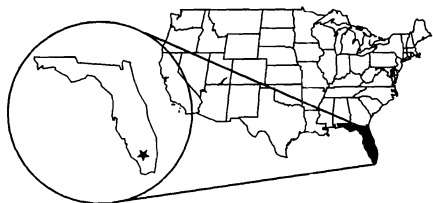


SEMINOLE OF FLORIDA



The Seminole Nation consists of three bands based in Florida (NAA, 251) and one large group forcibly removed to Indian Territory (Oklahoma) during the early 1800s [see Seminole of Oklahoma]. The Seminole, whose name means “runaway”, are actually a composite tribe made

up of members of many nations that fled the onslaught of the white man from their lands in Georgia and surrounding states. These Indians were supplemented by escaped black slaves granted sanctuary by the Seminole, a practice which brought about the Seminole Wars.

Those Seminole who remained in Florida continued to fight the government of the United States from their strongholds in the Everglades. An infamous episode of the 1830s involved a flag of truce carried by their leader Osceola. General Thomas Jessup tricked Osceola with an offer of peace talks and imprisoned him instead. A peace



treaty between the United States and the Seminole of Florida was not signed until 1934. The three bands of Seminole located in Florida today are the Seminole Tribe of Florida, the Seminole Nation of Florida, and the Oklewaha Band of Seminole Indians.

The Seminole Tribe of Florida adopted a flag after a contest in August, 1966, to symbolize their sovereignty over the lands they have occupied for almost 300 years. It placed the tribal seal on a dark blue field, backed by a cross of small red, white, and blue chevrons forming an “X” and recalling the state flag of Florida, a red “X” on a white background (FBUS, 261-263).

That 1966 flag has been replaced by the current flag, designed by Chief Jim Billie (*NAVA News*, Sept./Oct. 1993, 3). The flag is similar in design to the flag of the Miccosukee, neighbors of the Seminole's Big Cypress Reservation in south-central Florida. Both flags have four horizontal stripes of white, black, red, and yellow [see Miccosukee]. The Seminole of Florida add their tribal seal, which is very similar to the Miccosukee seal, to those stripes.

Centered on the seal is a *chickee* in black and red, the traditional dwelling of the Seminole built on palmetto stilts, with a campfire below it. Above the *chickee* in black reads "TRIBAL COUNCIL".

Surrounding the center, and separated by a black ring, is a band

reading "SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA" above and "IN GOD WE TRUST" below, separated by small black dots, all in black. (The former seal also depicted the *chickee*, as well as a warrior in a canoe and a palmetto.)



The new flag flies prominently outside the Seminole bingo parlor and casino along U.S. Route 441 near Fort Lauderdale. A row of at least two dozen flags, alternating United States and Seminole, runs the length of the parking lot. Also in the Okalee Indian Village, the smaller of the two main Seminole reservations, is the capitol of the Seminole Tribe. In front of an eight-story office tower, three poles fly the United States flag in the place of honor, the flag of the Seminole, and the flag of Florida. It is unusual for a sovereign Indian nation to display the local state flag; most tribes simply ignore the flag of the surrounding state.

With the new flag of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, the Indians of southeastern Florida have one unified design to confirm their sovereignty on lands they have occupied for almost 300 years. ♡