

## Sign Language Descriptions

Provided by Shanandoah Martineau Anderson, a member of the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah

**PAIUTE/INDIAN:** Rub the left hand with tips of right fingers. This sign generally refers to your own tribe but in modern times it can also refer to an Indian of any other tribe.

**LAND:** Place both hands close to front of chest, palms down, thumbs almost touching; then push both hands forwards at the same time and as hands go out from body, bring right to right and left to left, so that both describe horizontal half circles in their respective directions.

**Mountain:** Place both hands above head, palms out, thumbs touching and finger pointing up, then bring both hands out to each side and then downward showing the shape of a big mountain.

**Canyon:** Place both hands flat at height of shoulders, about three feet apart, with palms facing up. Then bring both hands inwards and downwards describing a shallow V until hands meet.

**Forest:** Place both hands in front of belly several inches apart, fingers pointing up and spread with palms facing body, then raise both hands to about head level or higher. This is similar to the signs; all stand up and many children, but, is raised higher. Several signs for tree can also be given.

**Desert:** Make sign for land, water and "no." "No" is placing right hand in front of belly, palm facing left, fingers pointing to front, then push hand to the right 90 degrees until fingers point right and downwards with palm facing front; the concept being pushing something away or to one side.

**WATER:** Put one hand out, hand flat with palm down, in an up and down wavy motion like the surface of a moving river.

**TREE:** Place left hand around wrist of right hand, closed fist, then lift right hand upward while opening right hand and spreading fingers to represent the branches at the higher level blooming up. Left hand remains at original level as right hand raises. Right hand can raise until elbow hits left hand.

**ANIMAL:** Use several signs for different animals.

**Dog:** Touch tip of thumb with all finger tips of one hand to represent the shape of the dog's head, then hold it down low to show the dog's size.

**Deer:** Spread vertical fingers of both hands, palms facing, and place them at the sides of your head and shake them to represent the antlers of a male deer.

**Buffalo:** make two horns with the extended index fingers curved, then place them on the top of the head or in front about 8 inches apart.

**Mountain Sheep:** Place index fingers on each side of head, pointing at each other and then describe the spiral of the sheep's horn as they curve to the back and then down and out in front in a full or half curl.

**Rabbit:** Raise both extended index fingers above head like a rabbit's long ears; then make sign for leaping with the fingers.

**Bird:** Hold both hands flat, pointing forward at your shoulders and move them up and down like wings, slowly for big birds and quickly for little birds.

**BIRTH:** There is no sign for life so the closest I could come up with would be birth. Place left flat hand, palm down and fingers pointing to right, in front of pelvic area. With right hand make a pointing sign with index finger then move hand under the left palm and up other side, bringing it up vertically. This represents a child coming out the birth channel and rising.

**FRIENDSHIP:** Clasp both hands together and shake them as if shaking hands.