

## Haliwa-Saponi Drumming and Singing Traditions

To Haliwa-Saponis and other Natives, the drum is among the most sacred of instruments and provides the music for the dances and honorings that happen in and outside the arena. Singers sacrifice their voices to invoke those good feelings to the dancers and all of those within earshot of the singing and drumming. Today, the Haliwa-Saponis have a very active singing and drumming tradition, which includes several drum groups and dozens of singers, who provide beautiful music for tribal and personal functions, including powwows, social gatherings, funerals, weddings, performances, and shows. Haliwa-Saponi singers travel to other Native communities and powwows across the United States and Canada displaying and sharing their beautiful music to indigenous peoples and non-Natives alike. Haliwa-Saponi drumming and singing traditions have humble beginnings and started over fifty years ago.

Many of the modern drumming and dancing traditions started with the Haliwa Indian Boy Scout Troop. Members of the Boy Scout troop would have gatherings, where they would drum and dance, as well as go out on performances for different non-Indian audiences. Willis James Richardson remembered being featured on Channel 7 T.V. in 1957. Richardson served as the dancer, while Randolph Green, Jr. drummed for him.



*Early Singers*

Other early drummers included Quantell Green, Theartis Lynch, and Arnold Richardson. In the early days, the drummers and the dancers worked together to make sure that the performance was in sync. Theartis Lynch remembered “me and Arnold Richardson worked on it with the dancers and everything and we even had signals in the drum that only I knew and they knew. When the signal came that meant to change dances. The public didn’t know that, but we did and that’s how we got the powwow going that year.” From the very beginning, the drum was an essential element of Haliwa-Saponi cultural performance.

As the Haliwa-Saponi Powwow evolved, so did Haliwa-Saponi drumming, and Haliwas added singing to accompany the music. Arnold Richardson brought his experiences and knowledge of singing learned from Native peoples living in the northeastern United States back to the Haliwa-Saponi community. Early songs included eastern-woodland songs, learned from the Iroquois and music from the Plains. Singers learned songs from some of the most popular drum groups in the land



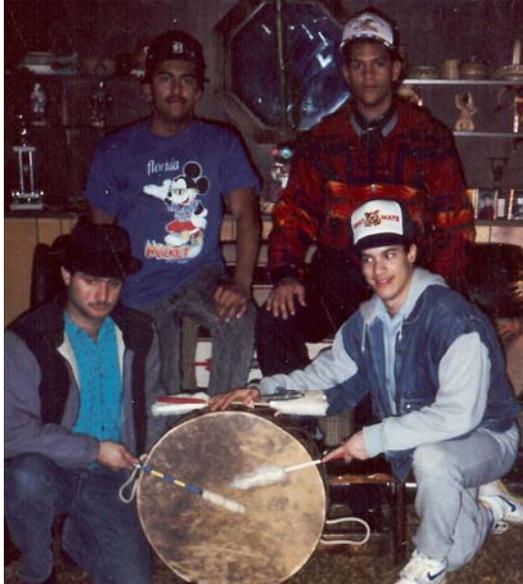
*Shallow Water Singers*

like Porcupine Singers of South Dakota. In the mid 1970s Arnold Richardson founded the first Haliwa-Saponi drum group **Shallow Water Singers**. Shallow Water was named after a translation of a Saponi word 'Moni Seep,' meaning Shallow Water. Other members of the group, among others, included Loius Richardson, Robbie Richardson, Anthony Harris, Dalton Lynch, Senora Lynch, Angie Richardson, Patricia Richardson, Cheryl Daniel, and Wayahsti Richardson. Up until the mid 1980s, Shallow Water toured the eastern United States representing the Haliwa-Saponi people at home and at powwows in Iroquois Country, Baltimore, MD, Florida, and other locales. Shallow Water Singers inspired a host of other Haliwa-Saponi and east-coast singers, and created a legacy of Haliwa-Saponi singing. Shallow Water came along in a transitional period in Haliwa-Saponi culture, between group-style performances and intertribal dancing.

After Shallow Water disbanded due to life changes of its group members, younger relatives of Shallow Water, and those inspired by them, formed the short-lived Midget Singers, which morphed into the **White Tail Singers** around 1985. Members of the group included Wayahsti Richardson, son of Arnold and Patricia Richardson, Tremayne Lynch, Chris Richardson, Otara Mills, Tamakwi Green, Jeff Anstead, Jessomy Evans, Kevin Evans, Jonathan "Bubba" Hedgepeth, and Jesse Richardson. As a young drum group, White Tail toured the eastern United States, hosting and competing at various powwows. One of the highlights for White Tail was when they served as host drum at the Mashpee

Wampanoag Powwow in Massachusetts in the late 1980s. White Tail was known for their renditions of songs made by various popular drum groups like Red Bull, Black Lodge, Assiniboine, Jr., Sioux Assiniboine, White Fish Bay, and others and brought some of the very best powwow music in Native Country to North Carolina and the east coast. However, what made White Tail true innovators for Haliwa-Saponi and North Carolina drum groups was their use of Native language in order to make their own songs.

In the mid 1980s Arnold Richardson brought the documented heritage languages of the Haliwa-Saponis, including Saponi to back to Hollister and began to teach community members. Drum group member Jeff Anstead also found words of the



*White Tail Singers*

Powhatan Language. White Tail Singers used those words and words from other tribes to compose their songs. By composing their own songs, the White Tail Singers were able to express themselves and communicate a message, but could also gain an edge when it came to competing with drum groups from other communities. Also, by having their own songs, White Tail could record their own music and share it with others, which they did around 1987.

Individually and collectively White Tail Singers were pioneers because of their use of word in song and because of their willingness to teach and encourage younger singers. White Tail taught and inspired other singers not only in the Haliwa-Saponi community, but also within North Carolina

and the east-coast powwow circuit.

White Tail influenced aspiring singers living not only in Hollister, N.C., but in Baltimore, MD, Fayetteville, N.C., Greensboro, N.C., Robeson County, and elsewhere. Marty Richardson, a Haliwa-Saponi and Bobby “Geronimo” Farley, a Lumbee Indian both living in Baltimore, MD along with Lumbee Derek Deese from Greensboro, N.C., and Waya Dimalanta, a Haliwa-Saponi/Lumbee from Philadelphia, Pa., got their start in singing by sitting in with White Tail. Other singers from Robeson



*Young Society*

County, including John Wesley Oxendine III, Paul Walters, and Terry White already had experience with singing and had already started the **Young Society Singers**. Cris Swift an Alabama-Coushatta/Lakota lived in Fayetteville while his father was stationed at Fort Bragg. These beginning singers were part of a large east-coast family of Natives who travelled the powwow circuit together. Around 1991 the new singers incorporated with Young Society and began travelling the east-coast powwow scene.

Like others before them, Young Society sang the music of their powwow idols, including Blackstone, White Fish Bay, White Fish, Jrs., Assiniboine, Jr., Eyabay, Northern Cree, Black Lodge and others, but also wanted to carry on the tradition set by White Tail in making their own songs in their indigenous languages. John Wesley Oxendine III. brought the Tuscarora Language to the drum and Marty Richardson brought the Tutelo-Saponi and Powhatan languages. Richardson had done research on the tribe and learned that the Tutelo and Saponi tribes were allies and spoke the same language. He discovered that Horotio Hale of Ontario, Canada and other researchers had documented a fair amount of the Tutelo Language and some of it had been published. At the age of fifteen Richardson set out to find out as much as possible about the Tutelo and other Carolina languages. Richardson's parents dropped him off at the National Anthropological Archives, where he hand copied all of the Tutelo words in the archives. These discoveries of the sleeping languages of the Haliwa-Saponi people were revelations to Haliwa-Saponi singing traditions and culture.

By 1992, both Young Society and White Tail Singers disbanded due to some of their members pursuing other interests or life changes, and eastern North Carolina was left without an organized drum group. Many of the former members of Young Society and White Tail still had an interest in singing and formed a "put together" group and called themselves "**Witah Biwa**" or good friends drum. Other singers, including Bo Goins and Tony Clark had formed their own group War Party, based out of Robeson County. Eventually many of these singers consolidated into a group that would stand the test of time: Stoney Creek.

**Stoney Creek Singers** unified various singing groups from east-coast communities at the 1993 Great American Indian Exposition in Richmond, Virginia.



*Stoney Creek Singers*

Although Stoney Creek continued to sing many of the songs of their favorite groups, they realized that they could not sing other group's songs, especially if they were sitting right next to them. At the group's debut Stoney Creek sat next to their powwow mentors Blackstone Singers, who served as host drum. From then on Stoney Creek focused their efforts on using their heritage languages to express themselves in song. Stoney Creek hit the east-coast powwow trail hard and competed at various powwows in North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey and other places. During their first anniversary at the Great American Indian Exposition in 1994, Stoney Creek recorded its first album. In 1993 Marty Richardson moved back to North Carolina and along with Jesse Richardson, a former White Tail member, began teaching other Haliwa-Saponis about singing.

The tribe's cultural class and after-school program offered an opportunity for Haliwa-Saponi young men to learn how to sing. At cultural class, often held on the Haliwa-Saponi powwow grounds, tribal singers learned singing skills and about how to show respect and reverence for the drum. Many of these young singers, including Brandon Daniel, Jason Evans, Dwayne Harris, Nathan Harris, E.J. Richardson, Troy Richardson, Chad Hedgepeth, Robie Richardson, and others readied themselves to travel with Stoney Creek. Members from other North Carolina communities also joined Stoney Creek, including J.D. Moore (Waccamaw-Siouan), Josh Moore (Waccamaw-Siouan), Bo Goins (Lumbee), Heath Hardin (Lumbee) and Marcus Locklear (Lumbee), among others.

For over twenty-one years Stoney Creek has represented the Haliwa-Saponi people and other communities of North Carolina at various powwows throughout the United States and Canada. Notable powwows include the Canadian Aboriginal Festival, where Stoney Creek won first place and Crow Fair, the "Teepee Capital of the World," where Stoney Creek served as host drum in 2007. Stoney Creek has been featured at the Jazz Festival in New Orleans and invited drum at Gathering of Nations Powwow. Stoney Creek continues to provide beautiful music and sing their signature Tutelo-Saponi word songs and old-style straight songs for the people.

Although Stoney Creek is the longest tenured of the Haliwa-Saponi-based drum groups, other Haliwa-Saponi drum groups made their contributions to Haliwa-Saponi singing traditions. In 1994 former members of White Tail and Stoney Creek, Tremayne Lynch and Otara Mills, joined with Jeff Anstead, also a former member of White Tail to form a new group: **Red Wolf Singers**. Other Haliwa-Saponi singers, including Mark Lynch, Mark Otis Richardson, Lucas Lynch, Johnny Hedgepeth, Howard Lynch, and Shane Lynch, joined the



*Red Wolf Singers*

group as well. Red Wolf brought their own signature style and made their songs in the Tutelo-Saponi Language. Red Wolf produced two professional recordings.



*Red Earth Singers*

Like other Haliwa-Saponi drum groups, **Red Earth** got their start around 2005 at the Haliwa-Saponi Red Earth Cultural Class by learning from older singers. Saha'Whe Green and the other former members of Red Earth, including Patrick Richardson, B.J. Richardson, Travis Richardson, Kehoni Green, Alex Green, Justin Hedgepeth, and Jacobi Rodwell, McQuinn Johnson among others credit Stoney Creek with mentoring them and serving as an example. Like their mentors, Red Earth first set up at the Great American Indian Exposition and focused mainly on singing Stoney Creek and Red Wolf songs, and also composed their own tunes in the Tutelo-Saponi Language. In addition to Stoney Creek, Red Earth molded their style from popular drum groups North Cree and Bear Creek.

After some members left the group, Red Earth changed its name to **Nassaw Nation**. Nassaw Nation added new talented singers from the Haliwa-Saponi community and communities up and down the east coast. The group won several competitions and served as host drum at a number of powwows, including Mashpee Wampanoag, Shinnecock, and others. Like others before them, Nassaw Nation developed its own style and made its own songs, but was also heavily influenced by Stoney Creek and other popular contemporary-style singing groups. As a matter of fact, many of the Nassaw Nation Singers were also regular rollers with Stoney Creek and when sustaining their own group became a challenge, incorporated with Stoney Creek.

Though northern singing has been the most popular style among Haliwa-Saponi singers, tribal members also have experience with southern singing through the efforts of two drum groups: **Secret Hill** and **Fox Tail**. Secret Hill, organized in 1998, is named after the school started by Haliwa-Saponi leader and ancestor



*Secret Hill Singers*



*Fox Tail Singers*

Tilman Lynch. The original drum group consisted of Tiachi Richardson, Tommy Richardson, Dudley G. Lynch, Dalton Lynch, Jeff Anstead, and Brian Lynch. Later Jason Evans, Nick Dean Richardson,

D.L. Daniel, and Jacob Lynch joined the group as well. The group travelled to and hosted powwows in Virginia and North Carolina, including the Chickahominy Powwow, Occaneechee State Park, and the Meherrin tribal powwow. Secret Hill sings the songs of popular drum groups such as Cozad, Yellowhammer, and Sizzertail, but also composed their own vocable-style songs and songs made in the Tutelo-Saponi Language. Though the group does not actively travel to different powwows, the singers get together to sing on occasion for the love of singing together. Tony Lynch and Danny Richardson started their drum group Fox Tail in the Spring of 2006. The group name drew inspiration from the foxtails that Danny Richardson and his son Tokeya Waci U Richardson had hanging their shed from various hunts. Other members of the group included Tokeya Waci U Richardson, Reggie Lynch, Jason Lynch, Yashica Lynch, and Michael Richardson. In the summer of 2006 the group met with the well-established southern group Southern Suns, who helped them learn how to sing. Their greatest honor was serving as Southern Host Drum at the American Indian Cultural Festival at the Hampton Roads Coliseum in Hampton, VA in 2007. Their last appearance as a group was on March 20, 2011. Even so,

many members of the group continue to sing as members of other groups, or remain active in tribal and cultural activities.



*Blue Moon Singers*

Haliwa-Saponi singing traditions continue through the efforts of younger Haliwa-Saponis, including the youngest drum group: **Blue Moon Singers**. Blue Moon got its start when students at the Haliwa-Saponi Tribal School decided that they wanted to sing in order to carry on

Haliwa-Saponi singing ways. The original members of the group included Timothy Mills, Jeremy Evans, Kaleb Richardson, Joe Richardson, Tristin Fischer, Jordan Silver, and Theodore Lynch. Other singers, including Matthew Richardson, Justin Richardson, Claude Richardson, Qua Richardson, James Rudd, Tyler Reid, Rick Evans, and Deitrick Richardson, and others form the heart of the group. Blue Moon counts as its mentors Stoney Creek singers Jesse Richardson, Marty Richardson, and Dwayne Harris. Like Stoney Creek, Blue Moon is a northern contemporary group specializing in dynamic Tutelo-Saponi word songs. Their songs are creative and are made to honor the many styles of dance as well as individuals. One special song was made in honor of Joshua Mills who passed away in 2014. Members of the group regularly attend the Red Earth Cultural class taught by Sharon Harris Berrun and are currently mentoring and teaching the next generation of Haliwa-Saponi songsters. In addition to singing powwow songs, the members of Blue Moon represent a younger generation of Haliwa-Saponis wishing to bring tribal traditions full circle by participating in eastern-woodland ceremonies and socials, as well as learning traditional crafts. Blue Moon and the singers that follow will insure that the legacy set by Shallow Water will continue into the future.

## *More Than Just Words, The Meaning of the Song...*

**Talking Eagle (Dedicated to the late Chief W.R. Richardson, Stoney Creek)**

*E:kowe: maxkí:towe té:ka mi ne: wanq̄ci:pi: axekq̄' majksé:ha nikás  
waiki:čʰi: hitq̄' oxá:ta ahq̄' iksé:ha ahq̄*

*“Our Chief has passed, but his spirit is here, let’s smile, let’s dance and sing, he’s sees us, yeah, he’s smiling at us.”*



**The Red Road (Stoney Creek)**

*lé: haṭkóx ačʰu:ti ki yawañjta ena kq̄ta kaka  
waihq̄:ni: nikás waita:ti í:ma waihkq̄spé:okʰa*

*“We will walk this red road, because that’s what our mothers and fathers taught us.”*

**Chief Chaweo (Stoney Creek)**

*Chaweo Saponi hú<sup>n</sup>tki yale:hleokʰa tó:kʰa: wa:sti: eni aki-  
sa:kó:mi<sup>n</sup>: pú:cka lá:ni aki-la:ni*

*“The Saponi Chief Chaweo walked with them to Where the Pine Trees Grow (North Carolina) in 1733.”*



**Nassaw Flava (Nassaw Nation)**

wą̀khitó' wą̀kyikópuwa yihkikle:puwa  
kiyiną̀hé:pupino kiwa:yi-kič́h'i:pupino

*"Our singing makes you wake up. Don't you want to stand? Don't you want to dance?"*



**Men's Traditional (Stoney Creek)**

Yiną̀hepú:hí ap<sup>h</sup>atu pokso yiluse tok<sup>h</sup>é:na:x no:naki  
ki:č́h'i:hlese ho:aka:kilé

*"You all stand up and take off your hats when the men are dancing the traditional dance."*

**Red Earth Song (Red Earth)**

Niwagenapai at<sup>h</sup>i: wata tahótane:ki nikás niwagenapi kowa yapóske mae ama' aču:ti

*"We have brothers from home, we have brothers from far, we are Red Earth."*

**A Song for Josh Mills (Blue Moon)**



Ikinopa: ma:to: kiko:khs mi yiwa:halake  
owaiya:ti kix:ka na owa xitita akines:se  
ama: nikas oma: toki yakichi

*"Brother you're gone from the earth but you're still in our heart, don't worry we will meet again. Until then dance for us in the sky, while we sing you this song, we love you."*