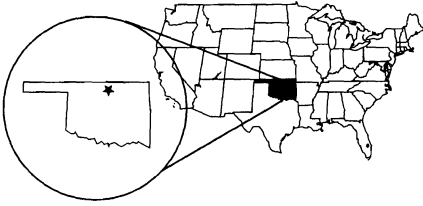


## PAWNEE

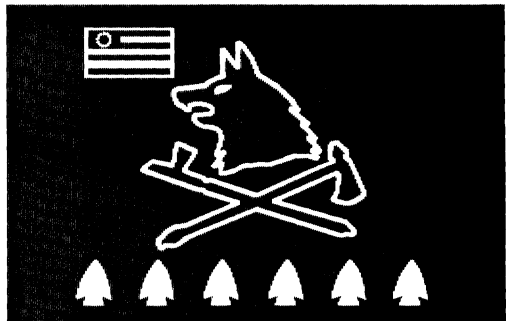


The Pawnee were among the first United States Indians to encounter Europeans, starting with Francisco de Coronado in 1541. More recently, the Pawnee have migrated from their original homeland in what is now Texas to the Great Plains, ranging from Oklahoma through Nebraska.

Today the Pawnee live in Oklahoma.

The Pawnee name is derived from the Caddoan *pariki*, “horn”, describing their unique hairstyle, an upright curved scalplock (ENAT, 179-181). The Indians of the Plains referred to the Pawnee as “wolves” for their cunning and courage. This term translated into Pawnee as “Men of Men”.

The current flag of the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma, dating from 1977, reflects a long association with the United States (*The Flag of the Pawnee Indians—Pawnee Nation*, Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma, unsigned letter, n.d.). It is blue and bears a small stylized representation of a U.S. flag in the upper part of the flag.



The central symbol, a wolf’s head, appears above a crossed tomahawk and peace pipe, all in red. The wolf recalls the tribe’s Plains name, while the other images represent peace and war. The wolf, tomahawk, and pipe all have narrow white borders. Below are six white arrowheads for the six wars in which Pawnee have fought in the service of the United States: the Indian Wars, the Spanish-American War, both World Wars, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. The U.S. flag has a ring of thirteen six pointed white stars.

As a whole, the flag means "Pawnee Indians, in peace and war, always courageous and always loyal to America". Unique to the Pawnee flag are the specifics of the pole and finial atop the pole. The main Pawnee flag flown at Tribal Headquarters in Pawnee, Oklahoma, is mounted on an old-style Pawnee lance with a genuine flint spearhead. The shaft of the lance has a special strip of buckskin with intricate beadwork designs along the length of the staff. Attached to the spearhead at the top are four real eagle feathers, representing the four bands of the Pawnee.

(The bald eagle is a protected species in the United States; hunting it is illegal. However, out of respect for the beliefs and customs of the Native Americans, the Interior Department and the National Parks Service collect all bald eagles that die from natural causes, disease, or poaching and give the feathers to the various tribes for use in their ceremonies and customs.)

On Homecoming Days, Armistice Day, Christmas, and occasions of state, the Pawnee attach a sprig of cedar to the staff. Cedar, used in sacred ceremonies, is a token of peace and the prayers of the Pawnee people. The Pawnee consider their flag a sacred symbol—under Pawnee law it must never be desecrated or allowed to touch the ground. ☪