

IOWA TRIBE OF OKLAHOMA

Tribal Headquarters: Perkins, OK



A brief history

The Iowa (pronounced I-o-way) are a Siouan group whose ancestral roots stem from the Great Lakes area. The Iowa call themselves the Bah-Kho-Je which means “grey snow,” a term probably derived from the color of their smoke-stained snow-covered dwellings in winter. The name “Iowa” is the term the French used for them which has an unknown connection with marrow.

The Iowas were a Woodland culture in the Great Lakes area and were relocated to the Pipestem Quarry area of southwestern Minnesota and then migrated south along the Mississippi and eventually west. They were skilled traders. Along the way they began to adopt elements of the Plains culture. They lived the majority of their recorded history in what is now the state of Iowa around Council Bluffs and near the Des Moines River on the Grand River Basin.

With the encroachment of white settlers, the Iowa ceded their lands in treaties with the U.S. in 1824, 1836 and 1838. The Tribe was removed to a small reservation on the Kansas-Nebraska boarder which later was further reduced seriously stifling their way of life. In 1878, dissatisfaction with their conditions and treatment resulted in a number of tribal members leaving the reserve for Indian Territory where, in 1883, an Iowa reservation was created.

About the flag

The flag features the tribal seal on a red field. The seal features a traditional shield with three images recalling the tribe's history. In the upper center is a Plains-style Indian headdress of black and white eagle feathers with light blue and yellow adornments. In the center is a sacred pipe in black with yellow leather streamers at each end. Below is a black silhouette of a plow, recalling the Iowa's agricultural tradition since moving to Oklahoma. The four black and white eagle feathers hanging from the bottom of the shield stand for the four cardinal directions. Extending slightly behind the outer edges of the shield is a ceremonial lance from which yellow streamers hang from either side.

Educational Activity

Look at a map to locate the origin of the Iowa Tribe. The tribal flag displays a plow, recalling their agricultural tradition since moving to Oklahoma. How is the land different in Oklahoma than the Iowa's origins? How would this affect their agriculture?