

Oklahoma Indian Education Tribal Guide: The Osage Nation of Oklahoma

Tribal Seal/Flag/Website

Tribal Seal:



The Golden Circle represents tribal prosperity. The Arrowhead represents the hunt. The Pipe represents peace and friendship, and the Eagle Feather Fan represents tribal authority.

Tribal Flag:



Tribal Website: : <http://www.osagenation-nsn.gov>

Migration/Movement/Forced Removal

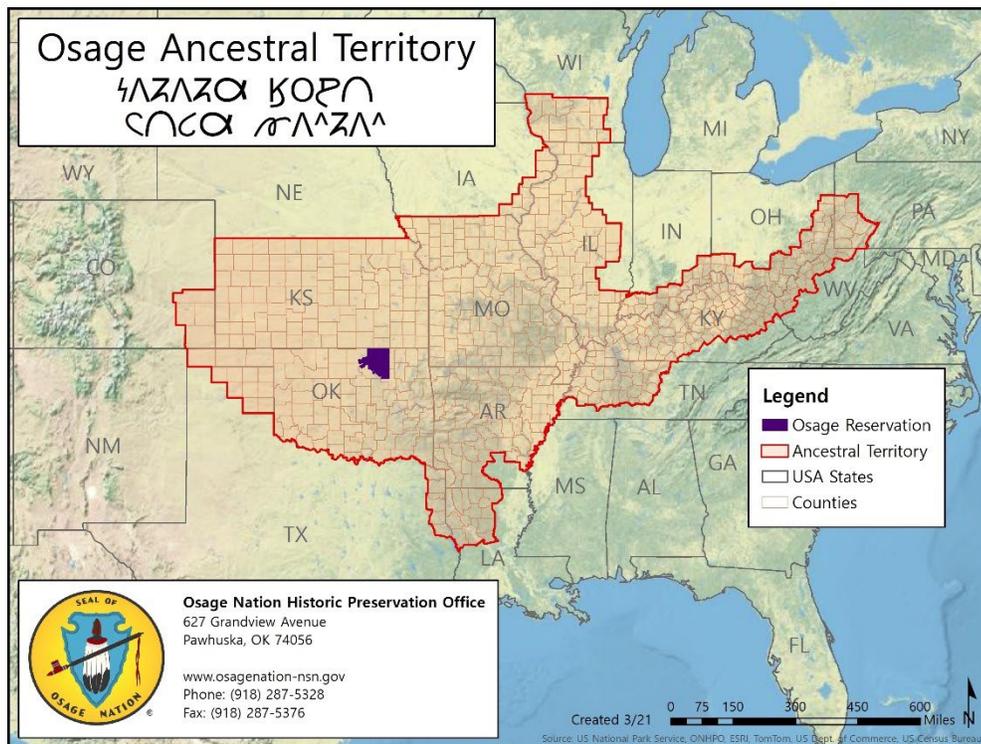
The Osage were originally known by *Ni-U-Kon-Ska*, which means "Children of the Middle Waters." At European contact, French explorers mistakenly assumed the name Wah-zha-zhe, which is the name of one of three sub-divisions of the Tribe, was the name for the entire Tribe. The French transcribed *Wah-zha-zhe* as *Ouazhigi*, which later became the English name *Osage*. Early settlers have said that the Osages were the largest Native people in North America, with the Osage men averaging over 6 feet tall.

The culture of the Osage Nation reaches back in time and is recorded in Osage oral traditions. The Osage, long before contact, migrated down the Ohio River Valley in a series of migrations between 100 B.C. and A.D. 500. The Osage reached the confluence of the Mississippi River and the Ohio River around A.D. 500. The Osage established themselves in Missouri, Arkansas, and western Illinois during pre-contact times. The Osage established Cahokia, a large pre-contact urban ceremonial center between A.D. 950-1350 and migrated into central Missouri after the city's collapse. The Osage recorded multiple migrations throughout their history until the time of contact.

European contact and written records regarding the Osage People occur at 1673. At that time, traders and explorers began to document their accounts with tribes of the Midwest in what was later to become the United States. The Osages are a member of the Dhegiha Siouan language family, which includes the Omaha, Ponca, Osage, Kaw, and Quapaw. The Osage lived in semi-permanent villages, near major waterways and at the time of contact were recorded mainly throughout the Missouri and Arkansas area, with hunting territory in Kansas and Oklahoma.



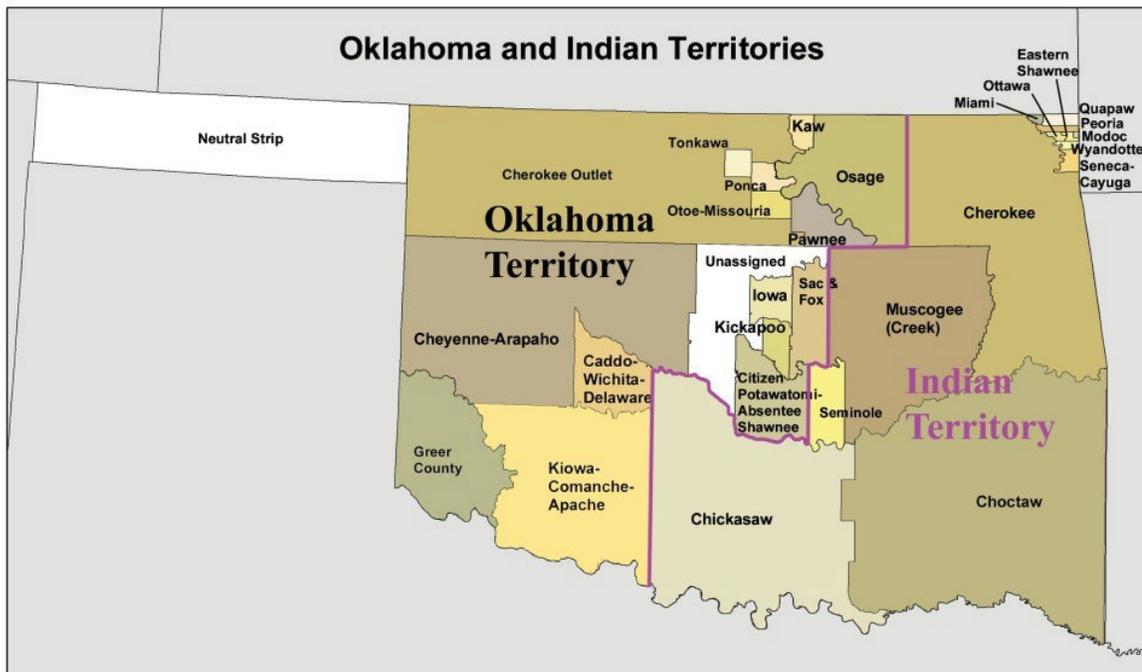
Maps



Long-established Osage trail systems in Missouri and Arkansas were used by settlers and later by eastern Tribes removed from their homelands. The Osage were removed from their homelands in Missouri and Arkansas in the Treaty of 1808 to a reservation in Kansas. The Osage were forced to cede more of their lands in Kansas and Oklahoma in 1825, and later had a portion of their Kansas reservation taken away due to increased illegal settlement of settlers on their reservation land. By the time the Osage negotiated the treaty of 1865, to purchase land in Oklahoma, the Osages had been reduced in population by 95%. Only 3000 Osage people walked across the Kansas boarder into their new land.

The Osage Nation is located in Osage County on the Osage Reservation. The Osage Nation capitol is in Pawhuska, Oklahoma. The original Osage villages of Grayhorse, Pawhuska, and Hominy are still towns today.





Oklahoma Historical Society source to consider for Indian Removal information:
<http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/i/in015.html>

The Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/Indian.html>

Oklahoma Indian Country Guide, Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department
[NIE 2011 OK Indian Country Guide\[\[1\].pdf](#)

Population Past/Present

- Total tribal enrollment:
- Tribal enrollment in Oklahoma:
- Membership criteria:

Government: Chiefs vs Chairman, Elected or Paternal

Today the Osage Nation Government is a tripartite format consisting of three branches, Executive, Legislative and Judicial. Current leaders of the Osage Nation are Principal Chief Geoffrey Standing Bear and Assistant Principal Chief R.J. Walker.



Language Group

Osages were originally in what are now Missouri, Arkansas, and Kansas and they were removed to what is now Osage County in the late 1800s. Despite their circumstances, they were able to retain their language and many of the Osage ways. As time passed, the “pure Osage” language was diluted by European influences. Osages who were born in 1906 and later were sent off to boarding schools, while there they were forced to quit speaking Osage and speak English.

Speakers between 1906 and 1940 continued to hear and speak Osage in their homes, but they took up more English and European ways. Osages who were born from 1940 forward had English as their first language although they heard Osage spoken. The language diluted even more and some of the meaning was lost. Many attempts have been made to keep the language alive. These attempts have laid a strong foundation and developed an ongoing interest to learn and preserve the language. These efforts have resulted in the Osage Nation’s Immersion School, Daposka Ahnkodapi, serving Osage children ranging in age from 6 weeks old through 7th grade.

The Osages speak a Dhegiha Siouan language that is related to the Quapaw, Kaw, Ponca and Omaha. The Osage Nation Language Department hosted the first Dhegiha Gathering of the five tribes in 2011 and has continued to today. The Osage Language Department continues to grow with 11 teachers who teach 19 virtual and in-person classes for various proficiency levels including Children, Parents, Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced, Verbs, and Orthography. The Osage Language website includes the orthography, lesson plans, audio and current schedules of Osage language classes.

Traditional Lifeways

The Osage of today resonate their culture of long standing traditions by adhering to the lessons of their ancestors. The modern day Osage is educated, diverse, and staunch to the fact that being Osage is their identity.

Our native culture today is a respectful memorial to our past. We participate in our dance, our feasting and our naming ceremonies because that is what we have left. We do not try to re-create the past, we are the present and our culture is in the present. Like all indigenous cultures, we are a traditional people. No matter where we roam, we are always “Osage” and that is what brings us back to our Osage Reservation. To commune with each other, to relate to each other and to be recognized each year during our ceremonials as Osages.

The Osage have their ceremonial dances during the month of June. Three districts, Grayhorse, Hominy, and Pawhuska maintain these ceremonial dances called the, “I’n Lon Ska”. It is said the three districts are the bands of the Big Hill, Upland Forest, and Thorny Thicket.



Fine Arts



Osage finger weaving and ribbon work designs.

Significant Events

Event: The Louisiana Expansion – preliminaries to June 2, 1804

http://www.umsl.edu/continuinged/louisiana/Am_Indians/1-Osage/1-osage.html

On Friday, 1 June 1804, the Lewis and Clark Expedition arrived at the mouth of the Osage River, a dozen days after leaving St. Charles, Missouri. Seeing the "best land he had ever seen," a member of the Corps of Discovery wrote in his journal that "the Osage nation of Indians live about two hundred miles up this River" and "are of a large size and well proportioned, and a very warlike people."

Lewis and Clark had little to fear from the Osage, however, because they were the most important fur-trading tribe in Missouri for forty years prior to the Louisiana Purchase.



When St. Louis was founded in 1764, the Osage were the original "Gateway to the West," using their talents and knowledge to make the fur trade profitable and western exploration possible.

The Osage leaders met Lewis and Clark long before the Expedition began and gave valuable information about Missouri River tribes. When the Corps of Discovery passed by the Osage River, Lewis and Clark did not meet with the Osage chiefs who were traveling on an official visit to Washington, D.C. President Thomas Jefferson wanted to meet members of this valuable and helpful tribe because he knew they were "the great nation South of the Missouri."

Event: 1863 Osage Battle with Confederates

May of 1863 a group of confederates were killed by the Osage on the banks of Drum Creek south of Independence Kansas. Initially the confederates tried to ride through the reservation in broad daylight but when questioned by some of the Big Hill Osage men the confederates tried to ride away. The Osage men attempted to stop them, but the Confederate soldiers began to shoot at the Osage. One Osage man was killed, which caused the remaining men to gather up this dead man and return to the village and call for more men to come fight. When the newly formed group of Osage men found the Confederates again it did not end well for the soldiers. All of the southern soldiers were killed and only two Osages were killed.

Event: Mi Hanga (Mahongo) Unveiled

A painting of the Osage Woman named Mi Hanga misspelled as Mahongo was unveiled at the Oklahoma State Capitol on May 2004. The story of Mi Hanga is one that many would have never known about. Mi Hanga (Mohongo) was born in Missouri in the year 1809. Her name means Sacred Sun in English. She was 18 years old when she, her husband and four other Osages traveled to France in 1827. While traveling through Europe their guides abandoned them without home or money. On February 10, 1828 while in Belgium Mi Hanga gave birth to twin girls, one was adopted by a wealthy local woman. They traveled Europe for nearly three years before returning home. On the return trip they were taken to DC and Charles Bird King painted her portrait in 1830. The painting is a gift from Senator Charles R. Ford and hangs at the capitol of Oklahoma.

Current Tribal Information

Newspaper article:

Osage Tribe Opposes Wind Turbines, Seeks Eagle Protections

The Osage win their case against the wind turbine company after a ten-year battle.

The Oklahoma Supreme court stands with the Osage Nation and the Osage Minerals Council. The Wind Energy Company was found to have never followed the proper



channels of seeking a permit with the Osage Nation for the mining and destruction of the sub surface minerals. The 80 plus wind turbines have been ordered to be removed and damages to be paid.

<http://news.heartland.org/newspaper-article/2013/07/10/osage-tribe-opposes-wind-turbines-seeks-eagle-protections>

Other information (ie. Elder testimonials; Presentations; Literature; Famous Tribal members...)

Presentations by Osage members

- Osage Spider Legend, retold and written by Archie Mason Jr. 1984. Center Five. Tulsa, OK.
- Osage Wedding Story, Indian Values Past and Present, by Lucelia Wise. 1978. OSDE
- The Osage Nation: A Brief History, by Dr. Andrea A. Hunter. 2018. Stillwater Public Library, OK:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2CVxv2MmnP4>

Literature by Osage members

- Sundown, John Joseph Matthews. 1934
- The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters, John Joseph Matthews. 1961
- The Deaths of Sybil Bolton, Dennis McAuliffe. 1994
- A History of the Osage People, Louis Burns. 2004
- A Pipe for February, Charles H. Red Corn. 2005
- Osage Nation Culture History, by Dr. Andrea A. Hunter. 2013. Hosted on Osage Nation website: <https://www.osageculture.com/culture/cultural-history>

Famous Osage members

- Maria and Marjorie Tall Chief- Ballerinas from Fairfax, Oklahoma.
- General Clarence Tinker- Tinker Air Force base named after him.
- John Joseph Matthews, Osage historian and author.
- Anita Fields, Artist in visual art.
- Ryan RedCorn, Osage screenwriter, photographer, filmmaker.

