Tribes of Oklahoma – Request for Information for Teachers

(Oklahoma Academic State Standards for Social Studies, OSDE)

Tribe:_____**Thlopthlocco Tribal Town** (thlop-thlock'-oh)_____
Tribal website(s): **http://www.tttown.org.html**_____

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."*

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."*

- Original Homeland – Alabama and Georgia
- Location In Oklahoma - Okemah, OK

Thlopthlocco Tribal Town was formed toward the end of the eighteenth century and was an upper Creek town of the old Creek Confederacy that was situated in Alabama and Georgia in historical times. Thlopthlocco Tribal Town was one of the forty-four (44) or more Creek tribal towns that immigrated to Indian Territory after the famous Removal Treaty of March 24, 1832 was signed. Thlopthlocco (Rvp-Rakko), an upper Creek town, was established near Wetumka Alabama. Rvp-Rakko, (Thlopthlocco) meant "Tall Cane" or "Big Reed" and was situated in the vicinity of a stream on which there was an abundance of cane or reed from which blow guns were made. Thlopthlocco was known as a Red Town and the red towns carried red beads and administered the war functions in Creek history.

During removal, members of the Thlopthlocco Tribal Town settled along the north fork of the North Canadian River and the Town was one of the most western settlements of the Creeks. The Town established its square grounds and rekindled its fire between Wetumka and Okemah Oklahoma. In 1938, Thlopthlocco Tribal Town ratified its constitution and bylaws under the provisions of the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act of June 26, 1936, and ratified its federal charter of incorporation in 1939. In 1941 the Secretary of the Interior placed 1900 acres of land in trust for the Thlopthlocco Tribal Town for its exclusive use and benefit. On a tract of those lands near the North Canadian River, the Town members constructed a council house made of hand hewn stone.

A tribal town represented a small but important segment of the Muskogee (Creek) Nation; therefore, any historical presentation concerning the Thlopthlocco Tribal Town

must involve portions of Muskogee (Creek) history and culture. This, however, by no means is an in-depth historical presentation. The accounts set forth are merely to provide the background and foundation from which the Thlopthlocco Tribal Town has emerged.

There are many stories pertaining to the origin of the Muskogee people which were given orally from one generation to another. We can expect some discrepancies; however, the consensus of the stories related by several elders of the Tribe seems to agree that the Muskogeans came from a north westerly direction beyond the earth backbone (Rocky Mountains), crossing many waters, following the direction (Southeast) where the sun started on its journey across the skies.They were said to have reached the Big White Water (Ocean) and from there traveled back inland until they found many streams near which they established their camps. Because their campsites were always alongside or near the creeks, they were referred to as the "Creek Indians" and finally, the name prevailed so that the Muskogees are more commonly referred to today as the Creek Indians or the Creek tribe.There were two main divisions of the Creeks, the Lower Creeks who lived closer to the coastal areas and the upper Creeks who lived further inland.

The waterways provided avenues of travel from their dugout boats and rafts. Alongside the creeks were edible plants and roots which could also be used for medicinal purposes. The nearby springs could be used for drinking while the creeks afforded a place for bathing and washing as well as a place to find various species of edible fish.

The laws and policies of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation were propagated through the local tribal town government. There were forty-four tribal towns from which representatives of each tribal town made up the tribal council for the entire tribe. Hereafter, "Creek" will be used when referring to the "Muscogee".

The tribal towns represented local autonomous communities subject only to the laws and policies of the Creek tribal government.

The tribal towns were identified as a "Red Stick" or a "White Stick" town. The members of the "Red Stick" town were those who would readily engage in battle in the event of war upon the Creek tribe. The members of the "White Stick" would be the one who would negotiate for peace. One tribal town is known as Re-ware (Thlewathle) today, but the root word was Horre-ware (Hothlewathle), indicating those who cut the war in two! The ends of several sticks would be dipped in red or white paint, depending on the coming event; war or peace. The sticks would be tied in several bundles and each tribal town king would receive a bundle. The town king would count the number of sticks in the bundle, and from that the town king knew how many days he had in order to prepare for war if in the case of a red stick town; if in the case of a white stick town, the town king would go through the same procedures with the counting of the sticks and he would know how many days he had in order to prepare for peace negotiations. The town king would throw away one stick from the bundle each day until the last stick was discarded. The last stick being discarded was an indication that the day had arrived in

which to take appropriate action, whereupon the town king would lead his men to a predetermined meeting place.

The preparations that took place, either for war or for peace, involved the service of a medicine man.There were many medicine men and some women within each tribal town community, but only one medicine man would be chosen to serve their respective tribal towns. The choice was made in accordance with the clan system; some tribal towns required their medicine men to be from a certain clan.

The spread of Christianity has been the main cause of many tribal towns' traditional ceremonial activities to dwindle from the original forty-four tribal towns to only fourteen that still practice the traditional ceremonies, the Green Corn dance, and the Stomp dance and the playing of the Stick-ball game. Before the coming of Christianity, there was knowledge of a Great Being. This real mysterious Being was referred to as OH-FUN-KAH (over all things). The coming of Christianity revealed the Great Being Ohfunkv as God. Basically, the coming of Christianity was not so much as bringing something new but revealing, by name something they already had or knew about. A new awareness came in the revelation of Jesus, the Christ (God's son) and there were many that accepted Christianity on the basis of personal salvation.

Many of those who practice or take part in the annual traditional ceremonies such as the Green Corn dance, are members of some church. The converts have been told that the old ways are pagan and sinful; therefore, many who have participated in the traditional practices have come before their respective churches and rededicate.

The Last designated medicine man of the Thlopthlocco Tribal Town was Ruben Cook. He tended the ceremonial fireplace for several years until his conversion to Christianity. He asked and received permission from the town king to properly extinguish the fire. In the year 1962, Ruben Cook gave direction from his sick bed on the procedures of extinguishing the fire in a proper way. The old "grandfather fire" had served them well and this ceremony of extinguishing the fire was not total abandonment without as much as saying "Mvto" (thank you); it was not a cold heart-ed forsaking of that which served as a way of communication with the Great Being until the day arrived when they could call the Great Being by the holy name, Cehofv (Jehovah). Because a medicine man had to go through long periods of fasting which receiving the knowledge and power of his medicine ways, he was regarded as a king of holy man. The members of a tribal town had many medicine men to choose from when they go sick; however, if someone engaged him, the designated tribal town's medicine man would perform his services in the art of healing practices, but his main function was to make medicine for the annual ceremonial dance. He was involved in most activities and even of the tribal town such as; group hunting, grou fish kills, making medicine for warriors during war, fixing medicine for orators during peace talks, for stick-ball players and or the ceremonial dances including the Great Fast Posketv-rakko or the Green Corn dance.

The 1978 elders of the Thlopthlocco Tribal Town concur that their tribal town is the off-spring of the Tuckabatchee Tribal Town.Tuckabatchee is said to have come down from

the sky while Coweta came up from beneath the earth's crust and all the tribal towns of the Creeks are said to be the off-spring of the Coweta or Tuckabatchee. The original location of the Thlopthlocco Tribal Town was in the vicinity of what is now Wetumka, Alabama about fifteen miles east of the present Montgomery, Alabama. All of the tribal towns were caught in the forced removal of the Creeks during the 1830's and so they are now located about seven miles east of Okemah, Oklahoma on Interstate 40, Clearview Road, exit 227.

The tribal towns that flourished as representatives of communities no longer holds true. They more or less represent communities by name because the majority of the people that comprised these communities have moved to urban and other areas for economic reasons and come back to the home communities only if there is a special function going on.

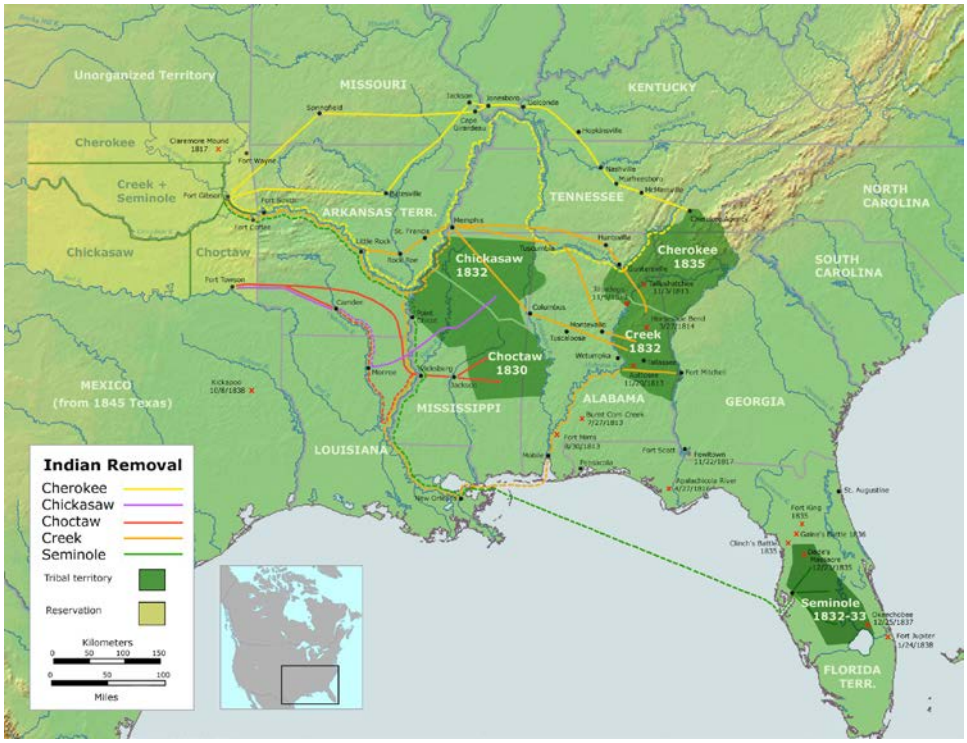
The members of tribal towns that do not practice traditional ceremonies and activities still retain their relationship with their respective towns as a means of identification if nothing else. The Thlopthlocco Tribal Town is an example of a people that can survive tragic events of history can undergo forced adjustments to meet certain requirements of non-Indian cultural norms and still satisfy the traditional values of an Indian community.

Source(s): Thlopthlocco Tribal Town website: http://www.tttown.org/hist.html
http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/T/TH004.html

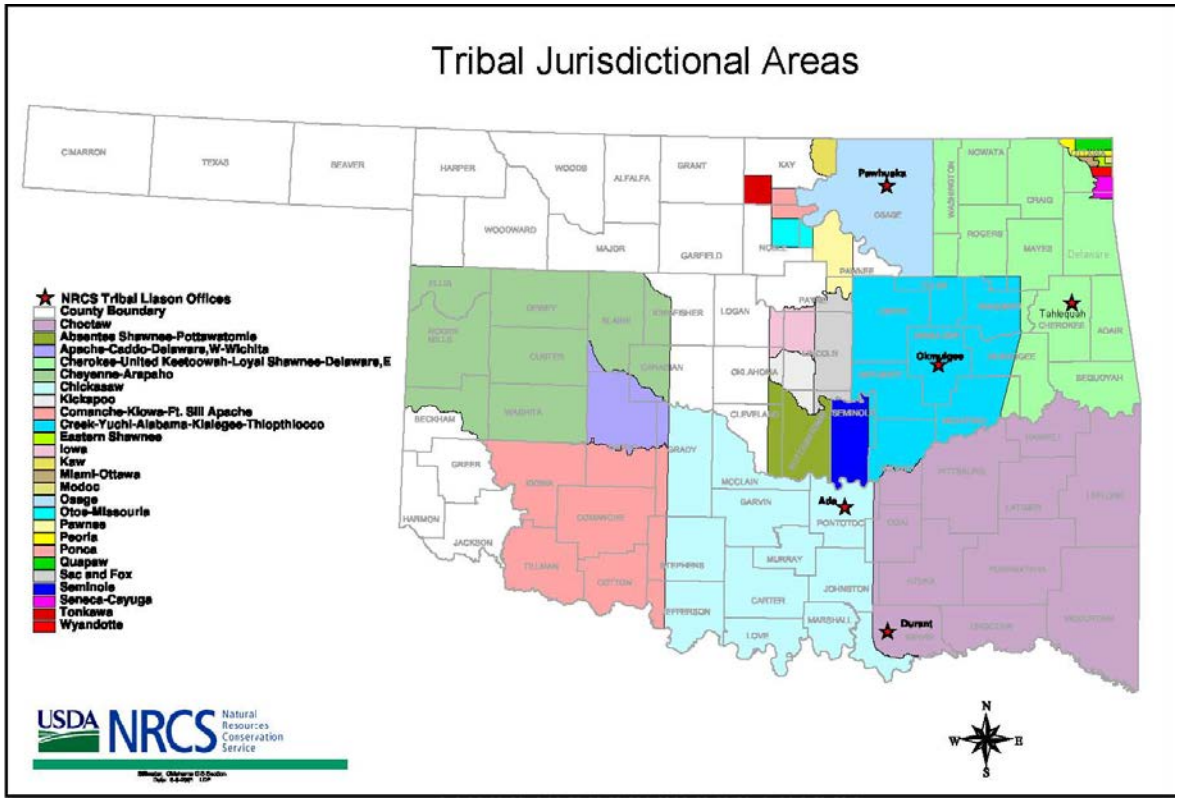
2. Maps

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."*

Trail of Tears route



Present location in Oklahoma



3. Population Past/Present

- Total tribal enrollment: 845
- Tribal enrollment in Oklahoma: 728
- Membership criteria: The first priority for eligibility is that a matrilineal descendancy from a base enrollee of the 1890 Creek Census Roll or 1895 Creek Payroll of the Thlopthlocco Tribal Town exists. The second, if the biological mother has no Muscogee (Creek) blood whatsoever, and the father is a tribal member then the applicant is eligible for membership.

Source: Thlopthlocco Tribal Town website: http://www.tttown.org

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.*

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."*

The governing body is known as the Business Committee, which consists of the five elected officials and five appointed advisory council. The five elected officials include: Town King, two Warriors, a Secretary and a Treasurer. These officials are elected by the town membership and hold the term for a period of four years, or until their successors are elected and installed. The Advisory Council consists of five members of the town who are appointed by elected officials.

The duty of the Town King is to preside over the meetings and carry out the orders of the Business Committee. The Secretary is responsible for keeping full reports of all proceedings of each Business Committee meeting. The Treasurer is the custodian of all moneys which may come under the jurisdiction of and into the control of the Business Committee. The duty of the Business Committee is to promote the general welfare of the members of this town and to carry out the provisions and purposes of the Constitution and By-laws of the Thlopthlocco Tribal Town. The Business Committee has the power to appoint subordinate committees and representatives, to transact business and otherwise speak or act on behalf of the town on all matters.

Source: Thlopthlocco Tribal Town website: www.tttown.org/gov.html

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."*

Language family: Mvskoke

- Mvskoke Language dictionary and pronunciation of words http://www.muscogeenation-nsn.gov/Pages/Language/words.html

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." Oklahoma schools only.*

- One of 44 or more Creek Tribal Towns

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."*

Music

Art

The Thlopthlocco Tribal Town holds an annual arts and crafts festival at the end of each May.

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."

9. Current Information on tribe

The tribe provides a library to its members. The memorial library is located in the Community building (#102). The hours of operation are 8:00 am. - 5:00 pm. Monday through Friday. The library has a variety of books for all ages. Some topics: Native American content, Children's literature, Romance, Mystery, Fiction, Non-Fiction, Health, Science, and many others. We have Resource manuals for the ACT-2008 Edition, The G.E.D. for Dummies, and Hooked on Phonics. The library currently has two (2) computers with access to the Internet for public use. During the summer months, the library offers a Summer Reading program for children ages 4-12. Please come for a visit and share your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions with the librarian Ms. Sharon Taylor.

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

Elder testimonials (audio or written)

"First Missionary Movement" interview with Louis Dunson, Muskogee tribal member

- http://digital.libraries.ou.edu/whc/pioneer/papers/5482%20Dunson.pdf

Famous tribal members:

- Ruben Cook, the last designated medicine man of the Thlopthlocco Tribal Town