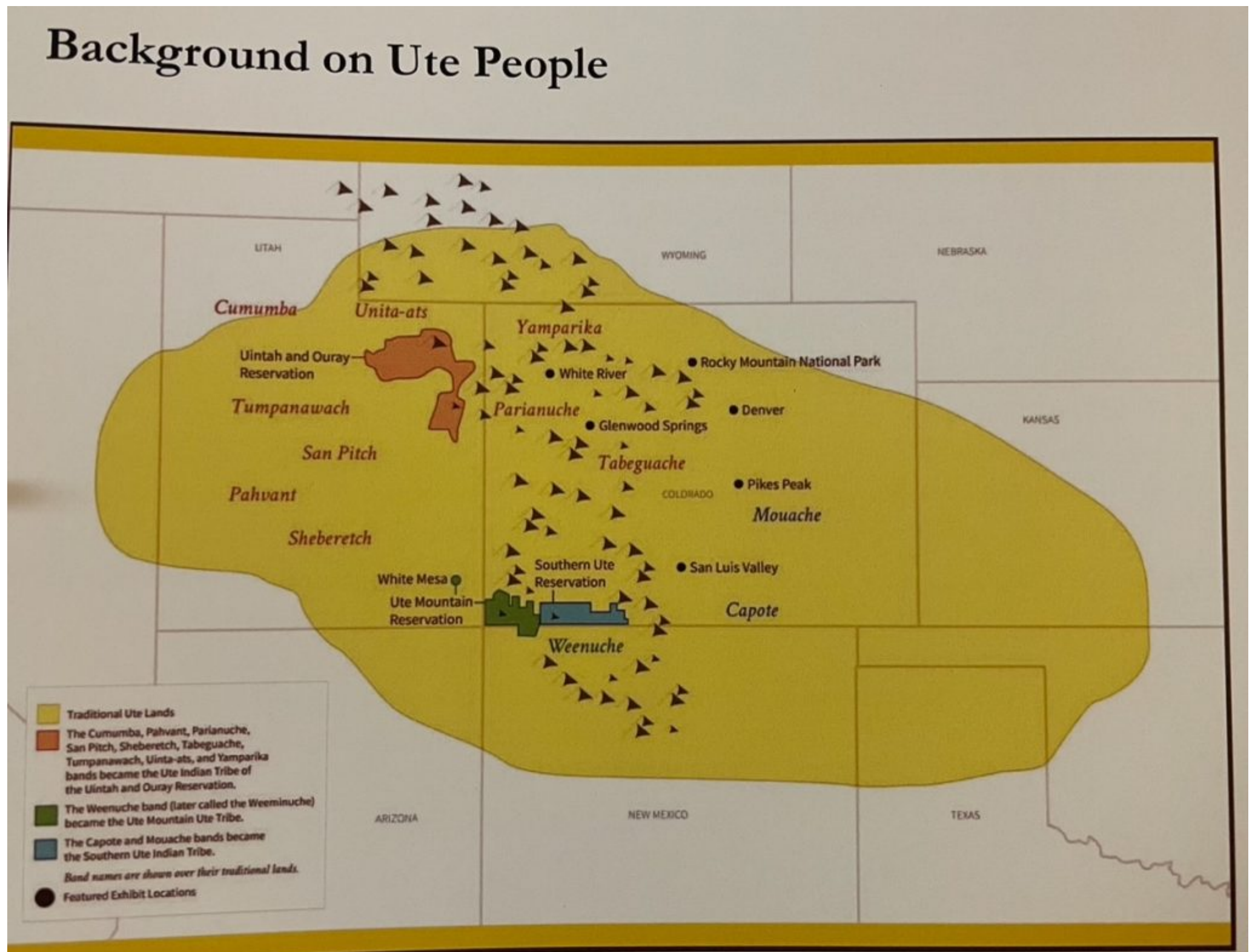


# Get Wild: November is Native American Heritage Month

Karn Stiegelmeier



**A map from Colorado History curriculum, shows where the Utes lived for thousands of years. The History Colorado Exhibit is currently at Colorado Mountain College in Breckenridge and is available for anyone to view.**

Karn Stiegelmeier/Get Wild

Most people living here in Summit County came from somewhere else, and some of us know stories from a few generations back, perhaps the stories a grandparent told, or conclusions from DNA tests that often give a slightly different story. My grandmother told me I had Native American heritage, but that was not what the DNA tests showed. Some of us in Summit County arrived from another country in recent years, some are a few generations removed from our European ancestors, who came in search of the riches of these Western lands in the middle of the 19th century.

The Utes were in Summit County seasonally during the summertime. Their migratory routes covered current boundaries of Colorado, Utah, and parts of New Mexico, Arizona and Wyoming.

The Utes have lived in this area for maybe 10,000 years or perhaps, forever, according to the Ute people's stories. The historic changes of European settlers moving in dramatically impacted the Ute way of life, as they were forced out of their homelands — experiencing broken treaties and eventually being marched out to reservations. The month of November is an opportunity to honor the Native Americans who came before us on these lands in Summit County and to learn more about how they have been living here successfully all these years. As we become more aware of the damage our modern lifestyle has on our ecosystems, it is even more important to appreciate the people who lived here with sustainable practices for thousands of years. The healthy ecosystems of rivers, forests and abundant wildlife provided rich sources of living. Then, Europeans arrived with a different ecological ethic of extraction and trapping without considering long-term sustainability.

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History Colorado archeologists and ethnobotanists worked in collaboration with the Southern Ute, the Ute Mountain Ute, and the Ute Tribes of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation to create this collection of exhibits and educational programs. Yes, the Ute Indians used STEM, science,

technology, engineering and math, to solve problems in the past and in the present. Thanks to the Summit Historical Society, this amazing exhibit is open for all to see at the Breckenridge Colorado Mountain College campus. The Ute Knowledge and STEM exhibit is open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. daily, excluding Sunday, until Nov. 14. The Summit Historical Society's vision is exploring the past to better understand the present and positively influence the future.

There are general information panels and videos to watch about the Native Utes living here for thousands of years with a focus on STEM! How did the Utes use science, technology, engineering and math to build their homes, design clothing and decorations, find and cook local foods, and to travel seasonally to new locations? They have hundreds of generations of traditional ecological knowledge along with a continual evolution of new STEM techniques. It is a fun exploration to test your own thinking to contemplate some of the problems solved with STEM through many centuries and today.

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Our schools have focused on STEM education in recent years, knowing we need to continue to solve problems using these areas. Our local students are very attuned to the concept and how important it is to learn more.

Would you be able to use engineering to build a structure, use technology to transform materials into comfortable shoes, weave a basket that could carry water? Do you have the scientific knowledge to know which plants you could gather for food, or the pattern making math skills to create beadwork designs? Visit the exhibit this week to learn more about some ancient knowledge, and where modern STEM knowledge intersects.



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Karn Stiegelmeier/Courtesy photo

**“Get Wild” publishes on Fridays in the Summit Daily News. Karn Stiegelmeier is the Chair of the Eagle-Summit Wilderness Alliance, an all-volunteer nonprofit that helps the U.S. Forest Service protect and preserve the Wilderness areas in Eagle and**

**Summit Counties, For more information, visit [EagleSummitWilderness.org](http://EagleSummitWilderness.org)**