



*The People
of the
Coarse Pounded Corn*

*Greeting Travelers
for more than
Four Hundred Years*

Our Traditional Way of Life

A rolling mist still clings to the face of the Chickahominy River as the first rays of sun paint the morning sky red. Already, the village is awake — the people are making preparations for a new day.

There are no schools here, but everyone in the village helps to educate each child. By the time they are adults they will learn many traditional skills. As young adults, they will also learn their place in the circle of village life. Some will learn the medicinal value of every herb in the forest. Others will learn to speak with great eloquence. Others will learn the signs of the seasons, for planting and harvest. Regardless of their gifts, children learn that they are unique and treasured by the village.

There is no church here, but all of daily life is infused with spirituality and worship. Every meal, every healing herb, every new sunrise — all of life — is received with reverence as a new gift from *Ahone*, the Creator.



The traditional *yehakin*, or longhouse, reflects the Chickahominy desire to dwell in harmony with nature.

The First People of This Land

The Chickahominy have always been people in covenant with this land. Our ancestors were not nomadic, but lived for generations in villages located in the same area.

Their way of life was built on a reverent relationship with the land. They were farmers who grew an amazing array of crops: corn, beans, squash, pumpkins, gourds, and tobacco. In addition to the crops, they gathered nuts, berries, roots, and other wild vegetation that were used as paint and decoration, as well as for food.

Men and women had separate roles in traditional tribal life, and each role was equally important to the family's survival. Men gathered game and fish for meals, defended the village from intruders and traded with others for supplies. The men also cleared fields and built canoes. The women tended the crops, prepared the meals, and built longhouses that provided shelter for their families.

The Chickahominy were always careful to give back to the land that nourished them. They understood the need to rotate crops and give the land time to rest in order to bear good harvests.

The beginning and end of each day were devoted to prayer. In addition, offerings were made at the start of each season and prior to significant events. Tobacco or some other offering was always given as a sign of gratitude.

Our Changing Landscape

When the first English settlers stepped ashore in *Tsenacomoco*, now known as Virginia, the Native people of this land were there to meet them. Then, as now, one of the largest and most influential tribes in Virginia was known as —

The Chickahominy

"The People of the Coarse Pounded Corn"

The Chickahominy originally lived in permanent villages along the Virginia river that still bears their name. The Treaty of 1646 displaced the Chickahominy from this area and set aside land for them in the Pamunkey Neck area of Virginia. As the settlers prospered, they crowded the Chickahominy out of this area as well.

The Chickahominy families began a gradual migration to the area called the Chickahominy Ridge, where they now reside. This area, between Richmond and Williamsburg, is only a few miles from one of their 1607 village sites.

In 1901, the Chickahominy Tribe established Samaria Indian Baptist Church, which serves as an important focal point for their community to this day.

Today, the Chickahominy invite you to experience their history and culture. We hope you enjoy your stay in The Land of the Chickahominy!

Changing Times, Changing Ways

The Chickahominy Tribe showed compassion for the English settlers who arrived in Jamestown in 1607. If they had not given the Europeans food during the lean times, the new settlement might not have survived.

As European settlements grew, tensions began to rise. In 1614, the Chickahominy entered into a treaty in which they agreed to supply corn to the colonists and provide warriors to defend the settlement. During the poor harvest in 1615, the English took the corn by force, even though the Chickahominy did not have enough food for themselves.

Prior to the Civil War, the Chickahominy people were subjected to extremely restrictive laws. They were not allowed to vote, carry firearms, or teach their children to read.

In the 20th century, Virginia's Racial Integrity Act only acknowledged two races: "White" and "Colored." "Indian" was not recognized as a valid race. Dr. Walter Plecker, director of the state's bureau of Vital Records, was instrumental in establishing this discrimination.

How did the Chickahominy respond? They put their lives on the line for the land they loved. Chickahominy men served in World War I, even though they were not granted American citizenship until 1924 — four years after the war ended. During World War II, their service sowed the seeds of change as Chickahominy enlisted men demanded, and received, recognition as Indians.

The Next Four Hundred Years

The 20th century was a time of great change for the Chickahominy people. Tribal members built their own schools, raised funds to pay teachers' salaries and sent their children to Oklahoma to complete high school and attend college. Higher education was not available for Indians in Virginia until the latter part of the 1960s.

In time, the Chickahominy saw the repeal of the Racial Integrity Act and the disgrace of those who championed it. The tribe was granted official recognition by the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1983, and is now pursuing federal recognition.

Today, tribal members contribute to surrounding communities by serving on boards and commissions and local government agencies. In addition, the Chickahominy contribute to local economies through private business ownership.

We invite you to visit our annual **Fall Festival and Pow-wow**, held on the fourth Saturday and Sunday in September. This annual celebration of the harvest is the longest-running such event in Virginia. We also encourage you to keep in touch with us online. Visit us at our official tribal Web site, www.chickahominytribe.org!

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