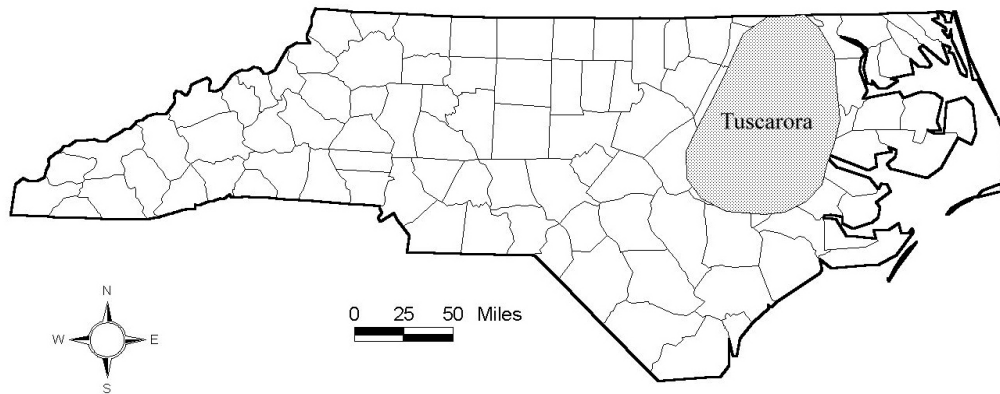


## The Tuscarora Tied Their World Together

The Tuscarora were once one of North Carolina's largest and most powerful tribes. Tuscarora legend says they used to occupy the country between the sea shore and the mountains. By the time Europeans arrived in the late 1500s, however, the Tuscarora lived in a smaller territory. It covered the western half of the Coastal Plain and the eastern edge of the Piedmont. Most Tuscarora villages were located on the terraces of the Roanoke, Neuse, Tar, and Pamlico Rivers. Their towns had names like *Haweta*, *Waqui*, *Chumanetts*, and *Kenta*. The contemporary towns of Raleigh, Smithfield, Goldsboro, Wilson, Rocky Mount, Tarboro, Greenville, and Kinston are in former Tuscarora lands.



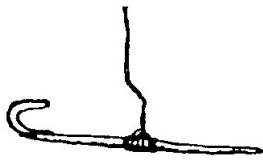
The approximate territory of the Tuscarora in the 1600s.

The Tuscarora are Iroquoian and speak an Iroquoian language. Their ancestors moved to Carolina sometime in the distant past. By the time Europeans arrived, several smaller tribes living on the Coastal Plain north and south of the Tuscarora were also Iroquoian. These were the Coree, Neusiok, Nottoway, and Meherrin. (The Cherokee are Iroquoian, as well.) Today, few Tuscarora live in North Carolina. Most modern-day Tuscarora live in New York state. Their ancestors left North Carolina and moved north after defeat in a war with colonists and allied Indians in 1711–1713. They went to live with the Iroquois and became the sixth nation in the Iroquoian Confederacy.

Before Europeans came, the Tuscarora lived much like most other North Carolina Indian tribes. They were agriculturalists who grew corn, squash, and several kinds of beans. Corn was their most important crop. It was parched and ground into meal, and people used it in soups and to make bread.

Even though they cultivated food, the Tuscarora relied heavily on wild foods. They fished and caught crayfish. They snared and hunted game animals, such as bear, beaver, racoon, rabbit, squirrel, and turkey. Deer was the most important source of meat. Hickory nuts, wild parsnips, wild turnips, Allegheny chinquapin nuts, and berries were among the wild plants the Tuscarora ate. Both men and women gathered food. Men hunted, and they also prepared the land for gardens.

The Tuscarora knew their environment well. To use what it offered, groups moved their entire villages twice each year. In the spring and summer, they stayed near the rivers. People farmed the

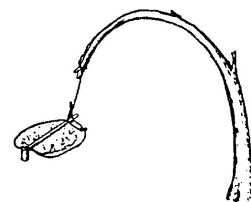


Fish hook.

soft, fertile soils and fished. In the fall, they moved away from the rivers to hunting quarters deeper in the Coastal Plains and stayed there all winter. Interestingly, the Tuscarora villages looked different in each place. Summer villages had houses set far apart. Fields were between them. The houses were round or oval. The walls were made from saplings that were pulled together at the top to form a roof. Fall and winter hunting

villages had rectangular houses with ridge-like roofs. People built them close together, forming narrow streets. The house sides were covered with bark to keep cold and wet weather out.

As they went about daily life, the Tuscarora needed many kinds of things. Some were for pleasure and some for work or ritual. They made necklaces and earrings by shaping a kind of sea shell called *Marginella*. This shell was obtained by trading with coastal Algonkian Indians. Copper ornaments were popular among the Tuscarora, and they got copper by trading with people in the west. Some work-related tools the Tuscarora needed were bows and arrows made from wood. The arrow tips, knives, and scrapers were chipped from stone. They also made stone drills, milling stones, and hoes. Animal bone was used, too. People carved it into items like fish hooks and pins to hold garments together.



Animal snare.

Clay pottery was very useful. The Tuscarora used different sizes and shapes of clay pots to cook and store food in. Archaeologists call the Tuscarora pots *Cashie ware* (pronounced ca-SHY). They are distinctive from those their neighbors, like the Algonkians, made. Some Tuscarora pots were decorated by placing a piece of loosely woven fabric on the surface of the wet clay. People then used a wooden paddle to lightly smack the fabric while turning the pot over in their hands. When the fabric was lifted off after paddling it, the pot's surface had the fabric's imprint on it. People also decorated pottery by cutting lines or using a hollow reed to punch holes near the vessel's rim.



Hemp.

Cordage was an especially important part of Tuscarora life. In the Tuscarora language, Tuscarora means "Hemp Gatherers." Indian hemp is a wild plant known today as common dogbane. Its dried stalks can be processed and made into strong cordage. The Tuscarora used other kinds of fibers besides Indian hemp. Each was suited to a specific purpose because of its special properties. Willow branches and surface pine roots were used for tying. Strong strings were made of sinew and human hair. Like Indian hemp, silk grass, rushes, and cattails made strong cordage. The Tuscarora needed to know where and when to find each kind of fiber, how

to prepare the fibers, and how to make useful objects from them.

Lacking nails, bolts, wire, and screws, the Tuscarora tied their world together. They used cordage to tie wood into bundles to carry back to the village for fires. They lashed the poles of their houses together and tied them securely at the top. They tied small game onto their waist bands. They tied arrow tips to arrows and stone hoes to long sticks. Cords were used to make animal snares and fish nets. It was used to hang meat to dry from drying racks.



Cattail.