

Squaxin Island Tribe

Introduction

The Squaxin Island tribe is located on the southern tip of Puget Sound near the city of Olympia on a series of inlets and islands. The Squaxin people had at one time six villages within their traditional territory. When the Medicine Creek Treaty was signed in 1854m a reservation was created for them on Squaxin Island. After the treaties were signed, war broke out and war prisoners were incarcerated on Squaxin Island. By 1862 most of the tribal members left the Island. Today nobody lives on Squaxin Island. It is a place to gather food, fish or come together for a potlatch. Today the reservation has a total of 2,175 acres with a total enrollment of 643 tribal members. The tribal government has a seven member tribal council reorganized in 1965.

Worth being familiar with

The cultural life ways of the Squaxin people included traveling by canoe, trading extensively with other tribes. Seafood, cedar and a particular breed of dog was part of their daily lives. The small white dog was shaved and the fur was used to make blankets. These dogs became extinct in the late 1800's. Hunters also had dogs to help track prey. The Squaxin people spoke the Lashootseed Salish language. Their traditional life ways were migratory. During the spring and summer they harvested berries, cedar, marsh grass and camas. During the fall they would follow the fish runs. Many of the houses were built on planks, like a boat house. So when the tide was out, their house was on the beach. When the tide came in, they lived on the water. This way they could move from place to place to gather seafood. Like many tribes on the Olympic Peninsula, the Squaxin people have a story of surviving the Great Flood.