Introduction

Forrest S. Cuch

_The day will come, when a white people will set foot on the eastern shores and claim this land as their own. They will build a white house near the shore from where they will govern their people. Upon establishing their government, they will raise a banner upon a flagstaff, on top of which they will place the spirit of the Hopi (Indian) people, this will be a sign to us that the Creator will keep his promises to us. This people, the “Bahana”, will scatter our people, seek to destroy us down to the last child, and bring upon us diseases that we have never known before._

—(Oral History of the Hopi Prophecy)

My understanding of ancient American Indian philosophy is that there is purpose for all things and that there are no accidents in this world. To many, it was no accident that the ancestors of the Hopi, the pre-Puebloan (Anasazi) people, once inhabited the area today known as the state of Utah. I also think it was no accident that my friend and predecessor, Wil Numkena, was Hopi, and a person of great wisdom and esteem. His vision, dedication as an educator, and love for the Indian people of Utah made this book possible. To him we all owe a debt of gratitude for this major accomplishment. I, and many others, will always appreciate his role in making this book possible and his contributions to our state.

The Hopi people claim there are four worlds of human passage. We are nearing the end of the third world and entering the fourth. In many ways, this book reflects this transition. We, the indigenous people of Utah, have endured great suffering during these times but are now coming forth in our development. The time has passed for non-Indian people to speak for us about “our past,” about “our history.” It is now time for us to bring forth the truth as we know it to be, and share it with others. Through bringing forth the truth, and through earnest discussions about it in our
schools, and with our neighbors, we will truly heal our wounds and take our rightful place in society.

Presenting the truth is necessary to dispel the myriad myths surrounding Utah history. One of the most obvious but prevailing myths is that "no one" (or no people of importance) lived in this area prior to Mormon settlement. Knowledge of pre-Mormon human presence in this area must hereafter be vital to any endeavor of educational enlightenment and postures of advanced learning by our citizenry. Furthermore, the belief must be eliminated from our consciousness that Utah’s American Indians were treated better than “other Indians” outside our state boundaries. In its place must be found the facts, suggesting that the treatment of the American Indian in the state of Utah was rarely different from what occurred in surrounding states. In some cases, treatment of the Indians was better; but, in the case of the Bear River Massacre, for example, treatment was even more harsh and severe than what was experienced by Indians residing in other states.

For the most part, the histories of Utah’s American Indian tribes have not been considered a viable and integral part of the history of the state of Utah. They have been treated as addenda or commentary rather than official textbook documentary. To quote Will Numkena, “Non-Indian authors have traditionally been the writers of Indian history. Therefore, it is their perceptions, understandings and views reflected in those writings. The reader is given a one-sided perspective without presentation of the Indian experience.” In other words, until this time, Indian history has been written by the conqueror, with little or no regard for those conquered.

In the following pages, the reader will have an opportunity to view six tribal histories as perceived by members of those tribes in consultation with local scholars. Each author has used written and oral sources to tell the respective stories of each tribe. Their histories reflect a series or combination of differing aspects, stories that are thought-provoking yet tragic, awe-inspiring yet plain, simple yet complex. Clearly, groups have a common thread binding them all together, but each has its own distinction, its unique history and perspective.

A common perception is that all Indians are the same, when, in fact, Indians are a very diverse group. There are over 540 federally recognized Indian tribes in the United States and over 340 languages of Indian people currently still in use. The tribes differ in so many ways: different customs, practices, clothing, housing, and foods. Also, however, although many differences exist, Indian tribes also have many commonalities: high
value placed on family and spirituality, nuclear family and extended family and extended kinship structures; similar tribal spiritual philosophies; a high regard for the elderly, who sometimes serve as the educators and second parents; and many more.

The following chapters provide a rare look into American Indian history from an Indian perspective—one that has been ignored because it is unwritten and is based on oral tradition. To quote Will Numkena again, “Generally speaking, scholars and publishers do not give the cre-
evidence to oral Indian history afforded European folk tales and oral history because they apply Euro-American standards—if not written in black and white, oral history does not deserve validation. By featuring tribal oral histories in this volume, the readers are provided several unique creation stories, explanations for life-ways, rituals and traditions, including tales of [first contact with the white man] and early interactions between Indians, explorers, soldiers, and settlers.”

It has only recently been determined (or the truth has escaped us) that neither Columbus, Cortez, nor the English colonials ever “discovered” America. The Western Hemisphere was discovered thousands of years before them by American Indians. Nor did early explorers find America to be an exotic untouched wilderness. Rather, all explorers on both continents encountered real live people and thriving civilizations. Columbus encountered kind and loving people, the Tanoan people, living on an island utopia that is yet to be equaled—and he quickly vanquished them into slavery. Cortez encountered an incredible civilization marveled about to this day. The English colonials found evidence of an
Indian population estimated at between thirty to forty thousand who lived in tree-bark structures, managed the land, and excelled in agriculture, as evidenced by expansive fields of corn. Both of the latter groups possessed written forms of language—the Aztecs and Mayans used stone tablets and parchment scrolls, the Delaware (Leni Lenape) wrote their tribal history in pictographs on wooden tablets, while the Algonquian and Iroquoian people portrayed their histories on sacred wampum belts.

Beginning with Columbus and the ensuing colonial contacts, the precedent would be set in America for Indians to be treated as separate and sovereign nations. It goes without saying that, if Indians were here prior to the colonial nations, their forms of government and independent sovereign status preceded the colonials as well. The Iroquois nations would also suggest that “democracy” preceded the colonials via the Iroquoian Confederacy—their governing council referred to as the “Council of Fire” and their constitution referred to as “The Great Roots of Peace.” In other words, the sovereign status of the American Indian tribes was in place prior to the arrival of European colonists and is solidly lodged in history.

Indian sovereign status was reflected, then and now, through a legal instrument referred to as a “treaty.” Treaties between the colonials (soon to be the United States of America) and the Indians came about as a result of wars between them. As American settlers appropriated to themselves more and more Indian land, fighting between the nations occurred. Some treaties were ratified by the U.S. Congress, some were not, and some treaties and land settlements were the result of executive orders of the president of the United States. One of the primary terms and conditions specified in most treaties was the understanding and provision that large amounts of Indian land were to be exchanged for government services to the Indians and peaceful relations between them. It was the treaty process that established the unique political status and nation-to-nation relationship Indian tribes presently possess with the United States. Many treaties between the U.S. government and Indian tribes continue to be honored and enforceable to this day.

Another important aspect of U.S. government relations with Indian Tribes was changing federal Indian policy. The first federal policy era, referred to above, was the Treaty Period of 1789–1871, when treaties were entered into with the Indians. Following this came the Reservation Period of 1871–1887, when the United States removed tribes from their aboriginal lands onto reserved sections of land called reservations. Next came the Allotment Period of 1887–1934, during which time the United
States attempted to break up reservation land holdings by assigning plots of land from 40 to 160 acres to individual Indians considered heads of households. The next period was called the Reorganization Period of 1934–1953, during which time the U.S. government attempted to establish governments for tribes resembling their forms of government. The Howard-Wheeler Act mandated establishment of tribal governments with constitutions and governing bodies, soon to be called tribal councils.

Ironically, following this period to reorganize tribes came the Termination Period of 1953–1970, a time when the federal government disenfranchised and disestablished many tribes. In 1954, under the prodding of Senator Arthur Watkins of Utah, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Indian Affairs of the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, a number of termination bills for specific tribes were enacted. The bills attempted to integrate Indians into mainstream American society. They proved to be of benefit to land-grabbing non-Indians but a miserable failure resulting in poverty for those tribes terminated, with the loss of thousands of acres of land on the part of individual Indians and their tribes.

The Self-Determination Era of 1970–1994 recovered some of the losses of the previous period. Under the Self-Determination policy, federally recognized Indian tribes were granted the authority to plan, develop, and operate (through contract with appropriate federal agencies) programs serving Indian people. The policy proved to be a refreshing change to prior oppressive policies and set the stage for the next and current policy mandate, the Self-Government policy. The Self-Government policy is a refinement of the previous policy and provides additional authority to tribal governments to prioritize and configure their own appropriations to meet their needs.

Writing this volume is important to the State of Utah, not only because it recognizes and validates the history of the various Indian tribes but also because it makes this information available to schools, libraries, and the general public. A written history including Indian perspective and the blending of Indian oral traditions and experiences with non-Indian written accounts is a major contribution to all people. This text provides a glimpse into traditional Native American life prior to the coming of the pioneers, into experiences of first contact with the white man, and into personal family perspectives, the ravages of war, and mistreatment of Indians by the pioneers and by the state and federal governments. It is apparent, not all has been well for Indians in the history of Utah.
All Utah tribes have experienced their moment of great suffering. For the Shoshone, it was, as mentioned above, the Bear River Massacre of 1863. For the Utah Utes, it was forced removal in 1865 from their beloved Utah Valley into the arid Uinta Basin. For the Goshutes, it was broken promises and removal from traditional sacred lands. For the Navajo and Paiute, it was countless skirmishes with Mormon settlers in southern Utah. The Paiute suffered again late in their history, when, dur-
Hoskaninni Begay and his grandson photographed in 1939. Hoskaninni Begay was the son of Hoskaninni (Haashkéneinii), who crossed the San Juan River in 1863 to escape the round-up of Navajos and the Long Walk to Fort Sumner in eastern New Mexico. (USHS)
ing the 1950s, they were terminated from federal assistance and their reservation lands were taken from them.

In many ways, some of Utah’s Indian tribes continue to suffer from traumas of the past. The Shoshone have not recovered from the Bear River Massacre; they continue to suffer from limited land-base, scattered and substandard home sites, intertribal political strife, poverty, poor health, and ineffective educational programs for their children. The Confederated Tribes of Goshute Indians continue to struggle with lands having limited natural resources. The Skull Valley Goshute have encountered external and internal conflict and strong resistance to proposed development on their lands. The Paiute continue to struggle to restore much of what was lost following the termination era. The Ute continue to experience difficulty adapting to complexities and sophistication required in developing their natural resources. The Navajos along with the other tribes face issues of development and equity. This history seeks to restore hope and healing to all Utah tribes and to promote improved relationships with their non-Indian neighbors.

This text is organized to provide the reader with information and themes which include creation stories, traditional Indian beliefs, oral history, first non-Indian contacts, the Indian experience, historic events of significance, and present-day issues impacting Indian tribes. Authors include Dennis Defa, with the assistance of Milton Hooper (Goshute) on the Goshute tribal history; Clifford Duncan (Northern Ute) on the Ute tribal history; Ron Holt and Gary Tom (Paiute) on the Paiute tribal history; Robert McPherson, with the assistance of Mary Jane Yazzie (Ute Mountain Ute) on the White Mesa Ute history; Nancy Cottrell Maryboy (Dine’) and David H. Begay (Dine’) on the Navajo (Dine’) history; and Mae Parry (Northwestern Shoshone) on the Northwestern Shoshone history. We respectfully honor and acknowledge the contributions of Vyrie Gray (Goshute), who passed away prior to the completion of this publication. Thanks to those who assisted in other ways includes Janet Smoak and Kent Powell of the Utah State Historical Society and Richard Firmage for the design and editing of this volume.

Presently, Utah Indian tribes are faced with many challenges in the areas of economic development, natural resources, unemployment, education, health, environment, high crime, and substance abuse. Successful tribal governments will invest in developing human resources as much as in developing natural resources, for many of the problems identified above have a direct effect upon family, children, and the elderly in particular. Regarding the future, tribes that are wise will maintain sovereign
political status with the U.S. Congress and both federal and state govern-
ments. They will put forth long-range planning strategies for tribal pro-
grams and services, and initiate intertribal partnerships with other pub-
lic groups and the private sector. They will strengthen relationships with
state governments and put into effect policies building upon those rela-
tionships. The political relationships, decisions, and agreements will in-
fluence effectiveness in deliberations and interactions with state and fed-
eral agencies on behalf of their constituents.

Many Indian people have long believed that through nature, with its
expression and glory, all other connections are made—the vital link with
our true God, our Creator. The ancient people of this land maintained
this connection with nature. The teachings of these people, as, for ex-
ample, through the Hopi prophecy above, demonstrated this vital link.
This wisdom is evident in the warnings of the Hopi traditionalists, de-
scendants of the Anasazi, who urge us to keep life simple and remember
two things: Love one another, and love the earth.

These ancient prophesies may be significant to modern times—to
non-Indian people as well as to Indian people. Perhaps the wisdom of
ancient prophesies will provide direction for the future. From the an-
cient high plains symbolism (found in the “Medicine Wheel”) to the Hopi
prophesy, perhaps a new direction can be found for all of mankind.

And so it is with this newfound wisdom and enlightenment from
the ancients that we look forward to this new millennium. Once we dis-
cover that we truly are brothers and sisters—that the world is one com-
munity for all—we can begin to discover our true essence, our beauty,
and what we, as enlightened beings, truly have to offer. It is when our
world becomes safe that we can begin to develop our true potential and
make this world into heaven on earth.

In closing, I think it is important to note the most important legacy
of the Utah American Indians: Despite widespread attempts at genocide
and often full-scale extermination campaigns against us by the domi-
nant culture, “we continue to exist.” We continue to live as a people with
a distinct and beautiful culture, worldview, and way of life. “We are still
here! And we do not plan to be leaving … not real soon anyway.”

—Forrest S. Cuch (Ute)
A HISTORY OF UTAH’S AMERICAN INDIANS
Map showing approximate general territory of Utah’s Indian tribes just prior to white settlement in 1847. Note that not only are boundaries inexact but also there was some interaction and use of adjacent territories by members of virtually all tribes.