

Tonkawa Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma

(Oklahoma Social Studies Standards, OSDE)

Tribe: Tonkawa Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma

Tribal website(s): www.tonkawatribe.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.”*

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 – south central Texas
- Location In Oklahoma – southeast of Tonkawa, Oklahoma
- The Waco (Wichita) name for the Tonkawa is “Tonkaweya”, meaning: ‘They all stay together’. The Tonkawa name for themselves is, “Tickanwa-tic”, meaning: ‘Real People’.
- The Tonkawa was once composed of a number of small sub-tribes that lived in a region that extended west from south central Texas and western Oklahoma to eastern New Mexico.
- Inhabiting a cultural convergence zone, the Tonkawa blended with the Caddoan culture to the east, the plains culture to the north, and the Coahuiltecan culture of northern Mexico. The tribe was first mentioned in 1691 by Spanish explorers; contact was also made with the French in 1719.
- From about 1800, the Tonkawa were allied with the Lipan Apache and were friendly to the Texans and other southern divisions. By 1837, they had for the most part drifted toward the southwestern frontier of Texas and were among the tribes identified in Mexican territory. During the mid-19th century, white settlers pressure for Tonkawa Lands spurred the federal government to settle the tribe on two small reservations in Texas.
- In 1859, the Tonkawas were removed to Indian Territory near present-day Anadarko. In 1862, seven agency tribes banded together and raided the Tonkawas, and the

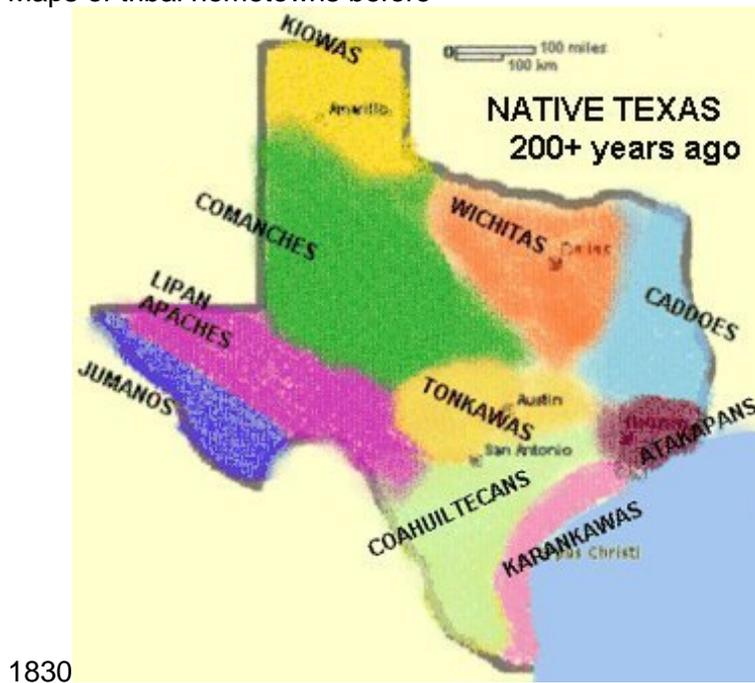
remaining members fled to Fort Griffin, Texas, remaining there until 1884.

- The Tonkawa were removed from Fort Griffin, Texas in October 1884 . . . they were transported by railroad from a station in Cisco, Texas to a temporary stop at the Sac-Fox Agency near Stroud, Oklahoma. The entire Tribe wintered at the Sac-Fox Agency until spring, then traveled the last 100 miles by wagon fording many rain swelled rivers and axle deep mud caused by severe spring rains.
- They reached the Ponca Agency on June 29th, and then finally to "Oakland" on June 30th, 1885. Fort Oakland was located in Indian Territory, previously inhabited by Chief Joseph's band of exiled Nez Perce. This was the Tonkawa "Trail of Tears"... a time in our history that should always be commemorated lest we forget. The Tribe has changed the date of its annual Pow-Wow to coincide with this historic date, therefore, the annual Tonkawa Pow-Wow is scheduled on the last weekend in June.
- The Tonkawa Tribe of Oklahoma incorporated in 1938.

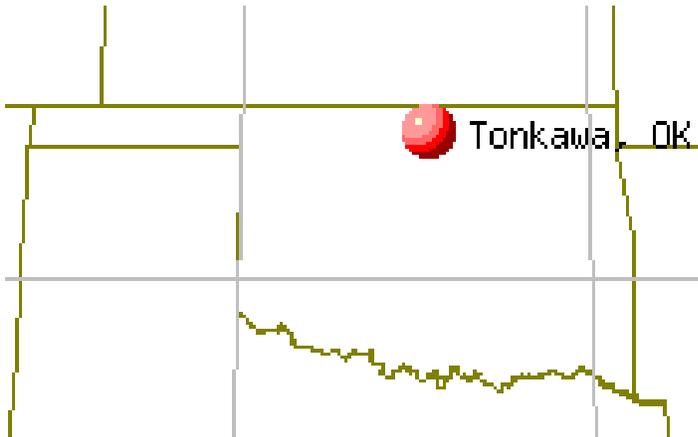
2. Maps

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.”

- Maps of tribal hometowns before



Location in Indian Territory (Oklahoma) 1885



3. Population Past/Present

- Total tribal enrollment – In 2013, there are approximately 700 members. In 1891, the Tonkawa Reserve was allotted to 73 members.
- Tribal enrollment in Oklahoma
- Enrollment criteria

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 Tribal Committee composed of a president, vice president and secretary/treasurer, serves as the elected governing body for enrolled tribal members. Committee members serve two-year terms, with elections occurring every other year.

- The Tonkawa Tribe is organized under the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act, having adopting a constitution and bylaws on April 21, 1938. This constitution was amended on April 2, 1977 and on September 1, 1994.

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 Tonkawa belong to the Tonkawan linguistic family, that was once composed of a number of small sub-tribes that lived in a region that extended west from south central Texas and western Oklahoma to eastern New Mexico. The Tonkawa had a distinct language, and their name, as that of the leading tribe, was applied to their linguistic family.
- They have developed a dictionary, texts, and readers, which have helped to preserve as much knowledge as possible.

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.”*

- In as much as the Tonkawa led a nomadic existence, they built rather simple, make-shift shelters almost always of a temporary nature. They had tipis which were generally small and constructed of poles covered with bison hides. The Tonkawa evidently used these more extensively in the eighteenth than in the nineteenth century, for the tipis diminished along with the bison.

- Brush shelters were also used. These were small, temporary dwellings, which were abandoned whenever the Indian moved camp. First a framework of poles and light branches was set up to form a cone. Over this were laid smaller branches, bark, "brushwood," or mesquite. Occasionally this structure was thatched with grass or covered over with a few bison hides. The only mention of internal arrangement was that a fire was laid in the center. These lodges were five (5) to seven (7) feet high, flat on top, and open on one or two sides.
- The Tonkawa, like most the Plains tribes, had a variety of dances that were performed regularly and ceremoniously. Among many dances belonging to the Tonkawa were the: Buffalo Dance, Deer Dance, Wild Hog Dance, Turkey Dance, Dance of the Short Steps, Notched Stick Dance, and a dance called "Singing All Around" which later became known as the "Back and Forth" dance. Dances connected with war were especially important to the Tonkawa. The "Scout" dance, the "Scalp" Dance, and the "Hold-Shield" dance were three primary dances associated with warfare. The "Wolf" dance was a particularly solemn ceremony performed to commemorate the "origin" of "creation" of the Tonkawa. This dance was probably the most sacred of all dances and efforts were made to keep it secret from outsiders.
- Another spiritually significant dance was the "Tome-ka" or "Water-Drum" dance which really was not a dance at all, but a religious ceremony which later became known as the "Peyote Ritual." This form of religious expression or worship had been a cultural tradition among the Tonkawa and Lipan since before the coming of Columbus. Other French and Spanish explorers noted this religious ceremony which utilized the peyote as a "sacrificial medicine" in use by the Tonkawa and Lipan during the 1600's. During the last 100 years, however, many tribes have adapted the use of this "sacrificial medicine" to their own religious ceremonials through a process of cultural exchange. The name "Native American Church" has been applied to this newly developed inter-tribal religion, but to the Tonkawa and Lipan, this religion is as old as the people themselves.
- The clothing of the Tonkawa Indians, except for some items which were secured through trade (cloth shirts, trousers, and blankets), consisted primarily of bison hides or deer skins; these last were sometimes heavily beaded. It is said that when bison hides were unobtainable, the Tonkawa used bear or wolf skins. The women generally prepared the skins. Bison hides were worn with the hair left on. Deer skins however, were scraped on both sides, first having been soaked in "lye water" made from leaching wood ashes. Next, bison brains or the juices of certain plants were rubbed into the hides; after that the skins were further softened by pounding and scraping with flint knives.
- Men sometimes wore only a breechclout of deerskin or cloth. These were said to be quite long. Men also wore skin shirts or "jackets," beaded moccasins of buckskin or bison hide, and leggings, belts, garters, and robes of bison hide. Tonkawa men wore earrings or necklaces of bones, shells, or of shell. The men wore their hair long and parted in the middle; they also braided it with cloth or wrapped it in strips of fur.
- In preparation for a battle, the warriors put on headdresses of horns and feathers and red flannel, and they painted themselves and their horses with stripes. The men decorated their

faces with special designs and colors. Certain individuals had the privilege of painting in a certain way, and this pattern could be used by an individual only if it was transferred to him. The designs were said to be imitated in the bead work. Among the colors used in face and body painting were red, the green, yellow, and black.

- These pigments were sometimes mixed with saliva and applied in daubs.
- Few descriptions of women's clothing are extant. The Tonkawa women wore little clothing, a small piece of deerskin which served as a skirt was the only article of clothing worn. However, some had an additional piece of hide draped about their shoulders. The skirts worn by the younger women had tinkling ornaments attached to the hem. In later times the women wore woolen blankets, a cloth dress, and skin moccasins.
- Women parted their hair in the middle and wore it sometimes long, sometimes short. Paint was applied in black stripes to the mouth, nose, and back. On each breast black strips were painted in concentric circles extending from the nipple to the base of the breast. Women also tattooed themselves with charcoal and with various colored ingredients. Apparently they wore fewer ornaments than the men, earring and elaborate shell necklaces being the only articles noted.
- An important weapon was the bow and arrow, which was used in warfare and in hunting bison and deer. The bow string was generally fashioned from bison sinew. The arrows were supposedly "poisoned" with the juice of the mistletoe leaf (this is known to be non-poisonous).
- Other weapons were the spear and the lances, used in warfare and in bison hunting. Here too, "poison" from the mistletoe leaf was used. As defensive armor the Tonkawa wore "jackets," helmets, and shields of dressed hides.
- The most important animal sought by the Tonkawa was unquestionably the bison. The bison provided them with much of their food, and the skins were used in making clothing and tipis. Bison fat, meat and hides were also traded. The bones were also utilized in manufactured items.
- The deer - used both for its meat and skins ranked next to the bison.
- The Tonkawa had herds of horses; some of these were obtained through raids and used for transportation purposes and also used in battle. Wild horses were hunted for addition to the herds, and sometimes these were sought for the hair from their manes and tails, the rest of the animal being abandoned.
- The wolf was reportedly not hunted, for the Tonkawa believed that they had been brought into the world by this animal, or were even descended from it. (Nevertheless the Tonkawa were in possession of a number of wolf skins, which were used in performing the wolf dance.) The Tonkawa claimed that if they killed a wolf they would lose their eyesight temporarily, go crazy, or contract a fever, unless special 'medicines' were taken.
- When the Tonkawa encountered a wolf they asked him to provide them with deer when

they hunted. After the hunt when the men returned to camp, they hung the game in some trees, first conducting special rites to protect from being carried off by the wolves. The Tonkawa stated that on one occasion a member of the tribe killed a deer but neglected to perform the necessary ceremony before hanging up the meat he had obtained. When he returned, the meat was gone, whereas that belonging to the other Indians had been left intact.

- Apparently the taboo on killing wolves was in some instances extended to include the coyote. The grey wolf was said to be 'the owner of the earth' and his permission was asked when hunters entered new hunting grounds.
- Collecting ranked next to hunting in the Tonkawa economy, and in the first half on the nineteenth century it became increasingly important as a means of securing food. They gathered a number of herbs, edible roots, acorns and wild fruits. Pecans were collected in large numbers.
- At times, fish and oysters were also obtained and used as food. Most meat was cooked by roasting; however, some of it was cured by the women. Dried venison or bison meat was pounded and mixed with pecan meal to form pemmican, the principal food of the Tonkawa when they were traveling or on the warpath.
- Before the tuna (prickly pear) could be eaten, the spines had to be removed. For this purpose the Tonkawa used pincers made from slivers of deer antler. Food was occasionally seasoned with chili made from the berries of the red pepper plant. And oysters were said to be 'barbecued' in their shells.
- Some additional items of Tonkawa material culture are harnesses and lassoes made of bison hides. These include rope made from the tails and manes of horses, as well as rope and coarse cloth manufactured from the inner bark of the mulberry tree. He also notes that they wove baskets and grass mats. They also made pots of fired clay.

Oklahoma Historical Society source to consider for Boarding Schools:
<http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/a/am012.html>

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.”*

- Musical instruments were rattles made of gourds containing pebbles or buckshot, and drums consisting of a metal container with a deerskin head or simply a deer hide tightly stretched

over a hoop.

- The dances connected with war were particularly important among the Tonkawa. The men who were to undertake a raid held a "**scout dance**". The dance began after dark. A number of warriors stood in a ring holding a large un-tanned cowhide which they struck in unison with sticks or switches about two feet long. A leader keeps time, and the whole ceremony was conducted with great order and formality. During part of the ceremony the men would get up and sit down repeatedly for about ten minutes. The men sang during the proceedings in low pitched, then high pitched voices. They imitated animal cries to represent the "hunting" of wild Indians. The men sang twice before the tipi of each warrior who was to participate in the raid, then moved on to the tipi of the next man.
- Several descriptions to the "**scalp dance**" have been given. In one of these the warriors, dressed in their best breechcloths and decorated with "war" paint, formed a circle around the scalp; this had been covered with paint and was held up on the point of a lance by a woman. Each of the men was supposed to have some kind of musical instrument. All of these were played in unison, along with a drum consisting of a deer hide which had been tightly stretched over a hoop. The Indians also "chanted," at the same time raising and lowering their bodies in time to the music; this suggests similarities to the scout dance.
- A few other war dances have been described. One of these was the "**hold-shield**" dance, referring to a bison-hide shield which was used in the rite. Only the men participated. They moved in a circle around the fire, giving war whoops to music provided by skin drums. In still another dance the men apparently rode horses in a circle. Specially improvised songs were sung at the war dances. And the achievements and important events in the history of the tribe were occasionally recounted. The dancers in war ceremonies wore special headdresses of feathers and of cloth decorated with buttons and embroidery.
- An especially important ceremony among the Tonkawa was the "**wolf dance**". This was supposed to commemorate the "origin" or "creation" of the Tonkawa. The wolf dance was held in a large dance lodge. It was essentially a solemn ceremony and efforts were made to keep it secret from outsiders. Only the men participated. One of these wolf dances was witnessed by the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Texas, who had lived with the Tonkawa for a time. According to this account, there were fifty warriors covered from head to toe in wolf skins. These were carefully draped so that the dancers would resemble wolves as much as possible. The Tonkawa entered the lodge in single file, then moved about on all fours growling and howling like wolves. From time to time, they put their noses toward the ground and "sniffed" in various directions. Suddenly one individual stopped and uttered a sharp cry and began scratching the ground at a certain predestinated spot. The other gathered around and also began digging with their hands. In a few minutes they uncovered a Tonkawa Indian who had been buried there before the ceremony. The wolf dancers ran about sniffing and examining him with intense interest. Next, some of the dancers, representing the older, more important wolves, met in a council to determine what should be done with this Tonkawa Indian. They finally advised him to live as the wolves did - by killing and stealing. They placed a bow and arrow in his hands, saying that he was to use this to provide himself with food and clothing. He was to wander about like the wolves and never build a permanent dwelling nor cultivate the soil - if he did he would surely die.
- Another important ceremonial was the "**buffalo dance**". In this, some of the men wore

bison horns and caps or hats and danced to the beating of a drum. Apparently some of the dancers used a gun to "shoot at" others who were supposed to represent the bison, and these latter "caught" bullets in their hands to feign being wounded. Still other Indians simulated the driving of lances through the bison dancers. This ceremony lasted all night.

- The Tonkawa Indians also had a "**deer dance**" in which both men and women participated. Dancers ate the red bean of the wild mesquite plant during the ceremony. In still another rite some of the women danced, each one holding a long stick to which were affixed deer "claws". These sticks were to be struck on the ground.
- Both men and women participated in the "**wild hog dance**". The main feature of the rite was the eating of the bulb of a plant which grew in Mexico. Although it was not identified, it may well have been the peyote bulb. The music was supplied by a drum which had been covered with a "wetted" hide so that only muffled sounds would be produced.
- In the "**turkey ceremony**" the women danced in a ring, imitating turkeys going around in a circle. A few of the women participated in the "**notched stick dance**". Apparently some of them rubbed a notched piece of wood to produce a noise which served to call the other women to the dance.
- In a dance called "**singing all around**", rattles were used. During the proceedings a woman would pick out a man she liked and sing with him. In somewhat similar ceremony, the women danced in a ring around four or five men and sang special songs.
- The "**dance of the short steps**" was also for the women, the men here being the spectators. In several other ceremonies, the women lined up in rows behind the men. Then the entire group moved in unison either forward and backward or from side to side. Sometimes they also sang to music provided by drumbeats and the rattling of gourds.
- The Tonkawa were among the first of the tribes north of Mexico to utilize the peyote bulb in the "**peyote rite**". Only those Indians who had left their hair long, who were wearing "perfume" made of special herbs, who had painted faces, and who were attired in a breechcloth and buckskin leggings and shirt were permitted inside the ceremonial tipi. The entrance of the tipi faced the east. After an individual was inside he was supposed to turn to his left and move around the tipi in a clockwise direction. Most of those who were participating in the ceremony sat in a circle around the peyotes, which were laid out on a piece of buckskin inside a flat basket. The peyotes were passed around the circle always in a clockwise direction. At intervals the Indians prayed and saw visions. Those persons who were to sing sat in a row. Each singer sang four songs and at the same time beat on a drum fashioned from a large metal container, the top of which had been tightly covered with buckskin. When one of the singers had finished, he passed the peyotes to his neighbor and shook a gourd rattle for this person. And after his neighbor was finished singing, the rattle was given to him. The ceremony lasted for four days and four nights.
- The Tonkawa also held a "**sun dance**". The Tonkawa sun dance differed from the typical sun dance of the Plains primarily in that the Tonkawa did not look into the sun or practice any form of "torture". Besides this, we only know that the ceremony was restricted to the men, who beat on a cowhide with a stick.

- A "**ghost dance**" was witnessed after the Tonkawa had been permanently settled at the Oakland Agency and had been in contact with a number of Plains tribes in Oklahoma. During this rite, some of the men sang while others beat on drums. They went into "trances" and recited "visions" of the departure of the White men in ships and the re-appearance of the bison on the Plains.

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.”*

- The Tonkawa were one of the most warlike tribes during nearly two centuries of conflict with their enemy tribes on the Western plains and with the Spanish and, later, American settlers in the Southwest. Their men were famous warriors, and their chiefs bore many scars of battle. During the mid-19th century, white settlers pressure for Tonkawa lands spurred the federal government to settle the tribe on two small reservations in Texas.
- In 1884, the federal government relocated the tribe temporarily to the Sac-Fox agency and then in the spring of 1885 to Fort Oakland in Indian Territory.
- The Tonkawa Tribe of Oklahoma incorporated in 1938.

Oklahoma Historical Society: <http://www.okhistory.org/research/indianrecs>

9. Current Information on tribe

- The Tonkawa Tribe aims to increase economic opportunity for its members while earning revenues through 2 tribally owned gaming facilities and a third is under construction, a travel plaza and motel, and an agricultural operation.
- In addition to tribally owned businesses, the tribe administers federally funded programs and services in education, job training, health and diabetes care, transportation, child care and others.
- A community center is located at Fort Oakland on the tribal reserve near Tonkawa. Tribal members receive electricity and gas service from regional providers.

- Tribal members receive health care through the Pawnee Agency in Pawnee, approximately 30 miles southeast of the tribal reserve. Hospitals are also located in Ponca City. Children attend Kay County Public Schools.
- The Environmental Protection Board (EPB) holds regular meetings, which are well publicized and open to the community. Project staff also put in place a plan for holding public hearings when necessary, and reported the community now has a voice. The project not only developed the Tribe's capacity to prevent pollution of air, water, land, and all other natural resources, but also provided opportunities for forming partnerships and exercising Tribal sovereignty.
- The Tribe holds their annual Pow-Wow to coincide with the historic date of their arrival at "Oakland" in 1885, therefore, the annual Tonkawa Pow-Wow is scheduled on the last weekend in June.

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

- July, 1992- Henry Allen, worked quietly and unselfishly for years on his own private project to remember and honor the native people, Nez Perce who were gathered on the grounds of the old Fort Oakland, now known as Tonkawa, Oklahoma by the U.S. Cavalry in 1877, and then were forced to walk to new reservations in the northwest. Heinmont Tooyalaket, known to whites as Chief Joseph, legendary Nez Perce leader, and Yellow Wolf, were among the chiefs who tried to keep the Nez Perce people together. On September 21, 1904 Heinmont Tooyalaket, Chief Joseph, died at the age of 63. The attending physician reported that cause of death was "a broken heart". This then, is the story which touched Henry Allen, Sr., Chief of the Tonkawa's so much that he had to honor them with his own memorial. Today the board fence has been replaced with a wire fence and the burial ground is surrounded with farm crops. The constant Oklahoma winds whistling through the trees and the tall corn seem to whisper to the listener, voicing their thanks to Henry who wanted no recognition for building this memorial and to the occasional visitor who traveled a hot and dusty country road to briefly visit with them and to see their final resting place. The writing on the memorial stone reads, "NEZ PERCE INDIAN BURIAL GROUND 1879-1885". It is a memorial to the good heart of Henry Allen, Sr., and the Tonkawa people as well.

A-ho!

Sources:

Oklahoma Historical Society source to consider for Indian Removal information:
<http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/i/in015.html>

The Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/Indian.html>

Oklahoma Indian Country Guide, Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department
[NIE 2011 OK Indian Country Guide\[\[1\].pdf](#)

Oklahoma Historical Society

Oklahoma Indian Country Guide, Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department *One State Many Nations*

The Library of Congress