer. The catalog of literature on Sarah is expansive and exhaustive, but the many instances in which white female scholars have praised her as a feminist icon should be subject to deeper scrutiny. White women's portrayals of Sarah demonstrate how Eurocentric notions of strong womanhood have, indeed, been prioritized at the expense of Native voices, which are left absent; as a result, these portrayals are woefully inadequate and glaringly incomplete.

Sarah Winnemucca, as she appears between the pages of white-authored biographies, is an independent woman, an eloquent spokesperson for her people, and a paradigm of resistance to assimilation. Thirty years after the Bannock-Paiute War,

99. Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women*, 3.

General Oliver O. Howard wrote of Sarah in his memoir, *Famous Indian Chiefs I Have Known*. His description of her service makes use of language and imagery that would become common amongst white-authored accounts. He writes, “If I could tell you but a tenth part of all she willingly did to help the white settlers and her own people to live peaceably together I am sure you would think, as I do, that the name of Toc-me-to-ne should have a place beside the name of Pocahontas in the history of our country.”¹⁰⁰ The fact that Sarah was likened to Pocahontas only seventeen years after her death demonstrates the eagerness of white Americans to glorify those Native women who have, in their perception, assisted and cooperated with settler society, satisfying “a non-Native desire for a Pocahontas or Squanto-like surrender to colonialism.”¹⁰¹ To this day, white female biographers like Gae Whitney Canfield and Sally Springmeyer Zanjani have, to varying degrees, painted a picture of Sarah as the saving grace of the Paiute people. To this aim, nearly all pieces of writing that center on Sarah make some note of her similarities to both Pocahontas and Sacagawea, treating them as “the three most famous pre-twentieth century Indian women.”¹⁰² Some, like Zanjani, even set Sarah apart from—and above—the other women:

Sarah, more than these earlier Indian women, created her own role... Sarah chose herself... Both [Pocahontas and Sacagawea] taught whites some Indian ways to help them survive. Sarah, by contrast faced a white world from a shrinking Indian outpost and recognized that Indians needed the white man’s skills in order to survive.¹⁰³

100. Oliver O. Howard, *Famous Indian Chiefs I Have Known* (New York: Century, 1916), 237, accessed April 26, 2017, <http://www.mainlesson.com/display.php?author=howard&book=chiefs&story=princess>.

101. Carpenter, *Seeing Red*, 129.

102. Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 304.

103. *Ibid.*, 1-2.

The distinction that Zanjani makes is peculiar, because she suggests that Sarah differed from Pocahontas and Sacagawea by *not* helping white settlers. This view is not one frequently found among contemporary Northern Paiute people, who are more likely to believe that Sarah went out of her way to assist the whites. In her anthology, *Wise Women: From Pocahontas to Sarah Winnemucca, Remarkable Stories of Native American Trailblazers*, Erin Turner similarly places Sarah on a higher pedestal than her predecessors. She writes, “Brave and intelligent Native American women such as Sarah Winnemucca... put their safety and the lives of their families at risk by taking on the roles of peacemakers, diplomats, and spokeswomen.” Conversely, Turner recognizes other Native women, like Sacagawea, who “proved detrimental or changed the destiny of their tribes.”¹⁰⁴ To many Northern Paiute people, Sarah would align more closely with the latter category. This glorification of Sarah’s impact is all too common among non-Native authors. Deborah Kogan Ray’s illustrated children’s book, *Paiute Princess: The Story of Sarah Winnemucca* perpetuates the inaccurate image of Sarah’s family as Paiute royalty. Erin Turner dedicates the very first chapter of *Wise Women* to Sarah. Dorothy Nafus Morrison’s juvenile chapter book, *Chief Sarah: Sarah Winnemucca’s Fight for Indian Rights* ends with the assertion that Sarah was “the Indian Joan of Arc.”¹⁰⁵ The list goes on.

104. Erin H. Turner, *Wise Women: From Pocahontas to Sarah Winnemucca, Remarkable Stories of Native American Trailblazers* (Guilford, CT: TwoDot, 2009), vii.

105. Dorothy Nafus Morrison, *Chief Sarah: Sarah Winnemucca’s Fight for Indian Rights* (Saddle Brook, NJ, American Book-Stratford Press, 1980), 160.

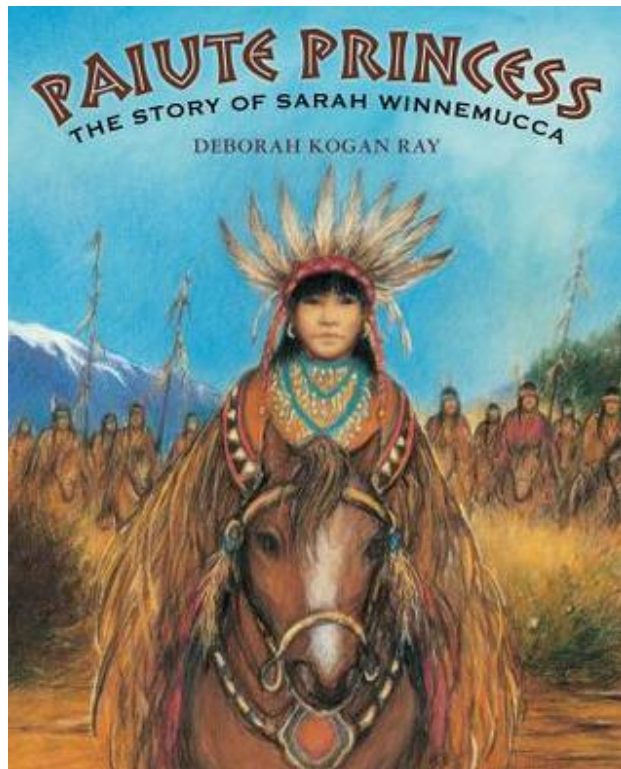


Figure 15: *Paiute Princess: The Story of Sarah Winnemucca*

Like many contemporary representations of Sarah Winnemucca, Deborah Kogan Ray's illustrated children's book diverges vastly from the commonly held Paiute opinion that Sarah betrayed her people. Additionally, the book's title draws upon the erroneous portrayal of Sarah as tribal "royalty." (Courtesy of Goodreads.com)

Another common thread among Sarah's white-authored biographies is a sense of delicately phrased commendation for the degree to which she embraced her own assimilation. Many non-Native authors applaud Sarah's participation in the Paiutes' removal to Yakima as a great personal sacrifice that she made on behalf of her people; Sarah's pursuit of a Western education also serves as a source of praise. These biographies contain periodic tidbits of their authors' esteem for Sarah and her accomplishments, but examining these compliments through a more critical lens often reveals ethnocentric and assimilationist outlooks. For instance, Canfield writes, "It is a credit to [Sarah's] individualism and character that she became culturally assimilated..."

by her own determination and persistence.”¹⁰⁶ Here, Canfield portrays assimilation in a positive light, as though it were a lofty goal that Sarah admirably worked towards. She also highlights Sarah’s individualism as an asset, denoting the philosophy of “every man for himself,” which is often a justification for Manifest Destiny, class stratification, and personal responsibility politics in the United States.

For her part, Zanjani launches her own white-centric defenses of Sarah; in learning English, lecturing to white audiences, and writing a book, Sarah “violated tribal norms by making herself different and better than others, and by her leaving, she diminished the strength of the community and made her people die a little more.”¹⁰⁷ The assertion that Sarah became “better” than other Native people raises questions about the standards that Zanjani employs in evaluating Sarah’s worth. Of course, Zanjani’s list of Sarah’s merits—namely, speaking and writing in English for white audiences—demonstrates that her criteria for “better”-ness are, unsurprisingly, couched in whiteness. Zanjani’s implication that holding an education “violates tribal norms” serves to portray Native cultures as backwards or primitive. In essence, Zanjani applauds the impacts of assimilation. Furthermore, Zanjani’s offhanded comment that Sarah “made her people die a little more” grossly understates the trauma that the Northern Paiute have endured. It also suggests that the devastating decline in the Paiute population was merely an unfortunate and inevitable incident, rather than a strategically implemented genocide. In this *Myth of the Vanishing Indian*, Suzanne Crawford

106. Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes*, 31.

107. Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 305.

O'Brien writes, "Native people would either assimilate to dominant culture and live or remain mired in the past and perish. In either event, the end result was the same: the 'true Indians' would vanish."¹⁰⁸ Thus, in her deeply flawed telling, Zanjani suggests that those who fault Sarah for abandoning her people and contributing to their suffering are mistaken, because the Northern Paiute were doomed from the start.

Overall, Canfield's portrayal is perhaps the less problematic of the two, in that she is more willing to acknowledge and address Sarah's work with the U.S. Army. Canfield's narrative, however, is by no means free of the oversimplification that pervades white retellings of Native stories. In her preface to *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes*, Canfield describes Sarah as "a strong woman determined to succeed for her cause while essentially alone in a man's world. She had to fight for her own integrity as well as for a good life for her people."¹⁰⁹ Here, it is significant that Canfield first identifies Sarah as a woman, rather than a *Native* woman, which is representative of white feminists' tendency to disregard issues of race when theorizing on gender and oppression. Canfield's delineation of a "man's world" is indicative of a similar sense of color-blindness and is lacking an intersectional approach. As a Native woman, Sarah was alone not only in a "man's world," but in a *white* man's world, which would have made her lived experiences all the more complex. To disregard Sarah's Native identity is to locate her gender as the primary source of oppression, which diverges sharply from both Sarah's own account and Northern Paiute oral histories. In leaving race out of her

108. Suzanne Crawford O'Brien, *Coming Full Circle: Spirituality and Wellness among Native Communities in the Pacific Northwest* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 73.

109. Canfield, *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes*, xiii.

analysis, Canfield reveals that her labeling of Sarah as a “strong woman” has little to do with the perspectives of Northern Paiute people and is far more reliant upon the surface-level standards of mainstream white feminism.

Sarah Winnemucca, by Zanjani, is undoubtedly the more white-centric biography of the two. In a fashion similar to that of Mary Peabody Mann, Zanjani overzealously romanticizes Sarah’s life: “Her bravery in the face of great danger... and her epic rides for long distances over harsh terrain are the stuff of western legend... She served peace as vigorously as she rode her galloping horse across the desert with a general’s message.”¹¹⁰ Zanjani’s imagery works to represent Sarah as a patriotic heroine, but again, the sanitized and sentimentalized nature of her account renders it one-sided and incomplete. Upon hearing Zanjani’s portrayal, Myra Johnson-Orange explains, “Our people lived that way, anyways. They always make it sound beautiful and mystical and wondrous. But it was a harsh life for lots of Native people. We were used to it at that time. It was the way we lived.”¹¹¹ To a white biographer such as Zanjani, the narrative of “epic rides” and “western legend” fits nicely with the opinion that Sarah was a feminist icon, but for Paiute women like Myra, it indicates the re-purposing of traditional Native lifeways to serve a non-Native agenda. For white feminist historians, it is easier to overlook (if not ignore) the drastic consequences of Sarah’s involvement with the Army, because as Shayleen Macy puts it, they “don’t

110. Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 3.

111. Johnson-Orange, interview by author, April 30, 2017.

have the perspective. They haven't lived it."¹¹² Thus, Zanjani's stake lies in telling the individual story of Sarah, rather than the collective story of the Paiutes.

Indeed, what makes Zanjani's book so contentious is its outright denial that Sarah ever betrayed her people—an allegation that Zanjani describes as “difficult to sustain in close study of the Bannock War.”¹¹³ Zanjani's stance is particularly perplexing, because it readily disregards the wealth of information, including documents that Sarah enclosed in the appendix to *Life Among the Piutes*, that verify her full and voluntary participation in the Army's efforts. Perhaps even more upsetting is Zanjani's assertion that at any “gathering of Paiutes,” attendees are bound to “erroneously condemn” Sarah's legacy. Then, in an attempt to substantiate her claim that the Paiute perspective is “erroneous,” Zanjani offers the fact that “few whites still malign Sarah” as proof.¹¹⁴ Essentially, Zanjani insinuates that members of Sarah's own tribe are unable to form accurate opinions on her, and that the mere existence of a different opinion among whites is ample evidence of the Paiutes' error in judgment.

The irony of Zanjani's argument lies in its implication that the white perspective is neutral and unbiased, when in fact, the white perspective simultaneously stems from and reinforces a legacy of colonialism. If “few whites still malign Sarah,” as Zanjani states, it is likely because Sarah had a role in preserving their position of privilege, and not because their standpoint is more factual or legitimate than that of the

112. Macy, interview by author, May 1, 2017.

113. Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 305.

114. *Ibid.*, 304.

Northern Paiute. Zanjani is well-researched on Sarah's life, but her critique of the Paiute perception makes the serious mistake of disregarding the cultural knowledge and lived experiences that qualify tribal members to hold strong, unyielding opinions on Sarah. Thus, like other white feminist historians, Zanjani oversimplifies not only Sarah Winnemucca's Native identity, but what it means to the people who share it with her.

The Paiute Perspective: A Native Feminist Response

Today, the Northern Paiute are registered as part of both the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and the Burns Paiute Tribe—two of Oregon’s nine federally recognized tribal communities. Alongside the Wasco and Warm Springs tribes, many Northern Paiute people now reside on the Warm Springs Reservation in central Oregon, about 10 miles north of Madras. Although the Warm Springs Reservation is Oregon’s largest, its 652,408 square acres represent only a small portion of the Northern Paiute’s traditional Great Basin homeland. On the other hand, the Burns Paiute Indian Colony in southeastern Oregon is comprised of 13,736 acres. In many ways, these contemporary Northern Paiute populations are still recovering from colonialist trauma, and the Sarah Winnemucca story burns bright in their collective memories. As Sarah’s story becomes increasingly commonplace, it has also undergone a great deal of glorification. In effect, the harmful impacts of Sarah’s legacy extend beyond the immediate outcomes of her actions and now include the erasure of Native voices in a whitewashed account of her “strong” womanhood.

This project aims to diverge from the preexisting literature on Sarah Winnemucca by incorporating and *prioritizing* the sentiments of contemporary Northern Paiute women in an analysis of Sarah’s relationship to feminism. In so doing, I have endeavored to align my work as closely as possible with the concepts that Devon Abbot Mihesuah outlines in her essay, “A Few Cautions on the Merging of Feminist Studies with Indigenous Women’s Studies.” First and foremost, Mihesuah writes, the would-be researcher must acknowledge the systematic exclusion of Native voices from academic histories and embrace this guiding principle: “If writers want to find out what

Native women think, they should ask them.”¹¹⁵ She encourages researchers to abandon the assumption that government documents and official records are the most legitimate forms of source material, and instead rely more heavily upon Native women’s oral histories, personal narratives, and literature. Second, Mihesuah implores non-Native writers to remember that “there is not one [authoritative voice] among Native women, and no one feminist theory totalizes Native women’s thought... There is no one voice among Natives because there is no such thing as the culturally and racially monolithic Native woman.”¹¹⁶ Inasmuch as Native women lead different lives than non-Native women, heterogeneity exists to a large extent *among* Native women, as well. Thus, in exploring Northern Paiute women’s perceptions of Sarah Winnemucca, this project does not aim to conclusively uncover her relationship to feminism, as no single definition of that relationship can exist—and if it did, it would not be my place, as a non-Native woman, to determine it. Just as non-Native writers like myself must remember that not all women are “on the same side of the feminist fence,” so too must we remember that Native women often find themselves on opposite sides of the metaphorical fence, too.

Mihesuah identifies an assortment of factors that contribute to Native women’s varying relationships to feminism. Perhaps the most significant among them is the fact that many Native women “have no interest in white feminist theory, because they have witnessed white women enjoying the power privileges that come with being white at the

115. Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women*, 4.

116. *Ibid.*, 7.

expense of women of color.”¹¹⁷ Indeed, white feminism has the tendency to not only disregard Native women, but to actively benefit from Native women’s continued oppression. While some Native women are repulsed by the exclusivity of white feminism, others merely have a different agenda for their liberation. According to Mihesuah, these women may feel that they are “primarily disempowered because of their race, and they believe it is more important to eradicate racist oppression than sexist oppression.”¹¹⁸ As Sandy Grande puts it, plenty of Native women conceive of “*decolonization* (not feminism) as the central political project.”¹¹⁹ Thus, for many Native women, the concepts of gender and sexism exist in a vastly different set of circumstances than they do for white women, and intersectionality governs the discourse. But despite assumptions about white feminism “having no meaning for Native women,” Mihesuah reminds us, “not all Native women reject every aspect of white feminism, and they are no less ‘Indian’ for their beliefs.”¹²⁰ Indeed, while Myra Johnson-Orange and Shayleen Macy each express skepticism as to the inclusivity of white feminist theory, both women report feeling as though feminism, in a very broad sense of the word, is relevant to their lives. Shayleen even voices her belief that white feminism can be “very powerful in dismantling the white patriarchal system,” in the

117. *Ibid.*, 160.

118. *Ibid.*

119. Sandy Grande, "Whitestream Feminism and the Colonialist Project: A Review of Contemporary Feminist Pedagogy and Praxis," *Educational Theory* 53, no. 3 (2003): 329, accessed December 1, 2015, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.libproxy.uoregon.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=e7998d83-90fe-426d-a6bf-897d868c114a%40sessionmgr4005&vid=1&hid=4112>.

120. Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women*, 162.

sense that it has produced significant advancements for more privileged women.¹²¹

Although a number of Native women may be hesitant to describe themselves as “feminists”—and those who do identify as feminists may disagree on what the label entails—the intersections of their Native and female identities offer insight that is otherwise absent in generalized references to “the” Native perspective.

In Sarah Winnemucca’s case, the absence of that insight is what makes writing like Canfield and Zanjani’s so problematic. These white-authored narratives fail to grasp what it means to be Native—a perspective that only a Native person can faithfully provide. Instead, most non-Native biographers tend to treat Sarah as a figure on the same playing field as Mary Peabody Mann (or other white female activists of the time), simply because both women were just that: women. In their own insidious way, these selective histories are a form of modern colonization; they hijack the narratives of Native people and re-appropriate them for an unrelated, whitewashed purpose. “The collective oppression of indigenous women,” Grande argues, “results primarily from colonialism.”¹²² If so much is true, it seems that non-Native women who colonize the story of Sarah Winnemucca play an integral part in that oppression. Stories, like, lands, may be colonized. Cari M. Carpenter explains that the differences between white and Native women’s relationships to Sarah raise questions about “the intersection of anger, femininity, and race today.” Carpenter continues by asking, “Who has the right to tell Winnemucca’s story? Questions of voice—of who may speak for this Northern Paiute

121. Macy, interview by author, May 1, 2017.

122. Grande, “Whitestream Feminism,” 329.

community—inevitably arise when Sarah Winnemucca’s name is mentioned.”¹²³ It is not necessarily true that Native people are the *only* people who can or should write about these issues. Rather, the problem with Canfield and Zanjani’s biographies is that they fail to take into consideration the contemporary perspectives of Northern Paiute people—and especially Northern Paiute women—who have felt the impacts of Sarah Winnemucca’s legacy, rather than merely researched them. Furthermore, in Zanjani’s case, this attitude results in the outright denial of Sarah’s connection to centuries of generational, historical, and cultural trauma, thereby invalidating the experiences and sentiments of the Northern Paiute community.

Like many others, Myra Johnson-Orange is suspicious of the racial polarization that has characterized Sarah Winnemucca’s legacy. Myra holds fast to her belief—informed by family members’ oral histories and her own reading of *Life Among the Piutes*—that Sarah was a traitor. She says, “[Sarah] led the Army to where the Native people were, the Paiute people. I didn’t think that was right. So I’ve always thought of her as a traitor... It looked to me like she was glorified for taking on non-Native ways.”¹²⁴ At the same time, however, Myra is not wholly dismissive of Sarah’s integrity. In some ways, Myra is able to sympathize with her. “Being a woman and having a Native perspective,” she explains, “I really believe that [Sarah] had traditional and ancestral knowledge that gave her understanding, but she was influenced by white culture. In her heart, she wanted to do well by the people.”¹²⁵ Thus, Myra’s inclination

123. Carpenter, *Seeing Red*, 122.

124. Johnson-Orange, interview by author, April 30, 2017.

125. Johnson-Orange, interview by author, December 3, 2015.

to renounce Sarah as a traitor is complicated by her belief that “most Native people have the knowledge of [their] ancestors at the back of [their] brains.”¹²⁶



Figure 16: Myra Johnson-Orange

Myra Johnson-Orange is a 68-year-old tribal elder of the Northern Paiute. She is the former Director of the Warm Springs Culture and Heritage Department. She has also worked to teach and preserve Native languages and cultural practices. Myra resides on the Warm Springs Reservation in central Oregon. (Courtesy of the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communications)

Throughout our conversation, Myra repeatedly cites Sarah’s assimilation as a primary reason for her negative reputation among the Northern Paiute. She calls Sarah a “token Indian,” a typecast of Native American cultures that played into the stereotypes that

126. Ibid.

white audiences expected (and paid) to see. But in a more casual, unrelated conversation, Myra mentions her mother, who encouraged her daughter to learn English so that one day, Myra might use her grasp of the language to advocate on behalf of her people. This, in and of itself, can be a radically subtle form of Native resistance: learning to speak the colonizer's language, if only to use it in favor of the colonized. It's possible that this tool was at play in Sarah's own political career. As one of the first Paiute people to learn English—and, of course, as the woman who had faithfully served the United States Army—perhaps Sarah was the ideal candidate to utilize this tactic. In her book on indigenous women's activism, Devon Abbot Mihesuah asserts, "Just because a Native woman is not formally educated does not mean she cannot be an effective advocate for Native rights."¹²⁷ Myra's perception of Sarah demonstrates that the opposite is true, as well; just because a Native woman *is* formally educated—and thereby meets white standards of respectability and authority—she is not always capable of effectively advocating for Native people. In earning the trust of white audiences and Army officials, Sarah had irrevocably lost the trust of her own people.

This narrative of betrayal, abandonment, and assimilation is almost entirely absent from mainstream white-authored literature on Sarah Winnemucca, yet it is enduringly prevalent in the modern-day sentiments of the Northern Paiute. Although Shayleen Macy is a member of the Wasco tribe, not the Northern Paiute, she speaks knowledgeably of the generational trauma that many Native communities have endured: "It's different than somebody from the outside thinking it was a million years ago when

127. Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women*, xviii.

all that stuff happened. They act like the 1800's is ancient history.”¹²⁸ To a white onlooker, the discrepancy in Sarah Winnemucca's reputations might constitute little more than an interesting historical detail. On the other hand, an intersectional lens reveals that the implications of this discrepancy are as real as they are harmful.



Figure 17: Shayleen Macy

Shayleen Macy is a 31-year-old member of the Wasco tribe. She studies linguistics at the University of Oregon, specializing in the Chinook and Sahaptin languages. Formerly, she has worked as a language teacher at the Warm Springs Culture and Heritage Department. Shayleen resides on the Warm Springs Reservation in central Oregon. (Courtesy of Shayleen Macy)

When we apply the standards of white feminism to a Native woman, we effectively erase any concern for the impacts of colonialism on the female experience. Although

128. Macy, interview by author, May 1, 2017.

Sarah interacted regularly and comfortably with white people from an early age, her Native ancestry is not interchangeable with her womanhood. White writers, researchers, and feminists cannot pick and choose the aspects of Sarah's identity that we wish to take into consideration. On the trend of whitewashing Native stories, Shayleen explains:

The Native people have always told the full story... We would say all the good things she did and all the bad things she did, and that's just who she was. That's how we tell our stories. Our oral history includes the good and bad that people do, and a lot of times, there's no judgment. It just is what it is.¹²⁹

The selective revision of Native stories by white women, even when it portrays Native women in a positive light, contributes to what Shayleen describes as a cultural genocide. In this case, the reimagined white narrative glorifies Sarah Winnemucca's betrayal of her own people, erases the Paiute perspective, and praises Sarah for her contribution to colonialism. Thus, those non-Native scholars who are dedicated to the decolonization of academia must commit themselves to trusting and prioritizing Native voices. If examining Sarah Winnemucca through a decolonized lens means acknowledging the fact that she betrayed her people, so be it.

129. Ibid.

Conclusion: Out Like a Lamb

This project of reconstructing Sarah Winnemucca as an ambitious, nuanced, and flawed figure is not an easy one. Each piece of the existing literature on Sarah's life and legacy falls into one of two camps: that which envisions her as a heroine akin to Sacagawea or Pocahontas, or that which is grounded in the traumatic aftermath of her betrayal. What these two contrasting ideologies have in common, however, is their invocation of Sarah's womanhood as a means to understanding her impact. It is evident that Sarah became assimilated quickly and efficiently as a young girl, but the psychological implications of this early (and evidently rather painful) introduction to settler society have been largely unexplored elsewhere. When taken into consideration, this personal history seems to suggest that Sarah was, from the start, bound for involvement in and interaction with white society, whether the capacity in which she did so was helpful or detrimental to her people. To reiterate, this project does not dispute Sarah's involvement with the United States Army, nor does it seek to clarify her reason for taking on such a role. On the contrary, the primary aim has been to understand why and how this aspect of Sarah's identity has been methodically expunged from white narratives on the "Paiute Princes," which instead portray her as a paragon of strong womanhood.

Devon Abbott Mihesuah writes that above all else, non-Native researchers should be "cautious and deliberate" in their studies, employing respect, sensitivity, and humility when engaging with Native communities. It has always been my goal to, at the barest of minimums, adhere to these guidelines in the completion of my project. During our conversation, I asked Myra Johnson-Orange if she believed there was any benefit to

a white woman conducting this research, and she responded, “If it’s shared well. We need to have different information out there that talks about my opinion on this, or [another Native woman’s] opinion on this. Talking to Native people is the most valuable resource.”¹³⁰ Shayleen Macy also offered her suggestions on how non-Native writers can be better allies through their research. She stressed the importance of creating safe environments for Native individuals to share their experiences in a safe and comfortable manner; she also encourages non-Native researchers to keep in mind that academic spaces are rarely set up to accommodate Native knowledge systems. “Just realize,” Shayleen explains, “that the struggle is so real. As a non-Native, it’s going to be [a struggle] for you, too... You have to share that struggle and understand that if it’s frustrating for you, you’re probably doing the right thing. You’re probably on the right track.”¹³¹

As a white feminist writing a critical analysis of *other* white feminists, it seems appropriate that I acknowledge my own stake in this project and the stance from which I write. My perspective is, by no means, the be-all and end-all of scholarship on Sarah Winnemucca. If anything, this project aims to portray Sarah as a highly complex, controversial figure about whom little is agreed upon, and whose story white feminists have routinely appropriated in order to advance their own political agendas. With this history in mind, it has been absolutely vital that I routinely question and evaluate my motivations and practices in completing this project. In assessing the past research

130. Johnson-Orange, interview by author, April 30, 2017.

131. Macy, interview by author, May 1, 2017.

efforts of other non-Native women, I have tried to hold myself to a higher standard of consideration for and inclusion of Native women's voices. Mihesuah, who is an enrolled member of the Oklahoma Choctaw tribe, writes, "My personal standards... are that I should not produce a manuscript about my tribe or another tribe unless it is useful to them, and I will not write about historic Native women unless the project benefits their descendants."¹³² Because Sarah had no children of her own, I cannot say with certainty that I have met the second of these requirements. As for the first, it is my hope that this project has produced some form of positive outcome for the Native women who graciously offered their time and knowledge to my research. I must also acknowledge the possibility that, in studying a highly controversial member of the Northern Paiute community, I have implicitly put certain participants at risk by asking for and documenting their input. I, like other non-Native women who have studied Sarah, "am not faced with the knotted questions of tribal commitment and betrayal" that Northern Paiute women, like Myra, must confront.¹³³ I must consider how my inclusion and interpretation of Myra and Shayleen's words might impact their relationships, especially given my plans to return this research to the Warm Springs Culture and Heritage Department. To that end, the contributions of Native women to this research are deeply appreciated, and the significance of their participation is not lost on me.

132. Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women*, 6.

133. Carpenter, *Seeing Red*, 124.

Today, debates on the nature of Sarah Winnemucca's character and her place in the Paiutes' cultural identity extend beyond mere conversations and often manifest themselves in tangible outcomes and impacts. For instance, Harriet Brady, a Native teacher at Pyramid Lake Junior & Senior High School in Nixon, Nevada, encountered sharp criticism from parents and school board members after proposing to assign *Life Among the Piutes* as reading for her students.¹³⁴ In 1994, Georgia Hedrick, a white member of the Nevada Women's History Project and former Daughter of Charity, launched a campaign to name an elementary school after Sarah Winnemucca. At the school board meeting where the matter was decided, two families threatened to remove their children from the school if it bore Sarah's name.¹³⁵ In the end, the school was named in Sarah's honor. In March of 2001, Hedrick was successful in having a statue of Sarah Winnemucca placed in the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol; two replicas were also erected in Nevada.¹³⁶ Most recently, on May 27, 2017, Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval signed into law Assembly Bill No. 435, which designates October 16 as statewide Sarah Winnemucca Day. Effective on July 1, 2017, the law requires government officials, educators, and journalists to "bring to the attention of Nevada residents the important contributions Sarah Winnemucca made to the Paiute Tribe, the State of Nevada and the United States."¹³⁷

134. *Ibid.*, 117.

135. Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca*, 299.

136. Carpenter, *Seeing Red*, 120-121.

137. "AB435," NELIS: Nevada Electronic Legislative Information System, accessed May 30, 2017, <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/79th2017/Bill/5580/Overview>.

These contemporary dialogues on Sarah Winnemucca’s place in history—and feminism—are not always perfectly split along racial lines, but they do demonstrate how portrayals of her legacy have become “symbolic [acts] of possession.”¹³⁸ Brady, the Native schoolteacher, had to work tirelessly just for permission to teach Sarah’s autobiography in her classroom. As a Native woman living on the same lands that Sarah called home, Brady felt that reading *Life Among the Piutes* would be valuable to her Native students, simply because it would allow them to formulate their own opinions on Sarah’s controversial reputation. Hedrick, on the other hand, is a white woman who championed Sarah’s legacy out of personal interest alone. As a result of her efforts, Hedrick has enjoyed massive success and praise—primarily by white women, including Zanjani—for celebrating a deeply complex member of a community to which she does not belong. This disparity in experience, according to Cari M. Carpenter, suggests that to this day, “the complex relationship between white and [Native] American women [that is] so central to *Life Among the Piutes* persists.”¹³⁹

The case of Sarah Winnemucca demonstrates the desperate need for Native voices to be the *primary* voices where narratives of assimilation and resistance are concerned. It is not hard to imagine why such a large body of work concerning Sarah Winnemucca exists today; she is something of an enigma. But, as is the case with many enigmatic figures, her story is a difficult one to tell. Though Sarah betrayed her people at a great and irrevocable cost, the summation of these influences on her life resulted in her status as a highly intersectional figure through which mainstream and Native

138. Carpenter, *Seeing Red*, 122.

139. *Ibid.*, 124.

feminist theories become both evident and contentious. The complexity and controversy of Sarah's political legacy and modes of advocacy offer unique insight into what it means to be Native, female, radical, and bicultural. Simply put, Sarah Winnemucca was "of two worlds, and perhaps sadly, at home in neither."¹⁴⁰



Figure 18: Statue of Sarah Winnemucca

This statue of Sarah Winnemucca was installed in the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol in 2005. In her left arm, she holds a book. In her right hand, she raises a shellflower aloft, signifying her Paiute name, Thocmetony. (Courtesy of the Architect of the Capitol)

~

"I was once buried alive; but my second burial shall be for ever, where no father or mother will come and dig me up. It shall not be with throbbing heart that I shall listen

140. Fowler, foreword, 4.

*for coming footsteps. I shall be in the sweet rest of peace,—I, the chieftain's weary
daughter.”*¹⁴¹

141. Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes*, 12.

Appendix

Interview with Myra Johnson-Orange

Warm Springs Reservation, April 30, 2017.

Sophie Albanis (SA): What is your name?

Myra Johnson-Orange (MJO): Myra Johnson-Orange.

SA: How old are you?

MJO: Sixty-eight.

SA: Do you live on the Warm Springs Reservation?

MJO: Yes.

SA: How long have you lived here?

MJO: I've lived here all my life.

SA: Can you tell me a little bit about your family or growing up here?

MJO: Well, originally we were real poor people. My mom passed away when I was eight, so I went to live with my grandmother. We stayed in a place called Hollywood, it was pretty, um... I guess poverty-level, but I didn't know that because we had plenty of food and things that mattered to us. We were well taken care of. There was a big living room-bedroom area, small bedroom, kitchen area. I think there were like five kids and six adults all living in the same space. Most people would call it a shack. There was no inside conveniences like toilets, electricity, things like that, so we had to haul water, go outside to the bathroom and stuff.

SA: What are your general feelings about or perceptions of white authors who write about Native American history?

MJO: Well, I think it's their perspective, not necessarily the perspectives of the Native people. I always find that if you grow up in a different culture with a different style of life-ways, you kind of [unintelligible] your thoughts from that process. So I always thought that non-Native people who write about Natives write from their heart or from their head, or from wherever they write from, and sometimes it's not the same as what the Natives are saying or talking about. I know one thing I always used to tell people is that when the white people first came this way, they were interviewing Natives who didn't speak language. The Natives would sit there listening to them and out of respect would be nodding their heads, saying "I hear you," and the whites always thought the Natives were saying "Yes, that's right," rather than understanding that they were just acknowledging and being courteous.

SA: Have you or anybody else you know ever been consulted by or involved in a white author's project on Native history?

MJO: Just Jim Gardner. I spoke with him quite a bit. I know I was in a book years back, 40 or 50 years ago, regarding my beadwork. But I never did see that book, so I don't know where that went to or what was written in there. I used to do a lot of beadwork.

SA: Do you feel like that's common, that Native people will participate in a history project and then never receive that project when it's finished?

MJO: Yeah, I find that to be so true.

SA: What are your general feelings about or perceptions of Sarah Winnemucca?

MJO: To be honest, I wish I would've known her. In some of the writings, the way she displayed herself, the way she carried herself, she was pretty elegant. But I felt like she

was highly influenced by her husband, a non-Indian. She was, I would say a traitor, because she led the Army to where the Native people were, the Paiute people. I didn't think that was right. So I've always thought of her to be a traitor. And I think, you know, I said I wished I'd known her, because maybe she thought she was going to do a good thing for the Native people by getting them [unintelligible]... lots of people thought [unintelligible]... heathen ways or their disparities or whatever non-Natives thought, and some of the things they taught her. It looked to me like she was glorified for taking on non-Native ways.

SA: Can you just tell me a little bit about why you feel that way about her?

MJO: Today's a whole different world, so what we know today probably would have made an effect on her at that time, if she knew where we were going as Native people, as Paiute people. If she would have known the ramifications of some of the things she done, of contributing to the genocide of the Northern Paiute people, then maybe she wouldn't have done that. But she did do it. And I think a lot of that was unknowing, never knowing what the future was going to bring. I'll never know if at that time, the white people didn't tell her that that's what they were trying to do, commit genocide on the Northern Paiute, or... It's hard, when you don't know people, to make judgments on them.

SA: Where or how or from whom did you learn the story of SW?

MJO: Just stories that I've been shared throughout my lifetime. I bought her book and a Northern Paiute person said, "What are you reading about the traitor for?" Okay, so I guess a lot of my opinions are based on other Paiute people's personal opinions too. But then I did form my own after I looked at some of the things she had done and how she

took care of the non-Natives and was there showing where all our Native people were, things like that. Historically, I've not really heard a whole lot other than comments like that.

SA: Do you remember when you first heard about her?

MJO: As a child, because I think the Winnemucca name was brought up. Not necessarily her, but I think her dad was a Chief or her grandpa or something. In my family, they called my great, great, grandfather a Chief, so when I hear the association, that's kind of my way of listening: "Well, who else were the Chiefs?"

SA: What do you believe is the common attitude towards Sarah Winnemucca amongst people living on the Warm Springs Reservation?

MJO: I think the common attitude is that she was a traitor. I can't say everybody, but I think the majority of people that I know who are Northern Paiute said that she was a traitor. I thought she was a great lady for going to Washington DC and being recognized, but I don't think it did any good for our people.

SA: In a lot of the books that I've been reading for my project—and a lot of them are not written by Native people, so I'm keeping that in mind—they kind of talk about how if it's true that she did betray her people, she also did all these great activist things. That's what a lot of people have written. Do you feel that the activist stuff she did really produced many results, or would you say that the bad things that she did kind of outweigh those?

MJO: I think the bad things outweigh the good and made her still not a positive figure. But you know, when you talk about her doing activist things, things that were supposed to be for the better... I'd like to know what those are. I don't know what they are. I

don't know when she went back to Washington D.C., who she talked for, how did it result in a positive thing for the people, those kind of things. As long as those things aren't talked about, then I don't know.

SA: How would you define a feminist?

MJO: Feminist? Oh, um... You know, they hold their fists in the air, Black power, power to the women, that to me reminds me of a feminist, although it's probably not the same for most women who stand up for women's rights... But that's what I think of. It's sad because they still are not treated with the respect I think they could be.

SA: What are your general feelings about or perceptions of feminism or feminists? Do you feel like it's relevant to you?

MJO: I think it's relevant to me, because in our society and in the way we choose our lifestyles, I think we took a lot away from our men. The men are our caretakers, they're providers in the home, so I just think that we need to be encouraging them. We already are equal to them, and I think men recognize that, because we do a lot more than they do... We have babies, we perpetuate our people. But to me, when you make a big thing of it, it kind of takes away from it, I think. It's nice just to know that we are equal in our own rights. Men can't have babies, I don't think that they'd ever want to. I think that we're fine. I don't know that I'd ever go to a protest to be equal... I don't know.

SA: The reason that I ask those questions is because I get the sense from a lot of the writing and the books I've been reading that are written by non-Native women, that they sort of understand Sarah Winnemucca through a feminist perspective. The white women who helped her publish her book were women's rights advocates fighting for voting and all of that, so I wonder if you think that a relationship is there. Would you

say that Sarah Winnemucca could be, like, a symbol in the feminist movement or would you say she doesn't belong there?

MJO: Well, it appears she is, if there are non-Natives who think that. It appears she's kind of a role model for that. The funny part about it is, on the Northern Paiute side, we're matriarchal people. The women did have their say-so and stuff, but that didn't mean we put down the men. I guess there's a way you do things respectfully, with respect to others. Sometimes I think feminists don't do that. It's "my way or no way," and it shouldn't be like that. There's a reason God put us on this world the way we are, the way we're made up to be.

SA: For non-Native women who understand Sarah as a feminist figure, that makes me wonder if those women have really taken the Paiute perspective into account. Because if you talk to Paiute women, they don't like Sarah.

MJO: I'm sure they don't.

SA: What would you say are attributes of a strong woman?

MJO: Humble. Quiet. Strong backbone. You're the strength of the family or the clan, and you don't have to go out and broadcast it. That's why I say quiet and humble are assets, because in instances like... I do a lot of things, and I don't brag about it, because that's just not how we're supposed to be. I was taught, don't brag on yourself, so I don't. But people recognize me for what I can do, what I can't do, things like that. That's my description of an ideal woman, one who can just recognize the disparities of others, without making them feel low.

SA: Do you think Sarah Winnemucca would fit into that description?

MJO: No, I think she was kind of a braggart. Even if she was quiet, she put herself out there or someone else put her out there. But when you put yourself out there in the limelight, to me, that's not a good thing. If you want to do good things, *good*. But you don't have to be a braggart about it.

SA: I have a few quotes I'd like to share with you, just to get your reaction and response. The first one is, "As a translator for the whites, Winnemucca is said to speak the 'truth' of both the whites and the Northern Paiute community. But for whom does she speak the truth? If she is indeed a 'true patriot,' exactly to what (or to whom) is she patriotic?" (Carpenter 87)

MJO: That's really a good question, to whom is she patriotic. She was patriotic to her husband, who was a non-Native. So to move towards his lifestyle and his way of life, that's who I would think she was patriotic to, which was not the Native people.

SA: What about when she worked as a schoolteacher and a translator? What about in that role, when she was working between the white people and the Native American people?

MJO: I don't think you can ever portray the feelings of one people to another just through language translation. Because you can translate languages, but if the Paiute people are speaking in their language, since it's a language of feeling, you'll never be able to transmit that same feeling. It comes into a block, and it doesn't translate.

SA: The next quote is, "What was the role prescribed for a woman, let alone a Native American woman, in the mid- to late 1800's? What could [Sarah] hope to accomplish given that role and what means were available to her? Could speaking out ever go unchallenged?" (Fowler 4)

MJO: To this day, she receives criticism. The spotlight really sets you up for it. I just think she set herself up to be criticized. In that time, you'd think she would have had some sense of her family values, the way of life, and understanding that you don't set yourself up like that. But because she was moving into a different type of lifestyle, her life ways and her traditional way of life, I'm sure, were fading even then.

SA: Agent Rinehart of the Malheur Reservation wrote that Sarah was "Adulterous and drunken... a Harlot and a drunkard... a notorious liar and malicious schemer... a common prostitute... [who] could be bought for a bottle of whiskey" (Canfield 173).

Have you ever heard those things about her before?

MJO: I've never heard that. It's sad, because no one really knows for sure what kind of person she was. He might have just been judgmental to her, but I don't know. I've never heard that.

SA: Do you think that these kinds of criticism—a drunken prostitute, adulteress, harlot—do you think that has to do with the fact that she was a woman?

MJO: I'm sure that at that time, non-Native people looked down on women anyways. They thought they were less-than, like a dog, especially Native women. Natives as a whole, they called them heathens, so I'm sure with the women, they had no problem killing women and children. So their thought process was that Native people were less-than.

SA: The next quote is, "Those Native American women whose writing, speaking, and activism have been included or lauded by white feminists... are those whose positions can be easily accommodated to that movement's political purposes" (Zackodnik 110).

Would you say that you agree with that?

MJO: Yeah, I imagine I would. I would agree with that.

SA: Do you think that that is something that happened with Sarah Winnemucca? Or is something like that still happening with her?

MJO: Well, people are still reading her book and some people, non-Native people, think she was a hero for the cause of her people. So I'm sure that people still use that, feminists out there, wherever they are, look for that kind of thing anywhere, so I'm sure people look to her for that.

SA: I have another quote. This one goes, "Her bravery in the face of grave danger... and her epic rides for long distances over harsh terrain are the stuff of western legend. At other times, she served peace as vigorously as she rode her galloping horse across the desert with a general's message" (Zanjani 3).

MJO: Sounds like a real book of fiction. Our people lived that way, anyways. They always make it sound beautiful and mystical and wondrous. It was a harsh life for lots of Native people, but we were used to it at that time. It was the way we lived.

SA: The same woman who wrote that description also wrote that the idea that Sarah betrayed the Paiutes is "difficult to sustain in close study of the Bannock War" (Zanjani 305). Do you have any responses to that?

MJO: There still was almost a full genocide, and the Bannock War was part of that. If she took the soldiers to where the Natives were and pointed out their hiding places and some of the ways that they could be found and conquered, she was still...

SA: When I read that, I kind of thought that the other thing to keep in mind is that the records that this woman probably studied were kept by the U.S. Army and so, I mean,

they're not going to be from the Native perspective, they're going to be from the white perspective.

MJO: And they were wanting the land.

SA: Sarah herself wrote, "We do not want to have white people near us. We do not want to go where they are, and we don't want them to come near us" (Hopkins 116).

Does that impact your idea of her at all?

MJO: It just makes me have even more mixed feelings about her. If she's saying that, and then she turned around and did what she did in regards to helping soldiers out, helping her husband out, doing the things she did... It just makes me wonder, where was she really at? Where was her mind at? Towards the end, I often wonder, was she was regretting the things she did?

SA: My last quote is, "Sarah Winnemucca was of two worlds, and perhaps sadly, at home in neither" (Fowler 4).

MJO: I totally agree with that. Must have been more difficult at that time, thinking about how the non-Natives felt about Native people at that time, and their Manifest Destiny. That was how they felt. I think if she was in that time, when our traditions and culture were strong, I think she was still attached to her people, because that's a strong, strong attachment. But her husband, being faithful to him... She was caught between two worlds. The reality is that the strength of her people, at that time, was immense. We've lost a lot of that today. We don't have that kind of connection, traditionally and culturally. We don't have the same cultural values and spirituality that I'm sure were alive and well at that time. I get a sense she was brought up that way. She ultimately, I

thought, was probably a very spiritual person, having grown up with her grandparents or her parents or whatever.

SA: It seems like one aspect of her life that is particularly troubling for you is the fact that she married a white man. Can you talk about that a little bit? What does that mean to you, in your perspective?

MJO: It makes me sad... Today we have people who mean well, but don't have the ability to decide who their real enemies are. Sometimes they could be your best friends or people that appear to be a friend. I felt like Sarah was deceived in many avenues of life. That led her to do what she had done. I think it's sad, it's just sad that she was used that way. And although I believe she was a traitor, I believe that was just part of her life that came to her that way, wanting to be accepted by her husband and the non-Natives. Yet in reality, I don't believe that they themselves accepted her as well as she was hoping they would've.

SA: Do you believe that Sarah Winnemucca is an important or useful figure for feminist historians to study?

MJO: If they look at it with an open heart. There are some feminists who are going to glorify it, and I don't know that's a good thing, and there are others who are like, 'Oh, poor lady, poor thing,' that kind of thing. So I think it's probably alright to study her, we all need to do some kind of studying to make sure you get a perspective of whatever you're searching for.

SA: It seems like, from what I've read, people kind of went into the research with an idea of who they wanted to find. So I'm kind of trying to compare what people are

finding and talk about why it's definitely more important to prioritize what Northern Paiute people are saying about her, in history.

MJO: And that's what research is about, I guess. Because I don't know that anybody will ever be able to figure it out, unless they were there beside her and were able to talk to her. She's just a personal study now, and she done what she done, and I've seen pictures of her, all glorified up, I can only imagine what it was like before she came onto those people that way.

SA: Do you believe that there is a benefit to conducting this research specifically?

MJO: If it's shared well. Because I think that's what research is about, to be informative to others. And, you know, we need to have that, we need to have different information out there that talks about my opinion about this, or someone else's opinion about this. I think talking to Native people is probably the most valuable resource for you.

Interview with Shayleen Macy

Phone interview, May 1, 2017.

Sophie Albanis (SA): What is your name?

Shayleen Macy (SM): Shayleen Macy.

SA: How old are you?

SM: Thirty one.

SA: Do you live on the Warm Springs Reservation currently?

SM: Yes.

SA: How long have you lived there?

SM: I've lived here for almost three years right now. I've lived here off and on throughout my life.

SA: Could you tell me a little bit about your upbringing or your family or your background?

SM: My parents both grew up here in Warm Springs. I lived here with them, and we lived with my mom's parents. We had kind of extended family all living together—my aunts and uncles and cousins on my mom's side. We lived there until my parents divorced when I was about five, and my dad remarried a non-Native woman, and she lived in Portland. So we moved to Portland and I grew up in Portland, and then when I was about 23, I moved back to Warm Springs and I lived with my dad's dad. I worked here and lived here for a year, and then I went back to college in Eugene and lived there for five years and graduated in 2014. Then I moved back to Warm Springs, and I live here and work here, and now I'm getting ready to go back to school to work on language for the tribe. I'm going to be studying linguistics and working on the Wasco

language, which my mother's mom spoke fluently. So I'm kind of continuing what she started when she was still alive, which was working on language and teaching language.

SA: What are your general feelings about or perceptions of white authors who write about Native American history?

SM: I think white or non-Native American authors don't know lots of the historical background of Native American tribes, and my expertise obviously is with my own tribe, but I also am pretty aware of what has happened in Oregon and Washington, because it's closer to home. Each region has its own history and most Americans know the blanket or umbrella history of the whole United States, but each area was different, each area had its own subtle things that happened. There were some general things that happened, like boarding schools and federal Indian policy, but for instance, in Oregon and Washington, I think only Yakima and Warm Springs have treaties that are intact with certain rights. So basically, every tribe in Oregon has different histories, and I think a lot of non-Natives really don't know the history, so their perspective is very... There really is no perspective, it seems like, because you really have to know that first. As long as that's been pretty much understood to an extent—you know, nobody can really understand all of it—as long as there's some background knowledge, that helps a lot. The other thing is, you really have to live in an Indian community to understand a lot of cultural differences. There are so many underlying cultural differences that Americans really don't have to deal with, and so I think it's really hard to have non-Natives understand what Native American life is like today, so the more amount of time you can spend in an Indian community or working with Native people, the better chance you'll have at producing work that is just more relevant and meaningful... But, you

know, as a linguist, I work with documents that were written by ethnographers and linguists over a hundred years ago. So I really do value those documents, because it's just a little bit of what there was, and in a certain way, I'm looking at my own culture like an outsider, because I'm trying to learn things that I don't know about my culture. In a way, it's like I'm kind of in-between.

SA: Have you or anybody that you know ever been consulted by or involved in a non-Native author's project on Native American history?

SM: I actually was one of the people that worked with the University of Oregon Northern Paiute History Project, and I've been interviewed for different projects for schools and newspapers and stuff, not specifically for the history of my tribe.

SA: Do you know anything about Sarah Winnemucca?

SM: Sarah Winnemucca?

SA: Yeah.

SM: I don't know who that is. But just tell me about it, and I might be able to elaborate a little bit.

SA: She was a woman from the Northern Paiute who sort of grew up involved with white settlers, and she ended up working with the Army and helping the Army to round up the Northern Paiute and move them to the Yakama Reservation, and so obviously... Like, I met with Myra yesterday, and Myra is one of many people who has pretty negative feelings about Sarah Winnemucca. But when you read biographies about her that are written by non-Native people, they really glorify her because after she did those things, she also lectured for Native rights and went to Washington D.C. and sort of

spoke on behalf of Native Americans. So she has sort of a complicated legacy. I don't know if you've ever heard her story before.

SM: Well, there were Indian scouts who were recruited by the U.S. Army to go after the Paiutes. You know, they slaughtered the Paiutes, and one of my ancestors was one of those people, one of those scouts. In a way, it was like, you're getting on the good side of the whites, because you're helping them colonize and go after these people, and they were really brutal about it. But that had already happened to us, so I think a lot of people were opportunistic, because they were trying to survive. They were in survival mode, because there was so much happening with the Army forcing people to live on reservations and the United States government was very racist, and they were killing Indians left and right. So if you were helping them, you were basically making an opportunity to protect yourself, and also to get an education. Because a lot of Indians knew that getting an education was going to give them a higher status among the whites, whatever you could do to get an education... You still weren't able to vote or anything, but you were going to be that much better off by doing whatever you could to appease the whites. So my ancestor was one of those scouts and got his education. On his tombstone, it says that he was a "great friend of the white man" or something like that, on his tombstone. So it's like, that's what he what he was living up to, and in the eyes of the whites, he was a good Indian, even though he was still an Indian. So it was about class, and a lot of people were oppressed... All of the Indians were oppressed, all of the Indians were put on reservations, all of them had a lot of death, a lot of family lost... With the Wasco people, like 99.9% were killed, and most of them by diseases, but they were also put on reservations. Even though the Wasco went after the Paiutes

and helped kill them—some of them did—we all end up living here together after going through all of that stuff. That stuff happened in the 1800's, so 150 years ago. Our reservation has been here since 1855, so that's about 150 years ago. And Myra, she's older than me, so she probably heard firsthand accounts from her grandparents about what happened. And me, I'm a younger generation. I'm absorbing the culture shock and the trauma from our communities. But that's our legacy, that's who we are, some of it is still kind of impacting us, with how we are, how we deal with trauma, how we deal with life, how we deal with our families, how we relate to each other here. There's a lot of legal and political stuff that we still haven't overcome.

SA: I mention the Sarah Winnemucca story because what I have noticed is that... Well, my major at U of O is Women's and Gender Studies, so I've noticed that a lot of the people who have written these glowing biographies of Sarah Winnemucca have been white women. And then, you know, you talk to people like Myra who have very different opinions. So my project is really trying to figure out what's going on there in that difference in perception and discuss what it means to Native communities when non-Native people decide how certain Native people are going to be viewed, when that's not even how Native people themselves view those figures.

SM: So that's an example of how I was saying that white people don't have the perspective, because they haven't lived it. So when Myra's grandparents, probably, told her firsthand about their family running and hiding, and their relatives being slaughtered, that's probably her grandparents' real account. And the pain and the suffering that the people have endured generation after generation is different than somebody from the outside thinking it was, like, a million years ago when all that stuff

happened. They act like the 1800's is ancient history, and they say, 'Well, this is just one person and what they did, and wow!' And there was great opportunity back then, but those opportunities were created by the oppressor. So the oppressor was saying, 'You can go to Washington D.C. and learn English, and you can dress fancy like a white person, or you can go eat rotten food in a shack. But you have to do what we are stressing is the only right way to live.' So people were given ultimatums, and I'm not saying that's the only thing that happened, but that's my point of view.

SA: My paper's really trying to get at what you were talking about, about how a lot of times when non-Native people write historical accounts of Native history, that perspective isn't there, and so I'm trying to incorporate that perspective as much as I can into this paper. So what is your definition of the word feminist?

SM: I think feminism is about shifting the social paradigm to include the feminist perspective and values and the power struggle. Because the patriarchal system is basically in control of our society, so I guess I'm referring to the global sense... But [patriarchy]'s pretty much the global system, the dominant culture. To me, feminism is about dismantling that and including a feminist perspective.

SA: And what are your perceptions of feminism, in the mainstream sense? Because a lot of the people who have been writing about Sarah Winnemucca are white women who have called her a 'strong woman' and all of these things, really invoking feminist values when they talk about her.

SM: So there's intersectional feminism, and then there's white feminism. I think of feminism as being very powerful in dismantling the white patriarchal system. For instance, white women got the right to vote in 1920, but Native American people got

the right to vote in 1924, and even then the states were still in control of the voting, so a lot of Indians didn't get the right to vote until the 1960's. In white feminism, they'll say, women got the right to vote in 1920, but as a Native American woman, I'm saying, 'Well, WE doesn't include all women. It only includes white women.' But I mean, white women are still a huge part of our society, and they can be an ally to people of color and women of color. From my perspective, I view feminist views as being... I don't know if this is sexist, but to me it feels like feminist views are more inclusive and more compassionate for people. Whereas I feel like patriarchal views are more geared towards war and conflict and political power. So my hope is that feminism will help a lot with environmental issues, as well as humanitarian issues. I believe that there is a really wonderful shift to include intersectional feminism now, so I'm really grateful for that, and I feel like I try to focus more on that. So when I think of feminism now, my mind goes to intersectional feminism and just sharing that knowledge.

SA: Have there been times in your life when you did really feel as though the mainstream feminist movement wasn't very inclusive or accessible to you?

SM: Yeah, like growing up in school, we learned about women's suffrage, and everyone in the first grade knew about when women got the right to vote. But nobody knew about Native Americans, and when we talked about Native Americans, all we talked about was, 'Well, this is what kind of house they lived in!' So basically there was no knowledge being shared throughout all of my grade school education, up until high school. Then in college, I feel like that started getting a little bit better, but even in college, I realized there was a lot of racism, a lot of white privilege, people that don't know these things. So I'm like, 'Oh, you don't know anything and you probably don't

even care, or you're not even studying anything that will ever bring it up. So it's probably not even on your radar.' So, yeah. I mean, even living in Northeast Portland and just growing up there and seeing the gentrification of where I grew up and witnessing that firsthand, it coincides with everything about my heritage and history, and everything about colonialism and racism. It's just repeating itself over and over.

SA: Do you feel as though, in your life, you are able to sort of connect feminism with your identity as a Native person?

SM: Yeah, I think it's all connected, and I think about that all the time. I always think about it, because as I grow and learn about the world and try to reflect on my life, I'm trying to place myself in the world and figure out what my purpose is. So I always think about those things, because I want to be positive and impactful, but I also don't want to run myself ragged trying to affect change, when sometimes I feel like I just have to let it go and enjoy my life. So it's really hard. I used to just struggle about it all the time, and then there's sometimes where I'm jaded and I'm like, 'I don't even care anymore, I'm just going to live my life.' It's a balance. It's all about balance. And I think balance is a really big lesson for understanding the Native culture, but also understanding feminist culture. I think there are some similarities. I think as a Native person, it's easy to see where feminist is important, because it's a life cycle. Everything is based off of nature. In our culture, we do have some sexist things, and I feel like that's from the boarding schools and the oppression, and all that negativity and all that war and all that murder and killing that happened to us. It threw our balance off. So there are some sexist things, and there are a lot of things that we deal with, different abuses. You know, there's this Christian culture, but it came from a very oppressive background and just includes a lot

of really bad things that have happened, and we have these learned behaviors that are really toxic that we haven't been able to overcome. I think it's really important for us to stay grounded and get back to nature. Basically, I think 75% of our people have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Children develop PTSD at a young age, and I was listening to this thing on a Native American talk radio show, and they said that children are developing PTSD at a rate faster than soldiers returning from Afghanistan. It's this hidden struggle... It's of thrown our culture out of whack a little bit. We have our old culture, but it's been really impacted by the conquering culture and the oppression, which has really destroyed about... I mean, 99% of our people were killed, but 99.5% of our culture was also lost. So when they rebuild us up in their image and throw in these toxic behaviors, these abuses, and this racist stuff that they've taught us—well, I'm not saying we weren't racist at all—I'm saying there was a lot of racism, there's sexism that we deal with. Those, I think, are learned negative behaviors.

SA: I actually have a quote from an essay that I read in my research that I wanted to get your opinion about. It goes, “Those Native American women whose writing, speaking, and activism have been included or lauded by white feminists... are those whose positions can be easily accommodated to that movement's political purposes” (Zackodnik 110).

SM: I mean, it doesn't really stand out to me, because that kind of thing is so expected. It doesn't even seem out of place. I mean, it's kind of a given, but it just depends on who's doing it. You could have someone, a non-Native, who really cares about the culture, who's really being responsible. And then for every responsible person, there are nine other people who are really irresponsible, or just haven't had a chance to learn, or

haven't made an opportunity for themselves to learn. So it's hard for me to say. I've met a lot of really great, wonderful people, but then there's always a sea of people who just have no idea. I think it's important to focus on what can be done, rather than picking out... It depends how impactful the person is. It just depends on who it is, I guess. If it's like, the Secretary of Interior on Indian Affairs being completely wrong, that's a huge problem. But if it's someone down the street who's writing an article for the local newsletter, it's like... You know, pick your battles.

SA: I'm wondering, I know you're not super familiar with the story of Sarah Winnemucca, but just based on what I've told you, and how her story has been kind of distorted, would you say that when that sort of thing happens, it's sort of a form of cultural appropriation, or is it something different?

SM: I don't think it's cultural appropriation, I think it's... Well, I don't know exactly what she supposedly did that was so great, but I'm sure she did do some wonderful things. I think that things get whitewashed a little bit, where it's like, we'll erase the parts that we don't like and just present the parts that we do like. It's not really a full picture, and it also lacks the perspective of the Native people, so that's whitewashing. And that's what I would call that. I don't know the story, so I would say that maybe she did do some wonderful things. What I'm saying is, the Native people have always told the full story. Let's just say, Suzie Q. We would say all the good things she did and all the bad things she did, and that's just who she was. That's how we tell our stories. Our oral history includes the good and bad that people do, and a lot of times, there's no judgment. It just is what it is. And then if we're going to say someone should or shouldn't do something, we would say, 'This is the consequence that that person

suffered. So if that's what you're going to do, look at the consequence.' We're not saying, 'Don't do that, because it's bad.' You know, if she was responsible for a lot of people dying, obviously that's really hurtful, but I think it's just important to know what really happened, because that's the history. That's what's being lost, is the actual history. When things get whitewashed, a lot of things get left out, there's a lot of history that's left out. It gets erased, and then it gets passed on. That's just how American history is. When you hear the American version of Native American history, it's totally whitewashed. There's nothing there, and you don't even know what it is anymore. The federal government literally took children out of their homes and put them in boarding schools so they would not get any oral history from their families, and then they only learned what they were taught in boarding schools, which was how to speak English, how to be Christian or Catholic, and how to recite the ABC's. These kids totally missed out on their history from their family, which is the oral history. That's an extreme case of whitewashing and cultural genocide. It's cultural genocide. I think Americans are so used to that, so when they read an account of something, like what you're talking about, they just take it for granted that that's the history. They just take it for granted that there's not a perspective missing, because American culture is so whitewashed, they don't even realize they're doing it. It's cultural genocide, more than cultural appropriation. I think cultural appropriation is taking what you like from the culture and leaving the rest. Like taking dream-catchers and saying, 'Well, I love dream-catchers, they're Native American,' but then not really caring about the rest of the culture. Or not caring what it takes to actually make one, or what the background is.

SA: I'm curious if you have any suggestions or ideas about ways that non-Native people can be better when they study history and be better at bringing in the Native perspective and working alongside Native communities. Do you have any ideas about that or suggestions for that?

SM: Creating a safe environment is so important, because Native people struggle so much more than the average American, with obtaining an education and obtaining a job and all of that... We have, like, 70% unemployment. So there's poverty. And then there's trauma to overcome, and the American mainstream culture is so oppressive. There's not really space for Natives to have a say in their own story, just because the systems are so oppressive, it's hard to even be heard. When I was at U of O, if I spoke up in a class about something, literally the entire class would be jumping down my throat. They didn't want to hear it, because they felt like I was calling them racists, when I never, never said that. That's just their reaction. So I think creating a space for Natives is important. It's not going to be easy. Also, just realize that the struggle is so, so real. So as a non-Native, it's going to be [a struggle] for you, too. If you're trying to help Natives have a voice, that struggle is going to be really hard. You're going to feel it too, because that's just how it is. You have to understand that and share that knowledge and share that struggle, and understand that if it's frustrating for you, then you're probably doing the right thing. You're probably on the right track. Let's see. You can be open-minded all you want, but getting that connection to a Native community is going to be a struggle, because as you've seen, it's far away, there's not that many of us, we're tired... We're tired all the time, because of all the sh*t that we deal with, and so it's hard to get a word in, when people's schedules are... You'll see

that Native people will drive across the state to do something that they want to do, to be with family, or to do something important. What you did yesterday is kind of like what we do all the time. You're like, 'I'm not feeling well,' and I'm like, 'I know what you mean.' That always happens when you're traveling and stuff, and so you're getting a little feel for what it's like. And I know when I go back to school to study language, I'm going to be away from the language people over here, and some of them are really elderly. When I was in school before, the last fluent speaker of Wasco passed away in 2012, and that's the language that I'm working on. So it was a huge loss for our community, for all of the Wasco people. The very last fluent speaker in the world passed away, and I was so far away. I guess that's why it's so important to create space for people to connect and do what we need to do, and we're going to do it in our own way, and it's going to be hard because it's not really set up that way. It's going to be hard for us to know when it's okay to say something, and when it's not okay. A lot of people believe that we shouldn't be sharing our language with the outside world. When I go back to U of O, when I do my papers, the U of O is going to own whatever I produce, so there's a conflict for me. It's like, how am I supposed to do this if the white structure is where you go to get an education, but there's a backlash [from my culture.] It's hard, but I'm really thankful, because U of O does have a really wonderful Native American language institute there, and they're very understanding and they're very good with the Native cultures and everything. They're doing a really good job, and I have to be open-minded too, because I'm not perfect and I'm never going to do everything. Nothing's going to be perfect. So you're going to make mistakes. It's just

like with feminism and racism—there are always going to be mistakes. We just have to grow and keep creating space and being open about it and listening.

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