

Interesting historical facts:

- » The Wyandot were instrumental in the founding of Detroit, MI and Kansas City, KS. At one time Kansas City was named Wyandotte City.
- » During the French and Indian War and the American Revolution our tribal unity was tested. The Wyandot living in the Detroit area sided with the French and then the British. The Wyandot at Upper Sandusky initially preferred neutrality, but eventually sided against the British and the Americans.

- » On Aug. 20, 1794 at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, all but 1 of the 13 Wyandot chiefs participating in the battle was



Tarhe at the Greenville Treaty signing.

- killed. Tarhe, the lone survivor, signed the Treaty of Greenville on Aug. 3, 1795.
- » The Wyandot adopted many whites captives. A few such as Robert Armstrong, Adam Brown, and Isaac Zane obtained great tribal status.
- » In 1816, John Stewart, a man of mixed race, became a missionary to the Wyandot in Ohio. Through his efforts and others, many Wyandot embraced Christianity, with some becoming preachers themselves.
- » The Wyandot were the last tribe to leave Ohio in 1843.
- » In 1853 Wyandot Chief William Walker, Sr. was elected provisional governor of Nebraska Territory.
- » Twice the Wyandotte were terminated and then re-instated as a tribe. In 1995, we were granted "Self Governance" status by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.
- » In 1999, the Wendat Confederacy was signed, forever uniting the Huron-Wendat of Wendake (Canada), the Wyandot of Anderdon Nation (Michigan), the Wyandot Nation of Kansas, and the Wyandotte Nation (Oklahoma) in a spirit of friendship and cooperation.



The Wyandot Mission Church at Upper Sandusky, Ohio.



William Walker, Sr.

What does our turtle emblem symbolize?

The Turtle – Signifies the ancient belief that the world was created on the back of a “moss-back turtle,” also known as the snapping turtle.



Willow Branches - Because of its resilience, our ancestors believed the willow tree signified the perpetual renewal of life.

War Club and Peace Pipe - Show us to be ready for war or peace, at any given moment.

Council Fire - Many tribes of the Northeast looked to us for leadership and advice. When the tribes came together for council, the Wyandotte often hosted and presided over those councils and were considered Keepers of the Council Fire.

Points of the Shield - Represent each of our twelve clans.

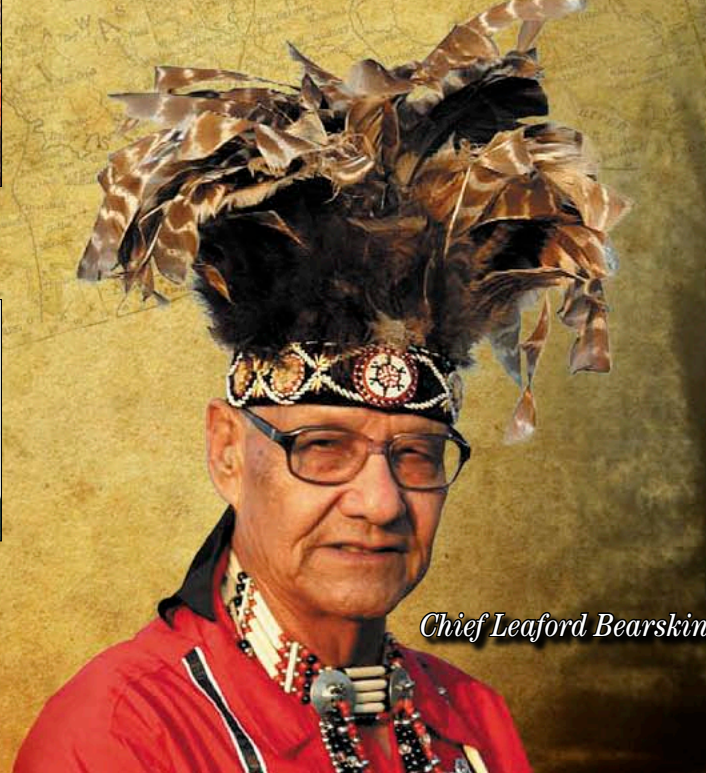
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|------------------|-----------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Big Turtle | 4. Wolf | 7. Deer | 10. Highland Turtle |
| 2. Little Turtle | 5. Bear | 8. Porcupine | 11. Snake |
| 3. Mud Turtle | 6. Beaver | 9. Striped Turtle | 12. Hawk |

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The Wyandotte Nation

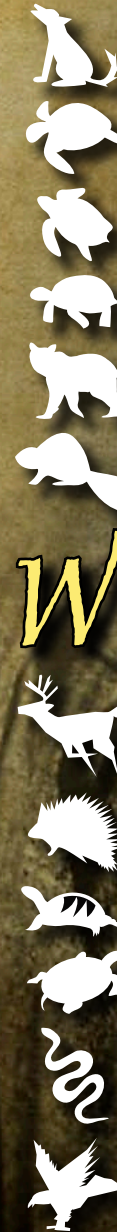
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Chief Leaford Bearskin

Preserving the future of our past...



THE WYANDOTTE NATION

Chief Nicholas Cotter
(photo taken in 1877)

This brochure produced by:



Wyandotte Nation
Culture Committee

Who are the Wyandotte?

It is commonly believed and many written histories have stated that the Wyandotte are the Huron. Many people also assume that the Huron was a single tribe of people. However, the Huron was actually a confederacy of five tribes. It received the name "Huron" from early French explorers because of a hairstyle called the "roach." Worn by many of the men, it resembled the thick, bristly hair on the back of wild boars that roamed Europe. The name the Huron people gave themselves was Wendat. The Wyandotte are directly related to the Huron Confederacy through the Attignawantan, one of the five tribes of the Huron.

The Wyandotte are, in fact, considered descendants of the Tionontati (Petun, Tobacco) people and the Attignawantan. The Tionontati and Attignawantan were different politically rather than culturally and lived in close proximity to each other in Canada. It was natural for them to unite as one people in 1649-50 after the defeat of the Huron Confederacy by the Iroquois Confederacy during the Beaver Wars. The remnants of the Tionontati and Attignawantan tribes fled west together in the middle of winter to seek relief from the relentless Iroquois who were trying to annihilate them.

After the dispersal from their homelands, the Tionontati and Attignawantan people united and called themselves Wendat. Because the Attignawantan were considered the grandfathers in the Huron Confederacy, no one questioned this "new" tribe using the Attignawantan's historic name, Wendat. In our traditional language the name Wendat is pronounced Wandat (wà: "dát). Today, we are the Wyandotte Nation; the spelling reflects an influence from the French language. Though spelled differently, both our traditional and current names are pronounced the same.

Meet Grandmother Toad

Traditional stories of the Wyandotte have been told from generation to generation for possibly thousands of years. In our creation story, a young woman named Aataentsic fell from the sky. To save her, the animals had to prepare a home for her. They needed dirt with which to grow an island on the turtle's back. One after another the animals dove into the great deep, but they could not reach the dirt on the bottom. Many of them drowned. Finally the toad said she would try. She dove down and was gone for a very long time. When she came back to the surface, she too had drowned. As she floated on top of the water, the other animals noticed that her mouth was full of dirt. She had succeeded and given her life in the process. Because of her sacrifice, the toad is held in high regard and loved by the Wyandotte. That is why we call her Grandmother Toad.



From Detroit, MI to Kansas City, KS

In 1701, Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac, a Frenchman, invited the Wyandot to settle near his new fort – Fort Detroit. Within a few years, we ventured south and settled around Upper Sandusky, Ohio where we grew as a tribe and reclaimed a position of honor among other tribes of the Ohio Valley. Pressure from white settlers ultimately forced the Treaty of 1843 and our removal to lands west of the Mississippi River. Some Wyandot chose to stay in the Detroit area and did not move west with the rest of the tribe. They still live there today.

Upon arriving in Kansas, no land or planned provisions were available. Initially camping in a swampy area, disease quickly swept through the people. Arrangements were quickly made and land was purchased from the Delaware. Our new reservation was located on highly sought and fought over land, which led to the Treaty of 1855 and the Wyandot being terminated as a tribe. Our land was quickly allotted and ultimately sold to white interests. In 1857, some Wyandot who were unwilling to accept US citizenship relocated to Indian Territory. They returned to Kansas during the Civil War due to difficulties inflicted upon them by rebel Indian forces. As soon as the war was over, they returned to Indian Territory and sought reinstatement as a tribe.

The Treaty of 1867 with the United States reinstated the Wyandotte as a tribe in Indian Territory (Oklahoma). It stated, "A register of the whole people, resident in Kansas and elsewhere, shall be taken... on or before the first of July, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-seven, which shall show the names of all who declare their desire to be and remain Indians." Those not registered by the deadline or accepted back into the tribe were called the Absentee Wyandot. This government-sanctioned distinction separated our people – but it did not conquer us. In essence we are one people, divided by fate and politics. Today, good relations exist among all our people.

A success story unlike any other!

After the Civil War, approximately 200 Wyandot moved from Kansas to Oklahoma. Land was purchased from the Seneca tribe, upon which we reestablished our lives in a new land in spite of very difficult circumstances. Wyandotte tribal government was established and schooling was provided by missionaries from various denominations. Although we came to Oklahoma in order to remain Indian, the challenges we faced and the decisions we made did not support the growth of our traditional way of life. In the early 1900s, many Wyandotte speakers did not teach their children their native language, and soon those capable of continuing the traditional ceremonies were gone. Tribal interests seemed to focus on the care of orphaned children, land disputes, and issues with the federal government.

In 1911-1912, Charles Marius Barbeau, an ethnologist from the National Museum of Canada, came to Oklahoma and preserved our language, traditional stories, song and dance. Today, by utilizing the information he saved, we are reviving our native language.

In 1983, Lt. Colonel Leaford Bearskin, USAF (ret), was elected chief. Like Tarhe and Matthew Mudeater, he had a vision and determined purpose for his people. Under his leadership we have grown to almost 5,000 members, secured our right of self-governance, initiated cultural renewal and achieved economic success unlike any other time in our history.

Today there are three bands of the Wyandot in the US. In Michigan, the Wyandot of Anderdon Nation, the Wyandot Nation of Kansas and in Oklahoma we are the Wyandotte Nation — the only federally recognized nation of the three.

