Edisto Natchez Kusso Tribe of South Carolina

The Name of the Indians in the Ridgeville area are the Edisto Natchez Kusso, better known as the Edistos. They are descendants of the Natchez and Kusso Indians. Indians are recorded as living in this area as early as 1577.

By 1711 there is a mention of the Cussow (Kusso) Indian Reservation, known as “Spoons”, or “land laid out to the Cussow Indians,” in this same area along the Edisto River.

The last person to speak the Natchez language was an elderly woman named Alkini, who was of the Cherokee tribe, and died about 1890. The Indians who were living along the Edisto River appear in the 1830 United States Census in Colleton County. The name Edisto Natchez Kusso Indians, is still used to describe this community of Native Americans, although the name “Edisto” was adopted by the tribe in 1970, being they reside along the Edisto River.

Edisto people are seen in the 1850 United States Census living in Creeltown, Saint Bartholomew’s Parish, Colleton County, which is also the location of a present community of the Edistos. Six miles away is the Four Holes Indian Community which branched off from Creeltown between 1890 and 1900, when they are seen in the Federal Census. The community is located on Highway 386 on the north side of Givhans Ferry State Park, three miles southwest of Ridgeville.

About fifty Natchez Indians moved eastward in the early eighteenth century. In 1747, they appealed to Charleston for recognition as “settlement Indians.” It was from this small remnant group that the family name of Creel originates. The current community established an Indian school in the 1940s. The Four Holes Indian Organization, Edisto Tribal Council, Inc. was established in 1969 to serve the Natives of these communities. It also provides direction to the future of Native American culture distinctiveness in South Carolina. Since 1970, the Edisto Indian people reside in Charleston, Colleton, Berkeley, and Dorchester Counties.

Today the Edisto people are descendant from and living in multiple communities in the low country, with a tribal enrollment that is growing. The Four Holes Indian Organization functions under a Tribal Council form of government. The tribal organization structure includes a chief and vice chief which are elected every four years. The By-Laws of the organization were adopted in 1971 and revised in 1995. The Constitution was adopted in 1995. The newest location of the Edisto Tribal Headquarters opened in March 1994, in Ridgeville, Dorchester County, South Carolina.

A book entitled, *Indian People of the Edisto River*, by Herbert McAmis and a book written by Wesley Taukchiray, *Natchez-Kusso Indians of the Edisto River*, recount the history of the ancient and contemporary people. The young Edisto dancers and drummers take an active part in the Edisto festival and celebrate their Native American heritage by maintaining their traditions and expressions. The Edisto Natchez Kusso Indians currently are State recognized but are seeking Federal acknowledgment.