

Tribes of Oklahoma – Request for Information for Teachers (Oklahoma Academic Standards for Social Studies, OSDE)

Tribe: The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
Tribal website(s): www.choctawnation.com



1. Migration/movement/forced removal

Oklahoma History C3 Standard 2.3 *“Integrate visual and textual evidence to explain the reasons for and trace the migrations of Native American peoples including the Five Tribes into present-day Oklahoma, the Indian Removal Act of 1830, and tribal resistance to the forced relocations.”*

Tribal oral traditions tell of a west to east migration of the tribe to present day Alabama and Mississippi. This was precipitated by two brothers, Chikasha and Chata, and their willingness to follow the Ofi Tohbi (White Dog). Other oral traditions speak of an emergence from two areas, one in present day Mississippi (Nanih Waiya; sloping hill) and the other in Alabama (Nanih Chaha; high hill). For hundreds of years before Europeans came to the United States, the Choctaw Nation was a tribe of farmers who lived in what is now the southeastern U.S. until the federal government forcibly removed most tribal members in 1830 to Southeastern Oklahoma in what became known as the “Trail of Tears.”

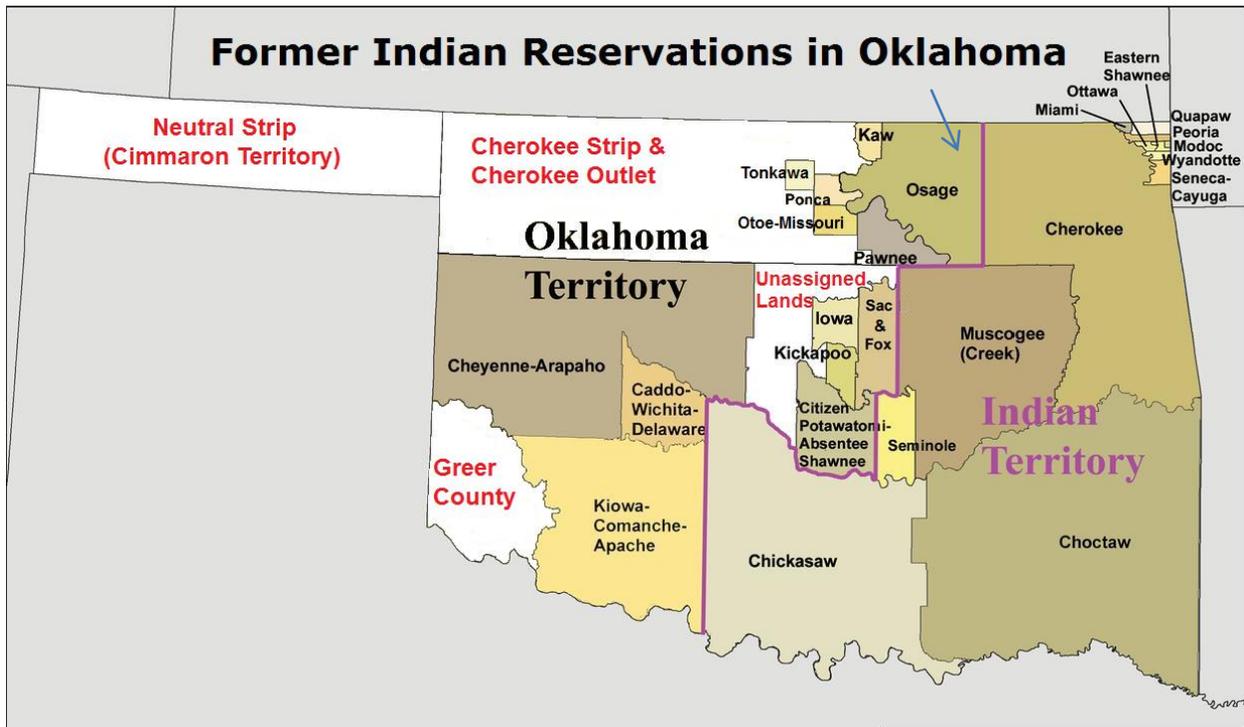
Oklahoma History C3 Standard 2.7 *“Compare and contrast multiple points of view to evaluate the impact of the Dawes Act which resulted in the loss of tribal communal lands and the redistribution of lands by various means including land runs as typified by the Unassigned Lands and the Cherokee Outlet, lotteries, and tribal allotments.”*

In 1897 the Dawes Commission negotiated the extinction of tribal governments and most tribally owned lands were distributed among tribal members. Remaining lands were opened to white settlement. Choctaw Freedmen, the former slaves of the mixed-blood Choctaw elite, were made citizens of the tribe in 1884. Over time their citizenship was eliminated and they continue to fight today for reinstatement as tribal citizens.

2. Maps

Oklahoma History C3 Standard 2.3 “Integrate visual and textual evidence to explain the reasons for and trace the migrations of Native American peoples including the Five Tribes into present-day Oklahoma, the Indian Removal Act of 1830, and tribal resistance to the forced relocations.”

Tribal lands after 1830



3. Population Past/Present

- Total tribal enrollment: 220,000
- Membership criteria: Enrollment with the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is open to any individual who can show direct descendancy from a person who appears on the Dawes Roll created for Choctaw Indians by blood. There is no minimum blood degree required. Current enrollees can be found to have from 4/4 (fullblood) to 1/2,048 degrees of Indian ancestry. Individuals who descend from the Dawes Roll created for Choctaw Freedmen cannot at this time enroll with the tribe.

4. Government; Chiefs vs Chairman; Elected or Paternal

US Government C3 Standard 3.4 *“Summarize and explain the relationships and the responsibilities between national and state governments including tribal and local governments.”*

Public Law 91-495 authorized the Choctaws in 1970 to select their own officers through popular election, and the Choctaw Constitution was adopted in 1983, reviving their 1860 Constitution with updated modifications. The tribal nation is guided by an elected 12-member council with a chief. As a “domestic dependent sovereign”, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma operates on lands reserved for their exclusive use and supports policing, judicial, educational, and health branches which maintain services for their citizens.

Oklahoma History C3 Standard *“The student will analyze the formation and development of constitutional government in Oklahoma. 1) Compare and contrast the development of governments among the Native American tribes, the movement for the state of Sequoyah . . . 2) Describe and summarize attempts to create a state constitution joining Indian and Oklahoma Territories including the impact of the Progressive and Labor Movements resulting in statehood on November 16, 1907.”*

Tribal Government leadership:

- Executive Branch
- Tribal Council Members
- Senior Executive Officers
- Executive Directors
- Tribal Court
- Tribal Elections

The Choctaw Nation’s governing structure is set forth in its revised 1984 constitution. Like the U.S. government, there are three branches, executive, legislative and judicial. The executive branch is headed by a chief and assistant chief, both of whom serve four-year terms. The legislative function is carried out by a 12-person tribal council, each of whom represent geographic districts. The nation has a Court of General Jurisdiction, which resolves tribal disputes within the 10 ½ -counties of the Choctaw Nation, including a three-member appellate division.

5. Language Group

Oklahoma History C3 Standard 4.1 *“Compare and contrast the successes and failures of the United States policy of assimilation of the Native Americans in Oklahoma including the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 and the effects of the Indian*

Boarding Schools (1880s-1940s) upon Native Americans' identity, culture, traditions, and tribal government and sovereignty."

The last 30 years has seen a resurgence in efforts to preserve and strengthen the Choctaw Nation's culture and heritage. Language programs to learn Choctaw are provided from elementary school through college as well as on-line programs for adults. Historical games like stickball and traditional native dances are taught to the young. A registry of Choctaw artists who have preserved traditional skills like beadwork, making baskets, gourds and pipes and wood sculptures, to list a few, is maintained by the tribe.

The Choctaw Nation now has language classes available on the Internet and are continuing to expand those classes to meet the needs of those who are interested in enrolling. In addition to learning how to read and write in the native language the students are also learning about the history and culture of the tribe through the classes.

Distance learning through One-Net is now in approximately 52 high schools within the Choctaw Nation jurisdiction and in five colleges including Carl Albert Jr. College at Poteau and Eastern Oklahoma State College at Wilburton. The program is also being taught at Southeastern Oklahoma State University in Durant and in community classes in various locations in Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and California.

The Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna (Choctaw Language School) was established to promote and preserve the language, history and culture of the Choctaw people. The School currently employs nineteen people. At the present time, there are eight Language instructors. These Language instructors have developed Choctaw Language Curriculum I & II which is taught to the public schools and colleges. The Choctaw Language is also taught through distance learning to 14 Head Start Centers. Language classes are also taught in the communities throughout the Choctaw Nation's 10 ½ counties and there are a few taught outside of the Nation. The School of Choctaw Language has developed and published a definer, a history book, a social history book, five children's books, a Choctaw Christmas CD, traditional hymns CD and cassette tape.

6. Cultural Identifiers – i.e. Mound Builders; Plains

Oklahoma History C3 Standard 4.1 *"Compare and contrast the successes and failures of the United States policy of assimilation of the Native Americans in Oklahoma including the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 and the effects of the Indian Boarding Schools (1880s-2013) upon Native Americans' identity, culture, traditions, and tribal government and sovereignty."*

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma citizens were sent to numerous Indian boarding schools out of state and within Oklahoma. The Oklahoma schools included Bacone, Chilocco, Riverside, and Jones Academy. In 1842 the Choctaw General Council enacted a law that established six boarding schools: Spencer Academy, Fort Coffee Academy, Koonaha (Kunaha or Sunsha) Female Seminary, Ianubbee (Ayanubbe) Female Seminary, Chuwahla (Chuwalla) Female Seminary, and Wheelock Female Seminary. Fort Coffee Academy was divided into a male and a female branch in 1845. The latter, located five miles southeast of Fort Coffee, was called New Hope Seminary. In addition, Armstrong Academy was established in 1845 near present Bokchito in Bryan County, and Norwalk Academy was opened in 1846 near Wheelock Seminary as a boarding school for boys. These institutions were originally run by missionaries, but by the 1890s those that remained were operated by educated Choctaws.

An initial purpose of the boarding schools was to teach boys agriculture and mechanical arts and girls how to sew and make clothing and to do household chores. Another objective was to teach business skills and reading, writing, and spelling in the English language. Arithmetic, music, and geography were also taught, and in some schools pupils learned algebra, geometry, U.S. history, chemistry, philosophy, botany, astronomy, painting, drawing, and Latin grammar. Students were generally ten to sixteen years of age.

The number of students in each school varied from about twenty-five to more than one hundred. The total enrollment for all institutions combined appears to have never exceeded six hundred at any time during the boarding-school era. In 1860 there were five hundred Choctaw children attending neighborhood schools and four hundred in the boarding schools. By 1888 the number of students in neighborhood schools had grown to 3,427, while boarding school figures had dropped to 318.

The boarding schools had their share of problems. Sickness from whooping cough, measles, pneumonia, and cholera kept the schools closed for weeks and sometimes months at a time. Occasionally there were so many ailing students that a school served as a hospital and deaths occurred. There were also natural disasters. In 1848 a tornado seriously damaged Chuwahla Seminary at Pine Ridge near Doaksville. Floods kept children home. One of the biggest problems was fire. Spencer Academy burned in 1896 and again in 1900. New Hope Seminary caught fire in 1896, and Armstrong Academy was destroyed by flames in 1921.

7. Fine arts

Oklahoma History C3 Standard 4.1 “Compare and contrast the successes and failures of the United States policy of assimilation of the Native Americans in Oklahoma including the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 and the effects of the Indian Boarding Schools (1880s-1940s) upon Native Americans’ identity, culture, traditions, and tribal government and sovereignty.”

Art

The Choctaws are well known for their intricately constructed basketry and ornate beadwork. Symbols such as diamonds, half diamonds, and crosses are routinely embroidered and beaded for inclusion on their clothing and other traditional materials. These symbolize the eastern diamondback rattlesnake (one who protected their crops), shelter, and stickball sticks/faith respectively.

*Please see #6 for further readings

8. Significant events (ie. Massacres, Battles, Supreme Court cases...)

Oklahoma History C3 Standard 2.4C *“Summarize the impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction Treaties on Native American peoples, territories, and tribal sovereignty including the a) Required enrollment of the Freedmen, b) Second Indian Removal and the role of the Buffalo Soldiers, c) Significance of the Massacre at the Washita, d) Reasons for the reservation system, and e) Establishment of the western military posts of Fort Sill, Fort Supply, and Fort Reno.”*

Formal relations with the United States began in 1786.

The Choctaw served as military allies with the U.S. in the War of 1812 and the Creek War with the exception of 45 Choctaw families who fought on the side of the traditional Creeks against the United States.

The Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek in 1830 forced the majority of Choctaws in the east to what was then Indian Territory (present day Oklahoma). The 500 mile journey was through frozen forests and disease-stricken swamps. It is estimated that perhaps one-quarter of the people died on the trip. The years of resettlement in Oklahoma were trying ones, but the Oklahoma Choctaw were determined to rise again and began laying the foundations for governance, adopting a new constitution in 1834 and building a council house at Nvnih Waiya, Oklahoma. In 1836 the Choctaws established the first national free public school system in the U.S. which included higher education. In 1838 their first tribal council meeting was held.

The Civil War had a disastrous effect on the Choctaw boarding schools. All were closed for the duration of the conflict, and Fort Coffee Academy and Koonaha, Ianubbee, and Chuwahla were never reopened. Armstrong Academy served as the Choctaw capital for twenty years beginning in 1863, while Spencer Academy was used as a hospital. After the war the boarding schools were slowly reestablished. New Hope Seminary and Spencer Academy were revived in 1871. In 1884 Armstrong Academy was reopened as a school for orphan boys aged six to twelve, and Wheelock Academy was reestablished as a school for orphan girls of the same age. As more boarding schools were needed, the Choctaw General Council organized three additional facilities in December 1891. They were Jones Academy for boys, Tushkahoma Academy for girls, and Tushka Lusa (Tushkaloosa) Academy for African Americans.

The Curtis Act of 1898 put all Choctaw Nation schools under U.S. government control. The boarding schools continued to operate, but one by one they were closed. By 1930 only Jones Academy and Wheelock Seminary remained, and Wheelock was merged with Jones in 1955. Jones Academy is presently maintained under the direction of the Choctaw Nation as a residential care center for elementary and secondary age children. Youths residing there attend the Hartshorne public schools.

9. Current Information on tribe

Tribal members have overcome adversity to grow to nearly 200,000 strong, the country's third largest tribe. The tribe's growing business enterprises have allowed it to work to improve the lives of tribal members who have a rich tradition of serving in the military (see Code Talkers) serving their community and the State of Oklahoma. Today the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma hosts their annual Labor Day Festival at the site of their capital, Tuskahoma. Their tribal headquarters are located in Durant, Oklahoma and through a diversity of business interests, the tribe employs over 8,000 people.

Current Services

- Directory
- Departments
- Education
- Program and Services booklet
- Choctaw Nation applications

Choctaw tribal members can avail themselves of a vast array of services including residential and business loans, college scholarships, health care services, day care and kindergarten through high school programs, housing assistance, food distribution, senior assistance and tribal burial assistance. While many of the services are located in Oklahoma, tribal members who live outside the state are also eligible and can take advantage of many of the programs. Tribal leadership once a month travels to another region of the country and Europe to discuss available services and meet with tribal members outside the state.

- Directory
 - Administrative
 - Business Enterprise
 - Education
 - Health Services
 - Housing
 - Public Safety
 - Miscellaneous

- Social Services
- Departments
 - Forestry Services
 - Financial Services
 - Public Safety Department
 - Historic Preservation Department
 - Veterans Advocacy
 - Community Services
 - Social Services
 - Youth Empowerment
 - Transportation Improvement Program
 - Property/Real Estate
 - Health Services
 - Outreach Services
 - Enrollment [CDIB and Tribal Membership]
 - Recycling Center
- Education
 - STAR Program Information
 - Jones Academy
 - School of Choctaw Language
 - Choctaw Nation Head Start
 - Career Development Program
 - Educational Talent Search
 - Higher Education and Grant Program
 - Adult Education Program
 - Johnson O-Malley Program
 - PL102-477 Program (formerly WIA)
 - Child Care Assistance
 - Vocational Development Program

Tribal Economy

- Employment Opportunities
- Choctaw Nation Procurement Groups
- Information for Choctaw Nation Employee

Choctaw Nation businesses generate hundreds of millions of dollars annually and more than 6,000 jobs for tribal and non-tribal Oklahomans. In addition to the tribe's seven casinos, the Nation has a manufacturing business, a management services company, 13 travel plazas, 12 smoke shops, a printing company and a document archiving company. Proceeds from all the tribe's businesses provide the revenue stream to support not only the programs that assist tribal members, including, health care,

education, housing, senior care and other social services, but enable the tribe to support scores of community programs and charities.

- Choctaw Global Staffing
- Choctaw Defense
- Texoma Print Services
- Choctaw Archiving
- Choctaw Bookstore
- Choctaw Casinos

10. Other information (ie. Elder testimonials; Guest speakers; Literature; Famous Tribal members...)

The Choctaw people today are separated into numerous tribal governments and communities who hold their own particular and separate relationships with federal, state, and local governments. These Choctaw tribes include:

Alabama- MOWA Band of Choctaw Indians

California- Okla Chahta Clan *affiliated with Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Louisiana- Bayou Lacombe Choctaw; Jena Band of Choctaw Indians; Clifton Choctaw; Choctaw-Apache of Ebarb

Mississippi- Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians; Live Oak (Vancleave) Choctaw

Oklahoma- Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Tennessee- Western Tennessee (Ripley) Choctaws *affiliated with Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians

Choctaw Literature Examples:

- ***How Choctaws Invented Civilization & Why Choctaws Will Conquer the World***; D.L. Birchfield
- *Choctaw Women in a Chaotic World*; Michelene Pesantubbee
- *Choctaw Nation: A Story of American Indian Resurgence*; Valerie Lambert
- *Choctaw Crime and Punishment, 1884-1907 & Recovering Our Ancestors' Gardens: Indigenous Recipes and Guide to Diet and Fitness*; Devon Mihesuah

Famous tribal members

Norma Howard (artist): Norma's work has won numerous awards throughout her prestigious career. Her attention to detail is clearly evidenced via her traditional Choctaw upbringing.

Michelene Pesantubbee (professor/author): Michelene is a published author (ex: *Choctaw Women in a Chaotic World*) and university professor whose works on the history of Choctaw women and culture have been highly praised.

Steven Judd (filmmaker/artist): Steven's art pieces have appeared in galleries and museums nationally, while his films are viewed regularly at film festivals throughout the United States and Canada.

D.L. Birchfield (author): D.L. has many published works to include ***How Choctaws Invented Civilization & Why Choctaws Will Conquer the World***

Billy Eagle Road (athlete): Billy is a reigning Most Valuable Player in the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma's annual Indian stickball championships.

Jordan Eagle Road: Jordan was one of only a few Choctaws in history to play NCAA Division I football when he attended the University of Oklahoma. In his four year high school career he scored 112 touchdowns for Talihina High School in Talihina, Oklahoma.

Resources:

www.choctawnation.org

Oklahoma Indian Country Guide: One State, Many Nations; Travelok.com

Oklahoma Historical Society; Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture