

Preserving Nature, Cultivating Culture: Ioway Tribal National Park Báxoje Mowotanañi

Introduction:

The Ioway Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska (ITKN) is a sovereign nation and federally recognized tribe seeking partnerships and financial support to develop and expand Báxoje Mowotanañi (*Ioway Land as the Creator Made It*) which we also refer to as the Ioway Tribal National Park (ITNP). As the Ioway Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, we are dedicated to preserving our cultural heritage and protecting the natural environment that sustains us. Through the ITNP, we aim to create a vibrant sanctuary where nature, culture, and community thrive in harmony. The park, established in 2020, encompasses conservation land, tribal land, and culturally significant sites for the Ioway people. The ITNP aims to preserve wild spaces, promote cultural education, support sustainable economic development, and contribute to biodiversity, clean water, clean air, and climate change mitigation efforts. With the support of partners and philanthropic organizations, the tribe intends to enhance infrastructure, staff capacity, educational facilities, and visitor services to ensure a successful public launch by or before 2025. Through a meaningful partnership with you and your organization, we can transform our vision into a reality and leave a lasting legacy for future generations.

Background on the Ioway People:

The Ioway Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, also known as the Ioway or Báxoje, is a federally recognized tribe with headquarters located on the Ioway Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska Reservation. The reservation spans approximately 12,038 acres across portions of Brown County and Doniphan County in Northeast Kansas and Richardson County in Southeast Nebraska. The tribe's rich history, dating back centuries, holds significant cultural and historical importance. The Ioway people have a deep connection to the land, and their heritage is intertwined with the natural environment surrounding the reservation.

Background on the Ioway Tribal National Park- Baxoje Mowotanañe

The Ioway Tribal National Park, established in 2020, is the largest tribal national park in the nation and the second tribal national park to be established. The park encompasses conservation land, tribal land, and culturally significant sites, including the Ioway and Sac & Fox Mission acquired by the tribe. While currently accessible only to tribal members, the ITNP aims to generate interest in the reservation, support ecotourism and agrotourism efforts, and foster river health and Land Back initiatives. With the park's unique status as preserved wild spaces on tribal lands, it holds immense cultural and ecological value for the Ioway people.



Park Units:

The ITNP comprises various park units, each with its own historical and ecological significance. These units include:

1. **Rulo Bluffs Preserve Unit:** A conservation preserve transferred to the tribe by The Nature Conservancy, designated as a Biologically Unique Landscape with numerous species of special status. This unit prohibits hunting and emphasizes conservation efforts. It also features the Schulenberg Hollow, dedicated to Ray Schulenberg, a pioneer in prairie restoration.
2. **Leary Site NHL Unit:** An ancestral village site dating back to 1200-1400, first recorded by Lewis and Clark during their expedition in 1804. This unit holds National Historic Landmark status and is protected under antiquities and archaeological laws. It serves as an educational site showcasing the tribe's rich history.
3. **Iowa and Sac & Fox Mission Unit:** Located within the original 1836 reservation boundaries, this unit operated as a mission and boarding school and was a significant site on the Oregon-California Trail. The tribe has reopened it, offering museums, exhibits, and educational opportunities.
4. **Dupuis Hollow Unit (Pauline's Pond and KS-NE ACT Survey Marker):** This unit includes a pond named after the Dupuis Trading Post, which traded with Frank and Jesse James, and a survey marker related to the Kansas-Nebraska Act. It offers opportunities for fishing, picnicking, primitive camping, and interpretive hiking trails.
5. **Visitor Center (Maya Wagundheci Park Visitor Center):** Serving as the main information hub for the park, the visitor center provides exhibits on culture, language, archaeology, history, and nature. It also offers short interpretive trails and serves as a starting point for exploration.

Goals

1. **Preserving Wild Spaces and Biodiversity:** At the core of our park's mission is the preservation of wild spaces, ensuring a sanctuary for diverse plant and animal species. The ITNP stands as one of the few remaining protected areas on tribal lands, making it truly special to our people. By safeguarding this land, we can maintain critical habitats for endangered and threatened species, safeguard rare and unique flora, and support ecological balance. Your support will enable us to implement sustainable conservation practices, protect fragile ecosystems, and create a refuge for wildlife to thrive.
2. **Cultivating Cultural Education and Connection:** The ITNP serves as a bridge between our past and future, offering a place of cultural education and connection for tribal members and visitors alike. Our park units encompass ancestral village sites, historic landmarks, and culturally significant locations. Through educational exhibits, interpretive trails, and immersive experiences, we will share the rich history, traditions, and wisdom of the Ioway people. By embedding our indigenous language and tribal ecological knowledge throughout the park, we can preserve our cultural identity and ensure its transmission to future generations.

3. **Promoting Sustainable Economic Development:** The ITNP presents an extraordinary opportunity for sustainable economic development rooted in environmental stewardship. By creating outdoor recreational spaces, we can attract visitors from near and far, promoting ecotourism and agrotourism efforts. This will generate economic benefits for our community, supporting local businesses, job creation, and cultural entrepreneurship. With your support, we can develop necessary infrastructure, including visitor centers, trails, picnic areas, and campgrounds, to provide an unforgettable experience for all who visit.
4. **Climate Resilience and Mitigation Efforts:** As custodians of the land, we have a responsibility to address climate change and promote sustainable practices. The ITNP will serve as a real-life learning laboratory, allowing us to explore the intricate relationship between conservation land and regenerative agricultural practices. Through indigenous-led knowledge gathering (research), we will examine the impact of carbon capturing, climate change mitigation, and biomimicry within our tribal lands. By integrating nature's lessons into infrastructure planning and adopting sustainable building practices, we can create a resilient and climate-friendly future and share those lessons learned with other communities and partners interested in learning from our efforts.

Next Steps:

To realize the full potential of the ITNP, we seek the partnership and support of philanthropic funding organizations. With your generous contribution, we can take the necessary steps to ensure a successful public launch by or before 2025. Our immediate priorities include enhancing park infrastructure, expanding staff capacity, and developing safe, accessible, and inclusive visitor services. This involves constructing a visitors' center, renovating existing facilities, establishing educational spaces, restoring prairies and trails, and creating accessible pathways for all individuals to enjoy nature. Additionally, we aim to conduct archaeological surveys, install culturally important signage incorporating our language, and develop promotional materials to elevate the park's visibility in the region.

Conclusion:

By supporting the Ioway Tribal National Park, you will play a crucial role in the preservation of our cultural heritage and the protection of our natural resources. Together, we can cultivate a sanctuary where nature, culture, and community thrive in harmony. Your partnership and contribution will have a lasting impact, enabling us to create a healthy, sustainable social hub for our people and the region.