

CITIZEN POTAWATOMI NATION

Tribal Headquarters: Shawnee, OK



A brief history

The Potawatomi were part of large group of Algonquian-speaking people who occupied the Great Lakes region from prehistoric times that included the Chippewa (Ojibwa), Ottawa (Odawa), and Potawatomi. Over 500 years ago, the Potawatomi lived in Michigan and had established a distinct tribal identify. The name “Potawatomi” comes from the term the Chippewa applied to them, meaning “people of the place of the fire,” since they retained the original council fire once shared by all three tribes. Some of the Potawatomi spread to Wisconsin and Indiana.

During the Removal Period in the 1830s, the Mission Band of Potawatomi was forced to leave their homelands in Indiana and march across four states to Kansas. From 1838 -1861, the Mission Potawatomi lived with the culturally very different Prairie Potawatomi on a reserve in Kansas. In a treaty with the U.S. in 1867, the Mission Potawatomi sold their Kansas lands for lands near present-day Shawnee in Indian Territory and took U.S. citizenship. They then became known as the “Citizen Potawatomi.” Today the Citizen Potawatomi Nation is the ninth largest tribe in the U.S. with over 27,000 Members. A modern style government was first formed in 1936. The Citizen Potawatomi’s government has evolved over the intervening years. The Nation has experienced growth in administration, tribal enterprises, and its community outreach programs.

About the flag

The Citizen Potawatomi have had several flags since moving to Indian Territory. The current flag was designed in the mid 1990s and features the Great Seal on a bright blue background. The seal is bordered by a thick red band edged on both sides with gold roping upon which the black lettering "Great Seal of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation" appears. At the center of the seal on a white background is the "Council Fire" from which they get their name and which has become a symbol of warmth, friendship and wisdom. Under the fire is their name for themselves, Neshnabe or the "True People." Over the fire a peace pipe and tomahawk cross as a symbol of peace, skill and strength. Three eagle feathers hang from each, signifying the three branches of their ancient roots.

Educational Activity

Fire is an important symbol in the Citizen Potawatomi Tribe, but it's also used in other tribal flags. Is fire used to signify different things in these flags? How so?