

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA

Tribal Headquarters: Durant, OK



A brief history

The Choctaw were the largest tribe belonging to the branch of the “*Muskogean*” family, which includes the Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole. They were mainly a farming and hunting people with an advanced system of government consisting of many towns and a central general council. Originally from current day Alabama and Mississippi, they were traditionally a peaceable people who loved games, sports and festivals.

In the 1500’s they were forced to defend themselves against the well-equipped armies of the Spanish under DeSoto, and more than two centuries later they fought the British. After the establishment of the United States Government, American settlers encroached upon on the Choctaw lands. When Mississippi entered the Union in 1817, pressure began to mount for them to give up most of their lands in return for smaller land “allotments” or move to a territory west of the Mississippi River which would be off limits to non-Indians.

Eventually, in 1830, the Choctaw signed the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek with the U.S. which gave them title to what are now the southeastern counties of Oklahoma in return for their 10 million acres in Mississippi. They were the first tribe to journey the devastating “Trail of Tears”. Some of the Choctaws refused to leave and remained in Mississippi.

The Choctaw formed a modern government in 1936, and have more than 185,000 enrolled members.

About the flag

The Flag of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is an evolution of several flags used by the tribe since 1860. During the Civil War, the Choctaw became the first tribe to have flag. All the flags have featured the Great Seal of Choctaw which has changed over time to have different colors and more detail. The background is now purple with a blue ring around a central seal or "shield" of dark yellow. At the center of the Seal is a smoking peace pipe, an unstrung bow and three arrows in white edged in black. The three objects symbolize the history and tradition of the Choctaw as statesmen, deliberators, and warriors if pushed to that point. The three arrows represent the three great Choctaw chiefs, Apuckshennubbe, Pushmataha, and Moshulatubbee and the three districts of the tribe in Oklahoma which were named for them.

Educational Activity

Research the Choctaw Nation's past flags. Why do you think they had flags earlier than other tribes? How would this relate to the symbols on their current flag?