

The Waccamaw People

A look at South Carolina's American Indians

RESEARCH AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROB SMOAK *The Sun News*

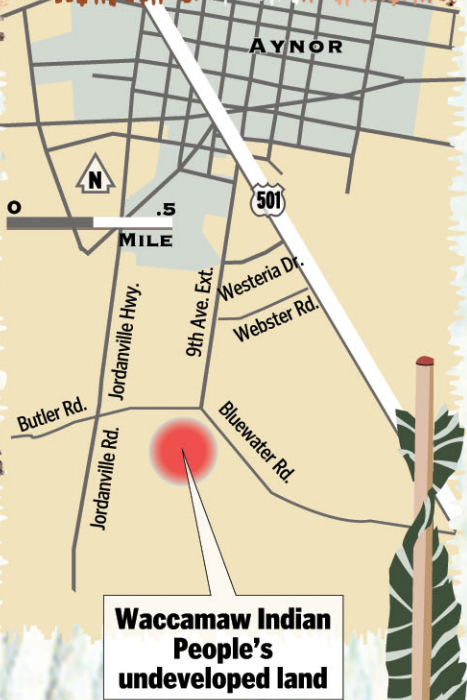


Waccamaw seal

Woodland groups such as the Waccamaw were a gathering and foraging people moving from place to place to harvest or hunt the best available food resources. They occupied seasonal campsites in areas along the coastal plain. Their language was Lakota or Siouan.



Tribal Chief Harold "Buster" Hatcher



Waccamaw Indian People's undeveloped land

Glossary of terms in the Lakota language:

The word **Waccamaw** can mean one of three things:

- A sacred place
- Black water, what is known today as the Waccamaw River
- Water that comes and goes or ebbs and flows

- **Mato** | bear
- **Sha** | red
- **Chunta** | heart
- **Wamble** | eagle
- **Wakin** | mysterious
- **Tanka** | great or big
- **Shunta sha** | "One who thinks as I do"
- **Wakin Tanka** | "The Great Mysterious" or "God"
- **Hunka** | Relative by choice; also known as "blood brother." Sometimes to denote spouse.



Houses

Called *Suk* (in Lakota), these were built of available materials such as tree bark and branches and were covered with thatch. Europeans called them wickias or wig wams because the Cherokee and Creek called their houses by those names.

Tools and hunting weapons

Hand drill

This drill is simply a spindle held between the palms of the hands. The hands are rubbed rapidly back and forth, causing the spindle to gyrate just as rapidly. It may be used to start a fire or cut a hole.

Arrowheads

These were made from stone or rock by chipping and carving the shape. Arrowheads varied in size depending on the intended use from small for hunting birds, fish or small prey to large for hunting deer and other large game animals.

Bone knives

These were used for cutting meat and fish. Bone knives also were a tool for cleaning hide to make leather or tanned buckskin.

Stone ax

This tool was made from stone and a wood handle bound by leather. It was sometimes called a tomahawk when used in combat.

Bow and arrow

This was a very important weapon used for hunting and combat. The point and arrowhead were made to release from the shaft so that if an animal escaped, the shaft (the more-difficult part of the arrow to build) could be retrieved, leaving the point in the animal.

A Waccamaw tradition

In ancient times, fire was hard to build, and a special person was designated to keep the flame burning. This person was called the fire keeper and lived with a continuously burning flame day and night. The fire keeper was fed and clothed by the tribe. Over time, he became the spiritual leader of the tribe. He was the source of advice and counsel. The Fire Circle is a worship service directed by the fire keeper and has a number of strict traditions that cannot be photographed.

The pump drill

Used to bore holes through bone, shell, wood and even stone, the pump drill was tipped with stone for most uses, but sometimes the stone was removed and the drill was used to make fire with friction.

Walking stick

The stick was a tool for balance while walking over rough terrain and as a weapon against any unexpected animal that may be in the path.

