

HISTORY OF THE COHARIE INDIAN TRIBE

The present population of the Coharie Indian Tribe is located in the State of North Carolina in the counties of Harnett and Sampson. We descend from the aboriginal tribe of the Neusiok Indians. According to the 2000 Census, the Indian population was 1870. However, our current tribal roll has 2,700 + members enrolled, with approximately 20% of these members residing outside the tribal communities. Historical movements, initiated by Inter-Tribal as well as white/Indian colonial hostilities, caused the Coharies to move to their present location between 1729 and 1746. Since that date, they have lived continuously as an Indian Tribe.



Throughout the 1800's, Coharies built a political base in Sampson County. This allowed the Tribe to establish their own small subscription schools for the Coharie children since 1859. This was accomplished with their own funds and teachers. In 1911, however, the North Carolina Legislature gave them their own school system. Due to the conflict the law rescinded in 1913. Due to the tribal activity, which included a published book on the Tribe's history by their attorney, the law was reinstated in 1917. The Coharies opened the East Carolina Indian School for all Indian children in 1943. Governor Melville Broughton gave the main address during the dedication services. The current building serves as the current tribal offices.

The fight to retain our school system was headed by the Sampson County Indian Clan, the governing body of the Tribe through our earlier history. Through their Indian clan, the Coharie had a well-defined political structure for the management of internal kinship needs, such as pooling economic resources and financially supporting the school system and churches. The Clan was also responsible for establishing eligibility committees to make sure that the students in the tribal school system met the necessary criteria.



The contemporary Coharie community consists of four settlements: Holly Grove, New Bethel, Shiloh, and Antioch. Within the main Coharie settlement are a number of Indian churches. The churches are the center of the Coharie activities. It is through the churches that families interact, the elders are honored, and the social rules are enforced. The Coharies' sense of themselves is manifested most clearly through their religious activities. The Coharie Indian Tribe has been recognized by the state of North Carolina since 1971.

The Coharie Intra-Tribal Council, Inc. currently governs the Tribe. It consists of a seven member Tribal Council that is elected by the tribal membership. Since 1980, Lumbee Legal Services (Legal Services of NC Pembroke) has represented the Tribe on the petitioning process for Federal Recognition. A substantial amount of research has been conducted to write the Tribe's petition for acknowledgment.



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