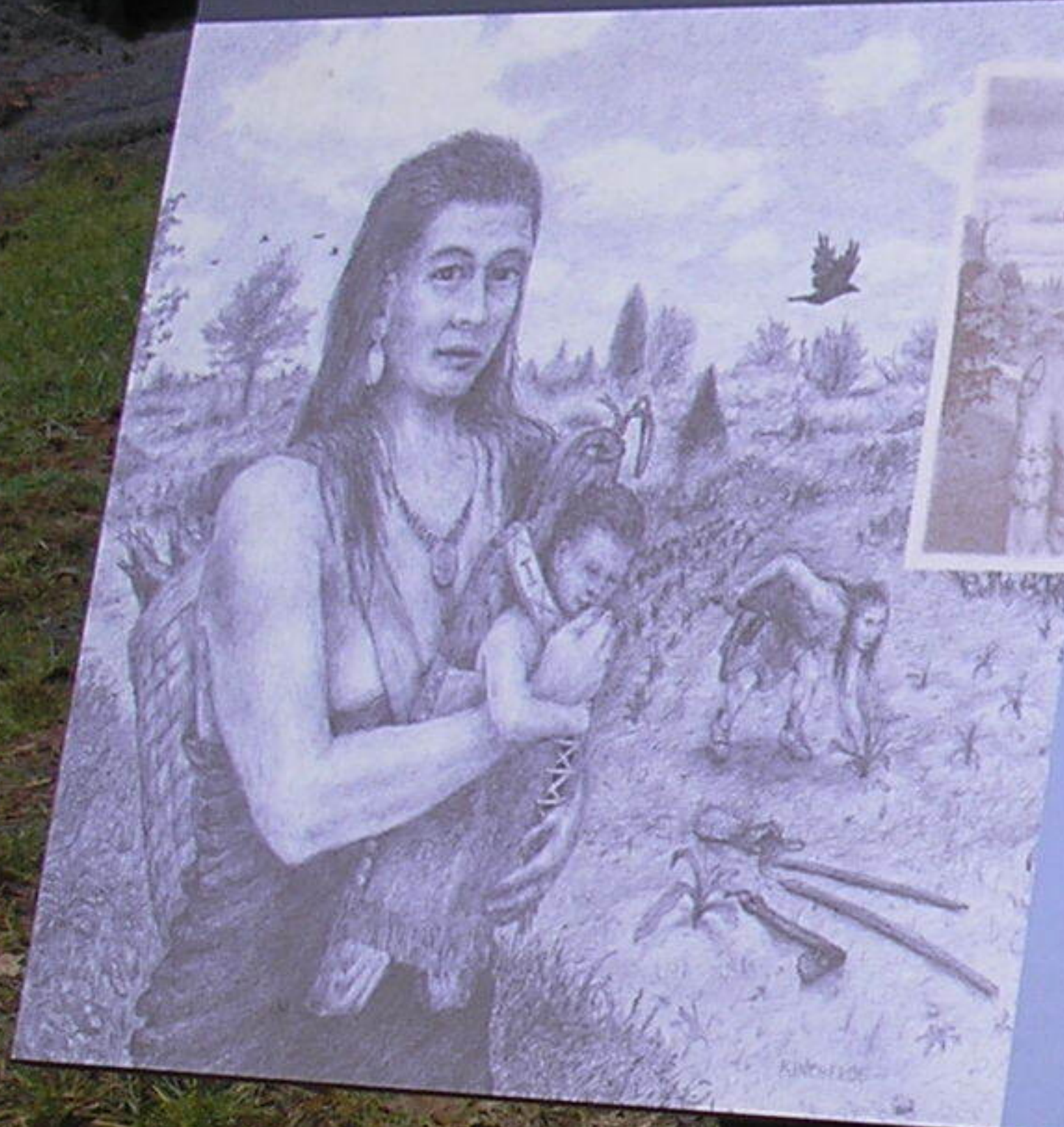


NATIVE AMERICANS AND FORT CHRISTANNA



"On the Western Path"
Abenaki canoe (Saponie-Tutelo)

Saponie woman with her child
Saponie nika nika wabashka (Saponie-Tutelo)

The story of Native Americans after Jamestown's founding in 1607 is a tragic one. At that time the Siouan Indians of Virginia probably numbered 6,300 people. By 1714, when Fort Christanna was established, they were in difficult circumstances, being reduced in number by diseases, oppressed by settlers from England pushing into the interior, and harassed by more aggressive tribes. Their numbers had fallen to around 600 people, many of them old and sick. Much of their land had been lost.

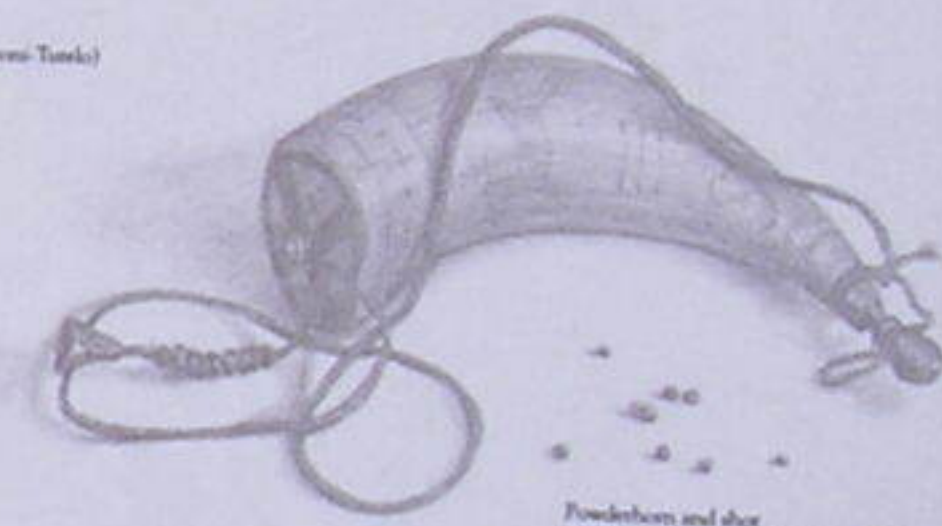
In 1713, however, the Saponie, Occaneechee, Totaro, and Stukanocks tribes signed a treaty that provided them a large tract of land for homes, hunting, and trading. This land was a safe distance away from English colonists. If colonists settled too close to their land, the treaty promised tribes land farther west. Fort Christanna was built within the tract of land provided these tribes by the treaty of 1713. With on-going support from Governor Spotswood, the Saponie benefited from this protected location. They pursued traditional trading activities with other tribes and with the English. Gathered here these four tribes all became known as "Saponie." As many as 15 other tribes came to trade and to make treaties at Fort Christanna. Inside the fort, children of the Saponie and other tribes were educated in a European fashion at a school for Indians.

Illustrations, 2006 by John W. Kinchen, III

A short distance from the fort itself was the Indian village called "Junkatapurse," meaning "Horse's Head" (probably from a bend in the river). There the Saponie built their houses in a circle joined together with only three entrances, making a sort of palisade. Indian men from the village hunted for food and pelts to trade, helped the rangers scout the countryside, and worked at the fort. Women cared for the children and planted corn and other crops. The Saponie made crafts such as pots, woven sleeping mats, and carved wooden plates both for trade and their own use. They entertained guests with an archery contest and with dancing.

When the fort was disbanded in 1722, many Indians stayed in the vicinity for a number of years. Some Saponie from the fort traveled to other states and even to Canada. There are still Saponie and Meherrin communities near the Virginia and North Carolina border. North Carolina recognizes three Saponie tribes: the Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe, the Occaneechee Band of the Saponi Nation, and the Sappony.

Arrow
Makos (Saponie-Tutelo)



Powderhorn and arrow
Tabaka nika nika (Saponie-Tutelo)

Remember that this land was where Saponie Indians hunted, traded, farmed, lived, and prayed. Please honor their memory by treating this land with respect.