MANDAN, HIDATSA, & ARIKARA

The “Three Affiliated Tribes” of the Mandan, the Hidatsa, and the Arikara nations live on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation in northwestern North Dakota.

The Mandan were among the earliest residents of the Great Plains, having migrated there during the 1400s (ENAT, 123-125). They were firmly rooted around the Missouri River when Lewis & Clark’s Corps of Discovery wintered with them in 1804-05. The Mandan lived in permanent villages of earthen lodges, engaged in agriculture, and took to the plains in annual buffalo hunts to supplement their diet. The Hidatsa, northern neighbors of the Mandan, also lived along the banks of the Missouri River in what is now North Dakota. Like the Mandan, they were essentially farmers and lived in permanent villages (ENAT, 92-93). The Arikara (or Rees), southern neighbors of the Mandan, derive their name from their custom of wearing two upright bones in their hair. Arikara means "horns" (ENAT, 23-29).

The Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation use a white flag with the seal of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation in the center. That seal is oval, oriented horizontally (seal provided by the Tribal Headquarters of the Three Affiliated Tribes). On a light blue background appears a map of the reservation in natural colors, including the bright blue Lake Sakakawea.

A bald eagle, also in natural colors, flies over the reservation map, holding a ceremonial tribal lance bedecked in eagle feathers. Circling the seal is a white band bearing the three tribal names “MANDAN,
HIDATSA, & ARIKARA NATION” above, their combined designation “THREE AFFILIATED TRIBES” below, and at the sides “MAY 15” and “1936”, the date on which the three tribes achieved self-governance, all in black.