

BACKGROUND ON THE SHASTA INDIAN NATION

The Shasta Indian Nation is a California Native American Tribe, whose ancestral territory includes, specifically, the Parcel B lands part of the Lower Klamath Project. Historically, there were several Shasta-speaking Indian “rancherias” or bands in Siskiyou County, California. However, the present-day Shasta Indian Nation traces its membership specifically to the historic Shasta Indian community located at present-day Copco Lake prior to its inundation by the construction of Copco No. 1 Dam. The Shasta Indian Nation’s enrollment criteria require descendency from an individual who was part of this community. Today, there are approximately 300 tribal members.

Shasta Indian Nation and the *K’ikac’eki* District Sacred Landscape

The Shasta Indian Nation’s ancestors have lived specifically on Parcel B lands since time immemorial. In its entirety, the area around Copco Lake near Bogus Mountain was known traditionally by Shasta Indian Nation as *Kikacéki*. This sacred landscape is a district with multiple culturally and archaeologically significant features: a large village and ceremonial center at *K’účasčas*, smaller habitation sites in the river bottom flatlands of *K’uč’uxwárax*, a fishing site at *Íkwík*, and the sacred outcrops of *K’úč’áwak* and *Ániruyryhénax*.

Following the Gold Rush, Shasta Indians began a concerted effort to acquire or control the land including the *K’ika-c’eki* District Sacred Landscape. Under the leadership of Bogus Tom Smith, they purchased or homesteaded land parcels. They “squatted” on newly privatized lands they did not own. Shasta Indian women began to strategically marry or co-habit with non-Indian men who purchased land, likely at the behest of tribal leaders. Even today, some descendant families have memories of how their great-grandmothers stayed with property as it was bought and sold, thereby becoming the “wife” of the new owner. Using these strategies, by the late 1880s, the members of the historic Beswick Rancheria owned outright or tacitly controlled a significant portion of what are now the Parcel B lands around Copco Lake.

In the early 1900s, planning began for the construction of Copco No. 1 Dam at the *Íkwík* fishing site along the Klamath River, which would flood the valley. In 1911, most of the lands owned and controlled by tribal members were taken by eminent domain. The Tribe did not leave willingly. The dam construction was tragic to the direct ancestors of the Shasta Indian Nation, and it eliminated the land base that the Tribe’s elders had worked so hard to create.

The Tribe after the construction of the Klamath River Dams

Following the construction of the Klamath River Dams, some Tribal members relocated to the nearby town of Hornbrook. Others remained near Copco Lake. In 1913, Charles E. Kelsey, Special Indian Agent to the California Indians, visited the Tribe remaining in the area, who were then “squattling” on lands owned by the Central Pacific Railway Company adjacent to Copco Lake. Kelsey enumerated those living on this land parcel and arranged for the lease of this property. Other officials at the Bureau of Indian Affairs would later arrange for the purchase of this parcel by Bogus Tom Smith, and it remained in the possession of his descendants until 1944. Some tribal families also acquired land parcels nearby in private fee.

The Shasta Indians residing in Siskiyou County reorganized in 1974 and incorporated as a 501(c)(3) organization in 2005. Today, the Shasta Indian Nation major initiatives are focused on cultural preservation, language education, and land return.