

"The Coquilles: Images of a People"

Since its restoration to federal recognition in 1989, the general public has become increasingly aware of and curious about the Coquille Tribe, and its history and culture. The following text was developed as a way to respond to the general subject areas that Tribal representatives are most questioned about; for inclusion in a tribal information brochure available at the Mill Casino-Hotel, the Tribe's several business offices, and at various Tribal and public locations and events.

Coquille Indian Tribe

On June 28, 1989, Congress passed Public Law 101-42, which re-established the Coquilles as a federally recognized Indian Tribe. The *Coquille Restoration Act* restored the Tribe's eligibility to participate in federal Indian programs and to receive federal funding to provide health, education, housing assistance, and other services to Coquille Tribal members. The *Act* also re-affirms the Tribe as a sovereign government; and validates the Tribe's authority to manage and administer political and legal jurisdiction over its lands and resources, its businesses, and its Tribal community members.

The Tribe provides direct services to more than 400 Tribal members and families living within the Tribe's five county service area of Coos, Curry, Douglas, Lane, and Jackson counties. Total Tribal population exceeds 900 persons. Tribal Government Administration Offices and other Tribal business offices are at several locations in the North Bend-Coos Bay Area.

Pronunciation and Origin of "Coquille"

Tribal anthropologists and historians agree that the word Coquille ("ko-kwel") is derived from a Native name for a fish (lamprey) that was once very abundant and very important in the diet and culture of coastal Native peoples. In 1854, a pioneer settler in the region, Perry Marple, wrote for a local newspaper: "*Scoquel is the Indian name of an eel which abounds in this stream, from which the river takes its name. Of late it is generally called the Coquell...*"

Coquille Language

When Euro-American settlement began here in the 1850's, Ko-Kwel ancestors spoke one or more dialects of three distinct local languages, along with Chi-nuk jargon, a trade language used by Native peoples throughout the northwest. On the lower Coquille River and lower Coos Bay estuaries, "Miluk" was the prevalent language. Native people on upper Coos Bay and northward spoke "Hanis." Along the upper Coquille River, eastward to Camas Valley and south into the Rogue River country "Athapaskan," was spoken- a language similar to that of modern day tribes in the southwest U.S. and Alaska. By the early 1900's, native Ko-kwel languages were nearly extinct; and except for some residual words or phrases that were still useful or meaningful in a rapidly changing world, Ko-kwel people spoke mostly English.

Where Coquilles Lived

Ko-kwel ancestors lived at South Slough on lower Coos Bay; in all the watersheds of the Coquille River system from the ocean to its headwaters; and south along the coast to as far as Cape Blanco and Port Orford. Those Ancestral Homelands encompassed more than one million acres, all of it ceded to the U.S. government in treaties signed by "Coquille chiefs and headmen" in 1851 and 1855. Those treaties were never ratified by the U.S. Senate, thus reservation lands promised in the treaties never materialized; and those Ko-kwel people and the many generations that followed them were denied permanent homelands. Today the Coquille Indian Tribe's land

base exceeds 8,000 acres of forest, farm, residential, and commercial-retail properties.

Today, little evidence remains of the many places Ko-kwel ancestors lived, but major permanent villages were located at places with modern names like "Old Town Bandon," Myrtle Point, Charleston, Cape Arago, Bullards, Bridge, and Powers. Seasonal villages were located at places where people went to gather foods or plants; or to hunt or fish. Such places can be located today only by the presence of remnant artifacts such as "lithics" (stone tools and flakes), "middens" (places where fish and shell fish were cooked or eaten), or fish weirs (traps and baskets arranged to catch a variety of fish species) that are found along muddy shorelines of estuaries and streams.

Coquille Habitations

Generally, permanent villages were occupied by members of one family clan or band, who lived in timbered and planked houses. A typical village might consist of one or more larger houses in which several family members lived; while nearby might be smaller dwellings used for storage or sleeping, or for special ceremonies or activities. At seasonal camps, shelter was less permanent, sometimes consisting of simple lean-tos, or arrangements of branches under a tree to ward off wind or rain, or to provide shade.

Most permanent villages were located along the lower reaches of streams and rivers, or in sheltered bays along the coast where canoe travel was easy; and where fish and game were abundant year round. Many seasonal places in the uplands and interior valleys away from the estuaries and coast were often hunting and food gathering areas used by many different groups. Typically, when Ko-kwels and other groups gathered for berry or nut harvesting, or root digging, or at hunting and fishing sites, it was also a time for celebration, and for renewing old relationships and making new ones. These kinds of places were returned to year after year, and all that happened at them became part of the oral traditions passed from one generation to the next. Annual events like the Mid-Winter Gathering, Restoration Day Celebration, and Solstice Dances all respond to those ancient Ko-kwel traditions.

Coquille Antiquity

Understanding and preserving Ko-kwel cultural heritage and traditions is critically important. The Tribe works closely with University of Oregon, Oregon State University, and Southern Oregon University to sponsor anthropologists and archeologists to work with Tribal members to research and document evidence the ancestral past. Major archaeological projects have been conducted along the Coquille River near Bandon, at fish weirs sites at several estuary locations, and along the coastal bluffs and shorelines between Coos Bay and Port Orford. Such research documents that humans have used and occupied the lands and resources of the Coos County and South Coast region for thousands of years; the oldest archeological site being 10,000 years old.

Tribal archeologists and historians also work closely governmental agencies (US Fish & Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, Oregon State Parks, Oregon Department of Transportation, and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife), and with other Oregon Tribes in projects aimed to protect, preserve and interpret cultural sites and resources on public lands. Though much of the past has been lost to time and circumstances, there is much that still remains. Tribal archives contain more than 100,000 pages of historic photos, letters and documents, and government records that have been collected by various Tribal research efforts. Tribal cultural preservation efforts also include the learning and teaching of

Ko-kwel oral histories and traditions to Tribal members.

Current Functions and Activities of the Coquille Tribe

Tribal Government.

Operating according to the Tribal Constitution, adopted by the Tribal membership on June 5, 1991, and approved by the Secretary of Interior June 9, 1991, the Tribe's governing body is the Tribal Council, comprised of seven (7) elected members, each of whom serve staggered three-year terms of office. Tribal Council Officers are: Chief, Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Secretary-Treasurer. Elections are conducted each year in October, under the supervision of a Tribal Election Board and a representative of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Tribal law is promulgated by Ordinance and Resolution, and provides for delegations of authority and representation to subordinate functions of the Tribal organization. Various Tribal Committees and work groups represent Tribal community interests as subordinate components of the Tribal Council. A Tribal Court and Tribal Police Department are delegated authority to administer and uphold tribal law in accordance and cooperation with other federal, state, and local jurisdictions.

Tribal Administration.

Under the direction of an Executive Director, Tribal staff is assigned various programmatic responsibilities to oversee the financial and service delivery functions of the Tribe, and to manage various cultural and community development projects. Administrative functions operate in accordance with federal budget and audit requirements, and tribal programs deliver services according to the requirements of P.L. 93-638, the Indian Self-Determination Act.

Coquille Economic Development Corporation (CEDCO)

Governed by a Board of Directors appointed by Tribal Council, CEDCO is delegated responsibility for economic development ventures and enterprises intended to generate independent sources of tribal revenue. The CEDCO Board meets quarterly, and publishes an annual financial report to the Tribal Council and Tribal membership. CEDCO enterprises include:

The Mill Casino-Hotel on Highway 101 in North Bend, Oregon. Casino operations began in 1995; first hotel opened in 2000; the 102-site *Mill RV Park* opened in 2006 and the "Tower" Hotel opened in 2008. *The Mill* offers Casino gaming, fine dining and buffet restaurants, gift shop, and live entertainment in on the Coos Bay waterfront.

Heritage Place, a full service assisted living and Alzheimer's facility located in Bandon, Oregon, serving Tribal members and the general public since 1995.

Coquille Cranberries, a twelve acre organic cranberry farm located on Tribal lands near Coos Bay. Presently, berries are grown for wholesale distribution to natural food processors in the Northwest.

ORCA Communications provides low cost fiber optic/broadband access to link Bay Area businesses and institutions to national and global markets.

Coquille Tribal Community Fund annually distributes grants to eligible organizations in Southwestern Oregon; in the areas of health, public safety, education, environment, arts and

culture, historic preservation, and problem gaming.

Ko-kwel Wharf. 50 acres of former industrial lumber mill site located adjacent to the Mill Casino Hotel on the Coos Bay waterfront; proposed for commercial-retail development by the Tribe beginning in 2010.

Coquille Indian Housing Authority (CIHA)

Governed by a Board of Commissioners appointed by the Tribal Council, the CIHA oversees a low and moderate-income residential community built on 66 acres of Tribal land near Coos Bay. Federal assistance through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides support for 71 units of housing currently available to qualified Tribal members and other Native Americans.

Coquille Tribal Community Health Clinic

The Health Clinic delivers medical services to Tribal members and other Native Americans who reside in the local Coos Bay area, and Tribal members who live within the Tribe's five county service area. Services include: vision, general physical examinations and lab work, prescriptions, referrals to other local medical care providers, and activities for Tribal youth and elders.

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