

The Seminole Nation of Oklahoma

(Oklahoma Social Studies Standards, OSDE)

Tribe: Seminole Nation of Oklahoma

Tribal website(s): sno-nsn.gov/

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

The history of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma began when Spain first occupied the peninsula known as Florida. When Pedro Menéndez de Avilés founded St. Augustine in 1565, the first permanent settlement in Florida after at least 60 years of sporadic Spanish visitation, he discovered complex cultures sustained by hunting, fishing, farming and raising stock. Tribes from three different basic language groups, the Timuquan, Calusan and Muskhogean occupied Florida and lived in small and well-organized villages.

Location in Oklahoma

Today the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma is located in Seminole County, Oklahoma. The entire county of Seminole is a portion of the original Seminole Nation jurisdiction, and covers approximately 633 square miles. The county is a checkerboard of tribal trust property, Indian allotments, restricted Indian lands, and dependent Indian communities. Native Americans make up 22% of the population of Seminole County.

Oklahoma Historical Society source to consider for Indian Removal information:

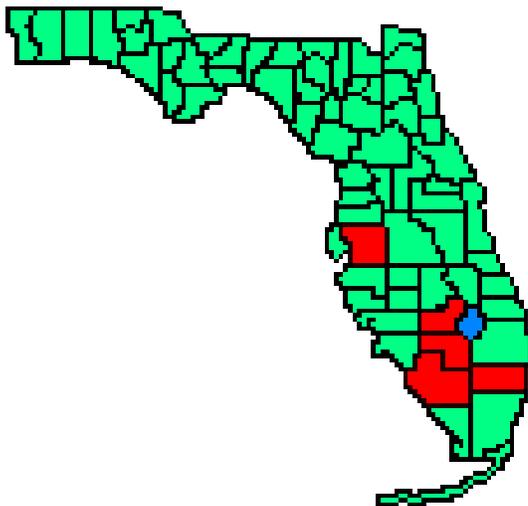
<http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/i/in015.html>

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

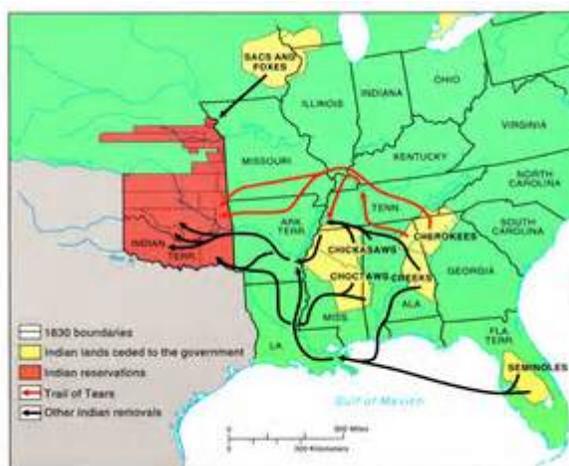
2. Maps

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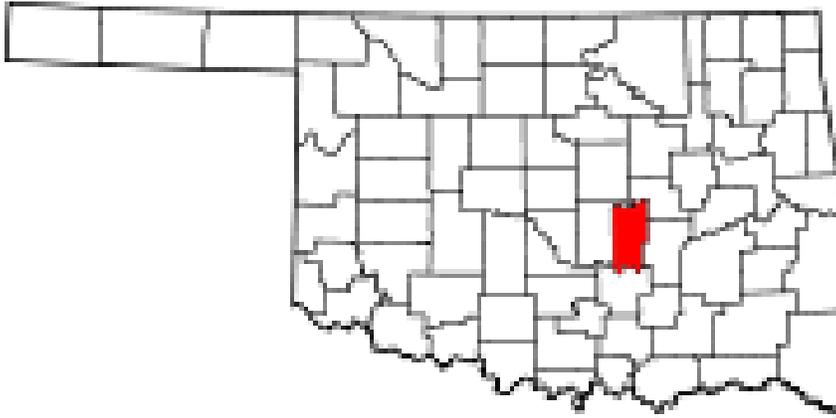
Map of tribal hometowns before 1830



Trail of Tears route



Tribal lands after 1830



3. Population Past/Present

- Total tribal enrollment: 17,000
- Tribal enrollment in Oklahoma: 5,315

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.”

Tribal Government leadership

Government

The Seminole General Council, chaired by the Principal Chief and Assistant Chief, serves as the elected governing body. The Chief and Assistant Chief are elected at large every four years. The Seminole Nation ratified a constitution on March 8, 1969, which the Commission of Indian Affairs approved on April 15, 1969. The Nation is comprised of 14 matrilineal bands, including two Freedman bands. Each band has an elected band chief and assistant band chief and meets monthly. Each band is governed by a set of

bylaws which originate from the band. Tribal headquarters are located in Wewoka, the seat of Seminole County. The general council meets at the council house on the Mekusukey Mission Tribal Grounds south of Seminole. The Nation has been developing a new tribal constitution that will eliminate the role of the BIA in tribal government operations.

Tribal government departments include administrative, executive, fiscal affairs, treasury, domestic violence, Indian Child Welfare, family and social services, enrollment, gaming, housing, education, language, communications, elder services, environmental, law enforcement, dialysis, youth, child care, roads, and Head start. Tribal departments are funded with either tribal revenue or federal/ state funding.

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.”

Most Seminoles speak the Mvskoke (Creek) language (especially in Oklahoma), although there are Hitchiti-speakers in Oklahoma and Mikausuke-speakers in Florida, Hitchiti and Mikasude are the same languages are, with dialectical differences. Prehistoric archeological sites are scattered across Florida. Some are ancient, others are Woodland, and still others are Mississippian cultures. The Seminoles were composed of remnants of many tribal nations and the Seminole-Creeks were latecomers to the peninsula however, so the archeological sites do not have direct application to them. But a few of the remnant who made up the Seminoles were connected to ancient residence in Florida. In addition, there are archeological burial sites of the historical residence of the Seminoles, of course, especially in their prerulement settlement and at gathering points for debarkation to Indian Territory.

The first Seminole mission school founded in the Indian Territory (present Oklahoma) was Oak Ridge, a manual labor school established in 1848. The Oak Ridge site was about three miles southeast of present Holdenville in the former Creek Nation, where the Seminoles dwelled until 1856. The Presbyterian Mission Board built and ran the school. Rev. John Lilley and his wife, Mary Anne, were in charge. The Lilleys were assisted by John Bemo, a Seminole. In 1853 they had twenty-six students, nineteen of whom were Seminole.

The Methodist Episcopal Church built Sasakwa Female Academy in 1880 near Sasakwa. In 1892 the institution was moved south of Wewoka and later consolidated with a new girls’ boarding school called Emahaka Mission or Academy.

Emahaka Mission was established in 1894, Emahaka, a Seminole word meaning “girls school,” was located five miles south of Wewoka, on the Seminole-Creek Nation border. Full capacity of the schools boarding department was 112. Studies ranged from elementary arithmetic to foreign languages.

Mekasukey Academy (which meant in Creek “where the chiefs meet”) a later translation was “the place where Christianity is taught.” Mekasukey was built three miles south and two miles west of present Seminole. Instructors spoke only English, and children were not permitted to speak their native language during the nine-month term.

6. Cultural Identifiers - ie. 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-1940s) upon Native Americans’ identity, culture, traditions, and tribal government and sovereignty.”*

Traditional dances are held throughout the spring and summer months at ceremonial grounds. Cultural ceremonies and grounds must be treated with utmost respect and decorum. Invited attendees must adhere to strict cultural guidelines and refrain from taking any photographs, videos and sound recordings.

Out of the eight ceremonial grounds that made the journey from their Eastern homelands to Indian Territory only one, *Ceyahv* (Gar Creek) still survives today with a fully functional ceremonial cycle.

Clan Law

In order to understand clan law and its guiding force in the lives of Seminole people it is necessary to provide a brief explanation of the origin of clans. In ancient times the people aligned themselves with certain animal and other supernatural spirits to assist them in enduring a hardship they were experiencing. Upon doing so a vow was made promising a commitment by the individuals associated with their particular being to remain in association from that point forward. For the majority of Seminole people this clan association had been maintained into modern times.

Clan Law and kinship are highly revered and held in great respect within the spiritual and ceremonial world among the Seminole people. Clan law traditionally governs every aspect of tribal life, from the spiritual, to the governmental, to the social.

Clans are matrilineal as they are inherited through one’s mother. For example, if an individual’s mother is of the *Wotkvlke* or Raccoon Clan, and the father is of the

Hvlpvtvlke or Alligator Clan, that individual would be of the Raccoon Clan. However, this person would also be related to the Alligator Clan, as a son or daughter. In turn, all other Raccoon Clan people and Alligator Clan people would be that persons relations, and would be referred to as aunts and uncles, if the age of a fellow clansman was relative to that of the mother and father, or brother and sister if the age of the clansman was relative to that of the child him/herself.

The Seminole base the ability to take a spouse on clan relationships. There is never to be intermarriage of clans. In keeping with the previous example of marriage between a Raccoon Clan and an Alligator Clan, a Raccoon Clan woman marrying a man of the Raccoon or Alligator Clan would be the equivalent of a woman marrying her brother, or according to age, a daughter marrying her father.

Historically, many marriages were arranged according to clan strength, or need for renewing life into a dormant clan. Although there are various creation stories that relate the hierarchy of the various clans, each clan holds essential qualities that pertained to a specific job or position held in the ceremonial ground, as well as at home. Each clan had a special talent, as well as a balance of weaknesses for various aspects of the spiritual world.

For example, if a tribal town was only allowed to seat a certain clan as their chief, for example, they could only be of the Bear Clan, and there was a shortage of Bear Clan people in the tribal town, then men would be encouraged to take a wife of the Bear Clan. In turn, the children of this marriage would be of the Bear Clan, and would therefore help to restore the Bear Clan people.

Child Socialization

Traditionally child rearing was the responsibility of all the individuals in the tribe. Clan law regulated much of the specifics associated with the process. For example, in instances of discipline it was the child's maternal uncle who was responsible for administering punishment because it was unlawful for an individual of another clan to do so.

Today extended family members raise many Seminole children. It is not uncommon for tribal children to live primarily with an aunt, grandparent or other family member. Seminole children are often raised with the core values of caring for one another. Elder siblings often play an integral role in the socialization of their younger siblings.

Mortuary Practices

Seminole people hold times of loss in high regard. Customarily, the passing of a loved one is a time of mourning that lasts for four days. During this time the family of the deceased carries out the final steps of the funeral process. Modern Seminole people still hold tight to ensuring that the burial of a loved one occurs within the four days after death. The time of mourning encompasses several customs and family traditions and,

as it can be overwhelming for a family that has just experienced the death of a loved one, is usually only able to be carried out with the help of family and close friends. Many of the practiced customs include times of fasting, participation in overnight vigils, and much cooking, cleaning, and other varying activities.

The body of the deceased is customarily buried with his or her feet towards the East. Prior to removal, the body of the deceased was buried beneath the floor of the family's dwelling. In modern times, the deceased are often buried in family cemeteries and a small house is erected over the top of the grave. This house is sometimes referred to as a *poyvfekev-cuko* (spirit house). Objects that were meaningful to the deceased are placed within the house along with food that has been set aside from the meal that is traditionally prepared following the funeral services.

Stubborn resistance to allotment in severalty among the Five Tribes under the Dawes commission let Congress to enact the harsh Curtis Act (1898). It abolished most of the Seminole Nation's court structure, school system, and tribal government. Under allotment, completed in 1902, 3,119 Seminoles received an average of 120 acres each. Afterward the BIA appointed principal chiefs when a signature was needed to deed tribal land to a private owner. During the late 1920's Seminole was the greatest oil field in the world.

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.”

Music

Ceremonialism

For Seminole people who continue to observe pre-Christian ceremonial practices, life revolves around activities at the “ceremonial or stomp grounds.” In modern times these are religious centers where ceremonial dances, dinners and ball games take place mainly during weekends throughout the spring, summer and early fall months.

Originally the individual tribes or *etv/wv*, as they are termed in the language, that would come to comprise the confederacy known as the Seminole Nation would physically organize themselves around the ceremonial ring. Seminole ceremonialism guided every

aspect of Seminole life. Although not as complete, ceremonial teachings still continue to guide those who actively participate in modern times.

Today the “ceremonial cycle” consists of four or five dances throughout the “dance season” of which Green Corn or *Posketv-rakko* (Big fast) is the most important. Depending on the ceremonial ground, Green Corn can last from four days (Thursday – Sunday) to seven days (Sunday – Sunday). Friday is known as *Hoktak-’pvnkv Nettv* (Women’s Dance Day) when Ribbon Dance occurs. Friday is also the day that *Yvrvsv ’Pvnkv* (Buffalo Dance) occurs at the ceremonial grounds that perform this dance. The signature dance that occurs during the daytime on Saturday is the *Cetvhayv ’Pvnkv* or the Feather Dance as it’s commonly referred to in English.

During Green Corn, as well as the other ceremonies, the participating members must commit themselves to dancing, fasting, medicine taking, work and other activities that are to be performed. The purifying herbal medicine is accompanied by “scratching” of the participants’ bodies. Generally administered to the arms and legs, but not limited to these areas, of the participants, “scratching” is performed to alleviate spiritual and medical ailments by strengthening the individual. Green Corn can be likened to the combined equivalent of the holidays of Thanksgiving, Easter and New Years.

During Green Corn strained relationships are to be reconciled and the wrongs that occurred during the year are to be forgiven. The nighttime songs include such things as recognition of tribal ancestors, spiritual entities, historical events, thanksgiving and well wishing or prayers for the coming year. Daybreak on Sunday marks the completion of the Green Corn ceremony and the beginning of the new year for the ground members.

Seminole Churches

The Seminole Nation also has approximately twenty *Mekusapkv-cuko* (churches), commonly referred to as Indian churches, active within the community. Missionaries founded these churches, of Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian denominations, in the late 1800s in an attempt to convert Seminole people to Christianity. To encourage participation, building layouts, beliefs, and customs of the ceremonial grounds were incorporated into the churches. The first song books, bibles, and dictionaries written in the language were also created during this time and continue to be used today.

Church meetings are held every four Sundays and referred to in the community as “4th Sunday.” Church meetings are all day services with multiple visiting preachers who each conduct sermons. Traditional Seminole church hymns are sung before, during and after sermons. The Mvskoke language within the churches was used pervasively until the late 1950s when English began to be used intermittently. Today, sermons are conducted both in English and the Mvskoke language.

Art

The distinctive multicolored designs on women’s skirts and men’s jackets, called patchwork, mark Seminole clothing. Oklahoma Seminoles adopted patchwork in 1960s from their Florida kinfolk. The designs are symbols of objects and events out of their heritage.

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.”*

Although a relatively large contingency of Seminole were able to hold out in the Florida Everglades during the Indian Removal Era and Seminole Wars, the majority were relocated to Indian Territory along with the other “Five Tribes” of the southeast. The passions of the Civil War divided the Seminoles as it did most of the United States. In March, 1866, Reconstruction treaty, the Seminoles ceded their entire domain for fifteen cents an acre and paid fifty cents an acre for 200,000 acres in the western part of Creek Territory. After the convulsions, of their removal and the Civil War eras, the following forty years were the longest.

In the 1960’s, the federal government included freedman in the reestablished Seminole Tribe, although the U.S. government excluded freemen from the judgment funds settlement. (Statehood further separated Seminoles and freedmen because of imposed statewide segregation.) A tribal vote in 2000, disputed in court, amended the tribal constitution and excluded freedmen from membership.

Overview of the Seminole Nation Today

The Seminole Nation of Oklahoma is a federally recognized tribal nation with a government anchored by a Band system, which is comprised of 12 traditional bands and two freedman bands.

Seminole Band	Associated Tribe	Language Group
CEYAHA	CHIAHA	Muskogean (Hitchite Dialect)
EUFALA	EUFALA	Muskogean

FUSHUTCE		Muskogean
HECETE	HITCHITE	Muskogean (Hitchite Dialect)
HVTEYIEVLKE		Muskogean
MEKUSUKEY	MIKASUKI	Muskogean (Hitchite Dialect)
NURCUP HARJO	APPALACHICOLA	Muskogean (Hitchite Dialect)
OCESE		Muskogean
REWALKE	HORREWAHLE	Muskogean
TALLAHASSE	TALAHASSE	Muskogean
TOM PALMER		Muskogean
TUSEKIA HARJO	OKONE	Muskogean

Government

The Seminole General Council, chaired by the Principal Chief and Assistant Chief, serves as the elected governing body. The Chief and Assistant Chief are elected at large every four years. The Seminole Nation ratified a constitution on March 8, 1969, which the Commission of Indian Affairs approved on April 15, 1969. The Nation is comprised of 14 matrilineal bands, including two Freedman bands. Each band has an elected band chief and assistant band chief and meets monthly. Each band is governed by a set of bylaws which originate from the band. Tribal headquarters are located in Wewoka, the seat of Seminole County. The general council meets at the council house on the Mokusukkey Mission Tribal Grounds south of Seminole. The Nation has been developing a new tribal constitution that will eliminate the role of the BIA in tribal government operations.

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

9. Current Information on tribe

Today the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma is located in Seminole County, Oklahoma. The entire county of Seminole is a portion of the original Seminole Nation jurisdiction, and covers approximately 633 square miles. The county is a checkerboard of tribal trust property, Indian allotments, restricted Indian lands, and dependent Indian communities. Native Americans make up 22% of the population of Seminole County.

The Seminole County service population is 5,315 Tribal citizens according to the Seminole Nation Tribal Enrollment Office. The total enrollment of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma is approximately 17,000 members. According to 2000 U.S. Census data the Native American (one race only) population is 4,328 and the Native American (one race or combination with other race) population is 5,485 respectively for Seminole County.

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Business Corporation

The Seminole Nation Department of Commerce (SNDOC) oversees five businesses: three gaming operations, a trading post, travel plaza, and convenience store. SNDOC will be expanding into other areas of business developments including, but not limited to, construction and manufacturing.

Economy

The Nation operates a number of businesses that contribute to the tribal economy. The net profits from these businesses are redistributed to tribal programs and to SNDOC for operational funds.

Economic Development Plans

The Nation continues to acquire land and businesses in Seminole County. The Nation purchased the River Mist Store in southern Seminole County and the Travel Plaza located just off I-40 at the Seminole exit.

Gaming

The Nation owns three gaming facilities: The Rivermist Casino in southern Seminole County, the Trading Post in Wewoka, and the Mystic Winds Casino located on I-40 at exit 200. All three casinos offer electronic gaming.

Services and Retail

The Nation owns the Seminole Nation Trading Post, Seminole Nation Travel Plaza, Rivermist Convenience Store, and North Park Plaza, a lease management building.

Media and Communications

A monthly newspaper the Cokv Tvlvme, publishes and distributes 10,000 copies directly to tribal citizens and as supplements in local papers. The Nation also produces a weekly radio program every Tuesday at 11am on KWSH 1260am. An interactive website is located at <http://sno-nsn.gov/> and is updated regularly.

Tourism and Recreation

The Nation holds its annual celebration, Seminole Nation Days, every third weekend in September at the Mekukey Mission Grounds to celebrate tribal heritage and culture. The event is free and open to the public. The Nation provides free concerts, carnivals, and cultural events with the featured performer on Saturday evening. Other events include an art contest, banquet, princess pageant, cultural events, parade, and sports competitions. Food, art, and craft vendors and demonstrators are also on-site. A free traditional dinner is also provided. Estimated attendance is 10,000.

The Mekusukey Mission also has RV campsite facilities available year-round for a nominal fee. Also, at the Mission are softball fields and a gymnasium where athletic and cultural events are held year round.

Traditional dances are held throughout the spring and summer months at ceremonial grounds. Cultural ceremonies and grounds must be treated with utmost respect and decorum. Invited attendees must adhere to strict cultural guidelines and refrain from taking any photographs, videos and sound recordings.

The Seminole Nation Museum is located in the town of Wewoka and features exhibits on Seminole culture and history. An adjoining gallery and craft shop features contemporary and traditional Seminole crafts.

Transportation

The Nation operates a Federal Transit Program for public transportation throughout Seminole County. The Seminole Nation Transit System is available to all residents and runs on a set schedule. This schedule is available online. The Nation also has handicap-accessible vans that can veer off of the route within one mile to pick up elderly and/or handicap riders.

Community Facilities and Services

The Nation maintains community centers in Wewoka, Konawa, Sasakwa, Strothers and the Mekusukey Mission Tribal Grounds. Community Services of the Seminole Nation offers child care, Indian Child Welfare, LIHEAP, emergency tribal assistance, and BCR programs. Its community division offers environmental, cultural and language preservation, housing, roads, transportation, Lighthorsemen, wildlife, and community health programs.

Education

The tribe's education division offers adult, higher education, Head Start, TERO and Judgement Fund programs. Seminole State College is located in Seminole, OK and provides scholarships for Seminole tribal citizens.

Health Care

Health care services are available through the Wewoka Service Unit of Public Health Services. The health center is served by two physicians and one physician's assistant. Programs include general medicine, prenatal, and well baby care, optometry, dentistry, and counseling.

The Nation administers the Alcohol Substance and Abuse Program, Community Health Representatives Program, Dialysis Center, Caregivers, and Diabetes Program.

Nutrition

The Seminole Nation Food Distribution Program is located at the Mekusukey Mission. Income eligible tribal citizens can participate in the program. A grocery store facility is available for participants to pick up their commodities. Nutrition and cooking programs are held at the full service kitchen at the Food Distribution building for interested community members.

The Nation also operates the Older American Program for tribal senior citizens. Nutritious meals are prepared Monday through Friday, except tribal holidays, at the OAP building just west of the tribal complex in Wewoka.

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

Enoch Kelly Haney is widely recognized as a painter and artist as well as a politician, including serving as tribal chief. His sculpture *The Guardian* atop the State Capitol dome honors the memory of his son.

Mary Jo Waton is a leading American Indian art history professor at the University of Oklahoma.

Benjamin Harjo Jr., painter, printmaker, and youth advocate

Sources:

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

Seminole Nation of Oklahoma website: <http://sno-nsn.gov/>

Human Right Maps. The Trail of Tears. 2011 Word Press.com

digital.library.okstate.edu

Oklahoma Historical Society

Oklahoma Historical Society's Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History & Culture

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

The Library of Congress