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Shawnee Indian Fact Sheet

Native American Facts For Kids was written for young people learning about the Shawnees for school or home-schooling reports. We encourage students and teachers to look through our main [Shawnee language](#) and [culture](#) pages for in-depth information, but here are our answers to the questions we are most often asked by children, with Shawnee pictures and links we believe are suitable for all ages.

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Native American Facts For Kids 

●●● **Shawnee Tribe** ●●●

● ***How do you pronounce "Shawnee?" What does it mean?***

Shawnee is pronounced "shaw-NEE." It comes from the Shawnee word *shawanwa*, which means "southerner." In history books, you can sometimes see the same name spelled Shawano or Sewanee.

● **Where do the Shawnees live?**

The original Shawnee homeland was in [Ohio](#), [Kentucky](#), and [Indiana](#). But the Shawnees were far-ranging people. Shawnee villages were located as far north as New York state and as far south as Georgia. Here is a [map showing Shawnee and other Indian migrations](#). Today, most Shawnees live in Oklahoma, where they were deported by the US government.

● **How is the Shawnee Indian nation organized?**

There are three Shawnee bands in Oklahoma. Like most Native American tribes, the Shawnee Indian tribes are **autonomous**. That means each tribe has its own government, laws, police, and services, just like a small country. However, the Shawnee are also US citizens and must obey American law.

In the past, each Shawnee village or band was governed by its own chief and tribal council. The Shawnees also had war chiefs, who were chosen by other warriors based on their bravery and military skill. But all of them owed allegiance to one main **principal chief**. The principal chief was a member of the ruling clan who the other Shawnee leaders chose to be in charge of the entire tribe. The Shawnee principal chief was a powerful figure, but he needed the support of his people to stay in power - otherwise he could be replaced. Today each Shawnee tribe is governed by a tribal committee that is elected by all the tribal members.

● **Do the Shawnee live on reservations?**

Technically, no. The lands belonging to the Shawnee and other Oklahoma Indian tribes are **trust lands**, not reservations. There are some legal differences between these two kinds of lands, but they are not very important. Many Oklahoma Indians call their homelands a reservation anyway.

● **What language do the Shawnees speak?**

Shawnee Indians all speak English today. Some elders also speak their native **Shawnee language**, which is songlike and has complicated verbs with many parts. If you'd like to know a few easy Shawnee words, "bezon" (pronounced bay-zone) is a friendly greeting and "neahw" (pronounced nay-aw) means "thank you." You can listen to Shawnee being spoken [here](#) and read a Shawnee picture glossary [here](#).

Today Shawnee is an **endangered language** because most children aren't learning it anymore. However, some Shawnee people are working to keep their language alive.

● **What was Shawnee culture like in the past and today?**

Here are the home pages of the [Absentee Shawnee](#) and [Eastern Shawnee](#) tribes, where you can learn about the Shawnee people past and present.

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● ***How do Shawnee Indian children live?***

They do the same things any children do--play with each other, go to school and help around the house. In the past, Shawnee kids had more chores and less time to play, just like early colonial children. But Shawnee children did have [dolls](#), toys and games, like miniature bows and arrows and hand-held ball games. Like many Native Americans, Shawnee mothers traditionally carried their babies in [cradleboards](#) on their backs--a custom which many American parents have [adopted](#) now.

● ***What were men and women's roles in the Shawnee tribe?***

Shawnee men were hunters and sometimes went to war to protect their families. Shawnee women were farmers and also did child care and cooking. Both genders took part in storytelling, artwork and music, and traditional medicine. In the past, Shawnee principal chiefs were always men, but either a man or a woman could be a village chief.

● ***What were Shawnee homes like?***

The Shawnees didn't live in tepees. They lived in small round dwellings called *wikkums*, or **wigwams**. Here are some images of [American Indian wigwams](#) like the ones Shawnee Indians used. Each Shawnee village also included a larger council house built from wood. Today, Native Americans only build a wigwam for fun or to connect with their heritage, not for shelter. Most Shawnees live in modern houses and apartment buildings, just like you.

● ***What was Shawnee clothing like? Did they wear feather headdresses and face paint?***

Shawnee women wore skirts with leggings. Shawnee men wore [breechclouts and leggings](#). Shirts were not necessary in the Shawnee culture, but both men and women often wore ponchos in cool weather. The Shawnees wore [moccasins](#) on their feet. As they migrated from place to place, the Shawnees adopted clothing styles

from many other Indian tribes and from white settlers as well. Here is a [picture of Shawnee Indian clothing](#), and photos and links about [American Indian dress](#) in general.

The Shawnees didn't wear [headdresses](#) like the [Sioux](#). Sometimes they wore a beaded headband with a feather or two in it. Shawnee people usually wore their hair long, though Shawnee warriors sometimes shaved their heads in the [Mohawk](#) style. Many Shawnees painted designs onto their faces, and some wore [tribal tattoos](#).

Today, some Shawnee people still have a traditional headband or moccasins, but they wear modern clothes like jeans instead of breechcloths... and they only wear feathers in their hair on special occasions like a dance.

● ***What was Shawnee transportation like? Did they paddle canoes?***

Yes, the Shawnees made **dugout canoes** by hollowing out large trees. Here is a website with pictures of different [Indian canoes](#). Over land, the Shawnee tribe used dogs as pack animals. (There were no horses in North America until colonists brought them over from Europe.) Today, of course, Shawnee people also use cars... and non-native people also use canoes.

● ***What was Shawnee food like in the days before supermarkets?***

The Shawnees were farming people. Shawnee women planted and harvested corn and squash. Shawnee men hunted in the forest for deer, turkeys, and small game and went fishing in the rivers and lakes. Shawnee Indian food included soup, cornbread, and stews. Here is a website with more information about [traditional Native American Indian food](#).

● ***What were Shawnee Indian weapons, tools and artifacts like?***

Shawnee hunters and warriors used bows and arrows, stone tomahawks, and spears. Shawnee fisherman used spears and nets. Here is a website of pictures and information about [Native American weapons](#).

● ***What are Shawnee art and crafts like?***

The Shawnee tribe is known for their [beadwork](#), [pottery](#), and [wood carving](#). Like other eastern American Indians, the Shawnee also crafted **wampum** out of white and purple shell beads. Wampum beads were traded as a kind of currency, but they were more culturally important as an art material. The [designs and pictures](#) on wampum belts often told a story or represented a person's family.

● ***What other Native Americans did the Shawnee tribe interact with?***

The Shawnee were a very far-ranging tribe, so they interacted with many different nations. Further to the north, the Shawnees were allies of the [Delaware Indians](#) and enemies of the [Iroquois tribes](#). Further to the south, the most important neighbors of the Shawnee tribe were the [Cherokee](#), [Chickasaw](#), and [Creek Indians](#). Sometimes

the Shawnees traded with these tribes, and other times they fought them.

● ***What kinds of stories do the Shawnees tell?***

There are lots of traditional Shawnee legends and fairy tales. Storytelling is very important to the Shawnee Indian culture. Here is one well-known tale about [a Shawnee man who married a sky daughter](#).

● ***What about Shawnee religion?***

Religions are too complicated and culturally sensitive to describe appropriately in only a few simple sentences, and we strongly want to avoid misleading anybody. Here are links to learn more about [Shawnee mythology](#) or this site about [Indian religion](#) in general.

● ***Can you recommend a good book for me to read?***

If you want to know more about Shawnee culture and history, two interesting sources for kids are [Shawnee American Indians](#) and [The Shawnee](#). A more thorough history of the Shawnees for teenagers or adults is [The Shawnee Indians](#) by Randolph Noe. You could also read a biography of Tecumseh, like [Tecumseh: Shawnee Leader](#) (for younger kids) or [Tecumseh: A Life](#) (for older kids). A more exciting read may be [Panther in the Sky](#), a historical fiction novel that follows Tecumseh's life closely. You can also browse through our recommendations of [Native American books](#) in general.

● ***How do I cite your website in my bibliography?***

You will need to ask your teacher for the format he or she wants you to use. The authors' names are Laura Redish and Orrin Lewis and the title of our site is Native Languages of the Americas. We are a nonprofit educational organization working to preserve and protect Native American languages and culture. You can learn more about our organization [here](#). Our website was first created in 1998 and last updated in 2015.

Thanks for your interest in the Shawnee Indian people and their language!

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