

Coharie Indians ^[1]

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The Coharie, like most Indians, depended largely on oral traditions for remembering and passing along their culture and history. The first recorded meeting of the tribe was in 1910 and at that time the group elected a chief, Enoch Emmanuel, who served in that role from 1911 until 1927. Along with the chief, the Coharie are governed by a tribal council of seven members.

The political base of the Coharie settled in the Sampson County area in the eighteenth century. Education has always been important to tribal members, as is evident in the subscription school established for Indian children in the region in 1859. The North Carolina General Assembly gave the Coharie their own, separate school system in 1911, but withdrew permission for the system in 1913. The Coharie Indians were actively organizing their tribal government and, in the course of that work, published a history of the tribe. Their work paid off when the state reauthorized the Coharie school system four years later. In 1943 the East Carolina Indian School was established in Sampson County as a high school for the Coharie and other American Indians in the seven-county region. Having closed in 1965, the school building has been repurposed as the Coharie tribal administrative offices. The Coharie Tribe gained state recognition in 1971.

Today Coharie tribal members live primarily in four communities. They are: Holly Grove, New Bethel, Shiloh, and Antioch. The churches in these communities are fundamental to the Coharie tribe, offering a place for kinship, for Elders to be honored, and for social rules to be enforced.

The Coharie chief is elected by the tribal membership every four years. The Coharie Intra-Tribal Council, Inc. governs the tribe. The Coharie People, Inc. is a nine-member board representing South Clinton, Herring, and Shiloh districts that operates and oversees various tribal concerns including the annual Coharie Powwow, Coharie Pageant, and the Title VII Indian Education Program. The Harnett County Coharie Indian Association is a nine-member board representing the Coharie of Harnett County, overseeing the programming central to Harnett County.

Since 1969 the Coharie have held a Powwow to raise funds for the organizations' cultural and educational activities, as well as to strengthen the cultural identity of Coharie Indians. The Powwow is held each year during the second weekend in September.

References:

Thomas E. Ross, *American Indians in North Carolina: Geographic Interpretations* (1999)

Coharie Tribal Intra-Council, Inc., "Coharie Indian Tribe," booklet produced for 2017 Powwow.

Website for the Coharie Tribe: <https://coharietribe.org/> ^[2]

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