

TODAY'S INDIANS OF THE WASHINGTON DC METRO AREA

WHILE THERE ARE NO SURVIVING TRIBES IN THE WASHINGTON DC METROPOLITAN AREA, THERE ARE MANY INDIAN PEOPLE WHO LIVE HERE. THESE INDIANS AND THEIR PREDECESSORS BEGAN TO COME TO WASHINGTON IN THE 1930'S WHEN THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS (BIA) AND THE INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE (IHS) RECRUITED THEM AS EMPLOYEES. MANY CAME DIRECTLY FROM BIA BOARDING SCHOOLS, MAINLY HASKELL INSTITUTE IN LAWRENCE, KANSAS. OTHERS CAME TO LIVE IN THE WASHINGTON AREA BECAUSE THEY HAD BROTHERS, SISTERS OR OTHER RELATIVES LIVING HERE.

THE INDIANS THAT CAME HERE IN THE 1930'S WERE FRIENDS WITH EACH OTHER AND SOCIALIZED TO A LIMITED EXTENT WITH THEIR INDIAN FRIENDS AFTER WORK. GENERALLY SPEAKING, HOWEVER, THEIR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN MERGED INTO THE MAINSTREAM AND DID NOT MAINTAIN THEIR INDIAN CULTURAL IDENTITY. THIS GROUP OF INDIANS WERE VERY SUCCESSFUL IN THEIR CAREERS AND WERE IN THE HEIRARCHY OF THE BIA AND IHS. THEIR COHESIVENESS WAS RECOGNIZED BY LATER ARRIVALS WHO CALLED THEM THE "HASKELL MAFIA." WHEN THEY RETIRED FROM GOVERNMENT, THESE INDIANS DID NOT RETURN TO THEIR TRIBAL HOMES BUT MANY OF THEM JOINED A LOOSE COMMUNITY OF OTHER RETIRED BIA EMPLOYEES IN ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO.

THE NEXT MAJOR INFLUX OF INDIANS TO THE DC AREA CAME IN THE LATE 1950'S WHEN, ONCE AGAIN, GRADUATES OF HASKELL INSTITUTE WERE RECRUITED TO WORK FOR THE BIA, INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE (IHS), AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT. OTHERS CAME HERE WHILE IN THE MILITARY AND CHOSE TO STAY IN THE AREA WHEN THEY FINISHED THEIR MILITARY COMMITMENTS. THESE INDIANS WERE YOUNG AND MANY ARE STILL IN WASHINGTON WHERE THEY HAVE ADVANCED IN THEIR POSITIONS. THIS IS A VERY STABLE GROUP WITH MANY OF THEM OWNING THEIR OWN HOMES AND ENJOYING A FAIRLY HIGH STANDARD OF LIVING. SOME OF THESE PEOPLE HAVE CONTINUED THEIR EDUCATIONS AND EVENTUALLY RECEIVED VARYING DEGREES. MANY OF THE MEMBERS OF THIS GROUP ARE IN MID-MANAGEMENT POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY AT THEIR PLACES OF EMPLOYMENT AND THE STABILITY OF THIS EVOLVING COMMUNITY IS EVIDENT.

IT WAS THIS GROUP OF INDIAN PEOPLE WHO SAW A NEED TO ORGANIZE THEIR AFTERWORK ACTIVITIES. SO, IN THE WINTER AND SPRING OF 1965 AND 1966, THEY MET TO DISCUSS THE MERITS OF FORMING AN ORGANIZATION OR INDIAN CLUB. ON AUGUST 3, 1966, THE AMERICAN INDIAN SOCIETY WAS FORMED. THE FIRST SET OF OFFICERS INCLUDED MITCHELL BUSH WHO SERVED AS PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY FOR 25 YEARS. IN MAY OF 1991, JOSIAH JAMES "JAY" HILL, II, WAS ELECTED TO SERVE IN THIS POSITION UPON MITCHELL'S RETIREMENT FROM THE BIA AND AS PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY. THE SOCIETY'S MAIN GOAL IS TO PRESERVE INDIAN CULTURE. IT HAS TRAINED MANY YOUNG INDIAN DANCERS THROUGH THE YEARS, MANY OF WHOM ARE NOW TEACHING THEIR OWN CHILDREN TO DO INDIAN DANCES. THE FIRST GROUP OF AIS SINGERS WERE ALSO TAUGHT BY VARYING SINGERS, PRIMARILY KIOWA. WE NOW HAVE FOUR DRUMS IN THE DC METRO AREA. WITH REGARD TO CRAFTS, WHILE WE DO NOT HAVE MANY PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION OF CRAFTWORK, WE DO HAVE SEVERAL OF OUTSTANDING REPUTE: MARION HANSSON IS A CLOTHES DESIGNER OF NOTE; LINDA TSONETOKOY IS AN EXCELLENT BEADWORKER; JOALLYN ARCHAMBAULT DOES PORCUPINE QUILLWORK; JAY HILL MAKES DANCE BUSTLES; ALICE HATFIELD MADE HER OWN JINGLE DRESS; BUD MASON DOES SILVERWORK;

KAREN COLLINS DOES BEADING ON BASEBALL CAPS; AND VERN HALLEY WEAVES DAWAS, A FORM OF GOD'S EYE. THERE ARE MANY MORE PERSONS INVOLVED IN RECREATIONAL CRAFTWORK. THERE ARE ALSO SEVERAL PEOPLE WHO SPECIALIZE IN INDIAN FOODS: EVE HILL AND HELEN PEACOCK MAKE FRY BREAD; CAROL SMALLEY IS RENOWED FOR HER TAMALES; AND JIM HILL MAKES INDIAN CORN SOUP. IN THE MUSIC FIELD, JOANNE SCHENANDOAH IS A PROMISING SINGER; PAUL ORTEGA HAS ALREADY DEVELOPED A SOLID REPUTATION AS A SINGER AND FLUTE PLAYER; SONNY NEVAQUAYA IS ALSO AN EXCELLENT INDIAN FLUTE PLAYER; TERRY HALSEY PLAYS A HARMONICA. MAX LITTLE IS BECOMING KNOWN FOR HIS PROSE AND POETRY. WE ALSO HAVE THREE MEN IN THE AREA WHO PROVIDE SPIRITUAL SERVICES, SUCH AS GROUND BLESSINGS, FOR THE COMMUNITY - DICK BAKER, JOE NEALE AND PAUL ORTEGA.

THE AMERICAN INDIAN SOCIETY IS A NON-PROFIT SELF-SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION WHICH DOES NOT ONLY INDIAN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES, BUT OTHER RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES. YOU MAY ALSO FIND MEMBERS BOWLING, SKIING, BICYCLING OR WHITEWATER RAFTING. THE "INDIAN CLUB" EARNS MONEY FROM THE SALE OF INDIAN CRAFTS AND PROVIDING PEOPLE WHO DO INDIAN AWARENESS CELEBRATIONS FOR FEDERAL AGENCIES AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS IN THE METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON AREA. FROM ITS INCOME, THE CLUB GIVES SCHOLARSHIP GRANTS TO THE CHILDREN OF MEMBERS WHO ARE EITHER GOING TO COLLEGE OR ATTENDING SOME OTHER SCHOOL OF HIGHER LEARNING, SUCH AS A TECHNICAL SCHOOL. WE PUBLISH A NEWSLETTER ONCE A MONTH WHICH GOES TO 40 STATES, CANADA, MEXICO, ITALY AND NEW ZEALAND. IN 1976 WE PURCHASED 46 ACRES OF TIMBERLAND IN CAROLINE COUNTY, VIRGINIA. THE LAND IS KNOWN AS "INDIAN PINES" AND WE HAVE A TRAILER, PAVILLION WITH PICNIC TABLES, AN outhouse AND A WELL ON THE LAND. WE HAVE PURPOSELY NOT HAD ELECTRICITY BROUGHT TO THE LAND. MEMBERS OF THE CLUB ARE WELCOME TO USE THE LAND FOR CAMPING PURPOSES OR IN CONNECTION WITH INDIAN RELIGIOUS RITES. WE HAVE DECLINED REQUESTS TO PURCHASE OUR TIMBER AND TO LEASE OUR LANDS FOR OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION.

NOT ALL INDIANS IN THE WASHINGTON AREA, OF COURSE, BELONG TO THE AMERICAN INDIAN SOCIETY. THERE ARE MANY WHO BELONG TO NO SOCIAL OR CULTURAL ORGANIZATION BUT WHO REGULARLY ATTEND THE VARIOUS POW WOWS AND OTHER INDIAN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES SPONSORED BY ONE OF THE INDIAN INTEREST ORGANIZATIONS IN THE AREA. HOWEVER, THESE NONMEMBERS ARE PART OF THE INDIAN COMMUNITY AT LARGE AND THEIR PARTICIPATION AT COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES IS APPRECIATED BY THE SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS. THE WASHINGTON URBAN COMMUNITY ENJOYS A STANDARD OF LIVING WHICH IS UNIQUE AMONG INDIAN URBAN COMMUNITIES. WE DO NOT HAVE A MAJOR UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM, OUR LOCAL FOLKS ARE FAIRLY WELL EMPLOYED, WE DO NOT HAVE A HOUSING OR DISCRIMINATION PROBLEM AND WE DO NOT HAVE A MAJOR PROBLEM WITH DRUG OR ALCOHOL ABUSE.

THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES, URBAN INDIAN CENTERS ARE DEVELOPING AS STABLE COMMUNITIES. SINCE THE SIZE OF INDIAN RESERVATIONS IS NOT VERY LIKELY TO INCREASE, THE TRIBAL POPULATIONS ARE INCREASING AND THE SURPLUS WILL EVENTUALLY FIND THEIR WAY TO ONE OF THE STABLE URBAN COMMUNITIES. HOPEFULLY, THE MELD OF URBAN AND TRIBAL PEOPLE WILL RESULT IN STRONG, STABLE URBAN INDIAN COMMUNITIES WHICH WILL BE THE "NEW TRIBES" OF THE FUTURE.