

KIOWA TRIBE OF OKLAHOMA
Tribal Headquarters: Carnegie, OK



A brief history

The Kiowa are part of the “*Tonoan*” linguistic family. Their name comes from their name for themselves, “*Kai ‘i-gwu,*” (pronounced K’oy-g’u), meaning “Principal People.” In the 1600’s the Kiowa were located in the Yellowstone area. As excellent horsemen and warriors their livelihood depended on hunting buffalo. They traveled east and south through the Black Hills and later to Colorado and Nebraska, aided by their advanced military structure and skill.

As the U.S. sought to connect the two coasts with railroads, treaties increasingly confined the Kiowa further south to Kansas and eventually to Oklahoma.

In 1790 the Kiowa made a peace treaty with the Comanche with whom they remained allies. At the end of the 19th century they were held at Ft. Sill with the Comanche and Apache in an effort by the U.S. to restrain them from continuing their life as hunters and holding their traditional ceremonies, including the *Skaw-Taw* or Sun Dance.

The Kiowa organized a government in 1936 under the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act. Today there are some 12,000 members of the tribe.

About the flag

The Kiowa flag consists of the Seal on a sky blue field. The Seal recalls the traditions of six warrior societies. At the center is a warrior atop an Appaloosa (recalling the tribes’ northern homelands) surrounded by a “wreath” of 10 white and black eagle feathers branching up from

a small circular medallion. The latter features a black buffalo head on a divided background (green on left and yellow on right). The 10 feathers recall the sacred *Tai-may*, or Ten Medicine Bundles and the “Principal Dogs” or “Ten Bravest” warrior society.

The warrior wears a red Spanish officer’s cape, bone breastplate and red headband while carrying a shield and lance. His shield depicts the sacred Rainy Mountain where the “Great Tribal Journey” ends. The red Principal Dog sash hangs from the head of the lance as a flag-like symbol of leadership and protection.

A lightning bolt painted on the horses front leg represents the “voice of thunder in the spring,” a symbol of the *Oh-ho-ma* Society. The blue sky and blood red hand on the horses hind quarter are part of the *Koitsenko* warrior tradition.

Educational Activity

Research deeper into the history of the Kiowa’s. Why would their flag include a warrior wearing a red Spanish officer’s cape?