

Native Lands in Central Iowa

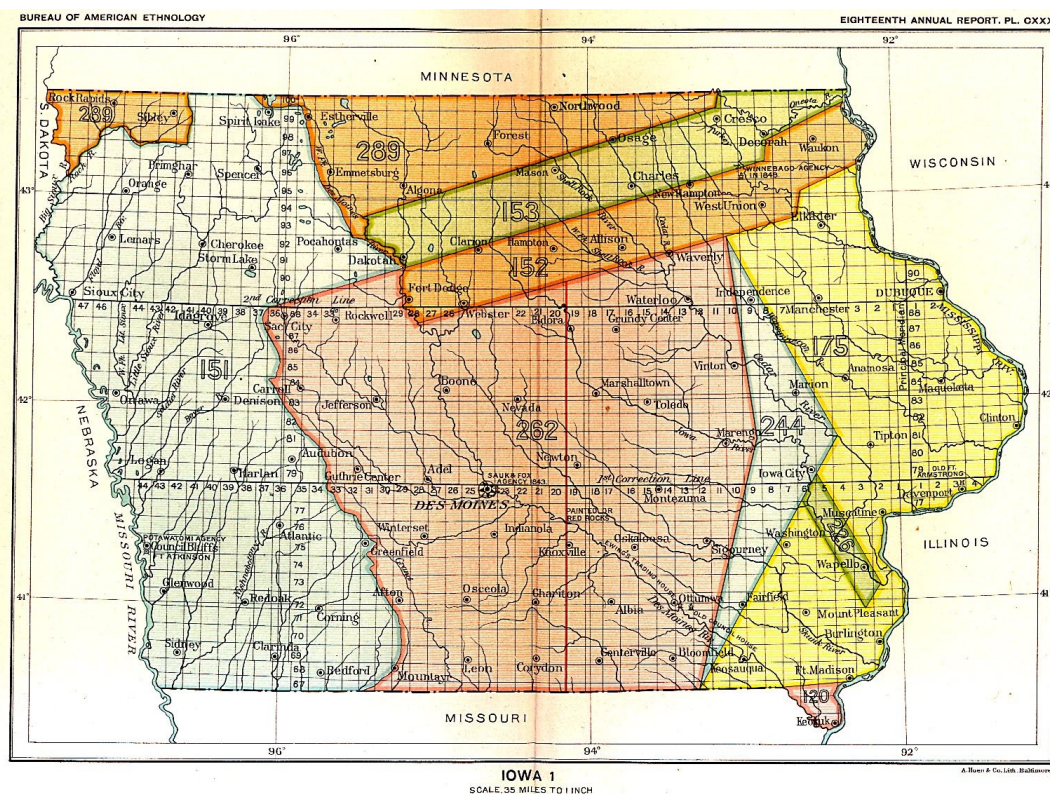
Indigenous peoples have lived in Iowa for over 10,000 years. Since about 3,000 years ago, Native people in what is today Iowa have been farmers. They built villages and towns, burial and effigy mounds, ridged fields, and large earthworks. They were involved in a network of trade that spanned the continent. Native people have been shaping this land just like they have been shaping its history and its current society and culture from time immemorial. Today, the state of Iowa is home to around 17,000 Native people from all over North America.

Most people in the United States do not know much about the history of the land or the histories of the people of the land. Iowa State University, the land grant university in Iowa, takes its obligations to provide that education seriously. Iowa State University acknowledges the histories of the land it is built on, and where students, faculty, and staff gather to learn, educate, and live.

This land carries the histories within it, and the people on it establish relations to the land through the ways in which they remember and acknowledge those histories. Those histories are complex. If we listen to them we learn how to relate. If we ignore them, we run the danger of tapping into some of the darkest stereotypes and untruths.

Land Acknowledgment Statement

"Iowa State University aspires to be the best land-grant university at creating a welcoming and inclusive environment where diverse individuals can succeed and thrive. As a land-grant institution, we are committed to the caretaking of this land and would like to begin this event by acknowledging those who have previously taken care of the land on which we gather. Before this site became Iowa State University, it was the ancestral lands and territory of the Baxoje (*bah-kho-dzhe*), or Ioway Nation. The United States obtained this land from the Meskwaki and Sauk nations in the Treaty of 1842. We wish to recognize our obligations to this land and to the people who took care of it, as well as to the 17,000 Native people who live in Iowa today."



A map of the Indian land cessions in Iowa. The territory in central Iowa labeled 262 delineates the lands sold to the United States by the Treaty of 1842.

The Meskwaki and Sauk agreed to remove themselves from the lands east of the vertical red line by 1842, and from the lands west of the line by 1845.

This meant that the state of Iowa would be established in 1846.

Treaties

All of Iowa was ceded (i.e., sold) to the United States through treaties with sovereign Native nations between 1824 and 1851. This means that everybody living in Iowa is bound by the treaty obligations specific to where they live. Those obligations are, according to the U.S. constitution, the law of the land.

Those treaties, in accordance with the policy of Removal aimed at re-settling tribes in "Indian Territory." Most tribes from Iowa were first removed to Nebraska and Kansas, and most were then again removed to Oklahoma.

The treaties came out of a strategy aimed at making Native nations dependent on American trade goods. President Jefferson outlined this strategy of economic dependency leading to political submission in 1803. In many cases, tribes ceded lands so they could pay their debts. For these tribes, treaties were offers they could not refuse.

However, treaties also acknowledge Native nations to be sovereign nations. Native nations ("tribes") are inherently sovereign. They were sovereign before the United States was established, and their sovereignty was never extinguished.

The People

Many different Native nations called this region home, each with its own language and culture. Many more people would come through and to Iowa over time. Each of these nations took their own decisions on how to relate to each other and to the newcomers.

The Ioway (Iowa), who are the Baxoje or Pahódje (*bah-kho-dzhe*) people, emerged as a nation from the archaeological society called Oneota, together with their Chiwere-speaking relatives, the Otoe and Missouri, perhaps the Ho-Chunk or Winnebago, and the Omaha. They settled in the lands that would later be named after them, the future state of Iowa. A powerful nation, they were weakened in the early 19th century by epidemics and war, and moved to the southwestern part of Iowa and northwestern Missouri. Today, they own two reservations, one in Kansas and Nebraska, the other in Oklahoma.

Two of the nations that arrived relatively recently in Iowa were the Sauk and the Meskwaki, who arrived around 1730. After the early 1800s, the Meskwaki had moved into central Iowa, and after 1842, the Sauk also moved into the area. They sold the lands to the United States in the Treaty of 1842. Today, the Meskwaki own sovereign lands in central Iowa; the Sac and Fox tribes have reservations in Kansas and Nebraska, and in Oklahoma.

After Removal, many Native people still stayed in Iowa. The Meskwaki Settlement was established in 1857, when the state of Iowa, upon petition by some of the settlers here, bought the land in trust for the Meskwaki with their money. Beginning in 1896, the state transferred the trust to the federal government, and since 1976 the Settlement has full reservation status. Over the years, the Settlement has bought more land to be added to their territory.

The Omaha and Winnebago nations own sovereign lands in western Iowa. The Omaha's land base was greatly reduced, and they later gave refuge to the Winnebago, who fled horrific conditions at Crow Creek in South Dakota, where they had been removed to. Both nations own territories in Iowa. Their titles to those lands were re-established in the 1980s and 1990s after prolonged court battles.

Other nations with ties to the state of Iowa include the Dakota and Yankton (in far northern Iowa), the Otoe and Missouri (in far southern Iowa), and several nations that were removed to Iowa and then again removed to other places, the Potawatomi and Winnebago among them. People from the Pawnee, Ponca, Arikara, Lenni Lenape, Ottawa, Miami, Kickapoo, Huron, Wea, Ojibwe, Piankashaw, and other nations also lived in and used these lands at different times.