

Recognition of the Land – Susquehannocks

The Susquehannock tribe first emerged as a distinct entity about 1450 along the North Branch of the Susquehanna River in Bradford County. Originally part of the Seneca – the westernmost tribe of the Iroquois Confederacy – the Susquehannocks split from the confederacy and migrated down the Susquehanna River encroaching the Shenks Ferry Peoples. In relatively short order they came to dominate the entire Susquehanna River Valley and established a significant presence in what is now Lancaster County. Susquehannock culture prospered through a golden era around 1650. John Smith met with a delegation of 60 Susquehannock warriors in 1608. He was impressed with their stature and bearing and even their voices.

The Susquehannocks differed from Lenape, or Delaware, who lived to the east, in that they possessed a superior political and military tradition. Like the Lenape and the Iroquois they were Matrilineal people. They lived in stockade villages, each headed by a chief, and in longhouses. They were great traders and in a perfect location for that purpose. However during the Beaver Wars the Susquehannocks were driven out of Pennsylvania to reappear later in a small band called the Conestogas.

Let us be aware that we occupy their homeland, that their presence is imbued in this land, and let us take a moment to remember them. (*Silence*)

Let us remember the terrible history of colonization about which we are going to learn today that involves horrific crimes committed against the original inhabitants of this land and against the land itself. (*Silence*)

Finally let us recognize that remembering is a starting point, not an ending point.

Sources:

Indians in Pennsylvania by Paul A.W. Wallace

A Clash of Cultures by Darvin L. Martin