

Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma

(Oklahoma Social Studies Standards, OSDE)

Tribe: Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma

Tribal website(s): <http://www.sctribe.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

present day states of New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio

Location in Oklahoma

Grove, Oklahoma

Overview

We are of the Hotinoshonni (People of the Longhouse) or also know as the Iroquois and or The Six Nations. We originally lived in and around the area today called New York; we also had villages throughout Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio. Through history not all of the Six Nations were relocated to Oklahoma. The Six Nations are starting from the east to west, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca and the Tuscarora.

During the Revolutionary War the Iroquois were located between the British and the American people. The Iroquois tried to remain neutral in this war because it was between those two nations and did not concern them. As time went on and the battles came closer and closer to their villages, it became very difficult to remain neutral and still protect their homes and their people. The leaders of the Iroquois came together in council, (there are 51 Chiefs among the Iroquois and they made up the council) it was decided in this council that each nation was free

to join the war as they saw fit. This broke the peace within the Iroquois because some of the Nations wanted to fight for the Americans and some for the British. During this time there were a good number of people who wished to remain neutral and these people began to move westward into the lands now called Pennsylvania and Ohio.

In 1817 the United States established two reservations for the Ohio "Seneca." One was for the Seneca of Sandusky, a mingling of Cayuga, Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Erie, Conestoga, and others, along the Sandusky River, and the second was for a consolidated band of Seneca and Shawnee at Lewistown. Although there were members from all the Six Nations within these two groups they were called the Seneca of Sandusky and the Seneca-Shawnees of Lewistown. By this time the Cayuga Nation had been divided into three different factions, one group going to the Six Nations reserve (Oshweken) on Canada's side, another stayed in New York to live among the Seneca within the Cattaraugus Reserve, and the third group moved to reservation areas in Ohio joining their relations along the Sandusky River.

In the 1831-32 the U.S. made treaties with the Seneca of Sandusky and the Seneca-Shawnee of Lewistown to give up their lands in Ohio and move west of the Mississippi river to Indian Territory or today called Oklahoma. Both groups exchanged their Ohio reserves for adjoining land in the Indian Territory in 1831.

With the onset of the Civil War and despite the pro-Confederate stance of their leaders, most Seneca and Shawnee spent the Civil War years as refugees in Kansas among old friends and allies the Ottawa and Wyandotte Nations. At the close of the Civil War the people returned to their own lands in Indian Territory to find their homes and farms in shambles and growing wild. In 1867 a treaty was made with the US government to separate the United Nation of Seneca and Shawnees, and reorganize into a single Seneca Tribe and the Shawnee became known as the Eastern Shawnee. Both surrendered lands that were divided to accommodate eight more tribes being moved to the area from Kansas.

In 1937 the U.S. passed the Indian Reorganization Act, at this time the Seneca and Cayuga people had decided to combine all their annuities and reorganize under this act to become the federally recognized Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma.

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

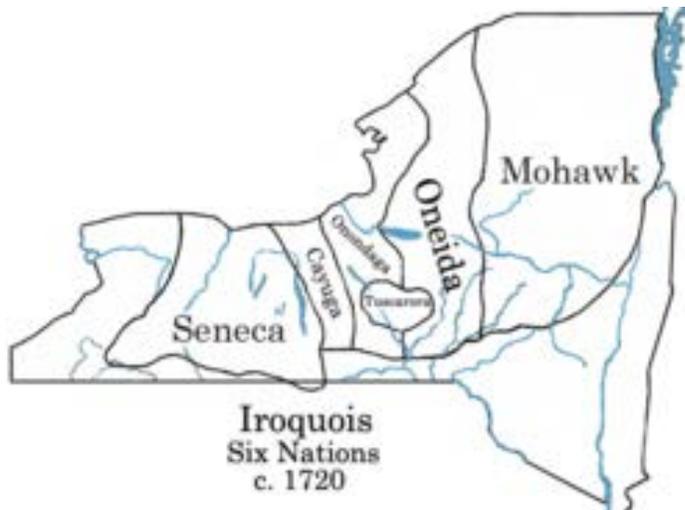
The Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/Indian.html>

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



- Relocation route & location along the Sandusky River (in Ohio) after 1817



- Location in Indian Territory (Oklahoma) after 1830



3. Population Past/Present

- Total tribal enrollment
- Tribal enrollment in Indian Territory (Oklahoma) – 372 allotments had been issued on Seneca Reservation by 1902
- Tribal enrollment in Oklahoma

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.”

Located in northeast Oklahoma in Ottawa and Delaware counties the Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma is a federally recognized tribe. The tribal government is made up of several committees with the overall governing body being the general council. The membership of the General Council is made up of all members of the Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma eighteen years of age and older.

Primary government functions are carried out by the business committee. The Business Committee has the authority to transact business and otherwise speak or act on the behalf of the Seneca-Cayuga Tribe. The business committee consists of the following elected positions, chief, second chief, secretary/treasure, and 4 council members.

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 name “Seneca” had become the common name used to describe the Six Nation people relocated to the Indian Territory. The fact remains they are a mixed group of people, families from the original Six Nations (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca and Tuscarora). Cayuga remains to be the more dominant lineage and identity including the language spoken within the Seneca-Cayuga Tribe in Indian territory. Seneca and Cayuga are members of the Iroquoian language family.

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

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The lands now called Pennsylvania and Ohio, had temporary villages in these areas before for hunting, trapping and fishing for the Iroquois. Then they became homes more on a permanent basis after the Revolutionary War.

The name “Seneca” had become the common name used to describe the Six Nation people relocated to the Indian Territory. Cayuga remains to be the more dominant lineage and identity including the language spoken within the Seneca-Cayuga Tribe in Indian territory.

The traditional clans of the Seneca are deer, wolf, bear, turtle, beaver, snipe, heron and hawk and those of the Cayuga are deer, wolf, bear, turtle, snipe and heron. The Seneca-Cayuga Tribe through history has been a mixed group of people, families from the original Six Nations including (Mohawks, Oneida’s, Onondagas, Tuscarora).

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.”*

The Corn, Beans and Squash traditionally known as the Three (3) Sisters, our Life Sustainers of which are recognized specifically through songs and dances during our ceremonies.

There are 5 tribal ceremonies during the year:

- Spring – Sundance
- April – generally Strawberry dance
- May – Blackberry dance
- July – Green Corn “Thanksgiving”
- First full week of August Fall – Sundance – same week as Green Corn
(The Fall Sundance actually takes place at the end of Green Corn.)

As a native people their heritage holds dear the rituals, traditions and ceremonies which give their thanks to the creator for what he has provided for them. While even though centuries have passed the beliefs remain the same. They continue to give “Thanks” in the prayers, songs and dance all of which were given to them for that purpose. Their ancestors relied upon growing crops for food and the ability to live off the land. Their ceremonies reflect that in each one. The Sundance give thanks for the sun (sa qwa tay tan nay), and that it will continue to shine and give life to the crops they grow. It also asks that the seeds they plant will be blessed and grow to a good harvest. During the seed dance while the men sing you will see the women making the gestures of planting seeds.

The next ceremony is the Strawberry dance which is held when the wild strawberries are ripe and the women pot hangers set the date. The Strawberry dance gives thanks for the first fruit of the season, and is another form of thanksgiving. It is a day dance and is usually finished by noon.

Next they have the Blackberry dance which takes place the first full moon in July. They give thanks for the moon in this ceremony by showing gratitude for her part in the changing of the seasons, and cycle of man. For it is the moon (tis soot – grandmother) which provided light at night and guides us during our planting season. Have you ever looked in

a Farmer's Almanac? Ever notice how planting times are determined? This is a nighttime dance that begins when the moon is full and begins rising just above the tree lines at the stomp grounds. It ends after the singing of the morning songs when the sun begins to rise.

The next is Green Corn which comprises several activities but in essence is their "Thanksgiving". Where it is a time to give thanks for the harvest, have the dance of prayer (stos koo wah) and cleanse themselves spiritually.

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."

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In 1838 A treaty was made at Buffalo Creek in New York, this treaty was to remove all the remaining New York Indians to lands west of the Mississippi River this included what was left of the Cayuga in New York. Although the Treaty was made, the effort to remove all Tribal Nations

from within the state of New York failed. Only a small faction actually moved to the reservation set aside within the State of Kansas, known as the Reservation for New York Indians. Many of the hardships encountered paid its toll on them some removing back to reservations in New York and the remaining went north to the Wyandotte in Kansas and south to the Seneca Agency in Indian Territory.

With the onset of the Civil War and despite the pro-Confederate stance of their leaders, most Seneca and Shawnee spent the Civil War years as refugees in Kansas among old friends and allies the Ottawa and Wyandotte Nations. At the close of the Civil War and the people returned to their own lands in Indian Territory to find their homes and farms in shambles and growing wild. In 1867 a treaty was made with the US government to separate the United Nation of Seneca and Shawnees, and reorganize into a single Seneca Tribe and the Shawnee became known as the Eastern Shawnee. Both surrendered lands that was divided to accommodate eight more tribes being moved to the area from Kansas.

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

9. Current Information on tribe

Seneca-Cayuga Tribe hosts stomp dances for their people and the public besides encouraging leaders (lead singers) and shell shakers to participate.

The Seneca-Cayuga Tribe aims to increase economic opportunity for its members while earning revenues through the Grandlake Casino and a Tribal Motel Lodge near the casino.

In addition they have an On-Line Store on their tribal website.

The Environmental Management Department (EMD) of the Seneca Cayuga Tribe has various functions within the tribe. Each employee is responsible for an EPA work plan that was developed by the department with EPA's approval. Currently, the EMD is operating under a General Assistance Project (GAP) grant and a Clean Water Act 106 grant. Both of these grants consist of extensive water quality testing on Grand Lake, Sycamore Creek and Buffalo Creek. Among other items, the department's work plan includes a plant study, development of a Solid Waste Management Plan, Recycling, GIS/GPS map development, and a long range plan for self sustainability. Grant research is also an ongoing process within the department. As funding comes available through various agencies, the EMD sees a future for Air Quality Monitoring, Climate Change, Alternate Energies, and Wetland Preservation and Development.

In an effort to unite all departments of the tribe the Miami office has been closed and all personnel have been relocated to the Grove headquarters.

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

Website of Cayuga Nation of New York: www.cayuganation-nsn.gov

Website of Seneca Nation of Indians in New York: <https://www.sni.org/>

Grant Foreman, *The Last Trek of the Indians: An Account of the Removal of the Indians from North of the Ohio River* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946).

William C. Sturtevant, "Oklahoma Seneca-Cayuga," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, Vol. 15, Northeast, ed. Bruce G. Trigger (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978).

Muriel H. Wright, *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of Oklahoma* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951).

Sources:

Oklahoma Historical Society

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

Seneca-Cayuga Tribal website

The Library of Congress