LOUISIANA

Coushatta Reservation

Federal reservation
Coushatta Tribe
Jefferson Davis Parish, Lousiana

Coushatta Tribe
P.O. Box 818
Elton, Louisiana 70532
(318) 584-2261
Fax: 584-2998

Total area	153.87 acres
Total labor force	16
Unemployment rate	56.3%
High school graduate or higher	56.0%
Per capita income	$4,588
Total reservation population	311

Chitimacha Reservation

Federal reservation
Chitimacha
Saint Mary Parish, Louisiana

Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana
P.O. Box 661
Charenton, LA 70523
(318) 923-7215
Fax: 923-6848

Total area	283 acres
Tribally owned	268 acres
Non-Indian	8 acres
Federal Trust	268 acres
Total labor force	85
Unemployment rate	10.6%
High school graduate or higher	61.6%
Per capita income	$5,584
Total reservation population	42
Tribal enrollment	640

LOCATION AND LAND STATUS

The Chitimacha Reservation covers 268 acres in south-central Louisiana, near the town of Charenton, southeast of Lafayette. The tribe obtained title to land sometime around 1830. Later it was divided among individual members, many of whom were unable to keep up on assessed tax payments. In 1917, the tribe gained federal recognition when Sara McIlhenny, a well-to-do friend of the Chitimacha, bought the land when it was offered up at a sheriff's sale. Subsequently the federal government took over the mortgage payments and in 1935 placed the land in federal trust at the tribe's request.

CULTURE AND HISTORY

Archeological artifacts suggest that Indian settlement at Chitimacha dates back at least 6,000 years. When the French arrived in the area just after 1700, they noted that the Chitimacha were a peaceful people. However, during an attack by a Mississippi band of Indians, a French priest was killed, setting the stage for French reprisals and subsequent protracted warfare. During this period, the French nearly decimated the Chitimacha altogether. The tribal community has existed in its present location since 1764, though only recently it has begun to experience significant growth. Traditionally the Chitimacha subsisted on fishing and agriculture, raising beans, pumpkins, melon, and corn. They were among the most sophisticated of the Louisiana Indians, as demonstrated through their stunning basketmaking and metalwork.

In modern times, the tribal leadership successfully staved off federal termination policies during the 1950s. Also during this period, the Chitimacha continued to rely somewhat upon agriculture, though during the oil boom years prior to 1980, most members found work in the offshore oilfields as laborers, drillers, and foremen. This remains the case today as the domestic oil industry stabilizes somewhat. Otherwise, the area's rich fisheries serve as the other primary source of tribal employment. The tribe filed a series of land claims during the 1970s to the rich Atchafalaya wetlands. These claims were dismissed by the courts, though the tribe continues its quest for compensation. Tribal cultural traditions remain vital today primarily through the Chitimacha's fine silverwork, basketry, and pan-tribal jewelry. The tribal Office of Education operates an elementary school on the reservation, the only Indian school in the state.

GOVERNMENT

The tribe is governed by a council comprised of a chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, and two other members, all elected to two-year terms. The Chitimacha adopted a constitution and bylaws in January of 1971. Over the years, the tribal government has been largely concerned with fighting to save diminishing tribal lands and preserving tribal sovereignty.

ECONOMY

AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK

The tribe's primary agricultural venture involves the farming and marketing of sugar cane. They are presently about 15 acres under cultivation, with the possibility of future expansion.

CONSTRUCTION

A construction company owned and operated by a tribal member maintains various types of heavy equipment for use on construction projects. The company employs up to 50 area subcontractors at times, a number of them tribal members.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

The tribe receives assistance from the Small Business Association in funding the Chitimacha Development Corporation.

FISHERIES

The tribally affiliated Chitimacha Seafood Plant processes primarily crawfish and crab and employs approximately 100 seasonal workers.

GAMING

The tribe operates the Chitimacha Bayouland Bingo Hall, a facility which employs between 20 and 40 tribal members. The facility is presently being expanded into a Class III gaming operation which will also include a restaurant and other features. Employment and revenues are expected to increase dramatically.

GOVERNMENT AS EMPLOYER

The tribe currently employs a total of 80 people in its various departments and operations.

MINING

Many tribal members work in the region's oil industry, with oil leases supplying a significant financial windfall for the Chitimacha.

SERVICES

Aside from the gaming facility, tribally affiliated businesses include a gas station, a grocery store/trading post, two craft shops, a recreation/exhibit complex, and a gift shop.

TOURISM AND RECREATION

The reservation features lakes with fishing and boating facilities, archeological sites, hunting, and a number of cultural events. The tribe also maintains the Chitimacha Unit of Jean Lafitte National Historic Park, which includes a museum and a gift shop selling the renowned tribal baskets and pottery.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Road access is provided by U.S. Highway 90, which runs east-west three miles from the reservation, and State Highway 182, about two

miles from the reservation. Commercial air service is available in Lafayette (about 45 miles away), Baton Rouge, and New Orleans. Commercial bus lines also serve Lafayette. Southern Pacific Railroad serves the area directly, though there is no spur on the reservation. Commercial truck lines serve the reservation directly. As for water transport, the reservation is located on Bayou Teche, eight miles from the Gulf of Mexico.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The tribe maintains a community center at its headquarters near Charenton. Electricity is provided by the Central Louisiana Electric Company. Natural gas service is available from the Glayco Company. Water is furnished through the Charenton municipal system, while sewer service is provided by a tribal system presently serving 130 residences. Health care is funded through federal grants which provide for a nurse and an ambulance. Hospitals and clinics are located in nearby Franklin. The Chitimacha Day School for elementary school students is located on the reservation, while older students attend the local public schools.

Tunica-Biloxi Reservation

Federal reservation
Tunica and Biloxi
Avoyelles Parish, Louisiana

Tunica-Biloxi Tribe
P.O. Box 331
Marksville, LA 71351
(318) 253-9767
Fax: 253-9791

Total area	154 acres
Federal trust	154 acres
Total labor force	11
High school graduate or higher	71.4%
Per capita income	$5,642
Total reservation population	36

LOCATION AND LAND STATUS

The Tunica-Biloxi Reservation covers 155 acres in east-central Louisiana. Marksville, the closest city, lies adjacent to the reservation and Alexandria, to the northwest, serves as the closest urban hub. The Mississippi River lies 25 miles east of the reservation.

The site of the reservation, now held in federal trust, has served as a communal land base for Native people since the 1780s when Bernardo de Galvez, a Spanish colonial, granted it to the Tunica Tribe.

CULTURE AND HISTORY

The residents of the Tunica-Biloxi Reservation are descendants of two separate tribes, the Tunica and the Biloxi, who united for political reasons during the 1920s. Although they speak unrelated languages, both these groups are descendants of the ancient Mound People of the area. The tribe was incorporated in 1976 and received state recognition the same year. The U.S. Government did not grant federal recognition until 1981.

Since the 1960s the tribe has been particularly active in local and national politics, often forming political coalitions with other Louisiana indigenous groups to further their shared agenda. During the 1960s, with the help of Claude Medford, Jr., an anthropologist and part-Choctaw artist, the Tunica-Biloxi established a "trading post" to market their tribal crafts. This endeavor failed due to lack of resources and skills for promotion and development. After utilizing federal recognition's legal and social benefits, however, the tribe has demonstrated a remarkable economic and structural revitalization. For instance, the tribe's gaming industry now represents the largest private employer in the Avoyelles Parish, and their former substandard housing and tribal buildings have been replaced by modern air-conditioned structures.

Most notably, the tribe's successful ten-year legal battle to recover its ancestral artifacts, referred to as the "Tunica Treasure," laid the foundation for the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. This landmark case and its preceding legislation, aided many other indigenous groups in reclaiming their ancestral remains and artifacts. Moreover, the tribe's museum housing these artifacts was built as a memorial and educational facility, and represents the first full-scale conservation laboratory and training facility on an American Indian reservation.

The Tunica-Biloxi have successfully weathered Louisiana's economic crisis, which followed the downsizing of the state's petrochemical industry. Reservation members are on the way to their stated desire of financial independence, while at the same time striving to retain and nourish their traditional culture and values. The tribe has been recognized for its basketry and has implemented an apprenticeship program to guarantee the continuance of this art.

GOVERNMENT

The Tunica-Biloxi government is led by a seven-member elected Tribal Council. Council members include a chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary / treasurer, and four members-at-large.

ECONOMY

AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK

The tribe raises some cattle, approximately 30 head, which graze on about 80 acres of the reservation. In addition, the tribe has recently undertaken the control of a pecan processing plant, called Sikania, in Mansura, Louisiana.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

The tribe's pecan-processing plant and its recently opened gaming venue represent its current economic-development ventures. In addition, the tribe hopes to open a 250-room hotel next to the casino.

GAMING

In the summer of 1994 the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe opened the Grand Casino Avoyelles gaming facility. With over 1,100 slot machines, gaming tables, a separate poker room, and two restaurants, this 20-acre facility is billed as the largest land-based casino in the state. While owned by the tribe, the casino is managed and was built by the Grand Casino company based in Minnesota. The gaming facility employs approximately 1,300 people, including 80 tribal members. Shuttle buses provide transportation for casino guests.

GOVERNMENT AS EMPLOYER

In addition to those employed by the tribal casino, 27 people are employed by the tribal government in administration, social, and health services.

SERVICES

A furniture store is owned by a tribal member.

TOURISM AND RECREATION

While the tribe's casino attracts thousands of people to the Tunica-Biloxi Reservation, they also are involved in other recreational endeavors. Notably, the Tunica-Biloxi Regional Indian Center and Museum, which houses a spectacular collection of Indian and European artifacts from the Colonial period known as the "Tunica Treasure," is located on the reservation. The museum is built like a mound in the traditional style and also maintains a tribal library and learning center.

Coinciding with the traditional corn festival, which is privately celebrated, the tribe co-sponsors the annual Fete Du Ble' / 4th of July Celebration with the town of Marksville. This festival offers native crafts, dancing, and a corn cookoff, as well as traditional festivities such as fireworks and a Civil War reenactment.

In addition, the tribe has recently signed a one hundred-year agreement to lease the Marksville Prehistoric Mounds Park and Museum from the state of Louisiana. The tribe is currently reconditioning the park which suffered some disrepair due to state budget cuts.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Louisiana Highway 1 crosses the reservation property and continues northeast to the city of Alexandria. The north-south running I-49 lies 20 miles south of the reservation. Commercial air service is available in Alexandria, Baton Rouge, and Lafayette.

Shipping and trucking service is available in the adjacent city of Marksville, a quarter of a mile from the reservation. Bus service is available in Alexandria. UPS and Federal Express serve the reservation directly; railway freight lines are about 10 miles away.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The reservation hosts many community buildings including the Tribal Center Administration headquarters, and the Tunica-Biloxi Regional Indian Center and Museum. Health care and social services are provided through a contract with the Indian Health Services. Hospital services are available in Marksville. The reservation also provides a recreational area for its children.

Electricity is provided by the Louisiana Power and Light and the Central Louisiana Electric Company. The town of Marksville provides water and sewage services; public schools are also in Marksville.