

Nisqually Indian Tribe

Nisqually Indian Tribe - About Us



The Nisqually people have lived in the watershed for thousands of years. According to legend, the Squalli-absch (ancestors of the modern Nisqually Indian Tribe), came north from the Great Basin, crossed the Cascade Mountain Range and erected their first village in a basin now known as Skate Creek, just outside the Nisqually River Watershed's southern boundary. Later, a major village would be located near the Mashel River.



The Nisqually have always been a fishing people. The salmon has not only been the mainstay of their diet, but the foundation of their culture as well. The Nisqually Tribe is the prime steward of the Nisqually River fisheries resources, and operate two fish hatcheries: one on Clear Creek and one on Kalama Creek.

The Nisqually Tribe is located on the Nisqually River in rural Thurston County, 15 miles east of Olympia, Washington. As of the year 2005, the Tribe had a service area population of 5,719 Native Americans, 600 of whom reside on the reservation. An additional 5,119 service population members live off the reservation in Thurston and Pierce Counties. Tribal land holdings, on and near the Nisqually reservation, exceed 1,000 acres -- all of which have been reacquired in the past 25 years.

History

The original reservation was established by the Medicine Creek Treaty of December 26, 1854. The reservation consisted of 1,280 acres on Puget Sound. On January 20, 1856 an executive order enlarged it to 4,717 acres on both sides of the Nisqually River.

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On September 30, 1884 acreage was set aside and divided into 30 family allotments on both sides of the Nisqually River. The acreage didn't include the river. The people lived in peace for a while harvesting fish from the River and growing potatoes on the prairie tracts.

They also received few government rations. In the winter of 1917 the U. S. Army moved onto Nisqually lands and ordered them from their homes without any warning. Later, the Army condemned 3,353 acres of their land to expand the Fort Lewis base.

Government

On September 9, 1946 the Tribe's constitution and bylaws were approved. The constitution was amended in 1994. The governing body of the Tribe is the General Council comprised of all enrolled tribal members 18-years-of-age or older. The day-to-day business and economic affairs of the Tribe are overseen by a tribal council comprised of seven tribal members elected by the tribe's voting membership.

Information drawn from the Washington State Governor's Office of Indian Affairs' web site, Nisqually Link. Information about tribal government and population were provided by Joe Cushman, Director of Planning at the Nisqually Tribe.

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