

# The Shawnee

## **Social Organization;**

Unlike other tribes in the southeast, the Shawnee did not have true clans. The village band was more important than lineage or name groups, and served as the ritual and economic unit. Men and women had clearly defined roles. Men were responsible for hunting, preparing the fields, and making war. Women were tasked with the upkeep of the settlement, growing the crops, dressing game, preparing food, and building the houses. Children were strapped to cradle boards to make sure that they grew straight and strong. Infants were bathed every morning, regardless of the weather, to build their endurance. Grandparents were responsible for the education of the children. They played games designed to prepare them for their adult roles.

## **Clothing:**

Deer skin and later European cloth was used to make clothing. In winter both sexes wore moccasins, leggings to the top of their thighs, a breech cloth, a girdle around the waist and a hat. Men wore loose shirts, while women wore a longer over blouse. In the summer men wore only the breech-cloth and the women wore a loose over blouse. They decorated their cloths with quills, feathers, paints, and eventually silver trinkets and glass beads.

## **Political organization:**

The Shawnee tribe was broken into five major divisions. Each division had different responsibilities to the over all tribe, but they were also individual political units, with their own chief and affiliations with other tribes. They had both peace and war chief. The peace chief was often hereditary, but one had to earn being war chiefs. Women could serve as chief. The Shawnee had a governing council. Decisions were made by consensus. The Council had more decision making power than the chiefs. Law was a private matter. From theft to murder, most cases were handled by the families of the people involved. Most wrongs could be atoned by the giving of gifts. If the problem could not be solved between the two parties, it could be taken before the council.

## **Economics;**

The Shawnee had a corn based agricultural society, but unlike most they did not lead a sedentary life style. They lived in villages and farmed in the summer, but in the winter they would break into family groups, travel while the men hunted and the women made maple sugar. They were also salt makers and traders. With the entrance of European traders, Shawnee men spent a great deal of their time hunting for furs in order to trade, as they quickly became dependant on European trade goods. The Shawnee quickly traded bow and arrows for guns and metal pots for pottery, as well as making use of European cloth and ornaments.

## **Ceremonies:**

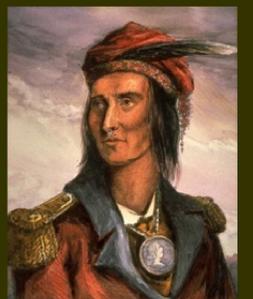
Religious practices were designed to ensure good crops, successful hunts and to ward off disease. rituals, and dances were held in the spring for the new planting, in August to celebrate the green corn, at harvest time.

## **Medicine:**

The Shawnee had a great reputation for their skills in medicine. Their doctors were not only sought out by other tribes, but by white settlers. Their skills was so great that many, including white and other tribes, thought that they bordered on magical. While there were specific members of the tribe that dealt with medicine, nearly all the tribe was well versed in the use of medicinal roots and herbs.



Chief Cornstalk by Hal Sherman



Tecumseh