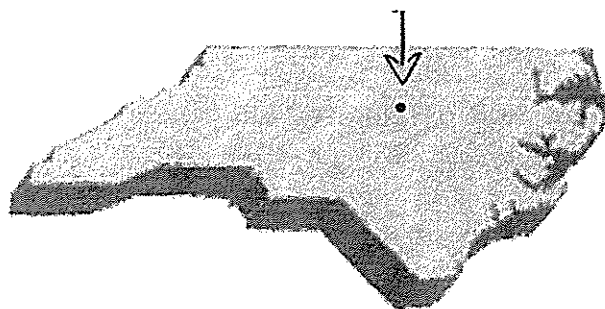


Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation

The Occaneechi are a small band of the Saponi nation that live primarily in and around Pleasant Grove Township, Alamance County, North Carolina.

With around 600 members today, the Occaneechi is one of the smallest tribes in the southeast. The tribe is mainly located in Alamance and Orange counties.



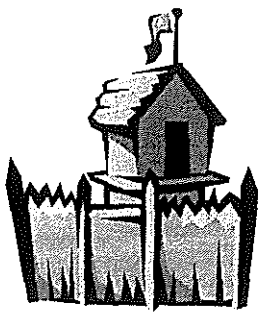
History

The ancestors of the Occaneechi-Saponi band called themselves the “Yesah,” which means “the people”. About 1000 years ago, just before the Revolutionary War, the Yesah were forced to move to the southeast after an attack by a much stronger enemy tribe. The Yesah left the area known today as the Ohio River Valley and crossed the Appalachian and Blue Ridge Mountains until they reached Roanoke River near Clarksville, Virginia.

The Occaneechi tribe was closely related to the Saponi tribe by language and culture. Along with the Saponi, the Occaneechi band controlled most of the trades from the Great Trading Path in Clarksville, Virginia. Because they dominated the region and intimidated others in battle, the Occaneechi tribe had power over the surrounding tribes in the southeast.

In 1676 there was a confrontation with Nathaniel Bacon, a European who disagreed with the Virginia governor’s friendly relationship with the Native Americans. Bacon became so angry with the governor and his support of the Great Trading Path that he formed his own militia to attack the trading post.

The attack resulted in the Jamestown capital being burned to the ground, as well as forcing the Occaneechi tribe to scatter and move further south into North Carolina.



The Occaneechi tribe settled in present day Alamance County, which was then a community known as "Little Texas" in North Carolina.

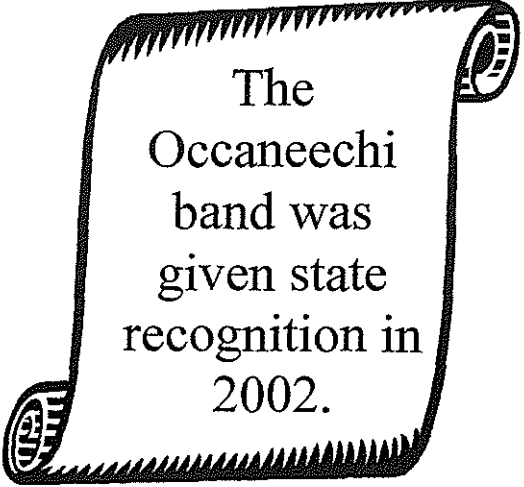
The tribe signed a peace treaty in 1713 with the colony of Virginia in which they were given a reservation in Brunswick County, Virginia, a trading post called Fort Christianna.

The Occaneechi tribe also joined forces with the Saponi, Tutelo and Tuscarora which allowed these tribes to adopt a new name, the Saponi Nation. However, the move back to Virginia was short lived as Fort Christianna closed in 1717 and the Occaneechi tribe moved back to North Carolina.

By the 1940s most of the Occaneechi traditions had disappeared and the tribe had spread out and given up its agricultural lifestyle. In the early 1980s, the Saponi Nation reorganized as the Eno-Occaneechi Indian Nation and by 1995 the Occaneechi tribe changed its name to the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation.

In August of 2002, the Occaneechi band initiated the Occaneechi Homeland Preservation Act. The act was designed to buy back the land of their ancestors and to begin a new community for the Occaneechi descendants.

In 2004, the tribe purchased 25 acres of farmland in northeast Alamance County giving them their own tribal land for the first time in 250 years.

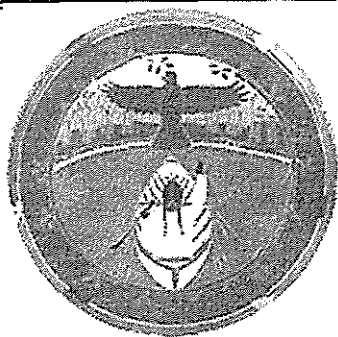


The
Occaneechi
band was
given state
recognition in
2002.

Government

Originally, the Occaneechi tribe was governed by two chiefs. One chief looked after those in war while the other chief watched over agricultural matters back home.

Today, the Occaneechi do not have a chief, but are instead governed by a 12-member Tribal Council and Chair. The chair and council are elected by tribe members and serve two-year terms.



Culture

By the time the Occaneechi had settled down in the North Carolina region, they had turned from a hunting to a farming lifestyle. They relied on their tobacco and corn crops as a main source of trade, food and celebration. The Occaneechi tribe was well known for ceremonial feasting.

Until the middle of the 20th century, most Occaneechi people made their living working in agriculture. Today, many are employed as skilled workers in factories or work as craftspeople. Others hold professions in such areas as medicine, law, and education.

The tribe holds two powwows a year, one in spring and one in the fall. Demonstrations and celebrations of Occaneechi include traditional dances, foods, and artworks, and decorations in wood, gourds, animal hide, gold, and silver.

Other events are held to raise money and cultural awareness for the tribe. A replica of a 1701 Occaneechi village is located in Hillsborough near the original settlement. Based on archeological records, the village features huts, a cooking site, a sweat lodge, and a palisade wall. In addition, the tribe continues to work towards gaining federal recognition as well as building a tribal center complex which will house administrative offices, meeting rooms, classrooms, and a museum.

Language

The Occaneechis were a Siouan language tribe. The Occaneechi language was used during trades and religious rituals of the area. The Occaneechi language has since been lost through the decades. However, today some of the Occaneechi descendents are making efforts to recover some of the distinct language this tribe once had. These contemporary members are learning the closely related Tutelo language in order to recreate and piece together the traditional Occaneechi language.

Examples of the Tutelo-Saponi Language:

swim – míní ínase (mee-nee ee-nah-say)

I am making – Móma

corn – mataqe (mah-tah-hay)



Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation Review

Answer the following:

1. The Occaneechi-Saponi tribe is one of the _____ tribes in the southeastern United States. It has a membership of approximately _____ individuals.
2. The Occaneechi live primarily in present day _____ County, North Carolina.
 - a. Guilford
 - b. Sampson
 - c. Hertford
 - d. Alamance
3. True or false: The ancestors of the Occaneechi-Saponi tribe called themselves “Yesah”, which means “the people”.
4. Before the Revolutionary War, the Occaneechi tribe was force to leave the _____ and move to the _____ River near Virginia. This forced migration was due to an _____ by a much stronger enemy tribe.
5. In August 2002, the Occaneechi tribe began an act to buy back land previously owned by their ancestors. What was the name of this act?
6. In 2004, the Occaneechi tribe purchased _____ acres of land.
7. After arriving in North Carolina, the Occaneechi tribe settled in Alamance County, which was then called:
 - a. Little North Carolina
 - b. Little Virginia
 - c. Little Texas
 - d. Little California
8. Why did the Occaneechi tribe originally have two chiefs?
9. True or false: Today the Occaneechi government is lead by one chief.
10. In the Tutelo language, how would you say, “I am making corn?”