

Meet the Native Peoples of John Smith's Bay

Virginia Council on Indians

The Council on Indians was established in 1983 as an advisory council to the Governor and General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia. See <http://indians.vipnet.org>.

The Powhatan Indian tribes

The name "Powhatan" is sometimes used to refer to some of the Algonquian-speaking tribes of the Virginia tidewater or coastal plain. By 1607, several tribes had been brought under the leadership of the powerful "mamanatowick" Powhatan. This paramount chief came from the town of Powhatan, near the falls of the James River, which was originally known as the Powhatan River.

At the time of English contact, the native Tidewater population in what is now Virginia numbered around 20,000. There were hundreds of settled towns and satellite villages built near the Chesapeake Bay or in the inlets and rivers, which flow into it.

Of the tribes that were tributaries to Powhatan, the following are state-recognized today:

Mattaponi-The Mattaponi, along with other original Powhatan tribes, were visited by Captain John Smith. The Mattaponi Indian Reservation was created in 1658 from land long held by the Tribe by an act of the Virginia General Assembly. Today, the Mattaponi still live on their reservation, and carry on their traditional shad fishing and stewardship of the Mattaponi River with the aid of a modern shad hatchery.

The **Upper Mattaponi**-The Upper Mattaponi tribe is a group of urban, non-reserved Indians, whose origins can be traced to several Powhatan tribes, including those of the Mattaponi and Pamunkey reservations. In 1608, Captain John Smith identified the village of Passaunkack at the location of the present day Upper Mattaponi. Today, the Upper Mattaponi Tribe is officially recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia. For more information about the tribe, please visit their Web site at <http://www.uppermattaponi.org/>

Pamunkey-The Pamunkey were considered to be one of the more powerful of the Powhatan tribes. The tribe was led by three chiefs who the English recorded as being brothers. In his diary, John Smith gives a description of these Indians: "The men bestowe their times in fishing, hunting, wars and such manlike exercises . . . The women and children do the rest of the worke. They make mats, baskets, pots, morters, pound their corne, make their bread, prepare their victuals, plant their corn, gather their corn, beare al kind of burdens and such like." Today, the Pamunkey still live on their reservation established in the 17th century, and manage a vital shad fishery on the Pamunkey River. For more information about the tribe, please visit their Web site at <http://www.pamunkey.net>.

Other Algonquian-speaking tribes:

Nansemond-At the time of the founding of Jamestown in 1607, the Nansemond Indians lived in several towns along both sides of the Nansemond River, in what is today the city of Suffolk. When the English arrived in Virginia, the tribe had about 300 warriors and a total population of perhaps 1,200 people. Today, the Nansemond Indian Tribe is officially recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia. For more information about the tribe, please visit their Web site at <http://www.nansemond.org>.

Rappahannock-In 1607, the Rappahannock were the dominant tribe of the lower Rappahannock River valley, maintaining 13 towns along the north and south banks of the river that bears their name. The Rappahannock territory encompassed lands in the modern counties of Richmond, Westmoreland, Essex, and Caroline. The king's town was located at "Cat Point Creek" or "Dancing Point" as known to the tribe, near present day Warsaw, Virginia. It may have been here, in December 1607, that the Rappahannock first met Captain John Smith--who called them "Toppahanocks"--when he was brought to see their chief while being held captive by Opechancanough. Today, the Rappahannock tribe is officially recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia. For more information about the tribe, please visit their Web site at <http://www.rappahannocktribe.org>.

Chickahominy-When the English settlers arrived in 1607, the Chickahominy were one of many tribes who received them. At that time the Chickahominy lived in towns along the Chickahominy River from near mouth of the Chickahominy to the middle of the current county of New Kent. The tribe, governed by a council of elders, was often considered an ally of Powhatan and his paramount chiefdom. In December 1607, John Smith was captured at the headwaters of the Chickahominy River and eventually delivered to Powhatan. Today, the Chickahominy Indian tribe is officially recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia. For more information about the tribe, please visit their Web site at <http://www.chickahominytribe.org>.

Eastern Chickahominy-The Chickahominy Indians Eastern Division shared their history with the Chickahominy Indian Tribe until a disagreement regarding land development and religious organization caused them to part. Today, the Chickahominy Indian Tribe, Eastern Division is officially recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia. For more information about the tribe, please visit their Web site at <http://www.cied.org>.

More Native Peoples of the Chesapeake Region:

Monacan Indian Nation-Bear Mountain in Amherst County has been the home of the Monacan people and their ancestors for more than ten thousand years. The earliest written histories of Virginia record that, in 1607, the James River Monacan (along with their Mannahoac allies on the Rappahannock River) controlled the area between the fall line near Richmond and the Blue Ridge Mountains. The most western of Virginia's currently recognized tribes, the Monacan were part of a confederation of Siouan-speaking

Indians. Although the colonists visited a Monacan town in 1607, the first known encounter between Siouan-speaking tribes and John Smith occurred in 1608, when he and his men engaged in hostilities with the Mannahoac and captured a wounded man named Amoroleck. When John Smith asked Amoroleck why his people had been hostile toward the English, he replied, "We heard that you were a people come from under the world, to take our world from us." His prophetic statement stands as an accurate description of the Monacan experience. Today, the Monacan Indian Nation is officially recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia. For more information about the Monacan Indian Nation, please visit their Web site at <http://www.monacannation.com> and their Flickr photo site at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/monacannation>.

Nanticoke-First contact with the Nanticoke Tribe was recorded by Captain John Smith in 1608. While exploring the Chesapeake Bay, Smith and his crew sailed onto the Kuskarawaok River. The Kuskarawaok, later known as the Nanticoke Indians, cautiously watched Smith's ship from the shore, climbing into the trees for a better look. When Smith approached the shore in a boat, the Nanticoke answered with arrows. Smith prudently put down anchor for the night in the middle of the river. Eventually, Smith convinced the Indians he came in friendship, and they returned with twenty more people from the nearby town. Food, water, and furs were exchanged for gifts the English brought. Smith described the Nanticoke as "the best merchants of all." Several Nanticoke agreed to serve as guides for Smith to continue his exploration of the Kuskarawaok, now known as the Nanticoke River. The Nanticoke tribe originally occupied the area between the Delaware and Chesapeake bays, in what is today Maryland and Delaware. Smith recorded that nearly 200 warriors lived with their families on the Nanticoke River and were allies of the Powhatan and other Algonquian-speaking tribes. Today, the Nanticoke Indian Association is officially recognized by the State of Delaware. From <http://www.nanticokeindians.org>.

The Nause Waiwash Band

The Nause Waiwash Band of Indians were part of the Great Nanticoke Confederacy, which in John Smith's time, extended from both sides of the Choptank and Nanticoke Rivers from its source to the Delaware Bay. Nause was Smith's first stop on the Nanticoke River, and he found that the inhabitants were fine merchants and makers of wampum. By 1742 the reservations were dissolved, and warfare or disease had decimated the tribe. After an attempted uprising, many Nanticokes moved north to join the Iroquois.

Those that stayed fled to the marsh areas near present day Somerset, Wicomico, Dorchester, Talbot and Caroline counties where their descendants live today. They lived in isolation until the "New Deal" brought paved roads to the area. Today their members are restoring a 19th century church to use as a long house for council and social events. They also hold in trust a historic church which they are restoring. The NWBOI host an annual festival during the second weekend after Labor Day in Vienna, MD.

The band can be contacted at 410-376-3889 or at their website www.turtletracks.org.

The Accohannoeks

The Accohannoeks are a Native American Tribe of Maryland, located in Marion. The Accohannoeks originally inhabited the territory that presently includes the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia. The territory included the Chesapeake Bay villages at present day Crisfield, Maryland.

The Accohannock Indian Tribe is an Algonquian-speaking sub-tribe of Powhatan Nation and part of the Accomac Confederation. Colonial policy in the 17th century weakened and dismantled the native culture. With the loss of its territory, self-government and other aspects of the tribe were destroyed.

Historically, they were hunters, trappers, and farmers. As hunters and trappers, they pursued deer, elk and bear. They planted crops of squash, maize and beans.

The tribe is a non-federally or state recognized tribe incorporated in the state of Maryland. To learn more about the Cohan's, see http://www.skipjack.net/le_shore/accohannock.