



## Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska

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March 15, 2021

### **PROPONENT, APPEARING IN PERSON**

#### **TESTIMONY BEFORE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS HB 2408**

Dear Chairman Barker and Members of the Committee:

My name is Lance Foster and I am the Vice Chairman and Tribal Historic Preservation Officer of the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska (the "Iowa Tribe").

The Iowa Tribe strongly supports passage of HB 2408. This legislation would transfer the now-shuttered Iowa and Sac & Fox Mission near Highland, Kansas from the Kansas State Historical Society to the Iowa Tribe. As part of the transfer of ownership, the Iowa Tribe would enter into a conservation easement with the Kansas State Historical Society and accept financial responsibility for maintenance of the Mission.

The Mission is an important component of the Iowa Tribe's history as well as that of this City of Highland. The Iowa Tribe intends to reinvigorate the Mission and establish a museum open to the general public. The Mission site would also be a site associated with the Iowa Tribe's recently established Ioway Tribal National Park. Additional background information on the Iowa Tribe's proposed utilization of the Mission site is attached.

Please feel free to contact me (785.595.3258, [lfoster@iowas.org](mailto:lfoster@iowas.org)) with any additional questions.

### **IOWA TRIBE OF KANSAS AND NEBRASKA**

Lance M. Foster, Vice Chairman and Tribal Historic Preservation Officer

During these last several months (2020-2021), the Iowa Tribe has been in discussion with the Kansas State Historical Society regarding transfer of the Iowa and Sac and Fox Mission at Highland, Kansas to the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska. The site is owned by the Historical Society and was operated as a museum until 2008, when the museum was shut down due to state budget constraints. Local community members, both tribal and nontribal, have asked about reopening it ever since it was closed in 2008, 12 years ago, and have requested for at least the past 5 years that the Iowa Tribe consider taking the project on.

The Kansas State Historical Society supports the transfer of the mission, and we have built a broad base of support in the community. Our neighbors, the Sac & Fox, have passed a resolution supporting transfer to the Iowa Tribe so that we can preserve and protect our shared history. We have coordinated with Highland Community College about possibilities for educational and community events at the site. In November and December, we held community meetings via zoom to discuss the transfer and answer questions from the community.

The Mission plays an important role in the history of the Iowa and Sac & Fox Tribes in Kansas, as well as the establishment of Highland. The Mission was built by the Presbyterian church from 1845 through 1846, using funds from an annuity guaranteed to the Iowa by treaty, as a mission to educate the children of the Iowa and Sac & Fox. At the time it was built, the Mission was within the boundaries of the Iowa Tribe's Reservation. The treaty of 1854 ceded those lands and the Iowa Tribe moved north from the Iowa Point and Mission area to their new agency on the Big Nemaha River.

The Mission in particular will tell the story of the Iowa and Sac & Fox tribes original reservation from the time of removal from Missouri (1836) until the final closing of the mission (1863), and will also tell the story of the land as it was before contact (including archaeology), the Oregon-California Trail, and after the mission closed (the Orphanage, agriculture and the origins of Highland). There will be places for permanent exhibits, temporary exhibits, and meeting/gathering space. The official name will combine the names by which it was known by the community and by the state: The Iowa and Sac & Fox Mission Native Heritage Museum.

If the Mission is transferred to the Iowa Tribe, the Tribe intends to reopen the Mission museum to the general public and offer cultural and educational events at the site. It will also be featured as a unit of our Ioway Tribal National Park, established in 2020, which was established on our reservation in Brown and Doniphan Counties in Kansas and Richardson County in Nebraska. These units will tell our tribal story here, and will also benefit surrounding nontribal communities both economically and educationally. Funding will be accomplished through a combination of tribal funds, federal funds and grants.

Ioway Tribal National Park is composed of a series of places on the borderlands of Kansas and Nebraska that tell the Ioway/Iowa tribal story at different points on the

landscape and history, as well as connecting to the nearby communities of Highland, Iowa Point, White Cloud, and Rulo. The story begins in 1836 and continues today, told through these associated sites:

1. Rulo Bluffs Preserve, NE: Missouri River bluffs ecosystem (Nature)\*
  2. Leary Site NHL, NE: Oneota and Central Plains ancestors (Ancestors, 1200-1500)\*
  3. Mission, KS: Iowa tribe (Reservation established, 1836-1854)
  4. Iron Boundary Monument, KS-NE (Kansas-Nebraska Act, 1854)\*
  5. Nohart/Nemaha Agency, NE-KS archaeological site (Civil War era, 1855-1887)\*
  6. Chief James Whitecloud Allotment, KS (Allotment era, 1887-1934)\*
  7. Iowa Community Building (Self-governance era, 1934-1970s)\*
  8. George Ogden Building (Families of the Iowa Reservation)\*
- (\*within current reservation boundaries)

Mission Uses:

Tribal Use as a museum/historic/educational site: A tourism gateway to Ioway Tribal National Park and a connection to the Glacial Hills Byway, the California-Oregon National Historic Trail and the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

A. Museum/Exhibits.

1. Story of far NE Kansas
2. Iowa Tribe story from 1836-1854
3. Iowa Point settlement
4. Iowa and Sac & Fox Agency and Mission
5. California-Oregon trail remnant and effect
6. Boarding school, language press, Indian orphanage.
7. Original conditions of the area (the natural world, archaeology), reservation and Highland, up through today

B. Classroom and Program space

1. Tribal regenerative farming/ cultural-historical/ nature education classes
2. Events (small meetings and cultural events)
3. Programs for language and culture preservation
4. Opportunities for community employment and student internships

## HISTORIC TIMELINE

1835 Presbyterian Mission to Iowa established at Agency, Missouri

1836 Platte Purchase Treaty signed by Iowa and Sac & Fox ceded northwest portion of Missouri; reservation assigned in Indian Country (present-day Kansas); agent asks mission to include Sac & Fox in new mission work

1837 Missionaries follow Iowa and Sac & Fox to new reservation; line surveyed to divide Iowa lands from Sac & Fox lands; mission established in log cabin near Iowa Point

1845 Funds from Iowa Treaty annuities and donations from Presbyterian Foreign Missions begin building of new brick mission, twice as big as it is now. Finished in 1846.  
1845-1854 Mission operates as manual labor boarding school for students who are mostly Iowa; period of Oregon-California Trail and California Gold Rush brings in epidemics of cholera and smallpox, decimating tribe  
1854 Treaty ceded portion of reservation the Mission was constructed on, tribe moves from Iowa Point and Mission area closer to the Big Nemaha River  
1863-1866 Mission changed to Indian Orphanage Institute, few students, soon closed  
1868 Mission sold, about half razed and bricks reportedly used at Highland College  
1868-1905 Remaining portion reported to have been used as a residence  
1936 Northeast Kansas Historical Society organized to preserve the remaining portion  
1941 Mission becomes property of the state and undergoes restoration  
1963-1996 Operation as Iowa and Sac & Fox Mission Museum by the Kansas State Historical Society; Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1970).  
1996-2008 Operation as the Native American Heritage Museum by KSHS  
2008-Present Museum closed due to state budgetary concerns

ATTACHMENT: PHOTOS OF MISSION