

***Economic Development Assessment
for the
Meherrin Tribe***

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This document in its entirety represents the findings and recommendations of the Office of Economic Development of UNC's Kenan Institute for Private Enterprise to the North Carolina Indian Economic Development Initiative (NCIEDI). The opinions are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the tribe or association. The acknowledgments section of each report indicates the level of interaction we had with representatives of that tribe or association.

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The findings and recommendations contained in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Meherrin Tribe or NCIEDI.

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This assessment represents an objective inventory of the assets and opportunities of the Meherrin Tribe related to improving the economic condition of their communities, including the development of jobs and Indian-owned businesses. It includes consideration of the economic resources and potentials of the tribal council, other Meherrin-run organizations, Meherrin business owners and citizens, and the communities in which the Meherrin reside. This comprehensive and place-focused (rather than organization-focused) approach is consistent both with the way economic development is practiced and with the assessments UNC prepared for 10 other North Carolina tribes and associations. What each tribe and its members choose to do with those resources and potentials is a matter for local policy that this report is intended to inform.

SECTION 1

Background

Ancestry and History, Governing Structure, and Demographics

Ancestry and History

The Meherrin Tribe is from the same linguistic stock as the Cherokee, Tuscarora, and other tribes of the Iroquois Confederacy of New York and Canada. The ancestral Meherrin spoke a language that was very similar to the Tuscarora dialect. In the Meherrin language, the literal translation of the tribe's name is "people of the muddy water."

The first European contact with the Meherrin Tribe took place in 1650 when an English merchant named Edward Bland arrived in the village of Cowonchahawkon near present day Emporia, Virginia. At that time, the land, forests, and resources of the Meherrin River provided the tribe with all the materials needed for self-sufficiency. The total population of the tribe never exceeded 600 members. During the 1700s, the Meherrin maintained their alliances with related tribes. During the Tuscarora War of 1711–1713, the tribe provided the Tuscarora with guns and ammunition and a safe haven in their villages for fleeing warriors.

Eventually, tribal enemies and colonists forced the tribe down the Meherrin River into Hertford County, North Carolina. A treaty of 1726 granted the Meherrin a reservation at the mouth of the Meherrin River, known today as Parker's Ferry near Winton. However, steady encroachment of colonists onto the tribe's reservation and European-introduced diseases eventually prompted tribal members to leave the reservation and migrate into the surrounding swamps and less desirable areas of the county. Although the tribe was not able to retain its land, many tribal members still live within a 10–15 mile radius of the former reservation.

Governing Structure

As individual property owners in the 1700s, tribal members had to conceal their identity to survive. Racial prejudice, internal factions, and governmental interference were barriers to formal organization in the 1800s and early 1900s. The Meherrin tribe became chartered in 1977 and was recognized by the state in 1986. In 1995, the tribe received 501(c)3 non-profit status.

The tribe is governed by a seven-member Tribal Council and a Tribal Chief, elected at large by the enrolled membership. The council members and tribal chief serve four-year staggered terms. There are no standing committees. The tribe employs two full-time staff persons. The tribe’s general body meets the second Saturday of each month and the tribal council meets the Tuesday before each general meeting.

The tribe’s annual operating budget is approximately \$65,000¹ and is managed by the full-time paid staff. The Project Director is responsible for implementing project activities and the Secretary/Administrative Assistant acts as bookkeeper. Monthly financial and progress reports are presented to the tribal council and a written report is sent to the Administration for Native Americans (ANA), the primary funding agency, every six months. The tribe has two treasurers; the first handles the tribe’s general funds and the second handles the pow-wow account.

Demographics

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are approximately 350 Native American residents in Hertford and Bertie Counties, representing 0.8 percent of the total combined population. Between 1980 and 2000, the two-county area experienced negative population growth, a decrease of 4.5 percent, compared with a 37 percent rate of growth for North Carolina overall. Much of the out-migration in the two counties has been in the white population group. The white population dropped 17 percent while the American Indian, Hispanic, and black population of the two counties increased by 41 percent, 1 percent, and 2 percent respectively. Table 1 provides population number and percentage share for American Indian, Hispanic, black, and white population groups.

TABLE 1
Population Numbers and Percentage Shares of Population Groups
Hertford and Bertie Counties (1980–2000)

Year			American Indian		Hispanic		Black		White	
	Hertford	Bertie	Hertford	Bertie	Hertford	Bertie	Hertford	Bertie	Hertford	Bertie
2000	22,601	19,773	271	79	362	198	13,470	12,319	8,385	7,178
1990	22,523	20,388	225	41	90	41	12,973	12,539	9,212	7,788
1980	23,368	21,024	164	84	257	294	12,806	12,446	10,305	8,494
2000	100%	100%	1.2%	0.4%	1.6%	1.0%	59.6%	62.3%	37.1%	36.3%
1990	100%	100%	1.0%	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%	57.6%	61.5%	40.9%	38.2%
1980	100%	100%	0.7%	0.4%	1.1%	1.4%	54.8%	59.2%	44.1%	40.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

There are currently 900 members on the Meherrin tribal roll. About 150 members live in northeastern North Carolina, mostly in Hertford County, with less than 5 percent of members in Bertie and Gates counties. In addition, several families live in the Tidewater area of Virginia.

1. The tribe’s operating budget is derived from an annual ANA grant. The tribe also receives donations for the tribal land fund and smaller grants from the N.C. Arts Council.

Tribal Mission, Current Priority Programs, and Plans for Economic Development

Tribal Mission

The Meherrin tribe has not yet developed a tribal mission statement.

Current Priority Programs

- In 2002, the tribe received a one-year ANA grant to conduct genealogical research to support its application for federal acknowledgement.
- Using a grant from the N.C. Arts Council, the tribe hired a folklorist in 2002 to document the construction of a longhouse. The grant was supplemented with tribal funds to cover the costs of the materials.
- In 1998–99, the tribe constructed a palisade using a grant from the N.C. Division of Tourism.

Plans for Economic Development

The Meherrin tribe's short-term development priority is to pay off its land loan. The tribe also has three potential long-term projects in the early planning stage:

- Gift shop for tribal arts and crafts and a permanent museum. (Currently the museum is only open during the pow-wow.) The tribe is considering the scheduling of different vendors to give the facility the feeling of a trading post.
- Completion of a reconstructed Meherrin Indian village, both for use by tribal members and as a tourism site. The tribe expects to complete construction after the land is paid off in two years.
- Multi-purpose tribal center with a room to conduct workshops.

History of American Indian Economic Development Activity

Occupations of Tribal Members

The occupations of tribal members are very diversified. Members work as health care professionals, teachers (K–12 and community college levels), administrators, physicians, county and state employees, and agricultural workers. There is a group that carools to work at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth, Virginia and the Newport News Shipyard in Newport News, Virginia. Tribal leaders cite Georgia Pacific and Whackenhut Correction Corporation as other employers of tribal members.

Indaloy (which purchased Eastco) recently closed their plant and there have been cuts in employment in the county school system. Even so, tribal leaders report that there is no urgent sense of economic distress among tribal members. Nucor, a recycler of steel, is the newest manufacturing plant and provides very well paid jobs. Five thousand people applied for 250 jobs when the plant opened in 2001. The company has an incentive program and quota-based bonuses for plant workers. Formerly, there was a fertilizer plant in the area that was polluting the water but it moved to Canada rather than install anti-pollution devices.

Tribal Member Businesses

Tribal members are self-employed as dentists, construction workers, carpenters, building contractors, electricians, morticians, truck drivers, farmers, retail grocers, insurance agents, and house painters. Others operate fast food franchises, restaurants, automotive parts stores, and day care centers. Several business owners have taken over businesses from immediate family members or other professionals.

Using their own resources, one tribal member and two local attorneys lobbied Royal Crown Cola to re-establish its bottling operations in Winton's industrial park.² The three individuals put up earnest money for a site, created a business plan, and located the necessary equipment for the venture. However, when the two attorneys left the area, the project was discontinued due to a loss of vital support and knowledge.

Land Issues

The Meherrin migrated from Lawrenceville, Virginia down the Meherrin River to the old Choanoke Indian fields in Hertford County where they were granted reservation lands by the Treaty of 1726.

Some individual tribal members who are property owners have explored putting their land in trust so that the state could manage it with the stipulation that it would never leave American Indian hands. These property owners might also be willing to enter into a long-term lease with the tribe or designate the tribe as beneficiary upon their death.

Tribal Enterprises

Since 1988, the Meherrin have hosted an annual pow-wow on the fourth weekend in October. In 1995, the tribe began holding the pow-wow on its own land. Activities include exhibition dancing, competition dancing, and drumming, and there are performances by guest artists. Native American vendors sell silver jewelry, beadwork, moccasins, t-shirts, books, and children's toys. About 1,200 children (K-12) from the county school system visit the pow-wow and enjoy demonstrations on pottery-making, beading, flinting, and wampum jewelry making as well as performances of social dancing and storytelling.

Meherrin pow-wows are financed by a combination of private fundraising (\$7-11,000) and a small grant (\$12-1,500) from the N.C. Arts Council to pay for dancers and drummers. Approximately 20 volunteers assisted tribal staff to put on the 2002 pow-wow which drew between 3,000 and 4,000 people over the three-day period and produced a net profit of about \$6,800 for the tribe.

Partnering and Resource Pooling

The tribe conducted a letter writing campaign to solicit philanthropic support from three timber companies: Union Camp, Georgia Pacific, and Weyerhaeuser. Tribal lead-

2. The same tribal member also explored the establishment of a bowling alley in Ahoskie with town leaders and the Brunswick company but was not able to raise the needed collateral.

ers hoped the letters would prompt company leaders to set up a meeting where they could present their economic development proposals; however, the meeting never took place.

SECTION 2

Strategic Assets and Critical Challenges

In evaluating the strategic assets and critical challenges of each N.C. tribe and association, the UNC team used a framework that looks at four types of capital: physical, human, financial, and social. Economic developers have always recognized the importance of physical infrastructure and workforce; the addition of financial and social capital reflects an increased emphasis in the knowledge economy on business finance and networks.

Below we summarize our key findings from statistical data, focus groups, individual interviews, and review of tribal documents (where available).

Physical Capital

Land & Buildings

Hertford County has 353 square miles of land area and nearly 1,950 acres of available sites for business development (0.9 percent of total land). Bertie County's land area is 700 square miles; the county has 2,234 acres of available business sites (0.5 percent of total land). There are no major municipalities in either county. The county seats of Hertford County and Bertie County are Winton and Windsor, respectively.

Most land in Bertie County is farmland, and there has been no significant change in the availability of industrial land in the last 10 years. The price of land in industrial parks has increased around \$500 to \$800 per acre over the past 10 years, and currently averages \$2,500 per acre. In Hertford County, the average price of industrial land has risen from \$7,000 per acre 10 years ago to \$15,000 per acre today.

In 1995, the tribe secured a private loan to purchase a 46.9-acre site on N.C. Highway 11, between Ahoskie and Murfreesboro. The tribe moved its administrative office to the site from rented space three years later. Tribal buildings include an office trailer, several out buildings, and a small kitchen.

Infrastructure

Hertford and Bertie Counties are very rural with no Interstate highways. N.C. Highway 17, a major north-south roadway before implementation of the Interstate system, winds through Bertie County before heading east to the North Carolina Outer Banks.

N.C. Highway 13 bisects both counties en route to the Virginia border and runs through the county seats of Windsor and Winton. Choanoke Public Transportation Authority provides subscription and demand-responsive transportation services for residents of Hertford County and the neighboring counties of Bertie, Halifax and Northampton. General public transportation also is offered three times per week to locations outside the county. Monthly discount passes are available for students traveling to area community colleges. Greyhound provides intercity bus service to the Ahoskie and Windsor terminals.

North Carolina Power and Roanoke Electric Membership Corporation supply electricity to Hertford County. Electric power in Bertie County is provided by Roanoke Electric Cooperative. The towns of Ahoskie, Murfreesboro, and Winton in Hertford County provide water and sewer service to their residents, while Harrellsville's residents have city water only. The Bertie County Water Department supplies water to its residents. Hertford County is served by N.C. Natural Gas and expansion of natural gas service to Bertie County is currently under construction. The proportion of households with high-speed Internet access in Hertford and Bertie Counties is 50 percent and 63 percent, respectively. This compares with a state average of 75 percent.

Bertie County is bordered by the Roanoke and Chowan rivers, with the Chowan River also forming Hertford County's eastern border. Other water resources include the Cashie River in Bertie County and the Meherrin River in Hertford. Bertie County is also home to the Roanoke River National Wildlife Refuge.

Housing

According to the 2000 Census, there are 8,945 households in Hertford County and 7,734 households in Bertie County. Home ownership rates in Hertford and Bertie Counties are 70 percent and 75 percent, respectively. The Meherrin tribe does not operate any housing programs.

Human Capital

Leadership

The Meherrin tribal leadership is a small committed group of members, many of whom have served as tribal chief, administrator, or council member in past years. Tribal members who have moved to other parts of N.C. or other states make every effort to return to Hertford County for monthly meetings of the general body. Leaders have donated extensive time to meeting with mainstream community and private sector organizations in an attempt to create economic development partnerships for the tribe.

The tribe has good human resources to draw upon in economic development planning. The current administrative manager of Hertford County is a member of the Meherrin tribe. In addition, an American Indian resident of Virginia with grant-writing experience has offered to assist the tribe with grant applications. Tribal leaders would like to see a core group formed that could be trained to do development work for the tribe.

Key Employers & Entrepreneurs

Table 2 lists the 10 largest private-sector employers in Bertie and Hertford Counties. From 1997 through 2001, 492 workers were laid off in Hertford County and about 100 residents in Bertie County lost their jobs. Hertford and Bertie County industries most affected by closings include clothing and apparel, primary metals products, and wholesale non-durable goods. In Hertford County, the rate of business start-up was 9 percent and the business failure rate was 7.2 percent. In Bertie County, business start-up and failure rates were each 9.5 percent. These compare with a state average of 11.6 percent and 7 percent, respectively. According to the N.C. Employment Security Commission, investments for expansion of businesses in Hertford County totaled \$43.7 million and created 208 jobs; in Bertie County, although business owners invested \$17.3 million in business expansion, only four additional jobs were created.

**TABLE 2
Largest Private-Sector Employers in Bertie and Hertford Counties**

<u>Bertie</u>	<u>Hertford</u>
Bertie County	Hertford County
Perdue Products Inc.	Home Life Care Inc.
Quality Home Staffing Inc.	East Carolina Health Inc.
VF Jeanswear Limited Partnership	Nucor Corporation
East Carolina Health Inc.	Wackenhut Corrections Corporation
Golden Peanut Company	Wal-Mart Associates Inc.
Liberty Commons of Jacksonville	Chowan College
Bertie Ambulance Service Inc.	Carolinas Home Care Inc.
Gregory Manufacturing Co.	Jernigan Oil Co Inc.
Beasley Enterprises Inc.	Beasley Enterprises Inc.
GC Services Inc.	Kerr Glass Manufacturing Inc.

Source: N.C. Employment Security Commission

Workforce Attributes and Existing Skills

In the 2nd quarter of 2001, there were approximately 9,700 Hertford County residents and 6,650 Bertie County residents in the labor force. The average unemployment rate in 2001 was 7 percent in Hertford County and 8.6 percent in Bertie County, compared with a state average of 5.5 percent. Table 3 provides a distribution of employment by

**TABLE 3
Employment by Sector, Hertford and Bertie Counties, Second Quarter, 2001**

Employment Sector	Percent Share of Labor Force in	
	Hertford	Bertie
Construction	3.7	1.9
Manufacturing	14.4	41.4
Services	34.9	18.9
Trade	22.7	11.0
Fin., Ins. & Real Estate	1.9	1.4
Government	18.2	17.8

Source: N.C. Department of Commerce, <http://emedis.commerce.state.nc.us/countyprofiles/>

sector for each county. The services and trade sectors dominate the economy in Hertford County, providing over half the county's jobs, while manufacturing still dominates all other employment in Bertie County.

The 2000 Census revealed that in Hertford County, approximately 34 percent of the general population 25 years of age and older have not completed high school compared to 51.4 percent of Native Americans. Over 30 percent of Hertford County residents have only a high school diploma, 6.6 percent have associate degrees, and 7.5 percent have completed a bachelor's degree. By contrast, 18.5 percent of Native Americans have only a high school diploma, 30 percent have attended college with about 7 percent completing associate degrees, and nearly 11 percent have earned a bachelor's degree.

In Bertie County, 36 percent of the general population 25 years and older have not completed high school. About 37 percent have only a high school diploma, 4.9 percent have an associate degree, and 6.2 percent have completed a bachelor's degree. Bertie County's small American Indian population is highly educated: 12 percent of Native Americans have only a high school diploma, 44 percent have completed some college (although none have associate degrees), and 44 percent hold a bachelor's degree.

Median household income in Hertford and Bertie Counties in 1999 was \$26,422 and \$25,177, respectively. Over 18 percent of the Hertford County population was below the poverty level while nearly one-quarter of residents were living in poverty in Bertie County. The mean travel time for workers 16 years and older was 28.5 minutes in Bertie County and 25.1 minutes in Hertford County. Individuals with college degrees are willing to travel as far as Greenville for good jobs. Those with a high school education tend to work in the fast food industry.

Workforce Development Institutions

Hertford County is home to Roanoke-Chowan Community College (RCCC), a Shaw University Center for Alternative Programs in Education (CAPE),³ and Chowan College. RCCC has developed a short-term industrial training program in conjunction with the Roanoke-Chowan Industrial Association, and RCCC's Continuing Education & Workforce Development Division designs courses to meet the needs of local business and industry.

Financial Capital

Federal, State, and Foundation grants

In carrying out administrative and program activities over the last 15 years, the tribe has relied largely on funding from state agencies and private foundations rather than federal programs. In the mid-1980s, grants from the N.C. Historical Society and the Z.

3. The CAPE program allows students in nine cities across North Carolina the opportunity to pursue an academic degree through flexible course scheduling, independent study, and credit for prior learning experiences. CAPE sites are located in Ahoskie, Asheville, Durham, Fayetteville, High Point, Kannapolis, Raleigh, Rocky Mount/Wilson, and Wilmington.

Smith Reynolds Foundation were used to support the Meherrin's participation in the Roanoke-Chowan Celebration of America's 400th Anniversary. More recently, the tribe has received support from the N.C. Arts Council's Grassroots and Folklore programs, the N.C. Division of Travel and Tourism, the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation, and the Presbyterian Church.

The U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) allocated \$96,000 in Native American Housing and Self Determination Act (NAHASDA) funding to the Meherrin tribe; however, the tribe could not access the funds because it did not meet HUD housing requirements stipulated in the NAHASDA legislation.

TABLE 4
Current Priority Programs

<u>Program Name</u>	<u>Funding</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Program Activities</u>
Federal Acknowledgment	ANA	\$65,000	2002-2003	This grant is funding genealogical research to support the tribe's application for federal acknowledgement.
Public Education about History and Construction of Longhouses	N.C. Arts Council, Tribal funds to cover materials	\$4,000 \$500	2002	The tribe hired a folklorist to document the construction of a longhouse.
Meherrin "living village" and palisade.	N.C. Division of Tourism	\$25,000	1998-99	The tribe used these funds to purchase materials for constructing a palisade.

Sources and Amounts of Program Funds

In Table 4, we present detailed information on the tribe's most important programs as reported by tribal leaders:

Tribal funds

In 1995, the tribe initiated a Tribal Land Fund and began a fundraising campaign to pay off the mortgage on its land. Currently, over 120 member donors contribute a designated amount to the fund on a monthly basis. In addition, all proceeds from the tribe's annual pow-wow are designated for the fund.

Scholarships

The Carroll Melton Scholarship was established by the family of Carroll Melton, Sr. Using funds raised during the pow-wow, the Melton family annually awards \$500 to an American Indian college student who is a rising freshman.

Community Resources and Networks

Although there are no local banks, RBC Centura, Southern Bank & Trust Company, and Wachovia have each located a branch office in Bertie and Hertford Counties. Leaders report that most tribal members use their own savings for capital as they find that getting capital from financial institutions is difficult without a proven track record.

Social Capital

Institutions

The Pleasant Plains Baptist Church in Ahoskie, N.C. was established by some of the community's American Indian residents. Even though many Meherrin still attend the church, there is substantial diversity in tribal members' places of worship.

Technology-based Resources

The Meherrin tribe uses *FAMILY TREE* software to maintain an electronic record of its tribal genealogy. The tribe does not currently have a web site.

Small Business Centers

RCCC has a small business center that provides assistance to small entrepreneurs.

Area JobLink Career Centers provide job and training seekers access to information on unemployment insurance, education and training opportunities, and services such as career guidance, resume preparation, job placement and referral to partner agencies. Services available to employers include work recruitment assistance, rapid response assistance for plant closings, and information on worker training and tax credits and hiring incentives. Hertford County's JobLink Career Center is located in Ahoskie and Bertie County's JobLink Career Center is located in Windsor.

Local and State Policy-Making

Meherrin leaders expressed their concern about attempts by federally recognized tribes to curtail programs and benefits for tribes not recognized by the U.S. government. In addition, even though the NCCIA has taken huge cuts in staff and funding over the last few years, tribal leaders feel that the agency has been effective in helping American Indians in North Carolina. They recommend that a concerted lobbying effort should be undertaken by the state-recognized tribes to ensure that NCCIA receives adequate funding in future and that state policies regarding American Indian economic development are inclusive.

Economic Development Programs/Activities

In October 1986, members established a replica of an American Indian village in Winton, N.C. as part of the Celebration of America's 400th Anniversary. Props were used from the PBS series "Roanoke" and a longhouse was built inside the multipurpose building at the Elks National Shrine. The dwelling was dismantled and reassembled at the N.C. State Fair the following year. Although the Meherrin did not have tribal lands at that time to construct a permanent village, leaders felt it was important that Meherrin

history be included in the event. Currently, the village is set up in the Meherrin pow-wow grounds and tribal members are in the process of constructing additional longhouses. Meherrin leaders believe that this “living village” represents an asset for developing tourism and making the annual pow-wow more financially successful.

The present day Meherrin tribal members have no knowledge of their language, which has been extinct for years. Likewise, very little of the tribe’s traditional arts and crafts have survived; however, the elders in certain families have acted as conservators of particular skills (e.g. medicinal herb use; brain tanning of deer hides) by handing down this knowledge to interested youth. Recently, there has been a resurgence of interest among tribal members in reviving traditional arts and crafts.

Community Resources and Networks

Over the last two decades, tribal leaders have forged relationships with local non-profit and educational organizations to support historical and cultural activities. The Roanoke-Chowan and Lumber-River Legal Services agencies have assisted the tribe in correcting birth records, conducting genealogical research, and lobbying for philanthropic funds.

Non-native students (K-12) from the Hertford County school system currently attend the Meherrin pow-wow as part of the Education Day program created by the school board. In addition, tribal members give presentations at local schools. There is also a non-Indian support base, e.g. area farmers who support the tribe’s development.

There is some difference of opinion among tribal leaders as to the non-native community’s knowledge of and interest in the tribe and its activities. In interviews, some leaders reported that the tribe is well known in the community, partly because tribal property is in a very visible location — on a main road near the community college. Other leaders felt that at least some people in the county don’t even know that the Meherrin tribe exists. Leaders agree, however, that the Meherrin do not get the same level of attention at the state level as other tribes, largely due to their isolation and small numbers.

SECTION 3

Most Promising Opportunities for Economic Development

Conclusions

- The size and composition of the population in the two-county area changed dramatically between 1980 and 2000. The most striking demographic changes were an increase of 41 percent in the American Indian population and a decrease in the white population of 17 percent, with black and Hispanic population groups holding steady. The area is facing significant economic challenges with an overall population decrease of nearly 5 percent over the last two decades, and unemployment rates and poverty levels in both counties higher than the state average.
- The education data present a complex picture with a striking disparity in education levels among the American Indian population in the two counties. In Bertie County, education levels of Native Americans greatly exceed those of the general population (except in the number of associate degrees); however, the data are somewhat skewed given that there are only about 80 American Indian residents representing 0.4 percent of the total population. The Hertford County data also reveal higher levels of education among Native Americans than the general population in every category except completion of high school; over half of Native Americans in the county do not hold a high school diploma.
- There are more educational opportunities for local residents than in most rural communities with three institutions of higher learning in Hertford County. Ahoskie is the only non-urban site for the Shaw University Center for Alternative Programs in Education (CAPE).
- Although some tribal members work for the major corporations in the region, the tribe has a limited amount of visibility within the larger community and its corporate leadership.

- Many of the enterprises attempted by the tribe over the last 25 years have been dependent on the commitment and direction of 1–3 individuals (native and non-native).

Key Assets

- High proportion of tribal members with college and advanced degrees
- Visibility of individual members in the larger community (e.g. county manager, dentist)
- Tribal land as physical asset and unifying force
- Experience in construction and documentation of an historic American Indian village, palisade, and longhouse.
- Experience in partnering with non-profit organizations

Key Challenges

- High number of people without high school diplomas
- Loss of language and many indigenous arts and crafts
- Small number of members, isolated location, and dispersion of members over four N.C. counties and Tidewater area of Virginia
- Lack of area banks and access to credit
- Insulation of tribe from larger community

Recommendations

General Recommendations

- Begin now to develop the necessary community partnerships for supporting the tribe's longer-term tourism projects. Explore heritage tourism and nature tourism models that have been successful in rural areas of the U.S. and other countries (e.g. Costa Rica).

Resources:

- Funding sources for heritage preservation projects: www.achp.gov/funding.html
- Information and technical assistance on tourism from the National Trust for Historic Preservation: www.nthp.org/heritage_tourism/index.html
- Success stories: www.nthp.org/heritage_tourism/Success_Stories.html
- Partners in Tourism network, and principles of successful cultural tourism: www.aam-us.org/initiatives/other/cultural.cfm
- Information about and examples of cultural and heritage tourism: www.mrsc.org/Subjects/Econ/ed-TourCulture.aspx#Examples
- North Carolina's state historic preservation officer: Dr. Jeffrey J. Crow, 919/733-7305

- Use the reconstructed Meherrin Indian village as a lynchpin in a heritage tourism strategy. Network with other N.C. and Virginia tribes in rural areas who are interested in developing heritage tourism programs, particularly the Occaneechi, to explore the possibility of conducting joint planning sessions and proposal development.
- If there is interest among remaining tribal farmers, arrange for county extension agents to meet with them to discuss the benefits and costs of aquaculture and new crops such as kenaf and borage.
- Work with the NCIEDI and interested members of the tribe to determine the feasibility of using privately-owned land for economic development through establishment of a land trust.

Specific Projects/Activities

- Develop a tribal mission statement and share it for discussion with tribal members as part of a general meeting. Create and maintain an economic development committee to encourage more members to get actively involved in the development work undertaken by the tribe.
- Procure training for the tribal leadership in networking and building relationships with the larger community (local governments, non-profits, corporations) and in grantsmanship to enlarge the pool of resources for the tribe's economic development programs.

Resources:

- There is an excellent and intensive economic development leadership development program available through the Rural Economic Development Center; see <http://www.ncruralcenter.org/leadership/institute.htm>. The Rural Center was a sponsor of the NCIEDI assessment and will be receptive to contacts from North Carolina tribes about specific initiatives; contact Robin Pulver, 919/250-4314. The cost of the program, which is several days of intensive training and networking, is \$495, an investment that would pay dividends many times over for the tribe.
- Many community colleges and universities offer courses in grant-writing. There are also increasing numbers of self-taught courses that can be done on-line, such as at www.iaogwanc.org; see press release about this organization at <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2001/5/prweb24598.php>.
- Seek help from the Small Business Center at RCCC to: (1) develop a business plan for the "living village" rural tourism model, and (2) train tribal council members in business plan development so they can do it in the future. There are sometimes modest fees associated with workshops and tailored assistance from SBCs but it will be a good investment in the tribe's capacity to manage its own enterprises profitably in the future. There are also basic courses in small business financial management, which is the central aspect of a business plan, that are only \$59 and can be taken on-line: see www.ed2go.com.

- Build on the extensive experience of the tribe in working with national foundations to create a local partner base of civic leaders, corporations, and community development organizations interested in the arts, historic preservation, and developing the area's tourism sector. Become knowledgeable about and involved in community and economic development planning efforts — for example, by getting a Meherrin appointed to the economic development commissions — in Hertford and Bertie Counties and the Northeast Partnership as a way to begin more active partnering with local and regional allies with similar interests.

Resource:

- The Northeast Partnership is a very effective coordinator of economic development activity for 16 counties, and one of its areas of emphasis is tourism. See www.ncnortheast.com and contact Cathy Scott at 252/537-9050.
- Take advantage of national resources to support the tribe's history and culture recovery programs, e.g. the Indigenous Language Institute (ILI) (www.indigenous-language.org).