Indian Institute

Little Axe Indian History Class
March 26, 1969

SHAWNEE HISTORY: EARLY HISTORY (continued)

In 1694 another large group of Shawnees moved north from South Carolina. They had been invited by the Munsee division of the Delaware tribe to settle with them on the upper Delaware River. They settled with the Munsee on the Delaware River, most of the group settling at the mouth of the Lehigh River near present Easton, Pennsylvania. Some of them went as far down as the Schuylkill to live.

Also at this time some of the Ohio Shawnees (those who had never gone to live in the southeast) came to settle on the Delaware River with the Munsees. One of the Munsee sachems, Matasit, returned from the Ohio country in 1692, accompanied by a Shawnee sachem and a few followers. There were eventually about 700 Shawnees living with the Munsees on the Delaware River. The Colonial government granted them permission to settle there on condition they make peace with the Iroquois. A council was held at which the Shawnees and the Five Nations settled their differents. Later a white man went with the visiting Shawnees back to the Ohio to conduct more of their people to the Delaware. The name of the Shawnee town on the Upper Delaware was Pechoquealin.

Period of the French and Indian Wars, 1689-1763

For the next several decades the main influence on the history of the Shawnees was the struggle between England and France for control of eastern North America. This was a major power struggle between the two most powerful nations of Europe. The stakes were high. Both European countries wanted to exploit the resources of the New World and use them to make their countries richer and more powerful. But the English had come also to colonize and make homes and transform the wilderness into a settled country after the image of England. The French did not colonize to such a great extent. They were more interested in trading with the native Indian tribes, and obtaining furs from them. They soon established a vast network of trading posts and forts from the St. Lawrence River through the Great Lakes area and the Northwest Territory, and down the Mississippi River to New Orleans, a French possession.

In general the Indians supported the French, but the Iroquois--the Five Nations--supported the British. In their struggle for power the English and the French each tried to enlist the support of the Indian tribes and get them to do much of the fighting. Probably at least some groups of Shawnees were involved in each one of these four wars between the French and the English. The issues must have been clear to the Shawnees of that time, as well as to the other Indians: If the English won, white settlers would be taking over more and more Indian land and spoiling the wilderness, driving out the game animals and cutting down the forests. If the French won--well, they did not seem so eager to encroach and settle among the Indians. They were simply supplying much needed trade goods such as iron and steel tools and weapons to the Indians in exchange for furs and other forest products.

At the beginning of this period there were still some Shawnees living on the Savannah River in South Carolina. Another large group of Shawnees left South Caroline about 1707. They may have left because the Colonists had gotten the Catawbas to attack the Shawnees. In 1708 there were reported to be three Shawnee