

The Zia Sun Symbol

New Mexico's distinctive insignia is the Zia sun symbol, which originated with the Indians of Zia Pueblo in ancient times. Its design reflects their tribal philosophy, with its wealth of pantheistic spiritualism teaching the basic harmony of all things in the universe.

Four is the sacred number of Zia, and the figure is composed of a circle from which four points radiate. These points made up of four straight lines of varying length personify the number most often used by the Giver of all good gifts.

To the Zia Indian, the sacred number is embodied in the earth, with its four directions; in the year, with its four seasons; in the day, with the sunrise, noon, evening, and night; in life, with its four divisions – childhood, youth, adulthood and old age. Everything is bound together in a circle of life and love, without beginning, without end.

The Zia believe, too, that in this great brotherhood of all things, man has four sacred obligations: he must develop a strong body, a clear mind, a pure spirit, and a devotion to the welfare of his people.

Guided by this historic background, the flag of New Mexico was wisely chosen, with the ancient Zia sun symbol in red on a field of Spanish yellow. The symbol's proportions are fixed by legislative act, with the four groups of rays set at right angles, the two inner rays one-fifth longer than the outer rays. The diameter of the circle in the center is one-third the width of the symbol.

The flag experts of North America have completed their survey of state and provincial flags, identifying the best and worst flags on the continent. NAVA, the North American Vexillological Association, conducted a poll on its website, asking its members and the public their opinions of flag designs in the U.S. and Canada. Responses came in from 100 NAVA members and over 300 members of the public in 20 countries. Participants rated 72 flags on their design qualities (rather than on political, historical, or geographic considerations.) On a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 was the best score. They were asked to rely on their personal sense of a good flag design in rating the flags, which appeared on the web page. They cast well over 29,000 individual votes.

NAVA members favored strong, simple, distinctive flags, choosing New Mexico, Texas and Quebec in first, second and third place.