

The Flags of the Native American Nations of the United States

By Donald T. Healy

Summary

This paper is a report of a multi-year project to uncover and document the flags of the American Indian in the United States. Over 70 tribal flags have been identified with another two dozen known to have flags. The report shall explain the methods used to obtain the data, analyze the causes for the great increase in the number of Native American tribal flags, and present a handful of examples. The entire body of work will be available for viewing and actual flags will be used to illustrate those examples presented.

As the twentieth century comes to a close, we have witnessed a burgeoning of flags unsurpassed in vexillological history. We have seen entire panoplies of flags go, come, go again and a third and sometimes fourth generation appear inside the Russian Federation, alone! The disintegration of central and eastern Europe into small tribal states where the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia used to exist shows the power and force of one's ethnic identity and heritage upon politics and cartography.

Within the United States, the identity and heritage of our indigenous peoples, too, has begun to manifest itself through increasing desires by those indigenous peoples to express themselves in the trappings of nationhood.

The Native Americans, or Indians of the United States have traditionally been a non-vexilliferous people, relying upon costume, art and totems to distinguish themselves from one another and from the European dominated culture that is the modern United States.

In the last fifty years that has been changing. It is still true that the bulk of the 900 plus recognized and unrecognized tribes found within the United States are without flags, but an increasing number have started using this form of symbolism that hitherto was alien to their culture. It may not be unreasonable to assume that the vast majority of federally recognized Native American nations do, as of 1995, indeed have flags. At the end of this report is a chart listing those nations that definitely do not have tribal flags as well as those known to have flags, but for which insufficient information was available. The number of nations with flags, both those reported and those without sufficient data, far exceeds the number of nations still without a flag.

To seek out these flags, possibly the largest body of sovereign national symbols that remain unknown to the general vexillological community, a major effort was undertaken. Many reservations throughout the United States were visited including ones in California, Arizona, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Montana, both Dakota, Minnesota, Florida, New Jersey and Maine. Surveys were sent out to over two hundred Indian nations and reservations ranging in size from the Santa Ysabel Rancheria in California with a population of under fifty residents to the great Navajo nation that exceeds 250,000 citizens. Where no response was received by the mail survey, follow up phone calls were placed to all whose phone number could be found.

For the purpose of this talk, I shall refer to all those mentioned by the terms tribe or nation although the Native Americans utilize many other terms in referring to themselves such as band, community, village, rancherio, etc.

It should be remembered that under United States law, federally recognized Indian tribes constitute sovereign, independent "domestic" nations. They are not subject to laws enacted by state governments except when agreed to by the tribe. Their chiefs, presidents, governors or whatever term they use to identify the head of their people are, by an executive order issued by President Clinton, treated with all the honor, rank and privilege afforded the governors of the fifty states.

The Native American, like any other ethnicity, encompasses a vast variety of socio-economic strata including some of the poorest in America and some of the wealthiest niches in society. In 1994, for example, the Pequot Indians of Connecticut were sufficiently wealthy that they could contribute ten million dollars to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. toward the construction of a Museum of the Native Americans, the largest single donation the project had ever received! In the 1930s the wealthiest ethnic group in the United States was the Chickasaw nation of Oklahoma, thanks to the discovery of oil on the land that constituted their "historic tribal area", a term used to refer to lands formerly constituting a reservation in Oklahoma that was declassified when Oklahoma achieved statehood in 1907.

While wealthy Native Americans are not uncommon, many also suffer in the worst conditions of poverty. Native Americans as a unit find themselves with the highest incidents of alcoholism and one of the highest incidents of suicide in the United States. To combat this, many Native American activists have encouraged a return to their traditional ways and lifestyles.

The adoption of flags by tribes can be seen in some instances as a tool to instill pride in the hearts and minds of people too often forgotten and abused by the federal and state governments with which they were involuntarily saddled.

Another major inducement for Native American peoples to adopt flags has been their increasing involvement in the gaming industry. More than ninety-five tribes now offer gambling in one form or another on federally recognized reservations. This has brought millions of visitors to lands they would never have thought to visit. With this massive influx of visitors tribes now find themselves in need of a readily acceptable symbol of sovereignty. Replies to surveys and phone inquiries in at least a dozen cases have directly attributed the adoption of a flag to the opening of a casino or bingo parlor. The impact of gambling upon the adoption of flags within the Native American community may be a unique occurrence in vexillological history.

This report in no ways can be considered conclusive. Many tribes failed to respond to the survey, including some that are known to have flags. Many tribes listed in the directory utilized no longer could be reached at the listed address. For those that had phones listed several were disconnected or converted into fax lines.

Some of the flags that are included have been reported on in the past, but are part of this presentation to make it as comprehensive as possible. There are some that have been seen only in NAVA News, and hopefully NAVA will continue to publish detailed stories of Native American symbols for years to come. The vast majority of the flags you are about to see have never before appeared in any vexillological media. It is hoped that this report will provide vexillologists with a greater understanding of Native Americans, their rich histories and their use of symbols.

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with which they were involuntarily saddled. This talk in no ways can be considered conclusive. Due to time constraints, only a sampling of flags uncovered during this project can be presented at this time. Even if the more than forty nations that have responded could be discussed, they would still be a small percentage of those tribes utilizing flags. Many tribes failed to respond to the survey, including some that are known to have flags. Some flags that are included have been reported on in the past, but are part of this presentation to make it as comprehensive as possible. There are some that have been seen only in NAVA News, and hopefully NAVA will continue to publish detailed stories of Native American symbols for years to come. The vast majority of the flags you are about to see have never before appeared in any vexillological media. It is hoped that this report will provide vexillologists with a greater understanding of Native Americans, their rich histories and their use of symbols.



Conclusions

This investigation into a little known area of vexillological interest has proven fascinating, enlightening and rewarding. I have learned much about the people that truly first colonized the New World, some 20,000 years ago, and have acquired a fascination far beyond the flags used by these people. One or two stereotypes of the Native American do seem to be very true. The first is there sense of spirituality and partnership with nature. The second is there pride in their heritage, now increasingly expressed in flags.

I have learned much about the acquisition of flags by the Native American. Mostly from phone conversations, it has become clear that two pieces of federal legislation from 1988 have acted as catalysts for the adoption of flags by United States Indians. Those acts are the Native American Sovereignty Act and the Native American Gaming Act. The first spells out the level of independence that federally recognized Indian Nations have. The second offers them the same rights as the state or states in which they reside in the area of gambling. The first has increased self awareness amongst many Native Americans and has given them a status not seen since before the birth of the United States. The second has been a tool for pulling many tribes out of the depths of poverty that they had been forced into under the not so benign over lordship of the federal government.

Flags can be seen as expressions of Native American sovereignty and there use as such an expression can be seen by reviewing the adoption dates of the various flags. At the time this piece was being prepared for mailing, 98 nations were known to have flags, of those, 28 provided dates, or at least, years, in which their flag was adopted. Just under half have been adopted since 1988. For Dr. Smith, and NAVA past president Bob Gauron, who researched Native American flags in 1978, they both can rest easy, only one nation, the Southern Ute,

escaped detection by Mr. Gauron. I have found none that predate Dr. Smith's book that he did not include.

Designs for Native American flags leave a lot to be desired. A few, such as the Navajo, the Comanche, and the Colorado River Indian Tribes have put considerable thought into their flag and have produced strikingly handsome designs. However, almost 40% of all Native American flags consist of the tribal seal on a white field. If one expands the background colors to include light blue and red, one can account for almost two-thirds of all designs. Writing appears on far too many flags and some, like the Flathead, realize the problem of writing and cope with it by using two sided flags.

The use of such simplistic design concepts by the Native American tribes of the United States is not entirely their fault. If one reviews the flags of United States' state, county and municipal flags, the lack of creativity shown by them is simply carried on by the Native American. Can one blame them? I think not. By using the same motifs for their flags that the states have done may in truth, be a way of reaffirming their status as sovereign equals with the other governments found within the borders of the United States.

Although I can only scratch the surface in the allotted time, I do have the complete body of work here of any and all to view at your leisure. I hope this talk has done justice to the flags of the Native American peoples and I hope that it has sparked an interest in the subject by more vexillologists. It is my fondest wish that future flag books recognize that the United States consists of more than just fifty sovereign states - there are hundreds of sovereign nations to be found and acknowledged.

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About the author

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The Blackfoot Nation

Located in western Montana, the Piegans, or Pikuni branch of the Blackfoot Confederacy is the southernmost group of Blackfeet Indians. The other two branches, the Siksika and the Kainah or Blood, are residents of Canada. The Pikuni, which means "poorly dressed", occupy a reservation of 937,838 acres straddling the border with Canada and abutting Glacier National Park. Their reservation was established in 1855. The term "Blackfoot" comes from their habit of dyeing their moccasins black.

In a rare occurrence, the reservation assigned to the Blackfeet in Montana coincides with their traditional homelands though greatly reduced in size.

The Blackfoot capital is in the town of Browning, which acts as the gateway to Glacier National Park, affording the many visitors to the park a chance to see the Blackfeet's heritage and flag. Browning serves as home to the "Museum of the Plains Indians".

The Blackfeet were known for their beautiful craftwork their teepees, clothing, weapons and riding equipment were of exceptional design. Their warbonnets, one of which appears on the flag, were unique in that the feathers stood straight up.

The flag, which is used quite extensively, is a medium blue and bears at the hoist a ceremonial lance having 24 eagle feathers attached.

In the center is a ring of 38 white and black eagle feathers surrounding a map of the reservation. On this appears a warbonnet and the name of the tribe in English and in the Algonquin based native tongue of the Blackfeet. All items appearing in the center are white with black edging and black lettering.

The Cherokee Nation

The Cherokee people are located in two distinct regions representing their history under the United States. The Eastern Band of Cherokee are located in North Carolina and Tennessee, the traditional homeland of the people who call themselves "Ani Yun Wiya" or "Real People". The term Cherokee was probably given to them by their neighbors in the southeast, the Creeks. The Creeks called them "Tciloki", meaning "people of a different speech".

The major component of the Cherokee nation is found in Oklahoma. In 1830, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act which evicted all Indians in the southeastern United States to what is now Oklahoma. At the time of this act, the Cherokee were an advanced nation having built towns and cities, having a written constitution and even printing their own newspapers in the Cherokee language. The Cherokee had been interacting with the United States government for quite some time on a true government to government relationship. Part of the fear that caused the move was that the Cherokee would actually take steps to become a truly independent nation on the western boundaries of the United States. The primary motivation, however, was greed. The whites in Georgia, the Carolinas, Tennessee and Alabama desired the lands of the Cherokee. The United States military had the might to grant the whites their wish.

The eviction of the Cherokee people and their relocation to Oklahoma has become known as the "Trail of Tears". The military did not care for the Cherokees in any way during the migration. The forced move was accompanied by disease, harsh weather, starvation and attacks

by marauding whites. Over 4,000 Cherokee died on the road to Oklahoma. Every year, the "Trail of Tears" is recalled in a pageant and remembrance ceremony in the Cherokee capital of Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

In Dr. Whitney Smith's "The Flag Book of the United States", the Cherokee are reported to have a white flag bearing seven red seven pointed stars. This flag, which has been called a "peace flag" was known to have been used in the ceremonies of the Cherokee to celebrate their national holiday on Sept. 7, 1968. The Cherokee Peace Flag is symbolic in both color and design. The red stars stand for victory and success, while the white background represents peace and happiness. The seven points of each star recall the seven clans of the Cherokee people. The stars are arranged in the pattern of the constellation "Yonegwa", known to the white man as the Great Bear or Big Dipper. According to Cherokee history, the peace flag was carried by the Cherokee from their traditional home to the Indian Territory along the "Trail of Tears". Before that journey began, the Cherokee War Flag, was buried with a hatchet. The "War Flag" is of unknown design.

The western Cherokee based in Oklahoma have an orange flag. This flag bears their tribal seal in the center. A single seven pointed star, each point divided in half, one side yellow, the other orange. This star recalls the seven original clans of the Cherokee people. This is surrounded by a oak wreath depicted in orange and green. The oak symbolizes the sacred eternal fire which was kindled from oak wood. All this lies on a gray circle. Ringing this central circle is an orange band bearing the phrase "Seal of the Cherokee Nation" in both English and Cherokee script. In the Cherokee language, it is pronounced "Tsa la gi yi A ye hli", meaning "The Cherokee Nation". That script, it should be noted, was the invention of the great Cherokee chief, Sequoyah. It was the first Indian language to be put in written form. At the base of the orange ring is the date Sept. 6, 1839, the date of the constitution of the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma.

The Eastern Band of Cherokee, based on a 57,000 acre reservation with its capital at Cherokee, North Carolina, use the same seal. This is the sole instance found where two bands of the same tribe employ the identical symbol, though separated by hundreds of miles and governed by different executive and legislative branches. It unifies the Cherokee people at least symbolically, even if they can no longer be geographically united.

Beyond the seal is a ring of seven yellow seven pointed stars, again recalling the seven original clans, but also recalling the seven holidays in the Cherokee Life cycle and the seven sacred rites in the Cherokee's native religion. In the upper fly corner appears a single black seven pointed star. This star honors those poor souls who died during the terrible ordeal recalled each year in Tahlequah, the "Trail of Tears".

Edging the entire flag is a border of green and black diagonal stripes similar to the rope-like border frequently found around seal.

The Eastern Cherokee do not have a tribal flag.

The Chickasaw Nation

The Chickasaw Nation constitutes one of the five so-called "civilized" nations of Oklahoma. These tribes, as well as many others, were forcibly evicted by the United States to what was then called the Indian Territory. The Chickasaw Nation was constituted at Tishomingo, Oklahoma on March 4, 1856. Its constitution was adopted August 16, 1867 and its tribal seal designed some forty years later in 1907.

The original capital of the Chickasaw, Tishomingo, was named for the last great war chief from the days when the Chickasaw lived in the southeastern part of the United States. Tishomingo dominates the tribal seal and the flag as well.

The flag of the Chickasaw Nation is indigo and bears a full color representation of the seal of the nation.

The orange (or gold) and light purple bands symbolize the purity and honor of the Chickasaw people. The warrior, besides representing the beloved Tishomingo, stands for all Chickasaw. Tishomingo carries two arrows. These stand for the two historical divisions of the Chickasaw, the forest dwellers and the town dwellers. Tishomingo wears four head feathers, representing the four prime directions of the compass.

The bow, traditionally made of hickory, symbolizes the hunting prowess of the Chickasaw warrior and his willingness to defend his people. The quiver made of deerskin and decorated with white fur reinforces these same ideals. Stretching across Chief Tishomingo's shoulder is a warrior's mantle which was traditionally made of swan feathers. Tishomingo's shield, made of deerskin, symbolizes the protection Chickasaw warriors offer their people. The kneestraps, also of deerhide, represent the fleetness of the Chickasaw warrior.

The river in the background recalls the Mississippi, a Chickasaw word meaning "without source". The foliage represents the flora found along the Mississippi, the ancient homeland of the Chickasaw.

Although the Chickasaw have been in Oklahoma for almost 150 years, their tribal seal, and therefore their flag recall their days in the east, a time where their heritage blossomed, their history, pride and glory achieved its zenith, a time that they will not forget. Their hearts still lie along the banks of the Mississippi, though they do not.

The Choctaw Nation

The Choctaw of Oklahoma were the first of the five "Civilized Tribes" to reluctantly accept expulsion from their native lands in what is now the southern halves of the states of Mississippi and Alabama and move to Oklahoma. Although their history included a long alliance with the government of the United States and they even served under then Gen. Andrew Jackson, when time came to move the Choctaw westward, they received no consideration from the government.

As part of the "Trail of Tears" the Choctaw lost almost twenty five percent of their people to disease, starvation and predatory whites during the long march from the southeast to Oklahoma. Once there, they quickly reorganized their tribal government even though more died after arrival. The ravages of disease and starvation continued but were now compounded by attacks from hostile western Indians.

When the United States Civil War broke out in 1860 the Choctaw, as well as most of the Indians forced into the Indian Territory, sided with the Confederacy. It is during this alliance that the Choctaw became the first United States tribe to adopt a flag. That flag is documented in Dr. Whitney Smith's "Flag Book of the United States" as a light blue flag bearing a red circle in the center that is edged in white. Within the red circle are a calumet, or peace pipe, a bow and three arrows representing the three subdivisions of the Choctaw Nation. These subdivisions are named for the three chiefs who were bribed by the United States into signing the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek which ceded their lands in Alabama and Mississippi in exchange for land in Oklahoma. Those three were Apuckshenubbee, Pushmataha and Mosholatubbee. This design is the basis of the national seal of the Choctaw to this very day.

A variation of the flag depicted in Dr. Smith's book appeared in "Emblems of Southern Valor", a book by Joseph Crute published in 1990. The variation shown in that book may simply be an artistic license at work, for no other Choctaw flag uses that design. It may also represent the flag of one of the other units of Choctaw forces and not the one reproduced in Dr. Smith's book. That the flag drawn in Mr. Crute's book contains two arrows, not one would lead one to suspect that it might be associated within the 2nd regiment of the Choctaw Cavalry, but Mr. Crute reports that the Choctaw's 2,000 volunteers formed the 1st and 3rd regiments. No mention is given to a 2nd regiment.

That first flag now exists solely as a replica in the Oklahoma Historical Museum in Oklahoma City. Its use was only during the period 1861-1864, but it has continued to inspire flags for the Choctaw in Oklahoma. In the 1970s, Paramount Flag Co. of San Francisco, according to its files, filled an order for the Choctaw Nation for new flags. This 1970s reincarnation of the Choctaw flag followed exactly the pattern shown in Dr. Smith's book, but drastically altered the colors. The field of the flag became dark red, similar to that seen in Latvian and Georgian flags. The ring around the central disc became light blue while the central disc changed to a deep yellow. The bow, arrows and peace pipe appeared in natural colors. It is not known when this flag came into use, nor when it was replaced.

It is known, however, that the Choctaw flag of the 1970s was replaced. The current flag follows the basic design of the preceding two, but adds more detail. The inner circle remains deep yellow, but the calumet and bow and arrows are now white edged in black. For the first time, the peace pipe shows black smoke coming from it. The light blue ring now is edged by two cords, a very narrow inner one and a wider outer one. Both cords appear in light green. The blue ring now bears a legend in black "The Great Seal of the Choctaw Nation". Finally, the deep red field has been changed into a purple color.

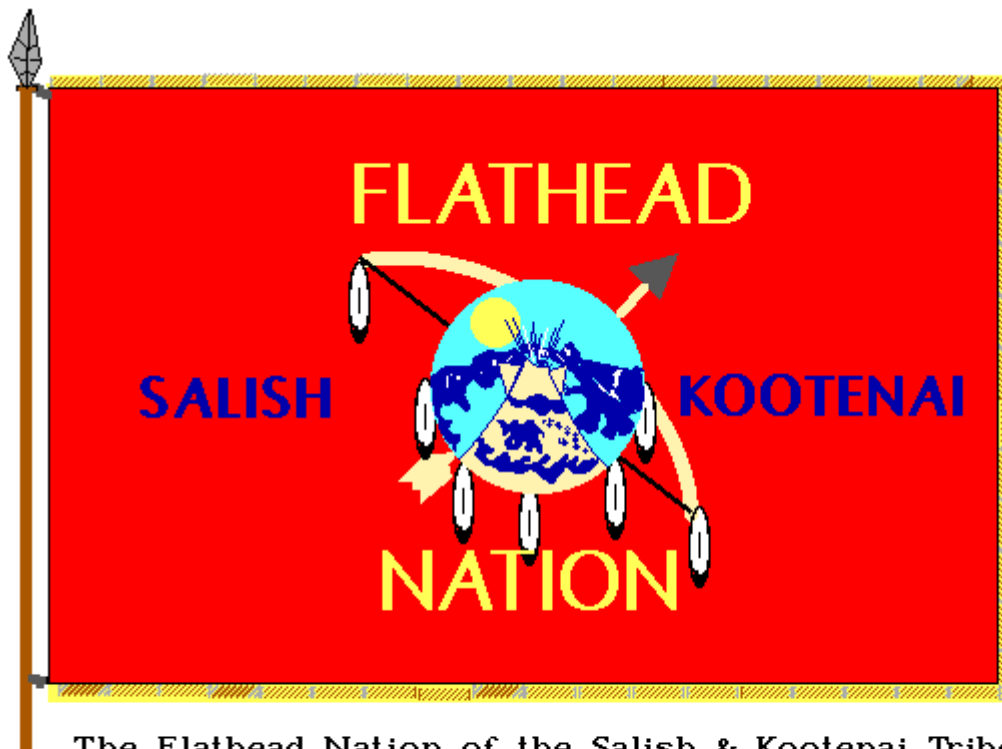
This flag seems to have been inspired by the drawing of the Choctaw flag "carried by the Choctaw Confederate Troops" as depicted in the 1958 sheet from the Oklahoma Historical Society entitled "Fourteen Flags Over Oklahoma". It is also similar to one shown in old postcards depicting the "Flags of the Five Civilized Tribes" based upon gift flags from the state of Alabama. This set of flags was created in 1940 to honor the tribes that once lived in Alabama. After being displayed at the statehouse in Montgomery, they were given as gifts to the five nations. All five flags were white with full color reproductions of the pertinent seal. The postcard, however shows the flag as a bluish-purple, possibly from aging. This postcard flag, it should be noted, is the only other one that includes the writing around the seal.

With the appearance of this new flag, the Choctaw Nation is one of the very few Native American peoples to have a traceable vexillological history. It is one that maintains a basic

design for almost 150 years, but shows evolution and adaptation much like the Choctaw people themselves.

One theory for the evolution of the Choctaw flag is a reverence for or dependence upon the original Choctaw flag for the design of current flags. What most people outside of the flag manufacturing business and vexillological circles never realize is the impact of light and time upon fabric. Blue dyes tend to age and in the process the color fastness of the dye is lost. A blue will slowly transform into a maroon and then into a purple. White will yellow with age and red will fade to a purple and eventually a pale blue. It is possible that the variations seen in the flag of the Choctaw people has been a recognition of the vagaries of time upon fabric and an intent by the Choctaw to continue with the exact design left to them by their ancestors. If so, it is a great example of the sanctity of the past in the culture of the modern Native American.

The Flathead Nation of the Salish & Kootenai Tribes



The Flathead Nation of the Salish & Kootenai Tribes

Covering almost 620,000 acres of western most Montana, near the border with Idaho's panhandle lies the Flathead Reservation. This land is home two two separate tribes thatfunction

as a single unit. This is the home of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes as they are officially named.

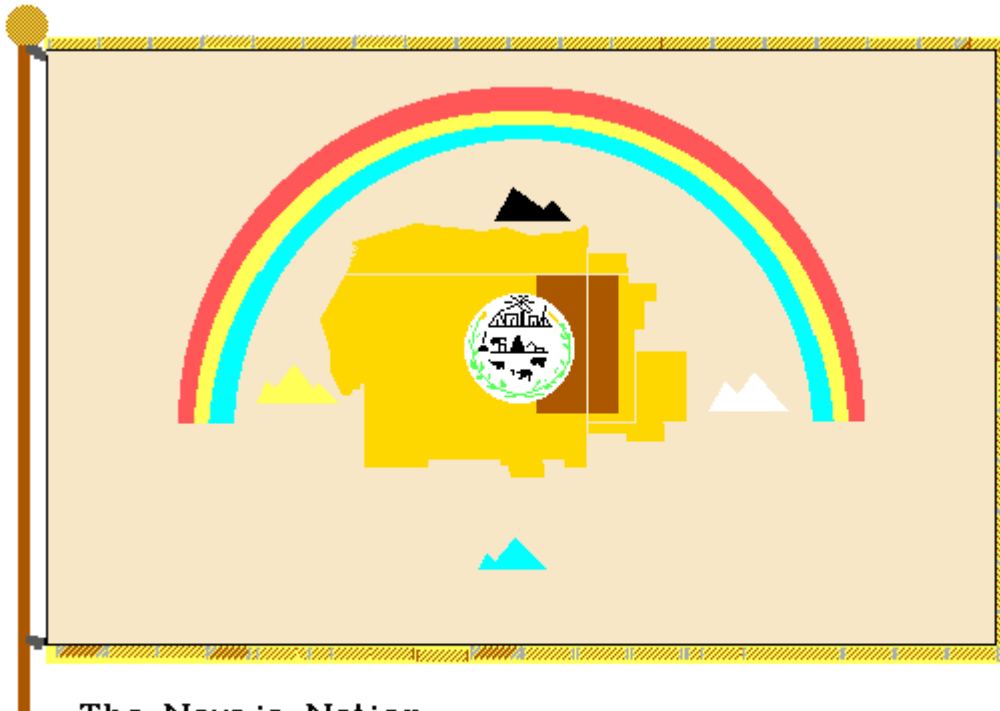
It is from the first of the two tribes that the reservation gets its name. The Salish nation is just one of many Salish speaking tribes that were found by the white man when he came to the northwest. Quite a few others, such as the Quinault and Upper Skagit resided to the west of the Salish. What differentiated this group of Salish-speaking Native Americans was that they did not practice the custom of head flattening. Coastal Salish frequently tied padded boards to their foreheads and over a gradual process tapered their heads by the time they reached adulthood. To whites, it was the Montana Salish who possessed the "flat heads" and the coastal Salish seemed to have tapered or pointed heads. Although the reservation retains the name Flathead Reservation, the people have reverted to the name they have bestowed upon themselves, the Salish.

The Kootenai live both in the United States and Canada. To the north the name is usually pronounced and spelled slightly different than in the United States - Kootenay. The Kootenai were for generations primarily fisherman. Around 1700 the tribe obtained the horse from neighboring Indians and it changed their lives. From a fishing based culture, they transformed themselves into a tribe of the Plains. They pursued the buffalo, they built teepees, etc.

Today, these two tribes of the Plains celebrate their former lifestyle on their flag. That flag is red. It bears the name of the reservation in yellow and the names of the two peoples in dark blue. Centered upon the flag is a picture of a typical teepee used by the Indians of the Plains. The teepee bears the sketch of a buffalo and the prints of a bear. These two emblems reflect the two bases of the lives of the two tribes - hunting and fishing, since the bear is a great fisherman. Behind the teepee lie the Rocky Mountains which transverse the land of the Salish and Kootenai.

In recognition of the difficulty that writing causes on a flag viewed from the reverse, two versions of the flag of the Flathead nation exists. The formal flag is dual sided, with the writing appearing properly on both sides. For economic reasons, the flag is also available in a single sided version.

The Navajo Nation



The Navajo Nation

The Navajo are the largest tribe in the United States. They account for almost fifteen percent of the Native American population in the 1990 census and number in excess of 250,000 members. They occupy a vast area of the southwest spreading across parts of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Utah. The lands of the Navajo encompass an area larger than the states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut and New Jersey combined!

The name Navajo is not so much a name as a place. The Pueblo Indians referred to the area of the southwest from which the Navajo came. The Spanish referred to them as the Apaches de Navajo which eventually was shortened to simply Navajo. The Navajo refer to themselves as Dine (Dee-Nay), which means "the people". Their vast land is called Dinétah.

Flying over this vast region is the flag of the Navajo Nation. The flag, adopted on May 21, 1968 by the Tribal Council in Window Rock, AZ, was designed by Jay R. DeGroat, a Navajo from Mariano Lake, AZ and won out over 140 other suggested designs.

The Flag incorporates elements from the tribal seal which was designed by John Claw Jr. of Many Farms, AZ and adopted on January 18, 1952. The great seal bears a ring of 48 arrow heads representing the then 48 states of the United States and reflects the Navajo nation protected by the United States. Within this ring of arrowheads are three concentric circles that are not completed at the top. These circles represent the rainbow, open to the east, and symbolize the Navajo Nation itself. It is a reminder that the sovereignty of the Navajo Nation is never closed. The rings are turquoise outermost, then yellow and lastly red. Within these rings are two corn plants, the sustainer of life for the Navajo, their tips yellow showing pollen, a substance used frequently in Navajo ceremonies. Within the corn are four differently

colored mountains and a horse, cow and sheep representing livestock, a main source of wealth for the Navajo. The four sacred mountains are shown in turquoise, white, black and yellow. The flag is a pale buff color bearing a map of the Navajo Nation in two colors. The original boundaries of the 1868 reservation are shown in dark brown, while the much larger current borders are shown in a copper color. Surrounding the map are the four sacred mountains and over the top of all this is the rainbow motif mentioned in the great seal. Centered on the map is a white disc bearing the corn stalks and domestic animals from the seal. In addition to these there are representations of other aspects of the Navajo's economy; a traditional wikipup, oil drilling equipment, forestry, mining and recreational fishing and hunting. All save the green and yellow corn stalks appear in black outline. The overall image of the flag recalls one of the arts associated with the Navajo - sand painting. Many of the flag's details, and the sand colored background, are frequently found in these temporary art works that initially served as altars in various healing ceremonies. The Navajo create these intricate works by carefully trickling powdered minerals such as ocher, ground sandstone, gypsum and charcoal into patterns on clean sand. When the ceremony was over the painting was destroyed, participants taking some of the powders home with them for their magical powers. Today the art of sand painting is a source of revenue for many Navajo artists who now make their works permanent and sell them to tourists and collectors.

In early 1995, the flag of the Navajo nation became the first Native American tribal flag to fly into space when it was carried aboard the space shuttle Discovery by astronaut Bernard Harris. Dr. Harris is an African-American physician who lived on the Navajo reservation when he was a child. Dr. Harris had asked the Navajo for some token to take into space with him and President Albert Hale of the Navajo nation decided upon the flag. Before it could be flown, however, the flag was blessed by the medicine men of the Navajo by sprinkling corn pollen upon it. The shaman also had to be assured that the Discovery's flight path conformed to Navajo religious beliefs in that the spacecraft had to fly in a clockwise direction. After its February flight the flag was flown over the Navajo National Capitol in Window Rock, AZ.

The Leech Lake Band of the Ojibwe Nation

Commonly called Chippewa in the United States and Ojibway in Canada, the people of Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin and the Dakotas to the south and Ontario to the north, call themselves Anishinabe meaning "first men".

The Anishinabe prefer to be called this. They accept Ojibwe, but dislike intensely the name Chippewa even though some bands include it in their official name for purposes of recognition by the wider world. Ojibwe, or Ojibway, is an Algonquin phrase that refers to a unique style of puckered seam on the moccasins of the Anishinabe. Chippewa is considered to be a poor attempt by early French explorers to say the word "Ojibwe".

The Ojibwe were and continue to be one of the largest tribes in the United States, second only to the Navajo according to most surveys. The Ojibwe however, have so intermingled with the white man's world that by the middle of this century it was thought that a "pure blooded Ojibwe" no longer existed.

Instead of there being a single flag for the Ojibwe nation in the United States, each band can decide whether or not it wants a flag and what that design should be. This situation is also true in the Canadian bands as explained by Kevin Harrington in FlagsCan over a decade ago.

The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe live on approximately 28,000 acres that comprise the Leech Lake Reservation. The flag of that reservation is white and bears the tribal seal in the center.

That seal starts with a red ring around a white central disc. On the ring in red appears the name of the reservation. Within the red ring the most prominent device is a yellow equilateral triangle. Outside the edges of this triangle starting from the hoist side are symbols of nature, in this case pine trees and a soaring eagle; symbols of education represented by diploma and graduation mortarboard hat; and symbols of justice and the law depicted as the scales of justice. Within the triangle appear a peace pipe and two brown feathers representing the Ojibwe people. The yellow triangle recalls the birchbark wigwams that were the ancient homes of the Ojibwe, and brings all the symbols together representing the concept that the Ojibwe people have a home on the Leech Lake reservation where they can prosper under the rule of law, through education and in harmony with nature.

The Citizen Band of the Potawatomi Nation

The Potawatomi name means "People of the Place of the Fire" in Algonquin. This term refers back some four hundred years when the Potawatomi were united with the Ojibwe and the Ottawa nations. In those days the land of the Potawatomi and the other two nations was what today is Ontario. When the three groups moved southward, they split up forming the three distinct nations. The Ojibwe moved west to what is now Wisconsin and Minnesota, the Ottawa moved to the lands around Lake Huron and the Potawatomi moved on to the lower peninsula of Michigan.

When they moved, they took with them the original "Council Fire" that had been used by the three groups when united. From this is derived their name. Today they are called the "Keepers of the Fire"

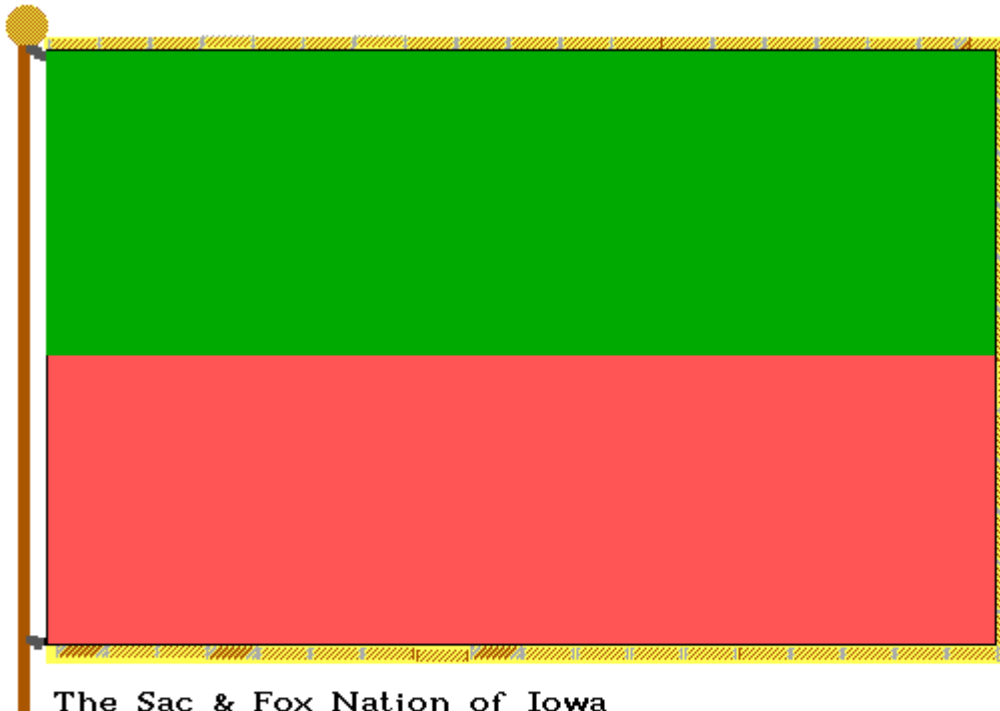
Today, the Potawatomi span an area from Michigan through Oklahoma. The largest band of modern Potawatomi is the Citizen Band found in Oklahoma. They received that title because after being ejected from Kansas and settling in Oklahoma, they accepted the United States' government's offer of citizenship and allotments of land. The Citizen Band controls only the 4,400 acre "Tribal Historic Area" in Oklahoma, but the vast majority of the Band live on private property as is true with virtually all Oklahoma Indians.

The flag of the Citizen Band of the Potawatomi Nation is white and bears their tribal seal in the center.

That seal starts at the top with crossed peace pipe and tomahawk signifying skill and strength in war bonded with a strong historical reputation as a peace loving people. In the center is the great "Council Fire" from which they get their name. A modern interpretation of the fire is as a symbol of warmth and friendship as well as the wisdom derived from the "Great Council Fire". Below that are two crossed oak leaves from the Red Oak tree. The acorns of the Red Oak were a source of food for the Potawatomi and the leaves were widely used in Potawatomi beadwork designs. The seal is ringed by the legends "Great Seal of the Potawatomi Indians" and "People of the Place of the Fire".

As a money saving device, the seal on the flag is frequently represented solely in red outline.

The Sac & the Fox Nations of Iowa



The Sac, or Sauk, an Algonquin word meaning "yellow earth people" and the Fox, or Mesquaki, meaning "red earth people" originated in what is now Illinois and Wisconsin, but like most other nations were forced to move time and time again. Today the two tribes, which have been extremely close allies and friends since joining together in 1734 to fend off attacks from an alliance of the Ojibwe and the French, occupy three distinct reservations in Iowa, Kansas and Oklahoma.

The Sac & Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa have a 3,200 acre reservation in central Iowa known as the Mesquaki Indian Settlement. This Iowa band of Sac & Fox numbering less than 1,000 individuals possess a flag of simple design, but complex meaning.

The flag is a simple bicolor of green over red.

The bicolor, naturally, invokes the idea that these two nations have come together as one people.

The green symbolizes the concepts of life, peace, spring and represents the peace chief, one of the three members of the tribal authority.

The red stands for death, war, the autumn, a time when much of life fades away, and the war chief. In the olden days, when war was imminent, the tribal calumets, or peace pipes, would be stripped of their traditional white feathers and replaced by red feathers.

The peace chief is an hereditary title passed from father to son. His job was to settle disputes within the tribe and to be in charge of discussions at all council meetings. The war chief was selected whenever there was a military campaign, from amongst the bravest and most able of the tribe's warriors. He would be in charge of council meetings whenever war oriented topics were discussed. The third tribal leader, not symbolized in the flag, was the ceremonial leader or shaman. The shaman was the keeper of the religious rites and instructed others in the various rituals of the tribe.

The Seneca Nation

Originally called "Sen Uh Kuh", or the "Great Hill People", the name Seneca devolved from the similarity in sound to the Latin name familiar to the white man's ears. The Seneca were the most powerful of the member tribes in the Iroquois League and served the league as the "guardians of the western door". This term came from the Iroquois' view of their confederacy as a huge long house, their traditional dwelling. As the westernmost member of the league, it fell upon the Seneca to protect that gateway into the heart of Iroquois land.

During the American revolution, the Seneca, under the leadership of two chiefs, Red Jacket and Cornplanter, sided with the British. This turned out to be a tragic miscalculation. As revenge for their British favoritism, the American general they called "Caunotaucarius", or "Town Destroyer" led American troops through the lands of the Seneca, burning villages, destroying all crops and stored foodstuffs, killing many and leaving the rest to starve through the bitter winter of upstate New York. "Town Destroyer" is better known to most people as George Washington.

The Seneca now hold three state recognized reservations in western New York, the Cattaraugus, the tiny Oil Springs and the Tonawanda reservations. Over these reservations and the over 6,500 Seneca that associate with the reservations fly flags of the same design.

The flag of the Seneca is white and bears the seal of the tribe in blue with red lettering in the center.

The seal contains maps of the three reservations. Surrounding the maps are eight animals, the beaver, the deer, a wolf, a bear, a turtle, a hawk, a heron and a snipe. These eight creatures are the totems, or emblems associated with particular Seneca clans. For the Seneca, the clan is a group of families all descended from a common ancestor.

Around the seal appear two legends in red. Over the top appears "Seneca Nation of Indians". Along the bottom is their title "Keepers of the Western Door".

The Warm Springs, Washoe and Northern Paiute Nations

Located in north central Oregon, just south of Mount Hood is the 644,000 acres Warm Springs Reservation. This reservation is home to eight bands from three separate tribes that function as a unit. The Warm Springs Indians lend their name to the reservation. They are represented by four bands, the Taih, Wyam, Tenino and Dock-spus. The Washoe are from the Dalles, Dog River and Ki-gal-twal-la bands. One band of the Northern Paiute is the remaining tribe.

The 3,000 residents of the reservation engage in farming and logging for sources of revenue. They also maintain the Kah-Ne-Tah vacation resort in the hills in the northern part of the reservation. It is at this modern resort complex that one can most readily see the flag of the "Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation".

The flag is light blue. It bears a yellow ribbon across the top bearing, in red, the line "The Confederated Tribes of the" and another, similar ribbon arcing across the bottom bearing "Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon". Between the two ribbons are two eagles, one approaching the center from either side. This recalls the most sacred of all animals to the Native American and the abundance of local wildlife to be found on the reservation.

In the middle of these ribbons and eagles is a central disc representing a traditional Indian shield. This symbolizes the protection and safety that the three tribes find within their sovereign boundaries. The shield bears a map of the reservation upon which appears a picture of Mount Hood, the highest peak in Oregon. Below it are three tepees and above the mountain are three stars. Both represent the three nations. The three tepees emphasize the fact that the three nations territory lies at the foot of magnificent Mount Hood.

Of the three nations, the Washoe and Warm Springs are very small tribes about which little has been written. This small size is not uncommon amongst tribes in the Pacific north west. The Northern Paiute stretch across central and western Oregon, northeastern California and southwestern Idaho. Their southern cousins can be found in Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and southeastern California. The name Paiute means either "True Ute" or "Water Ute" pointing to an ancient relationship with that tribe.

The Yakima Nation

Located in southwestern Washington State is the 1,130,000 acres reservation that is home to the Yakima Indian Nation. That reservation was granted to the Yakima in a treaty signed in 1855 by Gov. Isaac Stevens of the Washington Territory and representatives of the Cayuse, Umatilla, Wallawalla, Nez Perce and Yakima tribes.

Although the treaty called for a period of two years to allow the various tribes to migrate to and resettle on, their new reservations, Gov. Stevens declared Indian lands open for white settlers a mere twelve days after the treaty was signed. A Yakima chief, Kamiakin called upon the tribes that had been duped to forcefully oppose this declaration, but not before they had built up their strength to oppose the military. Things move too quickly and shortly thereafter a series of raids, counter raids and reciprocal atrocities began. This uprising became known as the Yakima War.

The war continued until 1859, when the last phase, known as the Couer d'Alene War ended. The Yakima accepted their reservation and still dwell there today. In addition to the Yakima, some Paiutes and a few members of other tribes reside on the Yakima Reservation.

The Yakima Nation has a flag that shows the borders of the reservation in white against a sky blue background. Within the map is a depiction of Mount Rainier, the impressive mountain that lends its name to the national park just beyond the reservation. This mountain is sacred to the Yakima. Soaring above the mountain is an eagle depicted in full color. Not only is the eagle sacred, but it shares a lifestyle with many Yakima who earn their living fishing for salmon in the waters of the Columbia River and its tributaries.

Above the eagle is the "morning star" a symbol of guidance and leadership and arcing around Mount Rainier are fourteen gold stars and fourteen eagle feathers honoring the bands of the Yakima nation. The feathers represent the fourteen chiefs that signed the treaty of 1855, while the fourteen stars represent the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakima Indian Nations. The tribe's name and the date of the treaty complete the design.

In 1955 members of the "Old Toppenish Long House" adopted a flag to represent the Yakima people of the Yakima Reservation. The flag adopted at that time was similar to the present flag of the Yakima Nation but did not include the reservation map, nor did it have the eagle flying overhead. It is obvious that the flag adopted in 1955, the centennial of the treaty signing was the basis for the current flag.

THE FOLLOWING NATIONS DO HAVE FLAGS, BUT INSUFFICIENT DATA EXISTS FOR THEM TO BE INCLUDED:

1. The Crow Creek Sioux (SD)
2. The Flandreau Santee Sioux (SD)
3. The Hoopa Valley (CA)
4. The Hualapai (AZ)
5. The Iowa (KS)
6. The Jicarilla Apache (NM)
7. The Lower Sioux (MN)
8. The Mescalero Apache (NM)
9. The Minnesota Ojibwe (MN)
10. The Muckleshoot (WA)
11. The Omaha (NE)
12. The Ottawa (OK)
13. The Pasqua & Yaqui (AZ)
14. The Prairie Band of the Potawatomi (KS)
15. The Red Lake Ojibwe (MN)
16. The Sac & Fox (KS)
17. The Sandia Pueblo of the Tano-Tiwa (NM)
18. The Santee Sioux (NE)
19. 19. The Shoshone & Bannock (ID)
20. The Spokane (WA)
21. The Tonkawa (OK)
22. The Tonto Apache (AZ)
23. The Upper Sioux (MN)
24. The Ute (UT)
25. The Wichita (OK)

THE FOLLOWING NATIONS DEFINITELY DO NOT HAVE FLAGS AT THE TIME THIS PROJECT WAS UNDERTAKEN (early 1995):

1. The Alabama & Coushatta (TX)
2. The Barona Band of Mission Indians (CA) (planning to adopt one)
3. The Bay Mills - Sault Ste. Marie Ojibwe (MI)
4. The Brotherton (WI)
5. The Cayuga (NY)
6. The Chippewa & Cree of the Rocky Boy Reservation (MT)
7. The Chitimacha (LA)
8. The Coree (NC)
9. The Eastern Band of Cherokee (NC)
10. The Ely Colony of Shoshone (NV)
11. The Hopi (AZ)
12. The Huron Potawatomi (MI) (planning to adopt one)
13. The Kalispel (WA)
14. The Karok (CA) (planning to adopt one)
15. The Kickapoo (KS)
16. The Nanticoke (DE)

17. The Point Pleasant Passamoquoddy (ME)
18. The Prarie Island Mdwenkanton Sioux (MN)
19. The Santa Ysabel Band of Diegueno (CA)
20. The Seminole Nation (FL) (different from Seminole Tribe)
21. The Shoshone (WY)
22. The Swinomish (WA)
23. The Taos Pueblo of the Tano-Tiwa (NM)
24. The Tsimshian (AK)
25. The Turtle Mountain Chippewa (ND)
26. The Umatilla, Cayuse & Wallawalla of the Umatilla Reservation (OR)
27. The Winnebago (NE)

THE FOLLOWING HAVE DECLINED TO SAY WHETHER THEY HAVE A FLAG OR NOT:

1. The Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla (CA)
2. The Pueblo of San Ildefonso of the Tano-Tewa Nation (NM)