

THE CHICKASAW NATION

Tribal Headquarters: Ada, OK



A brief history

The Chickasaw were "*Muskogean*" speaking people who lived in the northeast area of what is now the state of Mississippi at the beginning of the 16th century. At the time they met DeSoto in 1540, there were an estimated 5,000 Chickasaw. These skilled hunters and warriors hunted over an extensive area in Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi. Their sophisticated government had two divisions made up of many clans who led their various towns and villages during times of war and peace. Like the Cherokee, Creek, Seminole and Choctaw, they were "removed" to Indian Territory (Oklahoma) in the 1830's.

When the Chickasaw re-established their government in Tishomingo, Indian Territory, in 1856, they honored their last war chief, Tishomingo, by representing him on the Great Seal as a symbol of their exemplary courage. The Seal was used on all legal papers and documents of the Nation until Oklahoma statehood in 1907. In that year the U.S. government took possession of the Seal for use in its representation of the Chickasaw government. The Seal was returned to the Chickasaw in 1984.

About the flag

The Chickasaw flag consists of the tribal Seal centered on a royal blue field. The Seal consists of a light purple band edged in a gold cord representing "purity." "The Great Seal of the Chickasaw Nation" is featured on the band.

The great Tishomingo stands on green ground at the center of the Seal. He holds two arrows representing the two ancient divisions of the Chickasaw—the warriors and the people. In the tradition of a great warrior, he wears a mantel of swan feathers and a headdress of four feathers denoting the four directions. His deer hide knee straps were a form of “medicine” enabling him to run very fast.

The quiver and bow demonstrate both hunting prowess and a willingness to provide for and protect his people. He carries a deerskin shield also a symbol of protection. In the background, the blue Mississippi River flows amidst trees, plants, and purple hills that remind the Chickasaw of their original homelands.

Educational Activity

Use your library and the internet to research more about the great Chickasaw leader Tishomingo. What did he do for the tribe? What was his role in U.S. history?