The descendants of the survivors of the 1872-1873 Modoc War are the only tribe in Oklahoma that traces its history to California. The war began when the United States government forced the Modoc from their homes in northern California onto a reservation in Oregon along with their neighbors, the Klamath. After their defeat, the Modoc were exiled to the Quapaw Reservation in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma). In 1909 the government allowed 51 Modoc to return to the Klamath reservation in Oregon (ENAT, 137-139); the rest remained in Oklahoma. Today, the Modoc in Oklahoma use a flag that closely associates them with their new homeland.

The Modoc flag is medium blue, as is Oklahoma’s, with “MODOC” across the top and “OKLAHOMA” across the bottom, all in yellow. Centered between these two words appears the seal of the Modoc Nation.

That seal is edged in white, recalling the “Circle of Life”—a common element in tribal flags—thicker above and thinner below. From the seal hang ten feathers (white-and-black, with tufts of yellow and red—the four primary colors in Native art) for the ten clans of the Modoc people. The central device of the seal is an eagle in natural colors flying in a light blue sky over a dark blue ocean. A patch of brown and gold coastline on the left symbolizes the historic homeland of the Modoc in northern California and southern Oregon.

The seal resulted from a sketch by Chief Bill G. Follis, Chairman of the Modoc Tribe since 1972, and has become the Modoc emblem. [Thanks to Jimi Abernathy of the Modoc Tribe for information about the flag and seal.]