

The Osage Nation

(Oklahoma Social Studies Standards, OSDE)

Tribe: Osage Nation

Tribal website(s): osagenation.com (Old website: limited content in read only format)

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."*

The Osage were originally known by *Ni-U-Kon-Ska*, which means "Children of the Middle Waters." Today they call themselves *Wah-Zha-Zhi*, which was translated by French explorers as *Ouazhigi*, which later became the English name *Osage*. Early settlers have said that the Osages were the largest Native people in North America, with the Osage men averaging over 6 feet tall. In war, they were feared by neighboring tribes.

The culture of the Osage Nation reaches back in time. Perhaps to the beginning of time. There is not much written about the Osage People before the mid-1600's. At that time, traders and explorers began to document their accounts with tribes of the Midwest in what was later to become the United States. The Osages were considered a Siouan people, semi-nomadic in nature and recorded mainly throughout the Missouri and Arkansas area. They were a Nation of people with a familial culture of Northern Plains' tribes.



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.”*

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](#)

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 1830; original homeland map

All nations east of the Mississippi traveled the Trail of Tears. The Osage were no different. They were removed and settled in Kansas. By the time they negotiated the treaty of 1865, to purchase land in Oklahoma, the Osages had reduced in population by 95%. Only 3000 Osage People walked across the Kansas boarder into their new land.



3. Population Past/Present

- Total tribal enrollment:
- Tribal enrollment in Oklahoma:
- Membership criteria:

The Osage Nation is located in Osage County. Their tribal headquarters is in the town of Pawhuska, Oklahoma. The name Pawhuska, means “White Hair”.

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.”*

Osage History

- In 1871-1872, the Osage Tribe was removed to a reservation described and confirmed by the Act of June 5, 1872 in Indian Territory now Oklahoma.
- Since the Reservation was purchased pursuant to treaty, the Osages were excluded from the General allotment Act of 1887, and their lands were not allotted until agreed in 1906.

During the early 1890’s the Osage successfully resisted the Government efforts to induce them to accept allotment and to sell their surplus lands. Allotment was a critical issue for the Osages. A 34 year period between removal to the Indian Territory and allotment of their reservation had Osages experiencing many changes.

The Osages approved an Allotment Bill in 1906 that was taken to Congress. The Allotment Act marked a special legislation by Congress pertaining to the Osage Tribe. The Osages were one of the last tribes to accept allotment.

On October 18, 1897, the first oil producing strike on Osage Reservation was made which would lead to a more complex and competitive time period.

Today the Osage Nation Government is a tri-partide format consisting of three branches, Executive, Legislative and Judicial. Current leaders of the Osage Nation are Principal Chief Scott Bighorse and Assistant Principal Chief Terry Mason Moore.



For the Osage: The Golden Circle represents tribal prosperity. The Arrowhead represents the hunt. The Pipe represents peace and friendship and the Eagle Feather Fan represents tribal authority.

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.”*

Osages were originally in what are now Missouri, Arkansas, and Kansas and they were removed to what is now Osage County in the late 1800s. In spite of their circumstances they were able to hang onto their language and ways.

As time passed, the “pure Osage” language was diluted by European influences. Osages who were born in 1906 and later were sent off to boarding schools, while there they were forced to quit speaking Osage and speak English.

Speakers between 1906 and 1940 continued to hear and speak Osage in their homes, but they took up more English and European ways.

Osages who were born from 1940 forward had English as their first language; they heard Osage spoken. The language diluted even more and much of the meaning was lost.

Many attempts have been made to keep the language alive. These attempts have laid a foundation of words and developed an ongoing interest to learn and preserve the language. Unfortunately, no fluent speakers were developed.

The Osages speak a Dhegiha Siouan language that is related to the Quapaw, Kaw, Ponca and Omaha. The Osage Nation Language Department hosted the first Dhegiha Gathering of the five tribes in 2011 and has continued to 2012 and 2013.

The Osage Language website includes the orthography, lesson plans, audio and current schedules of Osage language classes.

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.*



Osage Boarding School, Pawhuska, OK
(Oklahoma Historical Center)

Osage parents began sending their children to public schools in preference to local government and mission boarding schools as towns developed in Osage County. Public school facilities became more adequate which lead to the closing of the schools. The government boarding school closed in 1921. St. John's in 1915 and St. Louis in 1948.

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.”*

The Osage of today resonate their culture of long standing traditions by clinging to the lessons of their ancestors. The modern day Osage is educated, diverse and staunch to the fact that being Osage is their identity.

Our native culture today is a respectful memorial to our past. We participate in our dance, our feasting and our naming ceremonies because that is what we have left. We do not try to re-create the past, we are the present and our culture is in the present. Like all indigenous cultures, we are a traditional people. No matter where we roam, we are always "Osage" and that is what brings us back to our Osage Reservation. To commune with each other, to relate to each other and to be recognized each year during our ceremonials as Osages.

The Osage have their ceremonial dances during the month of June. Three districts, Grayhorse, Hominy and Pawhuska maintain these ceremonial dances called the, “I’n Lon Ska”. It is said the three districts are the bands of the Big Hill, Upland Forest and Thorny Thicket.



Osage finger weaving and ribbonwork designs.

8. Significant events (i.e. 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.”*

Event: The Louisiana Expansion – preliminaries to June 2, 1804

http://www.umsi.edu/continuinged/louisiana/Am_Indians/1-Osage/1-osage.html

On Friday, 1 June 1804, the Lewis and Clark Expedition arrived at the mouth of the Osage River, a dozen days after leaving St. Charles, Missouri. Seeing the "best land he had ever seen," a member of the Corps of Discovery wrote in his journal that "the Osage nation of Indians live about two hundred miles up this River" and "are of a large size and well proportioned, and a very warlike people."

Lewis and Clark had little to fear from the Osage, however, because they were the most important fur-trading tribe in Missouri for forty years prior to the Louisiana Purchase. When St. Louis was founded in 1764, the Osage were the original "Gateway to the West," using their talents and knowledge to make the fur trade profitable and western exploration possible.

The Osage leaders met Lewis and Clark long before the Expedition began and gave valuable information about Missouri River tribes. When the Corps of Discovery passed by the Osage River, Lewis and Clark did not meet with the Osage chiefs who were traveling on an official visit to Washington, D.C. President Thomas Jefferson wanted to meet members of this valuable and helpful tribe because he knew they were "the great nation South of the Missouri."

Event: Mahongo Unveiled

A painting of the Osage Woman named Mahongo was unveiled at the Oklahoma State Capitol on May 2004. The story of Mahongo is one that many would have never known about. The painting is a gift from Senator Ford and hangs at the capitol of Oklahoma.

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

9. Current Information on tribe

Newspaper article:

Osage Tribe Opposes Wind Turbines, Seeks Eagle Protections

<http://news.heartland.org/newspaper-article/2013/07/10/osage-tribe-opposes-wind-turbines-seeks-eagle-protections>

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

Literature

- Osage Spider Legend, retold and written by Archie Mason Jr. 1984. Center Five. Tulsa, OK.
- Osage Wedding Story, Indian Values Past and Present. Lucelia Wise. OSDE. 1978
- Mean Spirit, Linda Hogan. 1990

Famous tribal members

- Maria and Marjorie Tall Chief- Ballerinas from Fairfax, Oklahoma.
- General Clarence Tinker- Tinker Air Force base named after him.
- Timeline download

Sources:

Osage Nation tribal website

Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report 1900. A Field report of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Osage Agency. 1952-1953

Clark, Blue. Indian Tribes of Oklahoma. University of Oklahoma Press: Norman. 2009.

Burns, Louis F. Osage Indian, Customs and Myths. University of Alabama Press: Tuscaloosa. 1984 and 2005.

Hogan, Linda. Mean Spirit. Ivy Books. Published by Ballantine Books. 1990

Historic Native American- The Osage

http://www.umsi.edu/continuinged/louisiana/Am_Indians/1-Osage/1-osage.html

Oklahoma Historical Center

The Library of Congress