

DELAWARE TRIBE OF WESTERN OKLAHOMA

Tribal Headquarters: Anadarko, OK



A brief history

The Delaware were once part of a large confederacy of Algonquian Indians in the Eastern Woodlands. They called themselves the *Lena'pe* or *Lini-lina'pe* meaning "the real men" and occupied the entire Delaware River basin from what is now Southwest New York, most of New Jersey and Delaware. There were three main and independent branches, the Munsee, Unami and Unalachtigo. The English knew them as the "Delaware" because of their location on the Delaware River. The Delaware had their Council Fire at Shackamaxon near present day Philadelphia. In 1787, they were the first tribe to treaty with the new United States, offering the fledgling government "peace and friendship." In return, the U.S. government offered the Delaware a seat in Congress which they never took.

During the 1800s the Delaware were pushed westward among 10 states as far as Kansas and Oklahoma. The main part of the tribe settled with the Cherokee in 1867 along the Caney River. Another group was associated with the Caddo and Wichita Tribes in Texas and settled along the Washita River in what is now southwest Oklahoma in 1859. This group called themselves the "lost tribe" or "Absentee Delaware Nation." The latter group organized a government under the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act in 1936. New Constitutions and names evolved in 1975 and 1999. Today the Delaware Tribe of Western Oklahoma serves over 1,300 members.

About the flag

The Flag of the Delaware Tribe of Western Oklahoma consists of the Tribal Seal on a medium blue background. Centered in the turquoise blue field is a turtle - the animal symbol of the Unami clan from which this branch of Delaware came. The turtle is divided in two by the wavy line of the background. The top left half of the turtle is royal blue, while the bottom right half of the turtle is bright red. The bi-colored turtle is reminiscent of trade blankets used in ceremonials. Centered in the middle of the turtle, also divided by the wavy line of the background, is a sphere, representing the sun. The top left half of the sphere is bold yellow and the bottom right half is burnt orange. Arching above the turtle are the words "DELAWARE TRIBE OF WESTERN OKLAHOMA." Across the bottom are the words "Lenni Lenape."

Educational Activity

Animals are often symbolic to Native American cultures. Research to match up animals with other Native American cultures in Oklahoma. What was the significance of the turtle to the Delaware Tribe of Western Oklahoma?