Native American Folklore Studies

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Richard Komas was a young Pahvant Ute who grew up at Corn Creek near Fillmore in central Utah. In 1874 he enrolled as a student at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania; the next year he worked for John Wesley Powell at the newly created Bureau of American Ethnology in Washington, D. C. As Powell described the collaboration in his *Anthropology of the Num"*: “... at present I am engaged in writing mythological tales as they are related to me by a Ute Indian who is skilled in such lore. I take them down as he dictates them slowly, word for word, then arrange in an interlinear translation, and then follow with a free translation” (p. 11).

A generation later, in 1910, the ethnographer Edward Sapir worked with another young man from Utah in a study of Ute and Paiute oral texts. Tony Tillohash was a Paiute from Kaibab in southern Utah who was studying at the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania. Sapir secured employment for Tillohash at the University of Pennsylvania Museum, and Tillohash became not only Sapir’s informant and translator but also a first-hand source for a seminar in American Indian linguistics at the university. Sapir praised Tillohash’s “... unfailing good humor and patience [which] also helped materially to lighten a task that demanded unusual concentration” (*Southern Paiute and Ute*, p. 319).

In the fall of 1939, Anne Milne (Cooke) Smith traveled with fellow students Alden Hayes and Douglas Osborne to various Western Shoshone communities in southwestern Utah and southeastern Nevada. Smith had just completed her Ph.D. dissertation in Yale’s Anthropology Department; the thesis argued that the Great Basin constituted a single culture area based on the tales told by its Native people. Deciding to collect Shoshone tales in addition to the Ute tales she had used for her dissertation, Smith was guided to storytellers by fellow anthropologists Julian Steward, Jack Harris, and Omer Stewart.

One of Smith’s Native storytellers was a Goshute from Deep Creek, Utah, on the Nevada border. Then in his nineties, he was called “Commodore.” Smith commented in her notes that his repertoire was so extensive as to “tire her out.” On one occasion, she wrote steadily from 9:30 A.M. until 1:00 P.M.—not directly from the Shoshone, but from the English translation given by Lily Pete. These collections of tales were not published until 1992 and 1993.
In the 1950s, Barre Toelken became connected to the Little Wagon and Yellowman Navajo families living in Montezuma Canyon, Utah. He listened to their stories and took notes out of personal interest. Then in the 1960s, as a folklorist at the University of Oregon, Toelken more deliberately recorded Hugh Yellowman telling stories to his family. Most of the stories were never published and, in the 1990s, after Yellowman’s death, Toelken returned the tapes to the family.

In the 1960s, the tobacco heiress Doris Duke funded an ambitious project to conduct oral interviews with Native Americans throughout the United States. The American West Center at the University of Utah directed this work in the Four Corners region. Among the many Utah Indians interviewed by students and staff were Moroni Timbimboo, his wife, and their daughter Mae Parry. These interviews and other materials became part of the study Parry subsequently published on the history of the Northwestern Shoshone.

These examples of collaboration between Utah Native American informants and non-Indian ethnographers are rather typical of the politics of folklore studies. Folklore developed as an academic discipline with uneven power dynamics. The researchers were usually outsiders to the groups they studied and had the power to ask the questions and to collect and dispose of the data in ways that benefited them personally and professionally.

Native American folklore studies are particularly problematic. Researchers in the nineteenth century rushed to collect languages, stories, and artifacts in Native communities even as government policies, federal and local, were deliberately disrupting and destroying those communities—their resources, political and social structures, family and religious traditions. Directives to American Indians from the dominant society were contradictory. On the one hand, programs in education, employment, and government required Native people to assimilate. On the other hand, researchers and collectors required the people to perform their ethnic traditions according to archaic stereotypes.

Well into the twentieth century, researchers sought informants who could give them stories and materials with which the former tried to reconstruct so-called traditional cultures, often ignoring expressions about their informants’ “lived lives,” which the researchers viewed as evidence of cultural decline rather than cultural inventiveness. Through their publications and museum exhibits, non-Indian researchers became the “translators” of Native experiences for audiences who knew little or nothing of those cultures. Too few public presentations of American Indian folklore—oral and material—were made from the perspective of the members of the producing communities.

Native Americans are among the indigenous peoples who have been most frequently researched. Anthropologists, archeologists, historians, sociologists, linguists have all explained their notions of Indian history and culture—mostly to other non-Indians. And the question about who “owns” the texts, transcripts, recordings, photographs, and artifacts collected by researchers is an ongoing ethical and legal issue in Indian country. In recent years, tribes have begun to
demand—and win—increased control over archeological resources and ethnological materials. Tribes are challenging the legal and political powers of scholars who have traditionally viewed themselves as the stewards of Native American cultural expressions. Contemporary efforts at collaboration between tribal groups and museums and academic organizations have only made us more mindful of issues of cultural jurisdiction.

Most Native American folklore studies have been based on limited fieldwork, often conducted during the summer rather than the winter months, the traditional time of storytelling. Ethnographers have for generations sought out not a representative sample of the Native folk group but rather one or a few individuals known for their detailed memories or for their willingness to talk to non-Indians. Researchers have also assumed that ethnicity and the collected “objects” are isomorphically related. And although these studies reflect the interactions of a small number of specific individuals, the products—whether literary, performance, or material—are invariably termed “tribal.”

“Because I asked” was the reason Toelken gave for Yellowman’s willingness to tell him Coyote stories, give him instructions about hunting rituals, and perform Yeibichei songs. And because other gracious (and occasionally mischievous) persons have been willing (or been persuaded) to share stories, skills, events, expressions, objects, and information with others who “asked,” there exist rich collections of Utah American Indian folklore. Most non-Indian scholars have made judgments similar to those of Wick R. Miller, when in 1972 he published work begun in 1965 with Goshute informants. In Newe Natekwinappeh: Shoshoni Stories and Dictionary, Miller addressed “the Shoshoni Reader”:

There are some of you who do not think it is good to publish these stories. You argue that the white man has stolen your land and almost everything else belonging to you. Your languages and your traditional stories are some of the few things you have left, and now, some of you say, I am taking them away and making them available to any white man that wants them, and some of whom will use their knowledge against you. . . . I can appreciate the feelings of those of you who say this, but I cannot agree. There are others of you who feel that this important knowledge is being lost, and for this reason it is good to save it by publishing it in a book. With this, I agree. (p. 4)

The modern trend to publish such materials has indeed made the texts more available to Indian and non-Indian alike, but such static presentations only emphasize that the “real text” is the one performed within the folk group. The printed texts are important artifacts, but they are not the culture itself. Hopefully, other Native scholars will be willing to comment and critique these artifacts as has Beverly Crum (Western Shoshone, Owyhee, Nevada) with Shoshone Tales, tales collected by Anne Smith in the 1930s but not published until 1993. Crum worked for several years with Miller and has collaborated with other scholars to publish several works in Shoshone language and literature, most recently
Newe Hupia: Shoshoni Poetry Songs. In Shoshone Tales, Smith quoted Crum about traditional stories, many of them told originally by Crum’s mother, Anna Premo: “Seeing these stories written on paper is a new experience for me. It is an isolating experience because in a ‘live setting’ the whole family listened and responded vocally to the storyteller. . . . the storyteller would answer questions if you asked” (p. 180).

Studies of the folklore of Utah’s American Indians parallel their accessibility as subjects. Many Spanish and other non-Indian travelers into Utah Indian country in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries occupied a “middle ground” with the Native peoples—a middle ground of commerce and information transfer. Descriptions of Native lifeways, ceremonies, and economic strategies are scattered through the writings created by explorers, trappers, and traders, such as the descriptions recorded in the 1776 journal kept by Father Escalante on his journey through Utah from Santa Fe. In the 1840s, the non-Indians who came to occupy Utah Indian country were Mormons from the East and Midwest. Their relations with the Native peoples were of ever-increasing subjugation and displacement. Although most Mormons were little concerned about documenting Native ways, stories from Natives were sometimes noted in journals written by Mormons who learned Native languages and then became interpreters and translators of Mormon religious texts, people like Dimick Huntington, George W. Hill, Ammon H. Tenney, and Jacob Hamblin. In 1910, Elijah N. Wilson wrote his memoirs of a youth spent among the Goshutes. And there was created in the twentieth century something of a “literary genre” of Indian stories published under the auspices of the LDS church and written for children without attribution of sources, such as William R. Palmer’s Pahute Indian Legends (1946) and Milton R. Hunter’s Utah Indian Stories (four editions between 1946 and 1960).

The deliberate and systematic collection of the folklore of Utah’s American Indians has been opportunistic, dependent on available funding and the vagaries of white attitudes towards Indians—the salvage sentiments of the 1800s, the repentant recovery efforts of the 1930s, and the liberal angst of the 1970s. Expertise and funding have been supported by the federal government, such as Powell’s fieldwork (1868–1889), and the 1887 recording of the Navajo Mountain Chant by Washington Matthews. Large museums such as the Smithsonian Institution, the University of Pennsylvania Museum, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Museum of the American Indian of the Heye Foundation have over the years sponsored fieldwork to gather tales and artifacts for display and study. The Smithsonian and the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography at Harvard, for example, provided support for Edward Palmer, a professional collector, on his visits to Utah during the 1870s, when he gathered up archeological and ethnographic artifacts from the Southern Paiute Indians. Universities outside of Utah have also sponsored ethnographic studies of Utah’s Indians, such as Omer Stewart’s study of the Goshutes in the 1930s under the auspices of the University of California and Yvonne Milspaw’s work in the 1970s for her Indiana University dissertation on Great Basin oral narratives.
Anthropologists, historians, and folklorists with Utah universities and cultural organizations have developed major studies of American Indians in the latter half of the twentieth century. University of Utah professor Wick Miller and his students worked during the 1970s and ’80s on Shoshone linguistics, and oral interviews with Utah Navajos were done in the 1980s under the supervision of Robert McPherson with the San Juan County Historical Commission. In the 1970s and ’80s, federal funds available to Utah Indian tribes made possible contracts with the American West Center, University of Utah, which resulted in tribal histories and curriculum materials based on personal narratives, tales, and ethnographic materials collected in the Doris Duke Indian Oral History Project and earlier studies. These publications include Stories of Our Ancestors by Fred Conetah and others, which assembled fifty-four tales from various collections; Ute Mountain Ute Stories, Games, and Noise Makers, published by the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe; A History of the Northern Ute People by Kathryn L. MacKay and Fred Conetah; and Ute Ways and The Way It Was Told, published by the Uintah-Ouray Ute Tribe. Support and recognition from the Folk Arts Program of the Utah Arts Council since the 1980s has helped sustain Native artists such as the Navajo basketmaker Mary Holiday Black, who received in 1995 a National Heritage Fellowship, the highest honor given to American folk artists.

Ute Folklore

Tales

In 1868, John Wesley Powell (1834–1902), with support from several Illinois educational institutions and the Smithsonian, led a party of volunteers to the Rocky Mountains. This was Powell’s second trip to the area as part of his scientific explorations of the West. Although his main goal that winter was to collect geological and geographic data about the region, Powell felt compelled to learn more about the people whose homeland he was exploring. This first systematic study of the Indians of the Colorado Plateau began a thirty-year interest in the Native peoples of the American West. A group of Northern Utes, under Douglass and Antero, were camped near Powell’s party on the White River, and Powell spent weeks learning to speak Ute, collecting stories, compiling vocabularies, participating in dances and cures, and trading buckskins for artifacts.

From 1870 through 1873, Powell made several trips to southern Utah and collected tales and miscellaneous ethnographic data from Shivwits and Kaibab Paiutes; in 1871, he collected “Uintah Ute” vocabulary and tale outlines during a trip from the Uintah Indian Agency to Gunnison, Utah. In May 1873, Powell was appointed Special Commissioner of Indian Affairs to investigate the “conditions and wants” of the various Numic-speaking tribes in the Great Basin region. He and G.W. Ingalls met with delegations of Ute, Goshute, and Northwestern and Western Shoshone in Salt Lake City, where Powell collected a “Ute vocabulary”
from Pon-pu-war (Jim). In late June, Powell and a group of Indians started south from Salt Lake City, meeting with various groups on the way: Utes at Fillmore and Kanab, a delegation of Goshutes and Paiutes at St. George. Kanosh, a leader of the Pahvant Ute, living at Fillmore, was one of Powell’s major informants. On board the Union Pacific train bound east, Powell recorded “Ute Vocabulary” provided by “Joe.”

Utes Richard Komas and Wonroan were also informants for the “Ute Vocabulary,” and Komas served as an interpreter for the special commission of 1873 before his work on the East Coast. Together he and Powell produced several Ute vocabularies and tale collections. The “Story of the Eagle,” told by Komas, is the only extant version of a tale taken down by Powell in text form with interlinear and literal translations.

In 1875, Powell traveled widely over Utah to review the geology of the region. He also met with various Indian groups, made collections of their implements and clothing, and added to his Shoshone vocabulary and collection of tales. Powell spent time in Utah again in 1877, mostly in northern Utah where he collected the “Weber River Ute” vocabulary. In the early 1880s, Powell traveled to Nevada and California to collect tales, vocabularies, and other data from the Northern Paiute and Western Shoshone.

Powell approached the Indians he interviewed and observed with an attitude of genuine curiosity. He spoke Ute and Southern Paiute passably well but on occasion relied on interpreters, including Jacob Hamblin. Powell described his method of inquiry in a publication coauthored with George Ingalls:

I tell the Indians that I wish to spend some months in their country during the coming year and that I would like them to treat me as a friend. I do not wish to trade; do not want their lands. . . . I tell them that all the great and good white men are anxious to know very many things, that they spend much time in learning, and that the greatest man is he who knows the most; that the white men want to know all about the mountains and the valleys, the rivers and the canyons, the beasts and birds and snakes. . . . I tell them I wish to learn about . . . themselves . . . and that I want to take pictures of everything and show them to my friends.

The tales found in Powell’s manuscripts are in English and are summaries of plots rather than literal translations from the Numic languages. He omitted nearly all scatological and sexual references in the tales he collected, and he separated the stylized “songs and chants” within the tales from the tales themselves, making it impossible to understand the relationships between the tales and the songs and the manner in which the informants presented them. Powell believed that grammar reflected evolutionary stages in cultural development; therefore he collected texts to obtain data that informed his great project of classifying tribal relationships in Native North America. Some of the Ute tales were published in 1881 as part of the first annual report of the Bureau of Ethnology; most were not
published until Don D. and Catherine S. Fowler edited Powell’s *Anthropology of the Numas* for the Smithsonian in 1971.

For some twenty years after Powell’s last fieldwork (1880) with Numic peoples in California and Nevada, no ethnographic studies were done among the Ute. Then in 1900, Alfred L. Kroeber (1876–1960)—student of the great anthropologist Franz Boas—collected twelve tales from Uintah Utes, although he did not provide information about his informants. Kroeber’s Ute collection reflected his determination (as explained in the preface to his *Handbook of the Indians of California*) to “reconstruct and present the scheme within which these people in ancient and more recent times lived their lives” (p. v) rather than to understand “the relations of the natives with the whites and of the events befalling them after such contact was established” (p. vi).

Ten years later, J. Alden Mason published in the *Journal of American Folklore* thirty tales he had collected in the summer of 1909 from Uintah Utes at White Rocks, Utah. His informants—Snake John, Andrew Frank, and John Duncan—were all respected leaders among the Ute and told the tales to Mason in English. Duncan also translated three tales told by his father Jim. One of the tales, “Wildcat Gets a New Face,” was published in Stith Thompson’s influential 1928 collection, *Tales of the North American Indians*.

Mason was on an expedition sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania Museum and led by Edward Sapir (1884–1939), a linguist who had trained with Boas and worked with Kroeber. Sapir and Mason planned a long-term study of Ute language and culture, but the project was not funded by the museum, although the photographs Sapir took of Ute artifacts, architecture, and activities were published by Anne Smith in her 1974 *Ethnography of the Northern Utes*. Mason transferred to the University of California at Berkeley, where he took his Ph.D. under Kroeber. Sapir remained in Philadelphia and began studying Southern Paiute with Tony Tillohash. Sapir’s work with the Southern Paiute and Uintah Ute was the first time that Great Basin folktales were recorded in the narrators’ vernacular with careful linguistic analysis. However, Sapir did not publish any of the Ute tales (most of which had been told to him by Charlie Mack) until 1930.

Another Boas student, Leslie Spier (1893–1961), became interested in Native American cultures while working at the American Museum of Natural History. In the 1930s, while teaching at Yale University, Spier supervised the work of Anne M. Cooke (Smith) (1900–1981), who wrote a master’s thesis on the material culture of the Northern Ute and wrote “An Analysis of Great Basin Mythology” as her Ph.D. dissertation. The over one hundred stories included in her dissertation were collected in English during the summer of 1936 from more than twenty Uintah, White River, and Uncompahgre informants on the Uintah-Ouray Reservation—some of whom, like John Duncan, had worked with previous investigators. Others who contributed to Smith’s research were Stella Kurump, Agnes Marianna, Stella Victor, Kurump (Katie) Longhair, Charlie Wash, Lulu Chapoose, Ruth Narants, Achis Myore, Morgan Grant, Old Mary,
Lincoln Picket, Pearl Perika, Archup, Stella LaRose, Arrochis, Alwine, Mamie Alhanda, Liza Mayor, Janie, and Tecumseh Murray.

Following the guidance of her mentors Spier and Sapir, Smith limited her observations about contemporary Ute economics, social organization, or political affairs. She continued the tradition of asking her informants to tell her stories only of origins, the supernatural, and tricksters. The tales were not published until 1992, although in the 1950s Smith used her field notes to testify about “Cultural Differences and Similarities between Uintah and White River Utes” in an Indian Claims Commission case.

When Smith's collection of *Ute Tales* was finally published, the foreword was written by Joseph Jorgensen. As a graduate student at the University of Utah in the 1950s, he worked under the formidable Jesse Jennings, who then dominated Utah archeology. Jorgensen’s 1960 master’s thesis, “Functions of Ute Folklore,” borrowed from the collections of Smith, Mason, and Kroeber and added twenty-three tales that he collected from Katie Longhair, Marianna Provo, Victor Archup, Pearl Perika, Achis and Henry Myore, Mary Noble, Harriet Johnson, Ouray McCook, Maggie Appa, Juanita Groves, and Sarah Hanker. In the thesis, Jorgensen asserted that the old stories were seldom told anymore and no longer functioned to transmit culture and tradition. As Jorgensen matured as a scholar, however, he came to appreciate that folklore is more than old tales not often told but is a range of genres which serve to validate and educate members of the group. Jorgensen continued his field research through the 1960s—expanding to include informants in several Ute and Shoshone communities—and produced a masterful study on *The Sun Dance Religion: Power for the Powerless* (1972).

Beginning in 1966, American Tobacco Company heiress Doris Duke made yearly grants of money to universities in Arizona, Florida, Illinois, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Utah in support of efforts to collect Native American oral histories. Between 1968 and 1972, graduate students and faculty working for the American West Center, University of Utah, conducted over 1500 interviews with forty-two different tribes or groups, making this the largest of the several state projects. Only one Goshute was interviewed, Maude Moon, who was working in Salt Lake City with Wick Miller; no Utah Navajo was interviewed; and several of the Southern Paiute stories were collected from a non-Indian living in Cedar City. However, many interviews were done at Ute communities in the Uintah Basin and southern Utah. Most of the stories collected have not been published, although increasing numbers of scholars are mining the collection for historical accounts and personal narratives.

The Doris Duke Oral History Project continued the practice of collecting stories mostly from informants living in reservation communities, even though by the 1960s more than half of all American Indians lived in urban areas where employment and education were more available. Hopefully, in the future, there will be more stories collected from urban Indian informants such as the conversations with Utes, Shoshones, and members of other nations documented by Keith Cunningham and published as *American Indians’ Kitchen-Table Stories* in 1992.
The Doris Duke project is part of a long tradition of “Indian autobiographies”—American Indian life stories told to non-Indian investigators. An example is Conversations with Connor Chapoose, as recorded by Y. T. Witherspoon in 1960 and published in 1993. Chapoose (1905–1961) was a leader on the Uintah-Ouray Reservation, had worked as an interpreter, and was employed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In 1944 he helped establish the National Council of American Indians. The text includes not only Chapoose’s history but Ute stories, medicines, and beliefs.

Material Culture

John Wesley Powell’s interest in language focused his collecting primarily on verbal lore, but he did collect additional data on many other aspects of Numic life: social organization, curing practices, leadership patterns, and material culture. His collection of material culture, now on deposit at the American Museum of Natural History in Washington, D. C., includes clothing, utensils, saddles, hunting equipment, basketry, games, and toys. That collection was reorganized and stabilized in the 1880s by Otis T. Mason, a curator at the museum, who also began publishing reports on the basketwork, cradles, skin-dressing, arrows, and textile arts of “North American Aborigines.” The descriptions, including photographs and sketches, of the collection were published under Powell’s name as Material Culture of the Numa by Don D. Fowler and John F. Matley for the Smithsonian Institution in 1979.

In 1907, Stewart Culin (1858–1929) included in his massive study, Games of the North American Indians, Ute gaming pieces that he had collected and researched; he claimed that this study would direct attention to “the remarkable analogies existing between the oriental and modern European games . . . and those of American Indians” (p. 29).

In the 1930s, Albert Kroeber and Robert Lowie at the University of California, Berkeley, supervised a major research project, initially with funds from the Works Progress Administration, to produce “Cultural Element Distributions” for various Indian groups. One of their graduate students, Omer C. Stewart (1908–1991), who later became professor of anthropology at the University of Colorado, collected information and artifacts from Utes at Myton, Whiterocks, and Randlett, Utah; he published his research in 1942. Anne M. Cooke Smith also collected artifacts on her 1937 trip to the Uintah reservation. Her sketches and photographs of objects and her descriptions of cures, dances, and ceremonies were published in 1974 for the Museum of New Mexico as Ethnography of the Northern Utes.

During the 1930s, the Uintah Basin Industrial Convention was held annually at Fort Duchesne. People came from all over the Uintah Basin. Courses were given by professors from the Utah Agricultural College (Utah State University); there were parades and rodeos. At the Indian Fair, non-Indians could buy baskets and leather and beaded goods made by Utes for the tourist trade. In the
The late Billy Mike of the Ute Mountain Ute shows flute-building techniques to Aldean Ketchum, who learned to make and play flutes through a Utah Arts Council apprenticeship, 1990.

1940s, federal employees set up an Arts and Crafts Guild, the Tribal Business Committee loaned money for supplies, and artists were encouraged to create beaded buckskin items. But with little market for the goods, production faltered. More successful in terms of marketing has been the Ute Mountain Indian Pottery project, which was incorporated in the 1970s. Souvenir wares have been mixed with traditional art objects in private and public collections throughout the state.

Ute Mountain Ute traditional artists have also been encouraged and recognized by programs of apprenticeships and awards through the Folk Arts Program of the Utah Arts Council. Apprentice Aldean Ketchum was awarded support in 1990 to work with his grandfather, master flute maker Billy Mike, whose father Jim was the guide for William Douglass in the 1909 “discovery” of Rainbow Bridge. Patty Dutchie (1918–1999), master cradleboard maker from White Mesa, received the Governor’s Folk Art Award in 1991; her work and that of many other Native craftspeople are part of the state art collection.

Museums such as the Utah Museum of Natural History on the University of Utah campus, the (LDS) Church Museum of History and Art in Salt Lake City, Edge of the Cedars State Park Museum in Blanding, and Iron Mission State Park Museum in Cedar City have archeological and ethnographic collections from various Utah Native communities and regularly present exhibits. However, the first major museum exhibit, “Ute Indian Arts & Culture,” to include pre- and post-contact as well as contemporary materials was not assembled until 2000,
when the Taylor Museum of Southwestern Studies at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center brought together pieces from several collections in Utah, Colorado, and elsewhere in a fine celebration of Ute folk arts with an exhibit catalogue edited by William Wroth.

Lifeways and Ceremonies

Northern Ute were included in two major studies of Native American music—those of Frances Densmore in 1922 and of Willard Rhodes in the 1940s. Densmore (1867–1957) began her life’s work after hearing Native American music at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair. She made her first field expedition in 1903 and became formally employed by the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1907. Of her seventy-nine field trips, Densmore made two into Ute country, in 1914 and 1916. She recorded over one hundred songs from twenty-five singers, including Andrew Frank and Charles Mack, who had worked previously with other ethnographers. Fred Mart, who had attended the Indian School at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, was Densmore’s interpreter. Hers was the first recording of Ute Bear Dance songs.

The recordings of Uintah, White River, and Uncompahgre Utes were all made at Whiterocks, Utah, the headquarters of the Uintah and Ouray Agency and a community in which many other researchers had worked and would work. Densmore recorded songs, took photographs of the singers and musical instruments, and made comparisons of Chippewa, Sioux, and Ute songs with Slovak songs. She made musical notations, took notes on the manner of delivery of the songs, and described the use of the songs—washing the wounded, accompanying hand games, and contributing to storytelling. Densmore even recorded a speech given by Red Cap, one of those who had led nearly four hundred Utes from Utah to South Dakota in 1905 hoping to make an alliance with the Sioux in protest against the opening of the Ute reservation to white settlers. As a consequence, her study is a rich source of information about Ute ceremonial, social, and individual creative expressions. In the 1980s, the Smithsonian Institution, through the Utah Folk Arts Program, returned to the Northern Ute Tribal Business Committee copies of Densmore’s recordings and manuscripts.

The second major study of North American Indian music was conducted by Willard Rhodes (1901–1992) between 1940 and 1952. Rhodes, who later became the first professor of ethnomusicology at Columbia University, then worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. With equipment supplied in part by the Library of Congress (which became the depository of the collection), Rhodes recorded the music sung and played for him by members of fifty Indian tribes living primarily in the West. Describing Indian music as “not a relic of the dead past but a vital, dynamic force,” Rhodes documented traditional songs, Christian hymns in Native languages, and music of recent composition. In the summer of 1951, Rhodes recorded from informants at Whiterocks thirty-three songs, many of which were peyote songs.
In 1998, Canyon Records released a collection of Traditional Ute Songs recorded in 1974 by Southern Ute Sun Dance leader and singer Edward Bent Box, Sr. He and singers from Ignacio, Colorado, and from Allen Canyon and White Mesa, Utah, recorded Ute war dance, Bear Dance, and Sun Dance songs. Box contributed notes for all the selections.

Of all the Ute folkways, none has intrigued scholars more than social and religious ceremonies—the Bear Dance, the Sun Dance, and peyote meetings. Descriptions of the Bear Dance, the only dance originating with the Ute, have been published by Cripple Creek, Colorado mining entrepreneur Verner Z. Reed (1896), University of California at Berkeley anthropologist Robert H. Lowie (1915), BYU archeologist Albert B. Reagan (1930), anthropologist Julian Steward of the University of Utah (1932), Joseph Jorgensen (1964), and ethnologist Anne M. Cooke. There has also been some recent (1999) speculation that two rock art panels in the Uncompahgre Plateau region of western Colorado, one of which is dated as Late Historic Ute (1830–1880), reflect narrative elements and symbolism associated with the dance.

Bear Dance songs often have lyrics, some received by the singers in dreams, more often incorporating local gossip and/or comments on the dancers and thereby reflecting the social nature of the occasion. The Ute Bear Dance, which continues to be held in the spring by both the Northern and White Mesa Ute, has been incorporated into curriculum materials in Utah and Colorado state education systems. A videotape, The Ute Bear Dance Story, was produced in the

Bear Dance at Randlett on the Uintah-Ouray Northern Ute Reservation, eastern Utah, 2002.
1980s by Larry Cesspooch in a teenage video workshop and was distributed by Ute Audio-Visual.

In 1890, a Northern Ute medicine man, Grant Bullethead, brought the Sun Dance from the Eastern Shoshone of the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming. Comments about and efforts to restrict the Sun Dance on the Northern Ute reservation can be found in the reports of BIA agents of the time. For example, Superintendent Jewell D. Martin failed in 1913 to convince Ute leaders to hold Bear and Sun Dances together at midsummer fairs as a sort of ceremonial sideshow. Mr. Merriman at the Whiterocks Trading Post took photographs of the Bear and Sun Dances in 1900 and J. D. Clark of the Smithsonian did the same in 1906. Robert Lowie (1915) and Frances Densmore (1922) included in their publications brief accounts of the dance from informants. Anne M. Smith claimed that her 1937 description was “possibly the earliest . . . by an eyewitness of a Northern Ute Sun Dance” (Ethnography, p. 175). And John A. Jones reported on the Sun Dance for the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1957. Joseph Jorgensen’s 1972 analysis continues to be the most complete ethnohistory to date on the subject.

Sam Lone Bear, an Oglala Sioux, had introduced the peyote crossfire ritual to the Northern Ute in 1914, and the intrepid Anne M. Smith claimed to have been the first white person on the Uintah Reservation to attend a peyote meeting. Her personal narrative of that event, in her 1974 ethnography, is vivid and poignant (p. 167). While collecting materials in 1938, Omer Stewart also observed and participated in an all-night peyote meeting held on the Ute Mountain Ute reservation. Stewart was then finishing his graduate studies at the University of California, Berkeley, and he became an advocate for American Indian religious freedom, publishing several articles and a monograph cowritten with David F. Aberle, Navajo and Ute Peyotism (1957). In that text, Stewart notes his work with Harriet Tavapont, an informant for several anthropologists, and includes photos of Snake John, Charlie Mack, Peacht, Tabioque, and Ebenezer.

Finally, John R. Alley, Jr. surveyed the impact of the first Euro-Americans in his article summarizing the impact of the fur trade on Northern Ute and Southern Paiute hunting and customs. Stephen P. Van Hoak conducted a similar historical survey to analyze the effects of the acquisition of horses on Ute foodways, myths, and hunting practices.

**Southern Paiute Folklore**

**Tales**

In 1870, John Wesley Powell received a congressional appropriation to continue his explorations of the Colorado River. He arrived in Salt Lake City in August and, on the advice of LDS church leader Brigham Young, secured the services of Jacob Hamblin as guide and go-between with the Indians. Powell and Hamblin met Chuarumpeak, the leader of the Kaibab Paiute band, and some of his
people on the headwaters of the Sevier River in early September. Powell and Hamblin also met with members of the Shivwits band and in the fall traveled to the Hopi mesas. In December, Powell and Hamblin went to Fort Defiance, New Mexico, where they negotiated a peace settlement between the Navajos and the Mormons. Over the next several years, as Powell continued his fieldwork in the Rocky Mountains, he recorded tales, lifeways, and language, collecting materials from Southern Paiutes, Utes, Goshutes, and Shoshones.

Powell’s work with Southern Paiutes was not extended by scholars for some decades, not until the remarkable collaboration between anthropologist Edward Sapir and Southern Paiute informant Tony Tilohash. Sapir (1884–1939) began studying the language with Tilohash in 1910. Their collaboration, which produced published texts and a collection of recorded songs still archived at the University of Pennsylvania Museum, resulted in what has been called the most artful grammatical description ever written of an American Indian language. Tilohash analyzed his native language, told stories, sang songs, and made study models of traditional Southern Paiute weapons and utensils—a remarkable outpouring of individual and cultural expression. Not until 1930 was the *Southern Paiute* study published, and it was 1992 before the 209 Southern Paiute song texts that Sapir collected from Tilohash were published as part of Sapir’s *Collected Works*. Annotations were provided by Robert Franklin and Pamela Bunte, with notes by Thomas Vennum, Jr. on the musical transcriptions which had originally been prepared by Sapir’s father, Jacob Sapir.

Knowledgeable and creative, Tilohash continued to collaborate with other scholars as they furthered their professional careers. Robert H. Lowie (1883–1957), whose first fieldwork was with the Shoshone, spent his professional lifetime working with American Indian folklore, which he considered the “remnant” necessary to study cultures that he thought were disappearing. Lowie did not list Tilohash as an informant, but the largest group of Southern Paiute tales that he published in 1924 were from the Shivwits community where Tilohash lived (the remainder were from Moapa). Lowie’s student Isabel T. Kelly (1906–1982) did acknowledge Tilohash as guide and informant through the years of her work with Southern Paiute shamanism (1939) and ethnography (1964). Her informants at Kaibab were Captain George, Sarah Frank, Little Jim, and Peter Henderson. Kelly also used Sapir’s notes and his photographs of Tilohash demonstrating the uses of various artifacts. Tilohash also worked with Philip Drucker, Omer C. Steward, Robert Euler, and Catherine Fowler; as late as 1967, he was interviewed for several hours by Fowler for the Doris Duke Indian Oral History Project.

By the 1940s, several scholars had developed specializations in Great Basin folklore and anthropology. Like Powell, many of these scholars worked with Ute, Paiute, Goshute, and Western Shoshone sources. For example, Julian Steward (1902–1972) studied Owens Valley (California) Paiute (1936), Northern and Goshute Shoshone (1943), and White River Ute (1953). His colleague Robert Manners (1913–1996) studied Southern Paiute and Chemehuevi (1974), and Robert C. Euler studied several Paiute groups; his *Southern Paiute Ethnohistory*
was published in 1966. Omer C. Stewart did fieldwork in 1937–1938 “to ascertain the culture of various groups of Goshute, Ute, Southern Paiute, and Navajo Indians as they were before the advent of European culture,” even though he admitted “an absolute accurate reconstruction of the culture of any of the groups represented is impossible at this time” (“Ute-Southern Paiute,” p. 231). Stewart worked with Southern Paiutes Rosie Timmican, Frank Mustache, Annie Harrison, Sarah Williams, Dick Indian, Little Jim Smoke, and Joe Frances and Dagaibitsi from the San Juan community.

These scholars were all expert witnesses in the Southern Paiute cases before the Indian Claims Commission (1946–1978). The Act establishing the ICC gave carte blanche to “any Indian tribe, band, or other identifiable group of American Indians residing within the territorial limits of the United States” to file claims against the federal government for land lost without due process transfer of title, for unfulfilled treaty obligations, and for other federal violations of tribal rights. The key to a successful ICC claim was proof by a tribe that it had held exclusive occupation of a clearly defined area “from time immemorial” until some specified date, when it was lost to federal malfeasance. Attorneys for the five groups of Paiutes in Utah and Arizona and unaffiliated off-reservation Paiutes filed a land claim in 1951, asking for compensation for unlawful seizure of tribal territory by the United States. Omer C. Stewart testified for the Southern Paiute, and Julian Steward, Robert Manners, and Robert Euler for the government. The accumulated body of research in Southern Paiute folklore, ethnography, linguistics, and history was used in many of the case arguments—with, as Martha C. Knack says in her 2001 book on the Southern Paiute, Omer C. Stewart “systematically and scathingly rebut[ting]” (p. 248) the government witnesses. At the end of the hearing, the Southern Paiute were awarded a judgment of $8.25 million as compensation (1965). In the meantime, however, the federal government had terminated four small reservations in southern Utah and withdrawn from its trust relationship with the Paiute. Only a small community near Cedar City remained intact, its land owned by the Mormon Church.

After termination and despite the distribution of land-claims money, Utah Paiutes remained poor, contacts with non-Indian neighbors and institutions remained minimal, and few scholars concerned themselves with the traditions or lived strategies of the Southern Paiute. In the 1960s, research on Southern Paiute ethnography and ethnohistory was conducted by Robert Euler, Catherine S. Fowler, and others in conjunction with the Upper Colorado River Basin Archaeological Salvage Project of the University of Utah. About the same time, the Native American Rights Fund was invited to send a team to investigate ways to improve Paiute housing. The NARF investigator, Martha C. Knack, conducted interviews, assembled field notes, and did archival research on Southern Paiute history, religion, and folklore. With support from non-Indian and Paiute advocates, an effort began to restore federal recognition of the five groups of Utah Southern Paiutes as an Indian tribe. That effort culminated in the 1980 Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah Restoration Act.
San Juan Southern Paiutes live at Willow Springs, Arizona, and at Navajo Mountain on the Arizona-Utah border. This Paiute group was never officially recognized by the federal government, but with the Paiute restoration, San Juan leaders petitioned under the Federal Acknowledgment Program and were awarded federal legal status in 1990. At that time they were the only Southern Paiute tribe still making everyday use of the language and with children still able to speak it. In recent years, the tribe has contracted with anthropologists and linguists, including Pamela A. Bunte and Robert J. Franklin, to record language and narratives as part of a revitalization program; they published a study in 1967.

During the decade of restoration efforts, several Southern Paiutes were interviewed by researchers with the Doris Duke Oral History Project. Most of the stories collected have still not been published. In 1992, however, LaVan Martineau (1932–2000) published his collection *The Southern Paiutes: Legends, Lore, Language, and Lineage*, taking pride in his status as an amateur and not a scholar.

**Material Culture**

Scholars have been deeply involved in the collecting of materials produced by Southern Paiutes, materials which are now housed in several state and national museums. The most comprehensive ethnographic collections of the Southern Paiute are those amassed by Sapir and Kelly. Omer Stewart in the 1930s investigated and reported on the phenomenon of Ute and Paiute weavers in southern Utah producing basketry—particularly black, red, and white wedding baskets—to Navajo specifications. However, that tradition has declined. In 1986, the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian in Santa Fe produced a major exhibit called *Translating Tradition: Basketry Arts of the San Juan Paiutes*. The catalogue of that exhibit included analysis by Pamela A. Bunte and biographical profiles of the weavers and their students.

**Lifeways and Ceremonies**

The Round Dance is the oldest and most widespread dance style in the Great Basin. Frederick S. Dellenbaugh, in his narrative of the second Powell expedition down the Green and Colorado rivers, described a Kaibab Southern Paiute Round Dance, and Powell collected two Kaibab songs from the occasion, suggesting to later scholars that the Round Dance may have included a kind of antiphonal call-and-response pattern. The Round Dance developed into other dance forms, some of which continue to be practiced, such as the Turkey Dance and the Ladies’ Choice Dance.

One important still-practiced ceremony among the Southern Paiute is the Cry, or Mourning Ceremony, which was probably adopted from Southern California Paiute groups in the late 1800s and was described by Sapir in 1912. Holding the ceremony a year or more after a death, kin shared and exchanged food and gifts in honor and memory of the deceased. Often, objects such as baskets made for
the occasion were destroyed in a ceremonial burning. Family members sang songs that had come to them in dreams or been learned from other singers. Nowadays the Cry is usually combined with the funeral.

To celebrate their restoration to federal tribal status, the Southern Paiute held a “Restoration Gathering and Pow Wow” in 1980. Since then, the spring powwow (spelling of the word varies) has become an annual event. Other powwows are held throughout the state—some, like the Northern Ute Pow-Wow, are long-standing events; others, like the Native American Festival at Liberty Park in Salt Lake City, held in conjunction with the Days of ’47 Parade on 24 July, are of more recent origin. Other tribal gatherings around the state include the Heber Valley Pow Wow, the Utah International Veterans’ Day Pow Wow in Murray, the West Valley City Contest Pow Wow, a Goshute-sponsored Pow Wow in Tooele County, the Ute Thanksgiving Pow Wow at Fort Duchesne, the Thunderbird Contest in Cedar City, the White Mesa Ute Bear Dance near Blanding, the Northern Navajo Fair in Bluff, and the Native American Arts Festival near Monticello. Powwows are also sponsored by Native American student organizations at various Utah colleges and universities.

**Goshute Folklore**

**Tales and Lifeways**

In 2000, the children and teachers of Ibapah Elementary School retold and illustrated *Pia Toya: A Goshute Indian Legend*. The lively story and vibrant colors of the text are a determined assertion of Goshute culture and identity. The Goshute people who live on the Deep Creek Reservation, which straddles the Utah-Nevada border, number about ninety; other Goshutes live to the east on the Skull Valley Reservation. When Powell and Ingalls reported the number of Goshutes in Utah in the 1870s, they offered a figure of 256. This small population and isolated homeland have not attracted many researchers since to Goshute folklore and ethnography.

However, in the 1910s, as the federal government was establishing the two small reservations for the Goshute, University of Utah ethnobotanist and historian Ralph V. Chamberlin reported on his 1906–1910 fieldwork among the Goshute in “Place and Personal Names of the Gosiute . . .” and “Ethnobotony of the Gosiute Indians.” In the 1930s, Omer C. Stewart and Julian H. Steward both included Goshute informants in their cultural element distribution studies of American Indians in the Great Basin. Stewart worked with Commodore, Tom Badger, and John Pete at Deep Creek; Steward worked with Grouse Creek Jack and Moody. He also worked with Northwestern Shoshones Ray Diamond and his sister Rachel Perdache at Washakie, and with Joe Pikavits, a Southern Paiute who lived with survivors of the Pahvant Ute community at Kanosh. Also in that decade, Brigham Young University archeologist Albert Reagan published Goshute tales and history in LDS church magazines, following up with a 1934 article for the Utah Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters.
Anne M. Smith’s research companion, Alden Hayes, reported in 1940 on his observations of the “Peyote Cult on the Gosiute Reservation at Deep Creek, Utah.” Photographs of Goshute at Deep Creek in the 1930s are part of the Vyrie Grey Collection at the Marriott Library, University of Utah. Carling Malouf included photographs of informants and material culture in his 1940 study, *The Gosiute Indians*. Malouf continued his fieldwork at intervals, publishing additional studies and coauthoring, with University of Utah anthropologist Elmer R. Smith, speculations about “Some Gosiute Mythological Characters and Concepts” (1947), an article based on a few partial tales remembered by a single Goshute narrator.

Wick Miller published Goshute tales in the Shoshone language as part of his 1960s Shoshoni Dialect Project sponsored by the National Science Foundation. Maude Moon (Pattun), then in her seventies, told Miller nearly fifty stories and an equal number of ethnographic and historical accounts. Other Goshute informants—Minnie Bonamont Bishop, Jimmy Steele, and Mabel Pugie—gave Miller nearly one hundred stories and historical accounts. Steele’s sister, Lillie Pete, and her daughter, Genevieve Henroid, also helped Miller with the translations and transcriptions.

Material Culture

Basketry is an important tradition among the Goshute, as it was among all the Numic peoples. Powell collected baskets from the Southern Paiute, White River Ute, and Deep Creek Goshute. Omer Stewart collected baskets at Ipopah in the 1930s, Malouf in the 1940s. In 1986, two Goshute basketmakers, Molly McCurdy (1908–1999) and Mollie Bonamont (1908–1994) were given the Governor’s Folk Arts Award in recognition of their fine work. Both women made cradleboards, baskets, and buckskin work gloves which were prized by tribal members and non-Indian ranchers alike. Members of the Bonamont family were informants for Julian Steward in the 1930s, Wick Miller in the 1960s, and Margaret K. Brady in the 1980s.

**Northwestern Shoshone Folklore**

**Tales**

In 1995, the Northwestern Band of Shoshone numbered 454 members. The tribe staffed two offices to serve tribal members—one in Blackfoot, Idaho, and the other in Brigham City, Utah. In 2003, the Trust for Public Land, with support from the American West Heritage Center, turned over to the tribe twenty-six of the 1,200 acres designated in 1990 by the National Park Service as a National Historic Landmark: the site of the Bear River Massacre (1863) in northern Utah near the Idaho border. There is no Northwestern Shoshone Reservation; this land is the only land owned by the tribe, although tribal members had occupied from 1880 to 1960 a nearby tract of land purchased by the LDS church for the
settling of Shoshones converted to Mormonism, a settlement named after the respected Eastern Shoshone leader Washakie (1804–1900).

There have been two major Northwestern Shoshone writers: Willie Ottogary and Mae Parry. Ottogary (c. 1867–1929) was a leader of the Washakie Shoshone in the 1910s. He represented the Northwestern Shoshone in Washington, D.C., in several negotiations over land and resources, and he supported the 1917–1918 draft–resistance activities among the Goshute. From 1906 through 1929, Ottogary wrote over 400 letters published in The Journal (a Logan, Utah, newspaper), the Tremont Times, and the Box Elder Journal. These letters included personal narratives about his life, his farm work, and his travels, along with the doings of Washakie people, social activities, Sun Dances, and special occasions. He wrote about land issues, new technological innovations, economic development, everyday life. The letters to The Journal were republished in 1967, with a larger collection in 2000.

Mae Parry is the great-granddaughter of Northwestern Shoshone leader Sagwich Timbimboo, granddaughter of Yeager Timbimboo, and daughter of Moroni Timbimboo. In other words, she is descended from survivors of the Bear River Massacre. Parry reports that Yeager would tell the grandchildren the story of the massacre over and over again until she had memorized it. Parry continued this tradition with her own family members with support from a 1991 Utah Folk Arts Apprenticeship Grant. Parry first published her family’s account of the massacre in 1976 as “Massacre at Bia Ogoi.” She was the major informant for Scott

**NAVAJO FOLKLORE**

**Tales**

The Navajo are one of the most frequently researched groups of Indians in North America. Anthropologists, archeologists, sociologists, and historians have all taken turns explaining their views of Navajo history and culture. Navajo tales, materials, and ceremonies fill publications and museum collections. The folklore of the Utah Northern Navajo, fewer in numbers and living in greater isolation, is less studied.

One of the earliest versions of a Navajo ceremonial to have been directly translated with accuracy was collected by an army medical doctor and friend of John Wesley Powell, Washington Matthews (1843–1905), who worked in 1887 with a Navajo named Juan. *The Mountain Chant*, published first in the Fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology (1887), has become a literary classic. The ceremony expresses Navajo sanctity of place through references to the northern part of Navajo land, although the ceremony observed by Matthews took place twenty miles northwest of Fort Wingate, Arizona. Matthews seems to have had great respect for the Navajo who invited him to witness the public performances of the chant, and he tried to capture the poetry of the performance—although later scholars suggest he breached confidence in publishing his information. He did excise sexually explicit burlesque portions, which were not published until 1997.

The western writer Charles Kelly (1889–1971) interviewed Hoskaninni Begay in 1939 (with Ray Hunt as interpreter) in Begay’s hogan near Goulding’s Trading Post in Monument Valley. Begay was the son of Hoskaninni (also Hoskinnini), who led his family and friends into hiding near Navajo Mountain during the 1863 roundup of Navajos by troops under the command of Col. Christopher “Kit” Carson. Kelly asked Begay about his father’s life and his own. Begay “answered the innumerable questions put to him without hesitation and, I believe, with the utmost honesty. He was glad to know that the story of his family was to be recorded in permanent form,” which it was, in 1953.

Another Utah Navajo autobiography is *The Journey of Navajo Oshley, An Autobiography and Life History*. Winston Hurst, while studying the Navajo and Ute community near Westwater Canyon for a master’s degree at Eastern New Mexico University, recorded fourteen interviews with Oshley, whose son was a schoolmate. Oshley was again interviewed in 1968 as part of the Doris Duke Oral History Project. Robert S. McPherson edited transcripts of the Hurst tapes for the 2000 publication. Interviews from the Doris Duke Project also brought
together Navajo informant and writer Clyde Benally with members of the American West Center staff to produce for the San Juan School District Dineji Nakeé Naahane: A Utah Navajo History.

In 1971, a number of Utah Navajo became concerned about the constantly rising water level of Lake Powell and its possible adverse consequences for Rainbow Bridge, a sacred site for the Navajo. Karl Luckert, professor of religious studies at Southwest Missouri State University, was asked to document the sacred significance of Rainbow Bridge. In 1973 he secured a grant through the Smithsonian’s Urgent Anthropology Program (begun in 1966 to support research on cultures undergoing rapid change) to tape the Navajo Coyoteway Myth. Luckert’s work was used in a lawsuit filed in behalf of the Navajo singers to prevent Lake Powell water from reaching the bridge; the study was published in 1977.

Since he began working for the Utah Navajo Development Council in the 1970s, Robert McPherson has become the major scholar of the Utah Navajo. He has developed his studies with support from the San Juan County Historical Commission and in interactions with his students at the Blanding campus of the College of Eastern Utah. His 1992 publication, Sacred Land, Sacred View: Navajo Perceptions of the Four Corners Region, and his 2001 publication, Navajo Land, Navajo Culture: The Utah Experience in the Twentieth Century, are both rich in stories, experiences, and comments from Navajo informants.

McPherson was also the first editor of Blue Mountain Shadows, a journal dedicated to the folklore and history of San Juan County. The publication, which began in 1987 as an oral history project by a group of high-school students, has included interviews and reminiscences by American Indians living in the county. In 1990, for example, Barre Toelken told the life story of weaver Zonnie Johnson in “Traditional Navajo Arts in Southeastern Utah.”

Toelken (see chapter 11) collected Navajo stories for over forty years, principally from Hugh Yellowman (Zonnie Johnson’s son) with whose family Toelken lived in the 1950s. The Yellowman tapes included Coyote stories, Yeibichei songs, instructions about hunting rituals and various crafts, and histories of early Navajo settlement. Although Toelken used these tapes as resources for his teaching and his publications—one story was included in the Norton Anthology of American Literature—he eventually decided to return the tapes to the Yellowman family, supposing that they would be destroyed and explaining that Navajo culture did not really exist in its “documented expressions” but rather in its “live interactions.” Toelken determined that the tapes belonged to the Yellowman family and not to him nor to the rest of the world.

Material Culture

The Edge of the Cedars Museum in San Juan County has offered several exhibits and Indian fairs featuring Navajo storytellers, artists, and dancers. This organization, along with Blue Mountain Shadows and the San Juan County Historical Commission, have extensive collections of primary documents, artifacts, photographs, and materials from Ute, Paiute, and Navajo residents.
However, most of this material is not accessible to the general public or to Native communities.

Increasingly available to the public, for purchase and on exhibit, are Utah Navajo baskets. In the relatively isolated area of Douglas Mesa, the Bitsinnie, Black, and Rock families continue to make ceremonial baskets for use by the many medicine men within their community. The basket-makers were encouraged by the Simpsons, a family of traders who had owned the Blue Mountain Trading Post in Blanding before moving to Bluff where they started Twin Rocks Trading Post in 1989. Members of the basket-making families began experimenting with weaving techniques to produce a new genre: the Navajo pictorial basket. The numbers, figures, and colors woven into the baskets reference Navajo ceremonial life. The design ideas of these families have revolutionized and revitalized basket weaving in the area. The Utah Folk Arts Program gave additional support to Mary Holiday Black and nine of her eleven children who have become proficient at weaving both classic and pictorial baskets. Black once explained her work: “There are many basket stories; if we stop making the baskets, we lose the stories.” In 1995, she became the first Utahn and first Navajo folk artist to receive a National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. The Douglas Mesa artists were featured in the 1996 publication Willow Stories: Utah Navajo Baskets, edited by Carol Edison. Mary Holiday Black is also one of the basket-makers featured in Susan Brown McGeevy’s Indian Basketry Artists of the Southwest: Deep Roots, New Growth.

CONCLUSION

Studies of Utah American Indian folklore have involved many indigenous teachers who took on as apprentices non-Indian ethnographers, linguists, historians, and anthropologists to serve mainly the ends of the researchers: intellectual curiosity, personal enrichment, professional advancement. Out of the interactions of these individuals, out of first-hand experiences of trying to understand the ways of existence of living people, have been created rich repositories of cultural materials—personal and tribal histories, law, religion, linguistics, medical practices, entertainment, arts, music. Most of this material has been disseminated to non-Indian audiences, although some has been used to replenish indigenous sources of identity.

A common aim of tribal communities is to persist and to flourish as distinct entities within the dominant economic and legal structures of American society. The Native groups of Utah have fought to retain and expand land bases, to restore their federal legal status, to reestablish claims over sacred and significant sites. From studying people as artifacts to mutually satisfying collaborations, from collecting only certain “tribal” works of lore to celebrating the individual capacity to transcend culture-specific codes, American Indian folklore scholarship is in constant motion. The politics of expression and disclosure must ever be negotiated. The power of cultural expressions that nourish the human spirit must ever be affirmed.