The seal of the largest of the three Sac and Fox bands [see Sac & Fox of Iowa] honors two noted members: the athlete Jim Thorpe and the great Chief Black Sparrow Hawk. The circular seal (provided by the Sac & Fox Tribal Library) bears a black and white depiction of a sparrow hawk with a shield on its chest. The colors refer to the two social classes of the tribe, the Oskacla and the Kiskoa (Letter, Juanita Goodreau, Library Assistant, 6 Jan. 1995). The shield contains symbols of the four countries with which the Sac & Fox had alliances: Spain, France, Britain, and the United States.

Above the hawk emblem, five Olympic rings recall the great Sac athlete Jim Thorpe, considered one of the finest athletes of all time. A black ribbon arches overhead between the tips of the hawk’s wings. On it appears MA KAI TAI ME SHE KIAKIAK, “Black Sparrow Hawk”, in white (The Sac & Fox Emblem, pamphlet, n.d.). A red band encircling the seal reads “SAC & FOX” above, and “NATION” below, in white. The seal is centered on a white field to form the flag.

Chief Black Sparrow Hawk, or simply Black Hawk, opposed the forced eviction of his Sac people from their lands straddling the Mississippi River at the village of Saukenuk, now Rock Island. In 1832, aided by the shaman Winnebago Prophet, Black Hawk rallied various tribes to his cause. He led this alliance in a desperate but ultimately losing war against the whites; he is now honored as a man of principle and honesty who knew what was right for his people. Jim
Thorpe in his own life had to overcome adversity to achieve greatness, had it taken away from him, yet continued on, never giving up. The two men represent great ideals for the Sac & Fox and the seal and flag pay tribute to them.