Santa Fe National Historic Trail

National Park Service
Kanza Tribal Organization

Ak'a Onikashi^{n}ga
People of the Southwind

The Kanza Indians left their homelands east of the Mississippi River during the 1600s. They settled into what is today the northeast part of Kansas. Waterways provided sustenance for their people and were part of the tribe's culture. The success of western routes of travel, such as the Santa Fe Trail, and American demand for land in the West forced the Kanza to relocate several times.

Lifeways Change

By the 1720s, the Kaw people were labeled the Kanza by European Americans. The name Kanza or Kansas applied to the people, waterway, and later, the territory and state. In forced moves, more than 1,600 Kanza were relocated to areas near Council Grove, Kansas, by treaties that each reduced reservation size in 1825, 1846, and 1859. The final, forced move to Oklahoma occurred in 1872.

Living Heritage

The Kaw Nation maintains its connection to the waterways with programs that work to protect natural resources. Its rich cultural heritage — past, present, and future — is preserved through education, showcasing tribal arts and artifacts, promoting cultural activities and workshops, and serving as a cultural resource.

The Kaw Nation is headquartered in Kaw City, Oklahoma. The tribe has grown to over 3,000 people and provides its citizens with many social, cultural, and health care benefits under the governance of the Kaw executive and general councils.