

Thocmetony



Thocmetony (Shell Flower), also known as Sarah Winnemucca, was born around 1844 and among the Numa¹. She is best known for her autobiography “Life Among the Paiutes: Their Wrongs and Claims (1883),” which provided narratives about Northern Paiute life and the impacts of colonization^{1,2}. As a child, she learned both Spanish and English. During the Paiute War of 1860 and clashes between colonizers and Natives, she lost several family members². This led her to attempt to be a peacemaker and also serve as an interpreter at Camp McDermitt in Northeast Nevada from 1868 to 1871. In 1872, the Paiute were forcibly removed to their land to a new reservation in Malheur in southeastern Oregon². When the Bannock war erupted in 1878, Thocmetony learned her father and others had been taken hostage. She learned where the Bannock camp was and rescued her father and many of his companions². This led her to be able to give information to General O.O. Howard in his campaign against the Bannocks². She also served as Howard’s aide, scout, and interpreter. She became a lecturer on the plight of her tribe, which attracted the attention of President Rutherford B. Hayes and she was falsely promised the return of her people to their land². After writing “Life Among the Paiutes: Their Wrongs and Claims,” she secured thousands of signatures calling for the promised return to their homelands, which led Congress to pass a bill to that end in 1884. The bill never took effect, and she spent the rest of her life advocating for her tribe and land rights². She died in 1891.

Citations

1. Magazine, S. (2016, July 27). Sarah Winnemucca devoted her life to protecting Native Americans in the face of an expanding United States. *Smithsonian.com*. Retrieved February 21, 2023, from <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/sarah-winnemucca-devoted-life-protecting-lives-native-americans-face-expanding-united-states-180959930/>
2. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. (n.d.). Sarah Winnemucca. *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved February 21, 2023, from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sarah-Winnemucca>