

Interesting historical facts:

- » We were instrumental in the founding of Detroit, Michigan and Kansas City, Kansas. Wyandotte City was the original name for Kansas City, Kansas.
- » During the French and Indian War we sided with the French against the British. During the American Revolution we sided with the British against the Americans.
- » On Aug. 20, 1794 at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, all but one of our thirteen chiefs participating in the battle was killed. Tarhe, the lone survivor, signed the Treaty of Greenville on Aug. 3, 1795.
- » We adopted many whites captives into the nation. Many, such as William Walker, Sr., Robert Armstrong, Adam Brown and Isaac Zane, obtained high tribal status and made significant contributions to the betterment of the tribe.



- » 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 and evangelists themselves.
- » The Wyandot were the last tribe to leave Ohio in July of 1843.



- » In 1853 one of our chiefs, William Walker, Jr. 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.



- » There are two other bands of Wyandot people, the Wyandot of Anderdon Nation located in Michigan, and the Wyandot Nation of Kansas. We are the same people separated by fate, the passing of time and choices made by our ancestors.

What does our turtle symbolize?

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



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

War Club and Peace Pipe - Shows that we ready for war or peace at any given moment.

Council Fire - Many tribes of the Northeast looked upon us for leadership and advice, when they came together for council, we often hosted and presided over the councils and are considered "Keepers of the Council Fire."

Points of the Shield - Represent each of our twelve clans; Big Turtle, Little Turtle, Mud Turtle, Wolf, Bear, Beaver, Deer, Porcupine, Striped Turtle, Highland Turtle, Snake and Hawk.

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64700 E. Highway 60 • Wyandotte, OK 74370

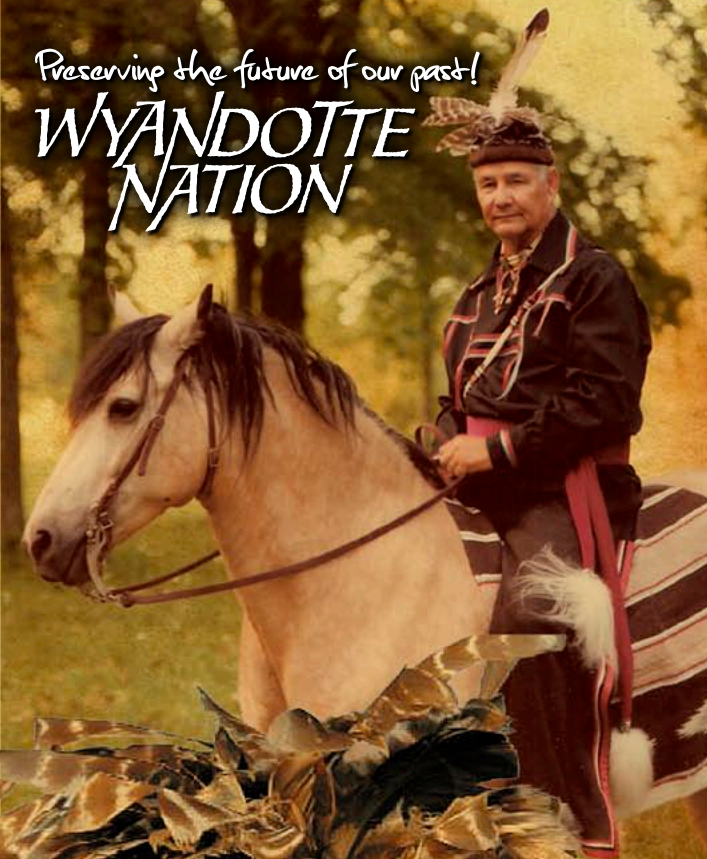
Local: 918-678-2297 • Toll Free: 800-256-2539



Chief Billy Friend

Preserving the future of our past!

WYANDOTTE NATION



Wyandotte Nation
Culture Committee

Chief Leaford Bearskin
1921-2012

Who are the Wyandotte?

It is commonly believed and many written histories have wrongly stated the Wyandotte to be the Huron. Many people also assume the Huron to be a single tribe of people; however, the Huron were actually a confederacy of five tribes. The Huron Confederacy received the name "Huron" from early French explorers due to a bristly hairstyle called the "roach." The roach resembled thick, bristly hair on the back of wild boars that roamed Europe. Huron is a derogatory name. The traditional and correct name for the Huron people is Wendat.

We are directly related to the Huron people through the Attignawantan, one of the five tribes of the Huron Confederacy. We are predominately descendants of the Tionontati (Petun, Tobacco) people. The Tionontati and Attignawantan were independent tribes, almost identical in culture, and lived in close proximity to each other in Canada. It was a natural for them to unite as one in 1649-50 after both were defeated by the Iroquois Confederacy. Remnants of the Tionontati, and Attignawantan tribes fled west seeking relief from the relentless Iroquois who were bent on genocide. It is believed remnants of another tribe, the Wenrohronon or Wenro, were also with the Tionontati, and Attignawantan at the time of their dispersal.

Out of necessity, the Tionontati, Attignawantan and Wenro people united and called themselves Wandat. The Attignawantan were considered grandfathers of the Huron, and other tribes did not contest this "new" tribe using the Attignawantan's historic name. Early historians correctly identified this union of the Tionontati, Attignawantan and Wenro as the Tionontati-Huron people, hence the confusion of being called Huron. In our traditional language the name Wendat is actually Wandat (wà·'n'dát). Today, we are the Wyandotte Nation; the spelling reflects an influence from the French language.

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 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, a portion of the tribe ventured south and settled around Upper Sandusky, Ohio where we grew 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, across the Detroit River on the Canadian side, and did not move west with the rest of the tribe. They still live in the Detroit area today and are known as the Wyandot of Anderdon Nation.

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 late 1800s, many Wyandotte speakers did not teach their children our traditional language, and soon those capable of continuing the ceremonies were gone. Tribal interests seemed to focus on the care of orphaned children, land disputes, and issues with the federal government.

In 1911-12, 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 material he preserved, we are reviving our traditional 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 grew to over 5,000 citizens, secured our right of self-governance, initiated cultural renewal and achieved economic success unlike any other time in our history.



Wyandotte Nation
Culture Committee

