



# Challenge Bowl 2025



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### **Disclaimer: regarding the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Challenge Bowl Study Guide**

The Challenge Bowl Committee have limited resources for the compilation of the Study Guides and have attempted to screen and review all material included herein. The Committee understands that some people may not agree with all the material included in the Study Guide (historical dates, Mvskoke language, etc.). The material provided has been agreed upon as a learning tool to spark the interest of the students to learn of their heritage and cultural. The Committee has no intention of disseminating wrongful information and cannot be held liable for any misinformation contained in the Study Guides. The Study Guides are to be used for student competition only and should not be considered as a complete historical work on the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, but rather as a continuously updated curriculum for use during the Challenge Bowl.

## “A Struggle to Survive”

### **The Muscogee Women: Keepers of the tradition and culture of the nation.**

Since the beginning of time the women of this nation have played a major role in the existence of the Muscogee people and to this day their contribution has successfully allowed this nation to survive.

Today, this struggle is yours to bear, and today’s challenge is made more difficult by the fact that now you must be able to walk in two worlds and still maintain your balance.

The structure of our ancient society is still intact in some parts of our nation today, and you, the Muscogee women, must protect this to ensure that future generations of Muscogee people have a foundation to build on and an identity to be proud of.

In your educational experience you have learned that listening is a key ingredient for learning. As a student of this nation, you have learned the ways of our people and now as you move forward to represent this Nation of people, you must also expose the humbleness that our ancestors also displayed in their daily lives.

As you learn the history of our people, both in the written and oral form, you can feel and touch the spirit that they possessed and this spirit is among us today. This is the same spirit that compelled you to be here today.

History tells us, that we, the Muscogee people, have endured tremendous tribulations, from ethnic cleansing, forced removal and religious genocide, to the dissolving of tribal governments and then finally, the attempt to separate the Indian from the person through enrollment of young Muscogee (Creek) children to “Finishing School,” later called “Boarding Schools.”

The horror stories that have been relayed to us by the ones that have gone on before us, we must not dwell on or forever hold a grudge. Their stories must never be forgotten. We must listen to these stories and learn from them so that history does not repeat itself.

The road that we travel today was planned out for us many, many years ago by a Creek leader named Opothle Yahola in a speech given at Asbury Mission on the North Fork in November, 1859.

He said: “My brothers, many, many, many years ago, when I was a child, there was a beautiful island in the Chattahoochee River. It was covered with stately trees and carpeted with green grass. When the Indian was hungry and could not find game elsewhere, he could always go to the island and kill a deer. An unwritten law forbade the killing of more than one deer, and even then, the hunter might resort to the island only when he had failed elsewhere. But the banks of that island were of sandy soil. As the floods of the river rolled on this side and on that, the banks wore away and the island shrunk in size. When our people left the country, the island had become so small that there was only room for two or three of the great trees and most of the green grass was gone. The deer, once so plentiful there had entirely disappeared.

“I have since learned that there is a kind of grass which, if it had been planted on the banks of that beautiful island, might have saved it. The grass strikes its roots deeply into the sandy soil and binds it so firmly that the waters of the flood cannot wear it away.

“My brothers, we Indians, are like that island in the middle of the river. The white man comes upon us as a flood. We crumble and fall, even as the sandy banks of that beautiful island in the Chattahoochee. The Great Spirit knows, as you know, that I would stay that flood which comes thus to wear us away, if we could. As well might we try to push back the flood of the river itself.

“As the island in the river might have been saved by planting the long rooted grass upon its banks, so let us save our people by educating our boys and girls and young men and young women in the ways of the white man. Then they may be planted and deeply rooted about us and our people may stand unmoved in the flood of the white man.”

So let us not forget, from where we came.

Today starts another chapter in our history, as we continue down this path that our forefathers had planned for us. For this nation to survive with its traditions, culture and language, it is incumbent for the Muscogee women to regain its strength and to inspire other women to step forward and say “Yes, I am a Muscogee Creek woman, I know who I am, I know where I’ve been and I know where I am going.”

As a role model for the next group behind you, how many will you inspire? How many will follow in your footsteps? Let’s hope and pray there will be many.

MVTO

God Bless All

Wilbur Chebon Gouge

# Muscogee History

## ***PRE-REMOVAL: THE SOUTHEASTERN HOMELANDS***

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### **The Creation Story**

The creation of the Muscogee Creek as described by Jean Chaudhuri begins with the seeds of life slowly stirring deep inside the darkness of the earth. Mother earth was completely covered by water in the beginning. The seeds of life, mixed with the earth's soil and the water, generated the first traces of life. Heated by the sun, those traces of life formed into the living beings inside the earth. Eventually, the living beings needed more warmth and light for their development. Eager for knowledge, the inhabitants needed to escape from the confines of the earth's center. The crawfish tried to lead the journey out from the depths of the earth and to the outside world. However, the crawfish was unable to break through the mud, and become stuck between the earth's inner and outside worlds. The escape route was blocked for all the inhabitants by the struggling crawfish.

The turtle, very well suited for the muddy conditions between the two worlds, decided to lead the way to the next world. The turtle pushed its way from the center of the earth, and into the next world, all of the other living beings climbed up on its back. The turtle with all the living beings on its back gradually emerged through the mud and water into a world of darkness, fog and air. All the living beings had made the journey to a new world of enlightenment atop the great transporter, the turtle. Unfortunately, this world was blanketed with a dense fog, caused by the elements of the sun and water. Eventually, the water receded and the living beings left the turtle's back for dry land. Again, the animals and humans lived in the dark and cold, wandering around the vastness of the earth. Frightened by the darkness caused by the dense fog, the animals and humans began to call out to one another. The animals and humans gathered together in groups to comfort each other. All at once, the animals and humans began to pray and chant to the creator for help from the darkness of the fog.

Hesaketvmese (*he-saw-key-duh-me-see*), the master of breath, answered the prayers of the animals and humans and gave relief from the haze of the fog. A strong wind from the east began to blow and pushed the dense fog away. The removal of the fog signaled the beginning of a new world. The animals and humans were able to see one another for the first time. The animals and humans were very appreciative of one another for coming together in a time of despair. Animals and humans continued the kinship bonds which had formed between them. Humans became clan brothers of the specific animals which were present when the fog lifted. Humans learned from the animal's keen sense of their environment and took on characteristics that would facilitate survival. Thus began the life of the Muscogee Creek people and the life of the clans. Remembering, honoring, and respecting these values of animals and humans are a sacred tradition.

### **The Mississippian Era**

Our Creek ancestors lived for thousands of years in southeastern North America, in what are now the states of Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, South Carolina and Florida. Over time, their culture evolved into what is now called the **Mississippian Culture**. During the Mississippian time period they built huge earthen mounds. They did so by carrying dirt in baskets to the mound site. These mounds were built for various purposes. Some were platforms for the homes of chiefs, some were for religious ceremonies and some were for burials. They are the only structures that remain of the

many highly organized and flourishing tribal towns of the Mississippian society. As many as 2,000 to 3,000 people inhabited these tribal towns. The time period for the Mississippian Era was 900 AD to 1350 AD.

### Mound Sites

Although many of the ancient mounds have been destroyed by farming and development, some have been preserved. One of the best preserved of these town sites is the **Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park** near present-day Macon, Georgia. (See photo below.)



The earth floor with an eagle platform of this “earth lodge” is well over one thousand years old at Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park, Macon, Georgia.



127 miles northwest of Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park is the site of the **Etowah Mounds** near Cartersville, Georgia.

### Southeastern Ceremonial Complex

One notable aspect of the Mississippian culture, was the artwork that was produced. Today it is referred to as the **Southeastern Ceremonial Complex**. It includes engraved copper, finely carved stone and shell necklaces and pendants, stone statues, and intricately wrought stone maces, clubs and hatchets as well as pottery.





### **European Contact Era**

The first documented Europeans to come among the Mississippians was Hernando DeSoto, who came in 1540. He found them living in “chiefdoms.” They grew vast fields of corn, beans and squash. The rivers and streams were teeming with fish and the forests were abundant with game, fruits, nuts and berries. They had honey from beehives and traded with other natives for salt. The people were strong and healthy and didn’t have to work very hard to thrive in the resource rich region of the southeast.

De Soto did not come in peace. He was searching for gold. To ensure his safe passage through the chiefdoms, De Soto routinely arrested the Chief and took him along as a hostage to the next chiefdom. He forced the men and women to carry his equipment and use their stored food to feed his army of several hundred men and animals. Thousands of native people were killed by De Soto’s army. Thousands more died from the diseases his expedition brought from Europe, such as measles, small pox and “the plague.” The loss of so many people devastated the chiefdoms. The people who survived moved away from the areas where sickness had occurred and banded together to form new towns. They preserved as much of their old culture as they possibly could.

After De Soto’s expedition, there were more Spanish expeditions. Tristan De Luna came in 1560 and Juan Pardo in 1566. Both were in search of the lush life of the chiefdoms that De Soto had described. They were disappointed and dismayed to see that the population was much smaller and thistles and weeds grew in place of the previously cultivated fields that had stretched from one town to the next. Nearly 100 years passed before the Europeans came again.

### **European Trade Era of the 1600’s**

In the late 17th century, after hearing the reports from early explorers of the riches and bounty in North America, the English, Spanish and French began to colonize the region and establish towns and farms. The English founded Charlestown in 1670 as the capital of the colony of Carolina. They became well acquainted with the Muskogean people through trade.

It was during this trade era that the English began to call the Muskogean people “Creeks.” The Hichiti people living on the Ochesee Creek were their nearest neighbors, whom they referred to as the Ochesee Creeks and later just “Creeks.” They applied the name to all the Muskogean people because their towns were situated along the rivers and creeks of the region. However, the people continued to refer to themselves by their own tribal town names, such as Tuckabatchee, Coweta, Cussetah, Abihka, Alabama, etc.

In 1698, the Spanish establish the town of Pensacola and in 1717 the French establish Fort Toulouse on the fork of the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers. To promote diplomacy, the Creeks maintained friendly relations with all three of their trading partners.

Eventually they referred to the tribal towns as “Upper” and “Lower” Creeks. The “Upper Creek” towns were those located along the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers, close to Ft. Toulouse, who supported the French. The “Lower Creek” towns were those located along the Catv Hvtce (now called Chattahoochie) and Flint Rivers. Many Lower Towns were close to Florida and were friendly to the Spanish. With the exception of the Yamasee War in 1715, relations between the Europeans and the “Creeks” were, for the most part, friendly for many years; later that would change.

Not since De Soto had there been such a devastating effect on the Muscogee culture. After a few generations of trading, the “Creeks” became dependent on the trade goods. They discarded their traditional ways of making tools, clothing and cooking & water vessels. They became dependent on the trade industry to the extent that they were becoming indebted to the traders and depleting their hunting grounds of deer. They had to travel farther and stay gone longer from their homes to find deer.

In 1733, the Lower Creeks permitted General Oglethorpe to establish the colony of Georgia. Creek leaders, recognizing the inevitable pressure of the Europeans, negotiated treaties in the best interest of Creek people. Other nations entered into the treaties with the Creek Nation as did England in the treaty of 1733, which promised friendship, protection and acknowledged that the area, by ancient right, belonged to the Creek Nation.

During the last half of the 1700’s, the Creeks found themselves embroiled in the wars between the Europeans. In the French and Indian War, the Spanish, British and French were each trying to gain control of the entire region and each wanted the Creeks’ loyalty.

When the English won the French and Indian War in 1763, they won complete control of the region and opened up what they called the Mississippi Valley for “westward expansion,” meaning that the Europeans population would continue to grow. The Treaty of Paris, drawn up at the conclusion of the war, included trading Creek lands. Creek leaders were appalled that the Europeans would presume to give away their land without their consent. The Treaty of Paris also set the European colonists on the path towards seeking independence from Great Britain.

### **The Creek’s Relation with the U.S.**

The colonist’s victory over Great Britain in the 1776 American Revolutionary War created a new power for the Creeks to deal with. Without the aid of the French or Spanish, or the protection of Great Britain, they were at the mercy of this new government.

The federal government in its first treaty with the Creeks, the Treaty of New York, 1790, guaranteed Creeks claim to their land and promised protection against Georgian encroachment. However, land cessions of 1783, 1785, and 1786 were also approved in this treaty.

Alexander McGillivray (Creek/Scottish), a dynamic tribal leader, worked to change the great Council from a loose association of town governments to a more centralized, forceful, and active institution. This would require the towns to relinquish control over their political and cultural life, which they were most reluctant to do. McGillivray passed away before he could accomplish this.

In 1796, President Washington appointed Benjamin Hawkins as the Southeastern Indian Superintendent. Hawkins implemented an assimilation policy. For 20 years he was able to destruct the traditional Creek system of government. He encouraged the council to create an executive committee and appoint a national police force, who was to arrest and punish tribal members who violated tribal law. He also urged them to allow missionaries to establish schools and instruct the Creek children in Christian religion, the English language, mathematics and the English farming and social practices. Hawkins also wanted to change the social structure by switching the roles of women and men. In order to survive, many “Lower Creeks” did make this change as the deerskin industry declined. But only a few of the “Upper Creeks” did. This created some resentment among the “Upper Creeks” who wanted to maintain the traditional Creek way of life.

This division between the two groups of “Creeks” was made worse by the U.S. Government’s plan to convert an old trading path into a Federal Road that would cut right through the Creek Nation. The road was first intended to be a postal route from Washington to New Orleans. The Upper Creeks knew that the road would enable more and more white settlers to come with their families, herds, and slaves and kill their game, cut their trees, foul their water, sell whiskey to their young and settle in their land. The mounting assaults on their lands, hunting grounds and culture increased their anxiety.

To preserve their traditional existence, Creeks emulated their white neighbors in order to convince the alien society that native people were being assimilated, in hopes that they would be left alone and in peace. Based on what he saw among the Creeks, Benjamin Hawkins, Indian agent, believed that he was bringing civilization to the Creeks. Individualism, cash crops, and the steel plow were introduced to Creek families in the 1790’s.

A century of trading, intermarriages and factions produced fertile ground for the agitations of Tecumseh. In 1811, Tecumseh and his followers came to Tuckabatchee, a major Creek population and political center located on the west bank of Tallapoosa River, to ask the main Upper Creek town to join in his revolution against the U.S. A group of Koasati warriors accompanied Tecumseh to his home in Shawnee territory. In the spring of 1812, on their return home, they executed several white settlers in Tennessee. As a result, the Secretary of War instructed the Tennessee governor to retaliate, which began the conflict between the Creeks, the settlers and Andrew Jackson.

### **The Red Stick Warriors**

Tecumseh’s speech struck a chord with many of the warriors at Tuckabatchee. Angered by the events of the last 15 years, a group of “Upper Creeks” emerged to ward off the impending destruction of the Creek Nation. Hillis Hadjo (Josiah Francis), Cussetah Tustenuggee (High Head Jim), Paddy Walsh and Peter McQueen, among others, advocated the return to traditional ways, severing all ties with Americans, expelling all whites and mixed-blood Creeks who lived like whites, and overthrowing the leaders who responded to Hawkins more than their own people. This group came to be known as the Red Stick Warriors. For two years, the Red Sticks fought twelve major battles known as the Creek War of 1813-1814. The more traditional Creeks were against the new life that was being introduced by Hawkins. Anglo-American encroachment into the traditional lands of the Upper Creeks instigated the Red Stick War. This conflict was looked upon by the U.S. as a means to weaken Creek people by pitting one side against the other (divide and conquer).

### **The Battle of Horseshoe Bend - March 27, 1814**



The Red Sticks at Horseshoe Bend were led by the respected war leader Menawa. The previous December, he had led some of the inhabitants of six Upper Creek towns (Nuyaka, Okfuskee, Eufaula, Fish Pond, Okchaya and Helvpe), to a bend in the Tallapoosa River where they built a fortified town. They constructed a village of 300 log homes at the southern toe of the bend, and a fortified log & mud wall across the neck of the bend for protection. Calling the encampment *Tohopeka* (*doe-hoe-be-guh*), Menawa hoped that the wall would hold off attackers or at least delay them long enough for the 350 women and

children in the camp to escape across the river if necessary. To defend Tohopeka (*doe-hoe-be-guh*), he had around 1,000 warriors of whom about a third possessed a musket or rifle; the rest fought using bows & arrows, tomahawks and war clubs.

Approaching the area early on March 27, 1814, Commander Andrew Jackson split his command of 3,300 men and ordered Brigadier General John Coffee to take the 1,300 mounted militia and the allied Creek and Cherokee warriors downstream to cross the river at the toe of the bend. From this position, they were to act as a distraction and cut off the Red Sticks' line of retreat. Jackson moved towards the fortified wall with the remaining 2,000 men of his command.

At 10:30 AM, Jackson's army opened fire with two cannons. For 2 hours they shot 6-pound and 3-pound cannon balls at the wall, but could not penetrate it. The 1,000 Red Sticks stood on the inside of the wall shouting at Jackson's army to come and fight them in hand-to-hand combat. While the American cannons were firing, three of Coffee's Cherokee warriors swam across the river, stole several Red Stick canoes and canoed their Cherokee and Lower Creek comrades across the river to attack Tohopeka (*doe-hoe-be-guh*) from the rear. Once across the river, they set fire to several of the homes.

Around 12:30 PM, when Jackson saw the smoke rising from the burning houses, he knew that Coffee was attacking from the rear. He ordered his men forward and they scaled the walls. In the brutal fighting, the Red Sticks were out-numbered and out-gunned, but they fought fearlessly. "Arrows, spears and balls were flying, swords and tomahawks were gleaming in the sun." Seeing that there was no way for them to defeat his army, Jackson offered them a chance to surrender, but they fought even harder. Fighting in the camp raged through the day as the Red Sticks made a valiant final stand. At the end of the day, over eight hundred Red Sticks were slain, 557 on the battlefield, 300 shot in the river. Menawa lay wounded and unconscious until nightfall, when he crawled to the river and escaped by climbing into a canoe. Having lost so many warriors, the Red Sticks would never again be able to pose a military threat to the south.

### **After The Battle of Horseshoe Bend**

Andrew Jackson built Fort Jackson at the confluence of the Coosa and Tallapoosa, right in the heart of the Red Stick's Holy Ground. From this position, he sent out word to the remaining Red Stick forces that they were to sever their ties to the British and Spanish or risk being wiped out. Noted Red Stick leader William Weatherford (Red Eagle) was not present at Horseshoe Bend, but he was wanted for the attack on Fort Mims. Understanding his people to be defeated, he walked into Fort Jackson and surrendered, telling Jackson that if he had warriors, he would still fight and contend till the last. As a matter of vengeance, Jackson threatened and coerced the Creek leaders to sign the Treaty of Ft. Jackson in 1814, which ceded 22 million acres of land, what was determined to be equivalent to the expenses of the war.

Due to Jackson's victory at Horseshoe Bend he was elected president of the United States and began the process of moving all the Creeks out of the southeast and into Indian Territory, now known as Oklahoma. This process included many treaties in which the Creeks were required to give up large amounts, and finally, all of their land.

The Creek's strengthened and centralized their National Council by codifying tribal laws in 1818. A law was passed that no tribal lands could be sold without the approval of the council under the penalty of death.

In 1825, William McIntosh, speaker of the Lower Towns, signed the Treaty of Indian Springs, which ceded all Creek lands in Georgia and 2/3 of their Alabama lands in return for new land in what is now Oklahoma. As a result, McIntosh was executed under National Council laws. The Creeks were determined to remain on their tribal homeland. Under the apt leadership of Opothleyahola (*oh-bith-thee-ya-ho-la*), speaker for the Upper Towns, the Creeks brought their complaints directly before the president. In Washington, D.C., Opothleyahola (*oh-bith-thee-ya-ho-la*) and the aged Lower Town principal chief, Little Prince, worked out a compromise with the United States. The 1826 Treaty of Washington stipulated that the Creeks cede their Georgia landholdings in exchange for a one-time payment of \$217,600 plus \$20,000 each year in perpetuity. Additionally, the treaty provided \$100,000 for the emigration of McIntosh supporters west of the Mississippi River.

## **REMOVAL ERA**

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### **The Indian Removal Act**

In 1830, the U.S. Congress passed the Indian Removal Act. A 2<sup>nd</sup> Treaty of Washington ceded Alabama lands and dividing the remaining lands between Creeks who did not want to join McIntosh's group in Indian Territory. Forbidden by Georgia state law for Indians to testify in court, the Creeks were legally powerless to protect their lands. In the 1832 Treaty of Cusseta, the Creeks ceded all territory east of the Mississippi River to the United States.

In 1827-38, approximately 23,000 tribal members were forcibly marched on the 1,200-mile painful journey to Indian Territory – approximately 3,500 Creeks died on the trail. An estimated 2,500 Creeks considered to be prisoners, were shackled and placed on board steam boats at Montgomery, Alabama. Three hundred died tragically on the steamboat Monmouth in the Mississippi River.

#### ***The Sinking of the Monmouth***

*As told by Dave Barnett, Tuckabatchee Tribal Town*

*“When we boarded the ship, it was at night time and it was raining, cloudy and dark. There were dangerous waves of water. The people aboard the ship did not want the ship to start on the journey at night but to wait until the next day. The men in command of the ship disregarded all suggestions and said, ‘The ship is going tonight.’*

*“The ship was the kind that had an upper and lower deck. There were great stacks of boxes which contained whiskey in bottles. The officers in charge of the ship became intoxicated and even induced some of the Indians to drink. This created an uproar and turmoil.*

*“Timbochee Barnett, who was my father, and I begged the officers to stop the ship until morning as the men in charge of the steering of the ship could not control the ship and keep it on its course but was causing it to go around and around.*

*“We saw a night ship coming down the stream. We could distinguish these ships as they had lights. Many of those on board our ship tried to tell the officers to give the command to stay to one side*

*so that the night ship could pass on by. It was then that it seemed that the ship was just turned loose because it was taking a zigzag course in the water until it rammed right into the center of the night boat.*

*“Then there was the screaming of the children, men, women, mothers and fathers when the ship began to sink. Everyone on the lower deck that could was urged to go up on the upper deck until some of the smaller boats could come to the rescue. The smaller boats were called by signal and they came soon enough but the lower deck had been hit so hard it was broken in two and was rapidly sinking and a great many of the Indians were drowned. Some of the rescued Indians were taken to the shore on boats, some were successful in swimming to shore and some were drowned. The next day the survivors went along the shore of the Mississippi river and tried to identify the dead bodies that had been washed ashore. The dead was gathered and buried and some were lost forever in the waters.”*

Many of the tribal towns brought with them their sacred fire which helped them persevere on their long journey from the homeland. This fire was the focal point for many of the tribal towns as they established roots in their new lands.

## **INDIAN TERRITORY ERA**

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### **Arriving in Indian Territory**

The survival of Creek families, from the homelands to Indian Territory, depended on their ability to adapt to a new environment and persevere against adversity. Creek communities replicated as much as they could, the life left behind in the east, by staying close to the rivers and planting corn fields in their new towns.

The decade after removal was a time of continuity and change for the Creeks. The Creeks maintained many of their ceremonies, traditions, and forms of recreation in the west. Religion continued to play an important role in the lives of the Creeks, although for some, the type of religion changed. Although the McIntosh party initially objected to the presence of missionaries, Christianity was formally accepted in the Creek Nation in 1848. That year, Chilly McIntosh converted to Christianity and later became a Baptist preacher. But, throughout the 1840s, much of the original hostility to Christianity began to wane. Jim Henry, a prominent leader in the Second Creek War, became a Methodist preacher in the Indian Territory.

But, many things changed for the Creeks. Roley McIntosh, an “underling chief of inferior degree” in the east, became a principal headman of the Creeks in the west. This did not change after forced removal. Although Opothle Yahola maintained much of his status after immigrating to the Indian Territory in 1836, it was Roley McIntosh who was “the acknowledged principal chief of the Creek Nation.”

The enmity between the two factions (Upper and Lower) Creeks continued to remain high long after the execution of William McIntosh and removal. This, in part, explains why the Upper and Lower towns were much more autonomous and distinct than they had been in the east. In fact, in the years after forced removal, the Upper and Lower towns maintained their own councils and had little to do with each other. But, on February 17, 1839, approximately fifteen hundred Creeks gathered...for the first nation-wide Council that had taken place in years. There were one thousand

Creeks from the Upper towns and five hundred Creeks from the Lower towns represented. Once the Council was reestablished, the Creek Nation created entirely new laws or modified old ones. The Council exerted more influence over Creek talwas in the west than they had in the east. The Council made decisions for all Creek towns and no talwa could nullify a decision made of the national level.

At the height of the secession crisis (Civil War) in 1860-1861, the Creeks broke into “loyal” and “southern” factions. Many members of the McIntosh party, along with a number of Creeks who despised the United States because of removal, were secessionists. In February, 1861, a partially-attended Creek Council passed laws that forced free blacks in servitude. While most of the principal headmen were in Washington, the council’s law required each freedman to choose a Creek master by March 10, 1861, or be sold to the highest bidder. When Civil War broke on April 12, 1861, in South Carolina, agents representing the confederate states traveled to Indian Territory to sway allegiances. In June and July, 1861, while many principal Creek headmen were meeting with the Plains Indians, the pro-southern Creeks as well as a number of Choctaws, Chickasaws, Cherokees, and Seminoles pledged their allegiance to the Confederacy. The signatures of a number of absent headmen were forged.

A number of Southern Creek regiments were organized, comprised of some of the most famous family names in the Creek Nation: Kennard, Stidham, Grayson, and McIntosh, among others. For his part, Opothle Yahola wanted to stay out of the war entirely. He sent a letter to Abraham Lincoln pleading for protection from Confederate agents and the McIntosh confederates. Approximately seventeen hundred Creeks joined the Confederate cause. Daniel McIntosh, Chilly McIntosh’s half-brother, led one of the regiments, while Chilly McIntosh led another. The Southern (Lower) Creeks were zealous in their persecution of blacks and the Creeks loyal to Opothle Yahola. Much of the animosity was residual hatred from the execution of William McIntosh in 1825. By mid-1861, thousands of Creeks loyal to Opothle Yahola, along with a number of Seminoles, Delawares, Kickapoos, Wichitas, Shawnees and Comanches congregated near the junction of the North Fork and Deep Fork. Many came with their livestock and possessions in tow.

In late 1861, Opothle Yahola and his followers sought refuge in Kansas. Along their journey north they were pursued by the McIntosh regiments and Confederate forces led by Douglas Cooper, an agent for the Choctaws. Before Opothle Yahola reached Kansas, the two sides fought...two hundred-fifty of Opothle Yahola’s party was killed near the Kansas line in December 1861. The survivors, many traveling in light clothes, continued on “in blood and snow.” Many died of exposure. Over one hundred amputations were performed on these refugee Creeks and one person observed seeing “a little Creek boy, about eight years old, with both feet taken off near the ankle.” Opothle Yahola died in Kansas sometime in 1863.

### **Rebuilding After the War**

The Reconstruction Treaty of 1866 that ended the Civil War required Creek Nation to give up 3.2 million acres, approximately half of the Muscogee domain. In October of 1867, the nation adopted a new constitution and code of laws, an effective framework of government for Creek citizens. The new government was patterned after the U.S. system, it included three branches: the executive, legislative and judicial. The Creek government was presided over by an executive branch. The executive branch consisted of a Principal Chief and Second Chief, elected by male citizens over the age of 18. Samuel Checote was the first elected Principal Chief. A judicial branch and a

bicameral legislature composed of a House of Kings and a House of Warriors. Representation in both houses of this legislative assembly was determined by tribal town. This "constitutional" period lasted for the remainder of the 19th century.

### **Creek Nation 1867 Constitution**

The Civil War facilitated the creation of a new Creek constitution in 1867 that included the adoption of freed slaves (Freedmen) into the nation as citizens. One of the greatest changes brought about by the 1867 constitution was the system of voting by secret ballot rather than visible show of hands.

The legislative branch, or National Council, was a dual form of government made up of a House of Kings (like the Senate) and a House of Warriors (like the House of Representatives). The leaders of the individual tribal towns chose National Council members according to the traditional system of representation. The Creeks had for hundreds of years been governed by their local tribal towns and participation in a form of regional councils. The nation was composed of 6 Districts: Muskogee, Coweta, Arkansas (Eufaula), Deep Fork, North Fork (Okmulgee) and Wewoka. The judicial branch consisted of a national Supreme Court composed of 5 judges chosen by the council, 6 prosecuting attorneys and a law-enforcement agency.

The Treaty of 1866 was the final treaty between United States and Creek Nation and was punishment for the Lower Creeks signing the 1861 treaty with the Confederate States of America. In 1889, the Creek Nation was paid \$2.3 million for land ceded in the 1866 treaty.

The Upper Creeks perpetuated their economic system in which the town leaders took charge of the harvest and the tribe's annuity payments. Annuity money was used for public works projects including gristmills and ferries. Creeks were known for budgeting their tribal funds wisely. The Lower Creeks were influenced by mainstream American culture which affected their perception of economics, social, and political issues.

### **Creek Schools**



Wetumka Boarding School, originally named Levering Mission.

The tribal school system of the Creek Nation, funded from annuities, consisted of 7 boarding schools for Indian children, 3 boarding schools for the descendants of Freedman and 65 day schools. Tullahassee Manuel Labor School was located ten miles north of Muskogee. The Koweta Mission day school was opened in 1843. Loughridge Boarding School was opened in 1851.

Asbury Manual Labor School was opened by the Methodist northeast of Eufaula. Harrell Institute, a Methodist school, was awarded a charter in 1881 as

the Creek Nation's first higher education institution in Muskogee. Bacone College (Indian University) was awarded a charter and a land grant from Creek Nation in 1885. In the 1890's,



Levering Mission operated near Wetumka, Nuyaka Mission was west of Okmulgee and Yuchi Mission was in Sapulpa. Wealaka replaced Tullahassee, which burned in 1880.

Teachers were appointed at a uniformed salary of \$25 a month with the requirement of an average of 10 pupils. An additional \$2 a month for each additional pupil was added to the average. Creeks built a reputation for having a well-developed system of education. In the early 1900's, the Superintendent for Creek schools estimated the literacy rate for Creeks who could read and write the language to be 95%. In 1853, a national alphabet was adopted by the Creek Nation, previously, several alphabets were in use.

### **Political Parties**

Political parties were formed in the Creek Nation elections of 1879, one known as the Pin, later reorganized as the Nationalist Party, were supporting Samuel Checote. A second party, known as the Muskogee Party, was led by Ward Coachman and mainly opposed the Pins. The third was the Loyal Party that nominated Isparhecher (*is-bar-heech-chee*). The primary differences in the parties were both the Loyal and National Parties favored more traditional forms of government, with the Muskogee Party being more moderate and willing to compromise over white immigration into Creek territory, which the other two were not prepared to do.

In 1883, the three political parties were in existence during the election for Chief, Second Chief, members of the House of Kings and Warriors. The party nominees were as follows: Pin Party-Samuel Checote for Principal Chief and Coweta Mekko for Second Chief; Muskogee Party-JM Perrymen for Principal Chief and Sam Brown for Second Chief; Loyal Party-Isparhecher (*is-bar-heech-chee*) for Principal Chief and James Fife for Second Chief.

### **Pre-Allotment**

With the treaties, the U.S. had recognized Indian nations, as well as the Creeks, as independent sovereigns. Even though the federal government had acknowledged the tribes as distinct political communities with full authority and rights to manage their own affairs, the U.S. took on a paternalistic attitude towards native people. The federal philosophy was one of assimilation, in which the ownership of land would be owned individually and not in common.

To bring about assimilation, the federal government gained legal control over the tribes through legislation such as the Dawes Allotment Act. An 1871 act, ending treaty making, provided the first legal groundwork necessary to begin assimilationist lawmaking. In 1887, Congress passed its most assimilative law, the Land in Severalty Act, also known as the Dawes Act or the Allotment Act. The act's aim was to assimilate Indians into white society by teaching them the techniques of farming and the values of individualism and private ownership.

The Dawes Act divided communal Indian lands into individual allotments, eradicating tribal governments and opening reservation land to white settlement. It was believed this legislation would "civilize" Indians. Units of acres allotted were as follows: head of a family = 160 acres; single person 18 years old and older = 80 acres; boys under 18 years old = 40 acres. Married Indian women were not entitled.

### **Allotment in Indian Territory, 1887-1907**

In regard to allotment, full bloods were not allowed to sell their allotments for 25 years, allotments were held in “trust” by the federal government for 25 years, mixed bloods were allowed to sell immediately, and guardians were appointed to handle the allotments of full bloods and orphans. The allotment process proved disastrous for tribes culturally, politically, and economically. Culturally, the notion of private ownership seriously conflicted with the deeply held Creek tribal belief that land was a sacred resource to be used communally. Politically, the allotment process seriously eroded the role and authority of the Creek tribal government. Economically, 60 million acres of land had been sold as “surplus” in accordance with the Dawes Act. Government officials often intentionally allotted poorer land to Indians and labeled more desirable parcels “surplus” for sale to settlers.

### **Opposing Allotment**

In 1895, Creek Chief Isparhecher (*is-bar-heech-chee*) opposed allotment because he believed that it would break up tribal government. The Creek Nation, hoping that compromise would save their government from extinction, finally agreed to the allotment of their lands in 1900. William A. Jones, Commissioner of Indians Affairs, approved regulations that enabled a Creek allottee to sell all of his land, except for the 40 acres homestead. However, this regulation was unsuccessful and was replaced by a requirement that the Indian office supervised any sales. Many full bloods refused to accept their allotments and a separate government was formed. At this point in Creek history, the Crazy Snake Rebellion had its beginning.

The Curtis Act (1898) in conjunction with the Dawes Act was written specifically for the Five Civilized Tribes under which Creek lands were allotted. It also dissolved tribal courts, put tribal funds under the control of the Secretary of the Interior and required presidential approval of all tribal laws. That act provided for forced allotment and termination of tribal land ownership without tribal consent, unless the tribe agreed to allotment. It also made tribal laws unenforceable in Indian Territory. In 1898, Principal Chief Pleasant Porter signed the first and second Creek agreements which allowed for allotment of Creek lands.

Chitto Harjo led a traditional movement against allotment and was an advocate for the traditional clan and Creek government that the U.S. was attempting to eliminate. The followers of Chitto Harjo established a traditional Creek government at Hickory Ground. They cited the Creek Nation’s previous treaties with the U.S., especially the treaty of 1832, which had guaranteed them self-government. Many Creeks rejected the terms proposed by the Dawes Commission. The American press referred to Crazy Snake’s men, and any other Creeks who opposed allotment as “Snake Indians.” The traditionalists set up a National Council that passed laws prohibiting allotment, forbidding Creeks from hiring whites to work for them or encouraging whites to move into the nation.

### **The Curtis Act of 1898**

In 1898, the United States Congress passed the Curtis Act in which they gave themselves the power to dismantle the national governments of the Five Civilized Tribes. The Dawes Commission was established for the purpose of negotiating with the Creek Nation for tribal landholdings to be

broken up into individual household allotments, still attempting to encourage the adoption of the European-American style of subsistence farming.

In 1900, the noted statesman Chitto Harjo heroically lead organized opposition to the Curtis Act. In his efforts, he epitomized the view of all Creek people that they possessed an inherent right to govern themselves. For Chitto Harjo and those like him, it was unimaginable that the Creek government could be dissolved by an act of a foreign government. This perception proved to be correct. In the early 20th century, the process of allotment of the national domain was completed. However, the dismantling of the Creek government was only partially completed. The Creek Nation still maintained a Principal Chief (appointed by the U.S. Presidents) throughout this stormy period.

A large number of Creeks were opposed to any further tampering with their method of government by internal or external elements. Most of the people who felt this way lived in tribal towns, still practiced original customs and continued to embrace traditional Creek culture.

At the last Creek Nation constitutional election held in 1903, Pleasant Porter was re-elected as Principal Chief and Moty Tiger was elected Second Chief, Concharta were the election officials.

### **Five Civilized Tribes Proposal for an Indian State**

In 1904, the Five Civilized Tribes drew up a constitution and requested that the Indian Territory be admitted to the union as an Indian state named Sequoyah. Muscogee Creek people, known for being leaders, played a significant role in the development of the proposed Indian state. Chief Porter presided over the Sequoyah Convention. Alexander Posey, Creek poet and journalist, suggested the name Sequoyah.

Despite all the efforts, in 1907, the Oklahoma and Indian Territories were combined and admitted to the Union as the state of Oklahoma.

## **STATEHOOD ERA**

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### **U.S. Citizenship**

All members of the Five Civilized Tribes were made U.S. citizens in 1901. Tribal members, including Creeks, did not lose their tribal citizenship or rights when they became American citizens. The Creek people maintained a strong tribal identity. In 1903, the final elections for Principal Chief and National Council were held. In 1906, the Five Civilized Tribes Act attempted to dissolve the tribal governments, timeline extended to June 1907.

In 1907, the final National Council meeting at the Council House on 6<sup>th</sup> Street in downtown Okmulgee was conducted. The meeting lasted for 3 days as the council sought to resolve all pending issues of national importance before closing the tribal government. At this point, the Creek government was not recognized and a period of federally appointed chiefs begins. Creek Nation could no longer elect its own head of government but was forced to accept the Bureau of Indian Affairs' choice for Principal Chief. Contrary to the rights guaranteed to the Creeks in their treaties, the federal actions were deemed illegal and denied the Nation's inherent rights of sovereignty. For

several decades, Creek leaders continued to fight for status to elect our tribal leaders and re-establish the government.

In an attempt to reorganize Creek government in 1909, the tribal towns elected delegates and convened the Creek Convention. However, the U.S. did not recognize the tribal government.

The Meriam Report of 1928 on Indian economic and social conditions revealed an existence of poverty, suffering, and discontent. It was concluded that Indians suffered from disease and malnutrition, a life expectancy of 44 years, and an average annual per capita income of only \$100. Many Creeks participated in this study.

The impact of this report led to the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, allowing Indian tribes throughout the country to establish tribal governments - later resulting in the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act that would affect Creek government.

Commissioner of Indian Affairs, John Collier, believed that Indian cultures and values had much to offer non-Indian society and that Indian problems were best solved by Indians. Congress passed the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act on June 26, 1936 for tribes in Oklahoma. The OIWA was similar in objectives to the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA).

### **The Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act**

The Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act affected Creek Nation in the following ways: stopped the allotment process, ended the loss of Indian lands, and re-established tribal governments.

The Creeks recognized that the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act, which was modeled after the Indian Reorganization Act, was written without tribal input, its ratification was highly irregular, and that the tribal governments would contradict the tribal cultures.

A typical Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act constitution established a governing board, often called a business committee and did not provide for a separation of powers. The executive, legislative, and in many instances, judicial functions were performed by the governing board. Adult tribal members make up the general council membership with each having voting privileges.

Creeks refused to adopt the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act, fearing that the federal government would force an alien government on citizens of the Creek Nation. It was believed by the Creeks that the citizens would best benefit by not accepting the requirements of the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act. Creek leaders petitioned Commissioner Collier to allow for an election of the Principal Chief and the Second Chief.

Thlopthocco Tribal Town adopted its own government in 1938 under the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act, also Alabama-Quassarte Tribal Town in 1939 and Kialegee Tribal Town in 1941. These three Tribal Towns located in or near Wetumka were developed during the administration of Creek Chief Roley Canard, also a Wetumka resident.

In 1934, delegates of 42 tribal towns elected their first Principal Chief in 31 years. In 1939, the Secretary of Interior sent a letter to the President recognizing the Creek Convention as the Legislative body of the tribe; the convention at this time was functioning much as the council had earlier. In 1944, the Muscogee General Convention adopted a new constitution and bylaws. Under

the new constitution, the executive and legislative branches were merged into one body, the Creek Indian Council. The Creek Indian Council, through the 1944 Constitution, followed a pattern of self-government that evolved over the course of more than a century. This government never received BIA approval because the new governing document excluded the Freedmen without giving Creek citizens the opportunity to vote on that provision.

In 1950, Chief John Davis did not recognize the Creek Indian Council on the basis that their credentials were improper and irregular and repudiated the 1944 Constitution. He immediately appointed members of the various tribal towns as the new Creek Indian Council, reversing the trend of having tribal towns elect the Chief.

Less than 15 years after passing the Indian Reorganization Act/Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act legislation to rebuild tribal nations, Congress reversed its goal to strengthen Indian sovereignty and tribal governments by terminating federal governmental responsibilities to the tribes and to integrate Indians into the white communities of their resident states.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs, in dealing with the Creek government, began to favor termination policies under House Concurrent Resolution 108, which would terminate the office of Principal Chief and eliminate any further elections of the Chiefs. In the mid 1950's, the Bureau of Indian Affairs refused the Creeks the right to elect a Chief and the office was filled by BIA appointees until 1970.

Since the appointment of the Creek Tribal Council in the early 1950's, the council served as advisory more than legislative capacity in regard to conduct of tribal affairs by the Chief and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

### **Relocation and Activism**

Indian Adult Vocational Training Act of 1956 provided funds for institutional and on-the-job training available only to Indians who relocated to urban areas. Many Creeks who moved to cities to achieve economic opportunities for their families continued to maintain ties with their relatives in the Creek Nation.

In 1961, the American Indian Chicago Conference involved more than 500 Indian tribal members that drafted the Declaration of Indian Purpose, a blueprint for future federal Indian relationships. Much of the activism began with the National Indian Youth Council, followed by the founding of the American Indian Movement (AIM) in 1968 which ushered in a new period of Indian militancy. In 1968, Indian Civil Rights Act provides a Bill of Rights to protect individual Indians from abuses of power by tribal governments. In 1969, a group of Indians occupied Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay. The activists claimed rights to the land under the terms of the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868.

## **RE-ESTABLISHING SOVEREIGNTY**

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### **Tribal Development**

Tribal Towns begin to assert more control over social and political life due to general mistrust of federally appointed chiefs. In 1964, the Indian Claims Commission awarded Creek Nation \$2.9m in recompense of federal violation of an 1814 treaty. In 1965, a further award of \$1 million is made for violation of an 1856 treaty. The Office of Economic Opportunity allows Creek Nation to begin creating/funding their own community programs. Termination had clearly failed to “liberate” Indians or to solve the “Indian problem.”

The major recommendation of each report was that Indians be given greater self-determination, that is, greater control in governing their reservations and greater participation in planning federal Indian policy. President Nixon, in a speech to Congress denounced termination and pledged federal government resources “to strengthen the Indian’s sense of autonomy without threatening his sense of community.”

In 1971, the Creek people, for the first time since the partial dismantling of their national government, freely elected a Principal Chief without U.S. Presidential approval. During the 1970s, the leadership of the Creek Nation drafted and adopted a new constitution, revitalized the National Council and began the challenging process of political and economic development. In the 1980s, the U.S. Supreme Court decisions affirmed the nation’s sovereign rights to maintain a national court system and levy taxes. The federal courts have also consistently re-affirmed the Creek Nation’s freedom from state jurisdiction.

### **Tribal Government 1970’s**

In 1970, the Principal Chiefs Act granted Creek Nation permission to vote for Principal Chief. In 1971, Claude Cox was the first elected Principal Chief under the new constitution since 1903. In 1975, the Self-Determination and Indian Education Act passes certain rights of sovereignty and right to education back to Indian nations. The *Harjo vs. Kleppe* (*kleppie*) decision, in 1976, acknowledges Creek right to self-governance by ensuring the creation of a legally constituted Creek national legislature. Tribal governments can now manage their own housing, law-enforcement, education, health, social service, and community development programs.

Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 and the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, passed in 1978, further solidified the government’s attempt to recognize and respect tribal cultural rights.

### **Muscogee (Creek) Nation 1979 Constitution**

In 1979, the nation adopted a new constitution under the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act. The new Muscogee (Creek) Nation Constitution continued the 1867 constitutional organization of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the government, with distinct separation of powers among the three. The current constitution (1979) was the first constitution for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation since 1867.

The Principal Chief has the authority to appoint an Election Board, Supreme Court members, College of the Muscogee Nation’s Board of Regents and other tribal boards. The Principal Chief

shall create and organize the executive office, prepare the annual budget and administer appropriated funds in accordance with the constitution. Principal Chiefs are required to present a State of the Nation address each year.

The National Council consists of one house with two representatives from each of the eight districts. Every bill shall have passed the National Council and be presented to the Principal Chief for approval before it becomes ordinance.

The judicial power of the nation is vested in the Supreme Court. All litigations between tribal officers shall originate in the District Court with the right of appeal to the Supreme Court.

### **Tribal Government under the New Constitution**

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation government is divided into three major branches, as determined by the constitution and are described as follows:

- The Legislative Branch is comprised of the National Council of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and oversees proposed legislation.
- The Executive Branch includes the Office of the Principal Chief, Second Chief, Tribal Administrator and Chief of Staff who oversee the daily operations of the tribe.
- The Judicial Branch is divided into two court levels, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation District Court and Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court is the tribe's highest court with original jurisdiction over challenges to the constitution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, and appellate jurisdiction over cases appealed from the District Court. The Supreme Court is the final authority on the constitution and laws of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. In 1982, the tribe passed an ordinance allowing tribal courts to enforce criminal and civil jurisdiction over tribal members and subsequently sought funding from the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the tribal courts and a law enforcement program, the funding denied by the BIA and Dept. of Interior resulted in MCN vs. Hodel. In 1988, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation retained its court system in MCN vs. Hodel, citing the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act, which states, any recognized tribe or band of Indians residing in Oklahoma shall have the right to organize for its common welfare and to adopt a constitution and bylaws.

Despite tragedies and drastic changes through the years, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation has survived. Through a series of rebuilding stages, the culture, the language, the hymns, the medicine songs, and the traditions are still alive in the 21st century. Our people continue to celebrate the rich cultural heritage passed down from our ancestors. We still perform the sacred ceremonies and sing sacred songs to the Creator or offer hymns to the Savior. Our language, although endangered, is being preserved. The Muscogee people learned lessons of perseverance and overcoming adversity, which is the hallmark of the Muscogee people of the old southeast.

## HEREOS OF THE MUSCOGEE PEOPLE

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**ALEXANDER MCGILLIVRAY**, also known as Hopere Micco, was born around 1750, near present day Montgomery, Alabama. McGillivray was born to a Scot fur trapper and to a half-Creek, half-French. He grew up during a very important time for the Creek people. Spain had been the most powerful foreign country trying to expand in America during the late 1700's. At the same time, the American Revolution was occurring, where English Colonists were challenging Great Britain's power and the French had established a trading post at Fort Toulouse. The Creeks had dealings with all three groups.

Because his father had been loyal to Britain, the American colonists had seized his properties and he fled to Scotland. Since he was left behind with his mother, Alexander was able to explore the ties with his Creek relatives. By 1775, he was recognized as a young leader among the Upper Creek tribal towns. Alexander, who never got over his father's losses at the hands of the United States, led some Creek warriors in a British attack on Georgia in 1779.

In 1780, British forces were attacked by Spain in Florida. McGillivray again led Creek warriors in aiding the British. He refused to deal with the new American government, and entered into a treaty relationship with Spain in 1784. McGillivray helped organize Upper and Lower Creeks in resisting white intrusion into the Creek country, and was a part of the Creek people's declaration of war upon the state of Georgia in 1786.

Alexander McGillivray experienced many changes in the Creek way of life during his lifetime. His leadership made it possible for the Creek people to have formal, governmental relations with Great Britain and Spain. By 1787, the United States Constitution was adopted, and the agreements the Creek people had with foreign governments began to weaken. President George Washington wanted to begin a United States Federal Indian policy. In 1790, Washington's cabinet representatives negotiated the Treaty of New York with McGillivray and 29 Mekkos of the Creek Nation. The treaty recognized borders of the Creek country; the United States promised to remove white trespassers from Creek lands, but called for the Creek people to cede lands to the United States. This treaty set a pattern which would continue into the next century where tribal peoples would give up lands for promises made by the United States; promises that were often broken or ignored.



**MENAWA** was born in 1766. During the Creek War of 1813, he was the Heneha (Second Chief) of Okfuskee tribal town. According to William Weatherford, as Heneha of Okfuskee, he controlled the Red Sticks, so named for the painted red sticks they carried, one of which was thrown away each day to count down the days to an important event.

Menawa led the Red Sticks into battle against an American army of 3,300 soldiers led by Andrew Jackson. Even after realizing that his strategy was not going to work, he and the Red Stick Warriors went head to head with the American army, in what is known as the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. He was wounded seven times and laid unconscious among the dead until nightfall. Under the cover of darkness, he crawled to the river where he found a canoe. Later, he told the remainder of the survivors to return to their home towns and make peace as best they could.



The Creek Nation was split on how best to deal with the overrun of their lands by the whites. William McIntosh was for the American side. McIntosh, along with other lesser leaders, signed the illegal Treaty of Indian Springs, agreeing to sell Muscogee lands. Menawa and others were outraged. They executed McIntosh, in accordance with tribal law on April 30, 1825.

During the Seminole Wars in 1836, Menawa's property was confiscated by the whites, and his family forced west. He followed later. Nothing is known of Menawa after he moved west, not even where he is buried. He fought Removal for a long time.



**WILLIAM WEATHERFORD** was born in 1780. He was the son of a Scottish trader and a Creek woman of the Wind clan. His early childhood was spent on his father's plantation near present day Wetumpka, Alabama. His mixed background enabled William to easily cross back and forth between the Creek and white worlds, a characteristic that would aid him throughout his life.

The Shawnee leader named Tecumseh came to the Creek country in 1811 to rally the Creeks to join his confederacy and rise up and rid their land of all whites. William, who is also called Red Eagle, attended the gathering of Chiefs and warriors at Tuckabatchee, where Tecumseh spoke. His message captured the feelings and emotions of many Creek warriors, including Weatherford. He began to spread the message throughout the Muscogee tribal towns.

In August of 1813, Weatherford and other Red Sticks attacked Ft. Mims in retaliation for the Battle of Burnt Corn. About 400 people were killed including many half-blood Creeks who had taken refuge there. News of the attack caused a panic throughout much of the south. General Andrew Jackson began marching to the Creek country, intent on subduing any further attacks by the Red Sticks. He destroyed every Creek town he came to along the way. He was especially looking to capture and punish William Weatherford for Ft. Mims.

It just so happened that Weatherford was absent from Horseshoe Bend when Jackson's army attacked. After defeating the Red Sticks at Horseshoe Bend, Jackson ordered his men to capture William Weatherford. In the weeks after Horseshoe Bend, Weatherford realized that to continue fighting would destroy not only what were left of his warriors, but their families as well. The women and children were hiding in the forests where they were growing sick and dying of starvation. Out of concern for them and not for his own fate, Weatherford surrendered. Catching Jackson by surprise by bravely walking straight into his camp, Weatherford introduced himself to Jackson and told him he was not afraid of him. He was only surrendering to save his people from more disaster. Jackson admired Weatherford for his bravery and decided to trust in his promise to persuade the remaining Red Sticks to surrender. Weatherford walked out without punishment.



**OPOTHLEYAHOLA** was born around 1798. He was a member of the Upper Creek tribal town of Tuckabatchee. He was the speaker for his tribal town Mekko, Big Warrior. Opothleyahola (*oh-bith-thee-ya-ho-la*) always challenged the power of the Lower Creek Chiefs, who were friendly with the white people. He believed that anything that concerned the homelands should have the consent of the whole Creek Nation. Opothleyahola (*oh-bith-thee-ya-ho-la*) spoke out many times against treaties that ceded land to the whites. Although he signed many treaties, it was often under duress.

Under the Treaty of Indian Springs in February of 1825, the signing Creek Chiefs sold land to the U.S. which was illegal by Creek law. Opothleyahola (*oh-bith-thee-ya-ho-la*), along with others went to Washington, D.C. to protest the terms of the treaty. Under the new treaty he insisted upon the removal of white intruders who were invading Creek lands. A new treaty was made in 1826 which nullified the Treaty of Indian Springs. This is the only time in history that the U.S. government has agreed to nullify a treaty.

Noting the success of Georgia in getting Creek lands, the state of Alabama began to exert pressure on their state government and the federal government. This pressure eventually forced the Creeks to sign a treaty in March of 1832, by which the Creeks gave up all their lands east of the Mississippi river. The Creeks were given 5 years to leave their Alabama homes, and in 1836 Opothleyahola (*oh-bith-thee-ya-ho-la*) led 8,000 of his people to Indian Territory, now Oklahoma.

The Creeks had not been in their new homeland long, when the Civil War began. This was no real affair of the Creeks, and the wiser leaders counseled the tribe to stay neutral. However, circumstances were forcing them to join either the North or the South. Both sides promised the Creeks that if they joined their side, their current homelands would be protected, and they would be able to retain them.

Wanting to remain neutral, Opothleyahola (*oh-bith-thee-ya-ho-la*), decided to lead his people to a Union Army camp in Kansas. He led 10,000 of his followers (known as the Loyal Creeks) who traveled with all of their belongings and cattle to Kansas. They had to fight Confederate companies along the way, but the Loyal Creeks ran out of ammunition and guns, and were scattered. The survivors reached the Union camp, many wearing no warm clothes or shoes and had no food. In Kansas, 240 Creeks died of famine and exposure and many amputations occurred. Opothleyahola (*oh-bith-thee-ya-ho-la*), broken in health, but dauntless in spirit, rode in severe winter conditions to officers in another Army camp. He was unsuccessful in getting the help that was promised his people. He never recovered from being sick and exhausted. He died the following spring, March of 1863, and was buried in an unmarked grave near the Sac and Fox agency in Kansas.



**WARD Co-cha-my (COACHMAN)** was among a small number of Creeks yet remaining in Alabama, a son of Jim Boy, he did not remove west until about 1845. Three years later he returned to Alabama to aid some of his people in immigrating to the Indian Territory. He arrived at Fort Smith, June 24, 1848, with a party of sixty-five Indians, but despite his earnest efforts, he was unable to secure a number who were held as slaves by white people. In a letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in D.C. he wrote, *“I think there yet remains in Alabama not less than 100 Creeks and most of them in a deplorable condition; a man by the name of Dickerson in Coosa County has one family, a woman and her children, 7 in number. A Mr. Floyd and a Rev. Mr. Hays both of Autauga County have each a number of Creeks. I tried to get these but was prevented doing so by threats of their would-be masters. I shall get them yet - but not this season; when the waters are in good boating order next season you will hear from me again.”*

Ward Coachman served as clerk of the district court of Deep Fork District in 1868 and as a member and speaker of the House of Warriors in 1875. He was court clerk of the Wewoka District in 1873-4, served as a member and President of the House of Kings in 1888 and was dispatched as a delegate from the Creek Nation to Washington upon five different occasions in 1881-2. In the fall

of 1875, Ward Coachman was chosen second chief and became Principal Chief of the Creek Nation upon the impeachment of his predecessor on December 15, 1876.



**CHITTO HARJO**, whose English name was Wilson Jones, was a full-blood Creek Indian with traditional values. After the Green Peach War, and Isparhecher's (*is-bar-heech-chee*) retirement from public affairs, Harjo became the acknowledged leader of the dissident full-blood Creeks, who were opposed to the division of Creek lands in the Indian Territory. Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was great pressure to divide Creek lands into individual allotments and dissolve the tribal government. The dissident Creeks who were followers of Harjo were few, but were very determined to recapture and resume the traditional ways of the Creeks. These Creeks felt that they had been wronged by the federal government and that both the spirit and the law of past treaties had been violated. They believed the government had treated them as people of no value and in fact, there was much truth of this in the way the government's relations were held.

In 1901, Chitto Harjo tried to establish a separate political status for his followers at Hickory Ground. However, the government sent troops to take Harjo and his followers into custody. They were indicted, tried and convicted in federal court, but were later reprimanded and paroled by the court. Over the following years, Creek tribal lands were divided into allotments, and the "Snake Band" refused to select any lands for their respective allotments. Arbitrary selections were then made for them.

Late in 1906, a Special Senate Investigating Committee came to Indian Territory to investigate and report on general conditions. Chitto Harjo, with some followers, was present, and he was recognized by the Committee and given the opportunity to speak. With great dignity and solemnity, Harjo gave a spellbinding speech, telling the Senators of the dealings between his people and the federal government. He told how the Creeks were forced to give up their homelands in Georgia and Alabama for lands in the west, even though they had been promised these lands would be theirs forever. The Creeks made a recovery from the terrible march from their old homelands to the area later to become Indian Territory. Then, the Civil War began. Harjo told of how he joined the Union Army, thinking to protect his home, land and family. But after the Civil War, the federal government made the Creek people give up a major portion of their lands.

In 1907, Indian Territory became a state. A rumor started that Harjo was leading an insurrection. He knew nothing about this, until he was told the state militia was looking for him. He and some of his followers fled into Choctaw country and he lived with friend Daniel Bob, where he died in 1913. Harjo was one who wanted only justice, fairness and equality for his people, which was never forthcoming during his lifetime.

**MUSCOGEE HISTORICAL TIMELINE**

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- 900-1350 AD Mississippian Period – Muskogeans are building large earthen Mounds; society becomes more complex as they form Chiefdoms; begin growing corn, beans and squash.
- 1540 Hernando De Soto’s expedition travels through the ancient Muskogean chiefdoms spreading diseases, consuming their food stores and killing thousands.
- 1670 The English establish Charlestown and begin to trade with the “Creeks.”
- 1698 The Spanish establish the town of Pensacola.
- 1717 The French establish Fort Toulouse at the conjunction of the Coosa & Tallapoosa Rivers.
- 1776 The American Revolution; colonists win, creating yet another foreign government for the Creeks to deal with.
- 1790 Aug. 7<sup>th</sup>, Treaty of New York, Creeks sell land on the Oconee and the U.S. guarantees their remaining lands from encroachment. Whites are not to enter into Creek territory without a government issued passport.
- 1811 Tecumseh addresses the Creeks at Tuckabatchee, encouraging them to join in a general war against all whites.
- 1813-14 The Creek Wars:  
 July 27, 1813 - Battle of Burnt Corn Creek  
 August 30, 1813 - Fort Mims attacked and burned  
 November 3, 1813 - Mass slaughter of Tallashatchee Tribal Town  
 November 9, 1813 - Battle of Talladega  
 November 12, 1813 - Canoe fight  
 December 23, 1813 - Battle of Holy Ground  
 January 22, 1814 - Battle of Emuckfaw  
 January 24, 1814 - Battle of Enitachopko  
 March 27, 1814 - The Battle of Horseshoe Bend, the last Battle of the Creek War
- 1814 The Treaty of Fort Jackson. The Creeks were forced to cede 23 million acres of ancestral homeland in central Alabama and southern Georgia to the United States, leaving them a tract of land in western Georgia.
- 1824 The Treaty of Indian Springs was illegally signed by William McIntosh, selling Creek land to the U.S.
- 1825 Treaty of New York in which the Indian Springs treaty is nullified.
- 1826 Treaty of Washington; Creeks sold their Georgia lands; retained land in Alabama and required the McIntosh faction to leave the Creek Nation and move “west of the Mississippi.” Others went with them, having nowhere else to go after losing their Georgia homes.
- 1830 Indian Removal Act.

- 1832 March 24, Treaty of Cusseta; opened up a large portion of Creek land to white settlement, but guaranteed them protected ownership of the remaining portion which was divided into individual allotments. Creeks could either sell their lands and use the money to remove to Indian Territory or remain in Alabama and integrate into white society.
- 1835 By this time Creeks were destitute; the government failed to uphold the protection promised in the Treaty of Cusseta.
- 1836 Second Creek War – Creeks retaliate against swindlers and land speculators. The resulting violence is considered a war by the U.S. officials who use it as an excuse to begin the forced removal.
- 1837 15,000 Creeks had been forcibly removed; approximately 7,000 more would come later, after the Creek warriors assisted the U.S. government in fighting the Seminole War. They were promised that their families would be protected in their homes, which again did not happen.
- 1838 At this point most of the Creeks had been removed to Indian Territory where they rekindled their fires and re-established their tribal towns.
- 1856 Treaty with Creeks and Seminoles.
- 1860s Tribal unity is tested as the U.S. creates a Civil War and Creek leaders, such as Opothleyahola (*oh-bith-thee-ya-ho-la*), attempt to keep the tribe neutral, although many “Arkansas Creeks” choose sides and fight.
- 1866 The Reconstruction Treaty required the Creek Nation to cede 3.2 million acres, approximately half of the Muscogee domain, as punishment for those who supported the South during the Civil War.
- 1867 The Creek people adopt a written constitution that provides for a Principal Chief and a Second Chief, a judicial branch, and a bicameral legislature composed of a House of Kings and a House of Warriors.
- 1898 Passage of the Curtis Act which dismantled tribal governments in another attempt at assimilation; the Dawes Allotment Act provided for tribal lands to be broken up into individual allotments to encourage adoption of the European-American style of farming.
- 1899 Creek and Seminole Indians enrolled by the Dawes Commission.
- 1901 293 “Snakes Indians,” including Chitto Harjo, were indicted for conspiracy, and sentenced to two years in Leavenworth; citizens of the Five Civilized Tribes admitted as U.S. citizens.
- 1906 With the U.S. federal government's passage of the Five Civilized Tribes Act, national self-governance of the Creek Nation and other four tribes comes to an end.
- 1907 Indian Territory becomes part of the State of Oklahoma and the final Creek Nation National Council meeting is held at the Council House in Okmulgee.
- 1919 Creeks are forced to sell the Council House and grounds to the city of Okmulgee for \$100,000 under the supervision of the Department of the Interior. The deed conveying title was executed by the Principal Chief. G. W. Grayson, proceeds of the sale being deposited in the U.S. Treasury in the name of the tribe.

- 1920s      Many citizens of Okmulgee do not exactly embrace the possession of the Council House and want to tear it down. Will Rogers visits Okmulgee and tells the citizens to preserve the Council House. Citizens begin to listen and future attempts to destroy the Council House are put to rest.
- 1936      Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act; tribes begin to slowly rebuild their sovereign status.
- 1938      Thlopthlocco, Alabama-Quassarte and Kialegee tribal towns adopt their own governments under the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act.
- 1964      Indian Claims Commission awards the Creek Nation \$2.9 million in recompense for federal violation of the Treaty of Ft. Jackson.
- 1970      Principal Chiefs Act (PL 91-495) granted Muscogee (Creek) Nation permission to vote for Principal Chief.
- 1971      Claude Cox is the first elected Principal Chief since 1903; pursues a source of tribal sovereignty to consolidate MCN's status as a self-governing entity.
- 1972      The first tribal programs began, later followed by Bingo halls.
- 1974      The Muscogee (Creek) Nation tribal complex is built in Okmulgee.
- 1975      PL 93-638; Self-Determination and Indian Education Act passed certain rights of sovereignty and right to education back to Indian nations.
- 1976      Harjo vs. Kleppe (*kleppie*) court case decision acknowledges Creek right to self-governance by ensuring the creation of a legally constituted Creek National legislature.
- 1978      Indian Child Welfare Act and the American Indian Religious Freedom Act further solidified the government's attempt to recognize and respect tribal cultural rights.
- 1979      Tribal sovereignty is fully renewed as a new constitution is adopted, replacing the 1867 constitution. Like the U.S. Constitution, 3 branches of government are formed - Executive, Legislative, and Judicial. This new constitution will help the tribe select future directions, such as forming an administration, and offices for education, health, and even gaming.
- 1988      MCN vs. Hodel, citing the OIWA, recognized any tribe or band of Indians residing in Oklahoma shall have the right to organize for its common welfare and to adopt a constitution and bylaws; the Muscogee (Creek) Nation retained its court system.
- 2010      September 30, Muscogee (Creek) Nation buys back the Creek Council House. Official ceremony held November 20, 2011.
- 2020      McGirt vs. Oklahoma: In July, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that the Muscogee Nation reservation was never dismantled and remains a reservation today.

# **Muscogee Forced Removal**

## *The Forced Removal of the Creek Indians*

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August 1836 - February 1837

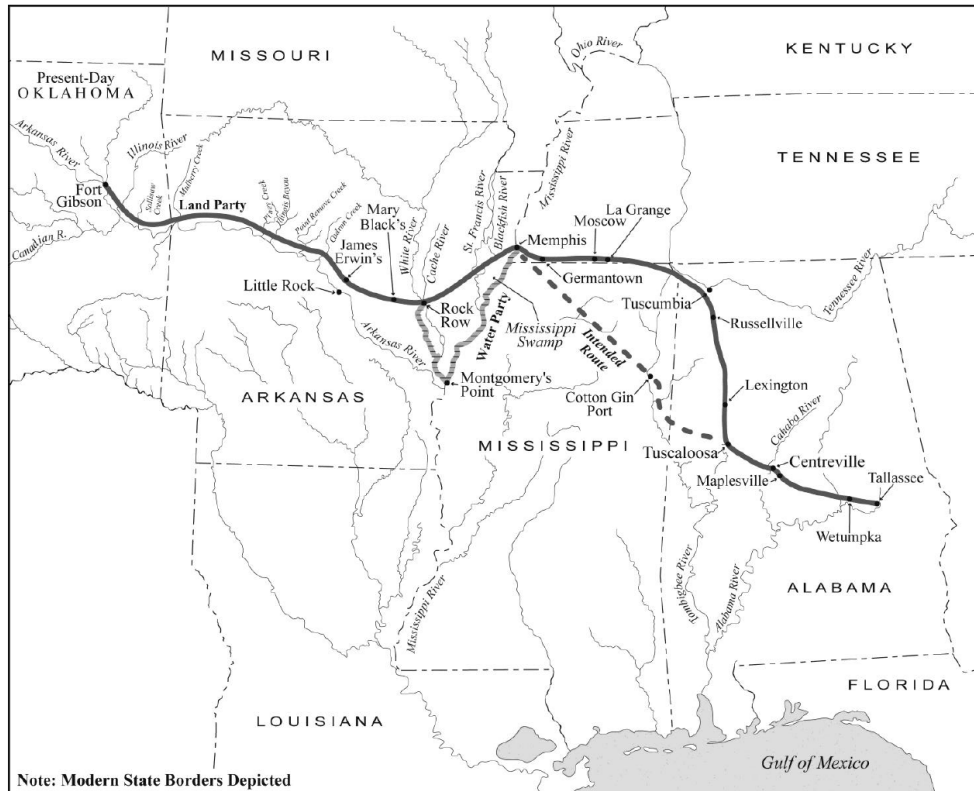
*“The Indians [are] very discontented. Everything appears to go wrong. I am disgusted with Indian Emigration.”* —Mathew Bateman, Emigrating Agent, 1836

The commencement of hostilities of the Second Creek War officially ended voluntary removal of the Creek Indians. The policy of voluntary removal was largely a failure due to the small number of Creeks who emigrated west. But the war gave Andrew Jackson an excuse, in his mind, to forcibly remove the entire Nation to the Indian Territory. The first forced removal was of Creek prisoners, approximately twenty-five hundred in all, who were shackled and placed on board steamboats at Montgomery, Alabama. But Jackson was unwilling to let the remainder of the Nation, even those friendly to the United States, remain on their ancestral homeland. Even before the two detachments of Creek prisoners arrived at Fort Gibson, American soldiers moved in to round up the remaining sixteen thousand Creek Indians. The Creeks were assigned to large detachments, told to rendezvous at various places within the former Creek Nation, and ordered to march west on their assigned routes. The company hired to remove the Creeks was the Alabama Emigrating Company, which won the bid to transport the Creeks west at \$28.50 per person. The company employed a number of holdovers from the J.W.A. Sanford & Company. The contractors provided transportation, provisions, and medicine when needed. Military officers and a surgeon accompanied the detachments to ensure the Creeks comfort and safety. But, the movement of sixteen thousand people proved to be extremely difficult and the Creeks faced obstacles at almost every turn.

As the Creek prisoners continued toward Fort Gibson, the government began the process of rounding up the remaining Creeks in Alabama. The Creeks were assigned to five large detachments that contained between one and three thousand people. Camps were established at a number of locations around the former Creek Nation and each detachment had a central rendezvous location where the Creeks congregated in preparation for their departure. On August 17, 1836, Thomas Jesup issued “Orders No. 63” organizing two detachments of Creeks under Chief Opothle Yoholo. Out of respect for his authority, Opothle Yoholo was assigned to the **First Detachment** and ordered to rendezvous with his people three miles west of Tallassee. By late August this party contained approximately 2,400 Creeks. **Detachment Two**, consisting of 3,142 Creeks rendezvoused near the town of Wetumpka. On August 22, Jesup issued “Orders no. 67,” which organized detachments three through six. This was later amended to include five detachments. **Detachment Three** consisted of all Creek towns along both banks of the Tallapoosa River extending from Tallassee in the south to Horseshoe Bend in the north. The most notable among this detachment was Menawa of Okfuskee. Their rendezvous, with 2,420 Creeks, was four miles east of Talladega. **Detachment Four** contained 1,169 emigrants from Randolph, Benton, and Talladega counties including four hundred Creek refugees from the Cherokee Nation. They encamped four miles north of Talladega. **Detachment Five** consisted of 1,943 Creeks, primarily from the towns of Cusseta and Coweta, led by Tuckabatchee Harjo and Jim Island. Tuckabatchee Harjo’s camp was at the Creek town of Cusseta in Chambers County, while Jim Island’s Creeks were encamped opposite West Point, Georgia. The camps converged at Lafayette, Alabama.



**Detachment One**  
August 1836 - December 1836



Preparation for removal from Alabama was emotionally difficult for the Creeks. The loss of their remaining ancestral land had come after a bitter, decade long struggle to maintain their sovereignty in the face of white encroachment and government hostility. While they tended to practical matters such as packing their possessions into wagons and receiving much needed food, the Creeks also took great care to close their ceremonial life in the east. A number of Creeks were chosen to carry the sacred items used in the annual busk and other ceremonies west. They traveled in advance of the detachments and no Creeks were allowed to pass them. For instance, the Cowetas carried with them the large conch shells out of which they partook of black drink.

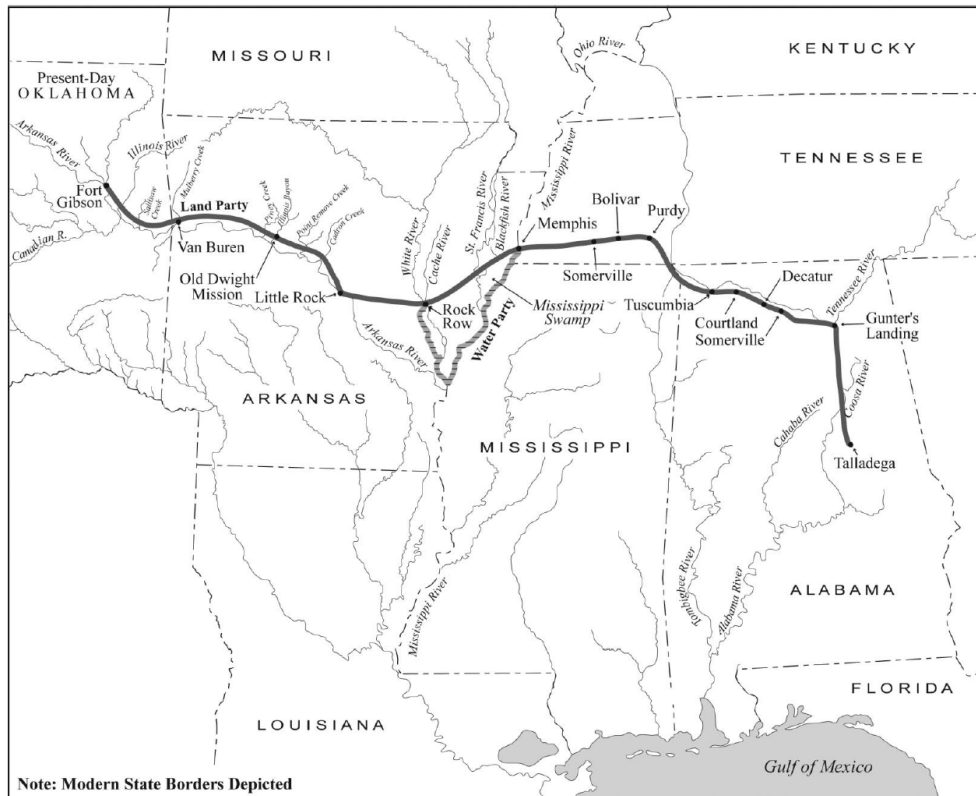
Whenever a Creek town was relocated in the past, the council ground and town fire was also moved with the people. Great care and ceremony accompanied the removal of the town fire and the re-consecration of new ground. This was no different for the Creeks during forced removal. There are, however, no documentary records detailing how the Creeks closed down their towns and square grounds or removed the sacred fire. But oral histories survive. In the 1930s, the Works Progress Administration sent interviewers through the Muscogee Nation in Oklahoma to collect oral narratives. Many deal with removal and a few stories explain the process of traveling west with the town fire. According to narrative, the town of Fish Pond chose two men to care for the town fire prior to removal. Before their detachments commenced their march west, each man took a burning piece of wood from the town's fire and they were responsible for keeping it burning until they consecrated their new square ground in the west. The Fish Pond embers were used to start a camp fire each night the party stopped. When camp was broken in the morning and their

travels resumed, two more pieces of burning wood were taken by the two men and carried with them. This process was repeated until they re-lit their town fire in present-day Oklahoma. Similarly, the Creeks of Okchai chose two men, and overseen by the talwa's micco, to carry and care for the town's fire on their journey west. These two men were designated fire-carriers and no other person could handle the town's embers during the journey. Moreover, these men were under strict orders to abide by the micco's commands. They could not mingle with women or drink from a cup used by women. The fire-carriers were also told to only eat certain humpeta hutke ("white meals") such as white Indian corn bread and white safke.

The Creeks made other preparations in anticipation of their journey west. Menawa—who fought Andrew Jackson at Horseshoe Bend in 1814, carried out the execution of William McIntosh in 1825, and accompanied the delegation that signed the Treaty of Washington in 1826—left the enrollment camp at Talladega and spent the night before he was to emigrate in his town of Okfuskee. With regard to his last night on his ancestral homeland, Menawa stated that *"last evening I saw the sun set for the last time, and its light shine upon the tree tops, and the land, and the water, that I am never to look upon again."* Just before departing with **Detachment Three** from Talladega, Menawa gave a portrait of himself to a white man and noted that *"I am going away. I have brought you this picture—I wish you to take it and hang it up in your house, that when your children look at it you can tell them what I have been. I have always found you true to me, but great as my regard for you is I never wish to see you in that new country to which I am going—for when I cross the great river my desire is that I may never again see the face of a white man!"* And, while Opothle Yoholo, no doubt, emotionally prepared himself for departing the land of his ancestors as well, he was also concerned with other practical matters. For instance, Opothle Yoholo sent off a number of communiqués to government agents requesting an increase in the amount of provisions issued to his people along the route as well as gaining assurances from the government that there would be protection from the McIntosh party in the west. Opothle Yoholo noted that *"I have been and still am recognized by the Government as the Principal Chief of the Creek nation, and should any of the Creeks West object to me as such, I wish time to consult, and arrange all our difficulties which I hope we can do in a friendly way."* Opothle Yoholo also requested to stop for an extended period of time within the state of Arkansas to settle the difficulties between the Creek prisoners such as Neah Micco and those who aided the government in capturing them. Opothle Yoholo and other headmen noted that these Creeks evinced *"bad feelings towards us"* and they feared reprisals from them. For his part, when asked about his inevitable meeting with the McIntosh party, Menawa responded by noting that *"they do not know me who suppose I can be influenced by fear. I desire peace, but would not turn my back on danger. I know there will be blood shed, but I am not afraid. I have been a man of blood all my life; now I am old and wish for peace."* Other Creeks prepared for emigration by purchasing jewelry. One oral narrative noted that Creek women purchased jewelry such as *"diamond rings, ear rings, [and] gold bracelets"* because they *"were celebrating before leaving their homes in Alabama."* In fact, John Sprague, who oversaw **Detachment Five**, observed that many Cowetas and Cussetas *"expended what little they had . . . for some gaudy article of jewelry."* And yet, there were many Creeks who found it difficult to comprehend what was happening to them. Oral narratives described the *"awful silence"* found in the emigration camps caused by the shock of impending removal.

### Detachment Three

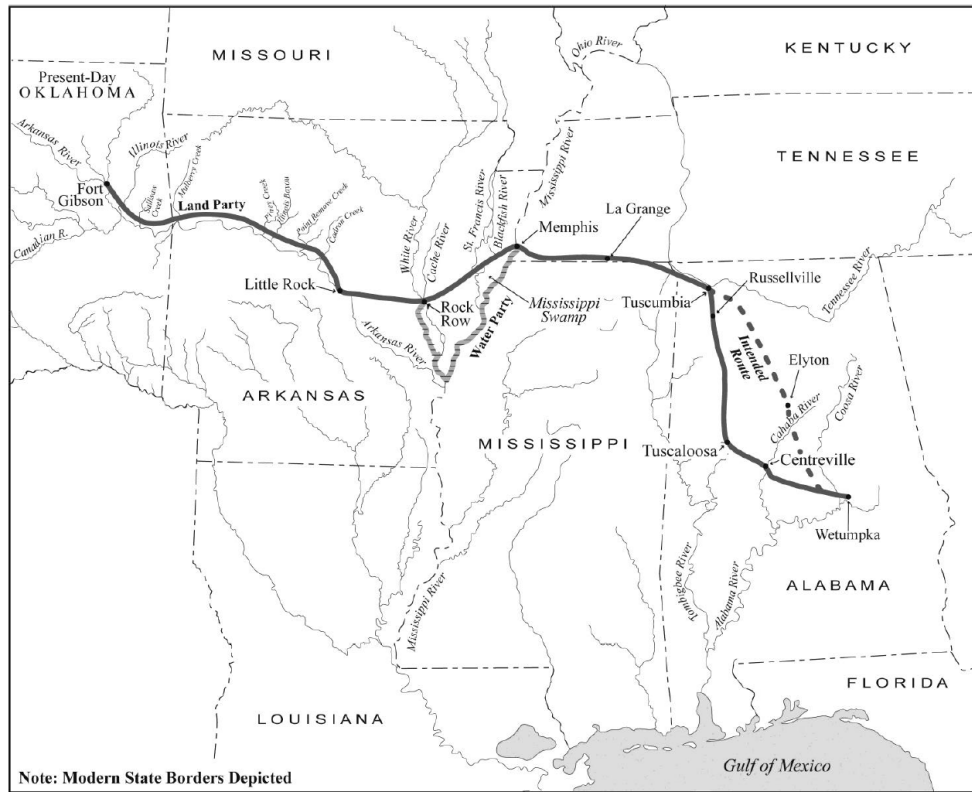
September 1836 - January 1837



While the Creeks emotionally and physically prepared for their journey, the contractors prepared for the logistics of removal. Routes were established, provisions and transportation collected, and days set aside for departure. Originally, August 25 and 26, 1836 were the days for **Detachments One** and **Two** to begin moving, respectively. The other detachments were ordered to begin their march between August 29 and September 5. But, Opothle Yoholo demanded more time so the Creeks and headmen could finish arranging their affairs, and the government obliged by postponing departure day for five days. Opothle Yoholo and his people were the first to take up their line toward Memphis and they left their rendezvous near Tallassee on August 31, 1836. They carried with them thirty-eight wagon teams and about seven hundred horses. They were followed by **Detachment Five** which left their encampments at Cusseta and near West Point on September 5 carrying with them forty-five wagons “*of every description*” and about five hundred ponies; **Detachment Two** which commenced their journey by crossing the Coosa River at Wetumpka on September 6; **Detachment Four** left Talladega on September 8; and **Detachment Three** began moving on September 17, 1836.

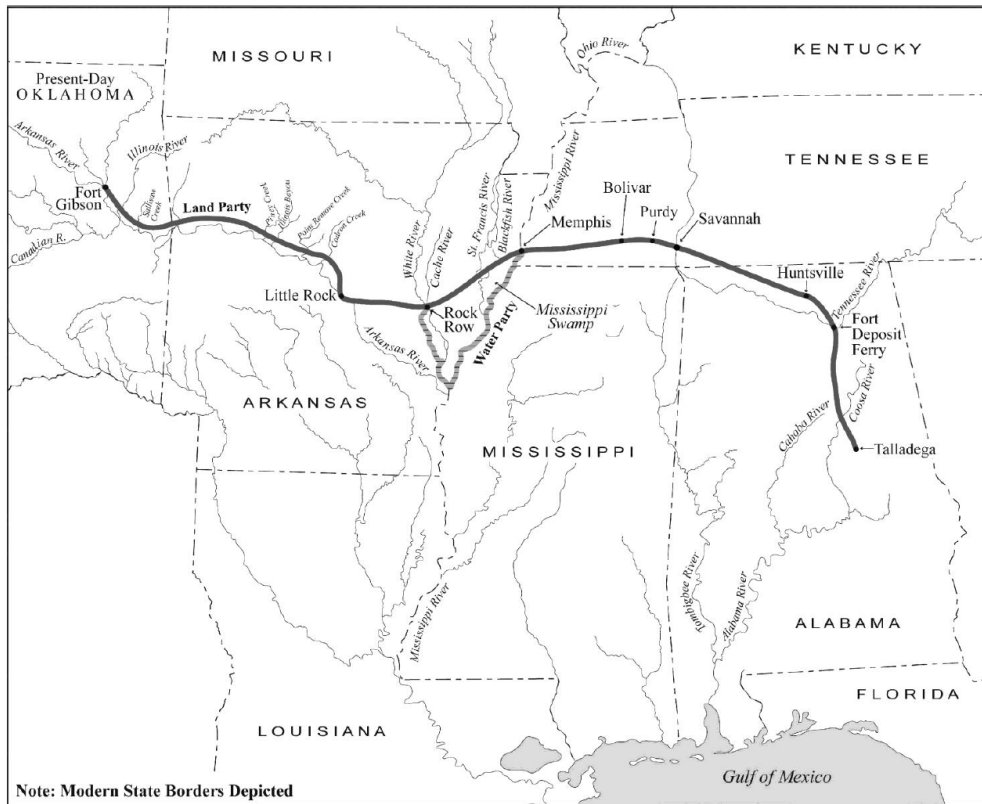
**Detachment Two**

September 1836 - December 1836



In addition to staggering the departure days of the Creek detachments, each party also had a prescribed route through Alabama to Memphis. This was done primarily to space the detachments enough to ensure a steady supply of provisions and to avoid particularly bad roads. The agents and contractors in charge of Opothle Yoholo’s planned a route to Memphis through Wetumpka and Tuscaloosa in Alabama, and Cotton Gin Port in Mississippi. **Detachment Two’s** route was established through Elyton. The planned routes of **Detachment Three** and **Four**, which rendezvoused in the northern section of the former Creek Nation near Talladega, was due north to Gunter’s Landing on the Tennessee River. Waiting at Gunter’s Landing was approximately a thousand Creek refugees who had escaped to the Cherokee Nation over the past decade. Accompanied by soldiers, the Creek refugees marched to Gunter’s Landing in anticipation of being picked up by **Detachment Four**. After reconnoitering, the party swelled to over two thousand emigrants. **Detachment Four** crossed the Tennessee River at Fort Deposit Ferry and proceeded to Huntsville before crossing the Tennessee River again at Savannah, Tennessee and continuing toward Memphis. **Detachment Three**, about ten days behind **Detachment Four**, turned west near Gunter’s Landing and followed the south bank of the Tennessee through Somerville and Decatur because the Creeks were “*much opposed to crossing the River.*” **Detachment Five** left Chambers County, Alabama and made a direct line toward Tuscumbia by way of Elyton.

**Detachment Four**  
September 1836-December 1836

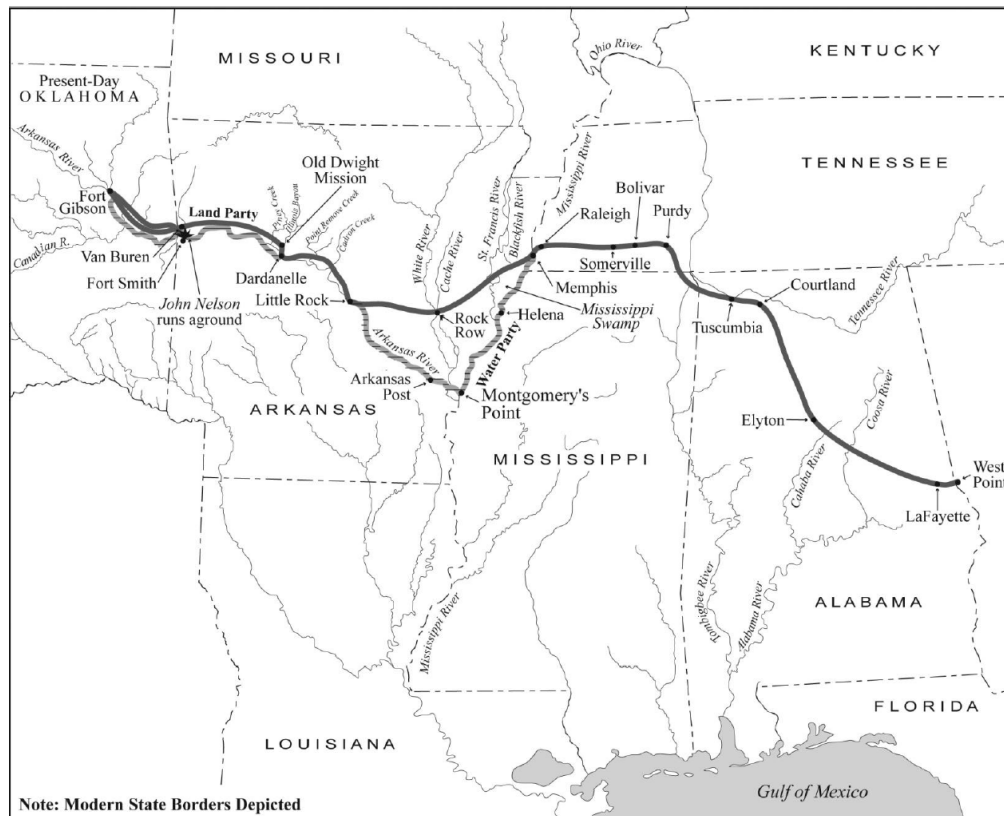


Six to eight hours of travel by land, covering around thirteen to fifteen miles per day, was typical for the Creek emigrants. The agents generally broke camp at between five o'clock and eight o'clock in the morning, although in some cases there were delays. It took some time to get the entire party moving each morning. For instance, Edward Deas, the military agent in charge of overseeing **Detachment Three**, noted in his journal that *"in moving a Party of the present size; a space of time of more than an hour generally elapses, between the starting of the first of the Indians [and] the Baggage Wagons, and the time at which the whole body has left the last nights encampment [and] is fairly on the road."* The Creeks usually traveled until one o'clock and five o'clock in the afternoon and then established camps for the evening. Deas, who kept some of the most detailed accounts of the Creeks journey noted that *"in stopping also the interval between the arrival of the first of the Indians [and] their wagons, at the new place of Encampment, and the time at which the whole party comes up, is generally from one to two hours [and] sometimes more than that space of time."*

Life in these nighttime encampments was a flurry of activity. In fact, Deas hired “servants” to assist in the “*menial offices of cooking, grooming their horses, and the like, all incidental to the camp life.*” The servants also aided in erecting the large tents, chopping firewood, and building fires. Observers traveled through the encampment of **Detachment Four** while at Huntsville and noted that the Creeks were divided into clans or families. Witnesses reported seeing the Creek women making fires and cooking food while the men were “*loitering about or stretched upon a blanket*” and “*scores of playful children scattered around.*”

### Detachment Five

September 1836 - December 1836



The Creeks' journey was complicated by many factors. Even before commencing, many of the Creeks were poor and malnourished and not in a condition to travel long distances. Many Creeks also had not harvested their crops due to the exigencies of the Second Creek War. Moreover, large numbers of Creeks were monetarily poor and had little possessions as a result of the hardships of the previous decade. This was particularly true for the Cowetas and Cussetas of **Detachment Five**. John T. Sprague, the military agent overseeing the party, noted “*to say they were not in a distressed and wretched condition would be in contradiction to the well-known history of the Creeks for the last two years. They were poor, wretchedly, and depravedly, poor, many of them without a garment to cover their nakedness. To this there was some exceptions, but this was the condition of a large portion of them.*” Moreover, Sprague observed that the Creeks of **Detachment Five** “*were in a deplorable condition when they left their homes.*”

Local whites also posed problems for the emigrating Creeks along their journey. Many “*hangers-on*” sold whiskey to the Creeks while they were in camp waiting to migrate. While attempting to break camp at Tallassee, Bateman was “*exceedingly annoyed by Sheriffs and Constables, who detained the Chiefs on Writs for debt.*” A few days later, saddles, blankets, and horses were confiscated from Opothle Yoholo’s party as they passed through Wetumpka. One Creek emigrant had six horses taken. Two days later the Creeks of **Detachment One** were once again “*much troubled last night by white people (drunken white people).*” The headmen, at the suggestion of the agent, placed a guard of forty Creeks around their camp. Similarly, the Cowetas and Cussetas who comprised **Detachment Five** were subject to harassment from local whites who robbed the Creeks “*of their horses and even clothing.*” The military agent overseeing **Detachment Two** observed that “*it is painful to reflect that, at the very moment of leaving their old homes peaceably in search of new ones, the Indians should have had their camps beset by a gang [of] swindlers, horse thieves and whiskey-traders, practicing every species of fraud that is calculated to disgrace the human character.*” He even noted that the whites “*anticipated*” the route of the Creeks “*and an abundant supply of whiskey furnished on the road-side.*” The Creeks in **Detachment Three** were also troubled by speculators as they waited in camp near Talladega. Deas reported that “*there are many speculators hanging about the camp, [and] various demands made upon the Indians.*” Many of the whites were trying to obstruct the emigration because their business was based on trade with the Creeks. Even local white settlers, who did not necessarily harass the Creeks, still came to gawk at the emigrants. In fact, the Creeks of **Detachment Five** were “*enrolled and prepared for removal in [the] presence of a large crowd.*”

The Creeks also had problems with other Creeks during their journey. For instance, as **Detachment Five** traveled to the northwest from their encampments, about 120 Lower Creeks who participated in the Second Creek War and had hid in the Chewacla swamp, inquired about joining up with the party. Sprague agreed but replied that only if they came in immediately would they be “*received as friends and treated as other Indians.*” Between one hundred and 150 of these Creeks, including women and children, eventually joined the party. As these Creeks traveled with the detachment, they “*kept themselves aloof lest they might be treated as hostiles.*” Tensions between these Creeks and the main party soon arose, however. Sprague, in fact, noted that “*there has been at times great dissatisfaction in the camp originating I think with a party of hostile Indians who joined me from a swamp the third night on our march.*”

The route chosen for a particular detachment, at times, posed problems as well. For instance, while encamped at Tuscaloosa, **Detachment One** changed the direction of their intended route through Mississippi because of the lack of provisions and the bad roads. Instead of passing through Cotton Gin Port, Mississippi, Bateman decided to go through Moulton but later changed his mind again and the party traveled through Russellville, Alabama. This also affected **Detachment Two** which planned on traveling through Elyton. When the Creek headmen of **Detachment Two** discovered that they were not going to travel to Tuscaloosa as Opothle Yoholo had, they demanded a change of plans. As **Detachment Two** camped for the evening near where the road forked to Tuscaloosa and Elyton, a number of Creek headmen met with the agents at nine o’clock in the evening to voice their concerns. The agents and contractors used “*every argument*” to dissuade the Creeks against a change of plans, including the possibility that there would not be enough food along the route to accommodate both detachments. The Creeks, however, would not acquiesce. In fact, the headmen noted that “*we were directed to follow in the foot-steps of Opothle-Yoholo and rather than disobey this command we are willing to starve the five days.*” The agents and contractors finally agreed to

the Creeks demands and provisions were furnished that allowed **Detachment Two** to travel through Centreville, Tuscaloosa, and Russellville, before dissecting the northeastern corner of the Chickasaw Nation.

Travel was also complicated by the presence of alcohol in the camps. In fact, many Creeks traveled west completely intoxicated. Agents observed intoxicated Creeks *“would come . . . singing into camp late at night, threatening the lives of all who came within their reach.”* While this slowed the progress of the party, the Creeks safety was also jeopardized. Within days of setting out from Tallassee, Spony Fixico from **Detachment One**, was shot by his brother during a drinking binge. He *“died in a few hours.”* Similarly, while near Somerville, Alabama, Nocose Yoholo, a Hillabee from **Detachment Three** who was about six miles behind the rear of his party, got drunk and quarreled with a white man who then shot him with a pistol. Edward Deas, the military agent overseeing the detachment, left the main party to visit the injured Creek emigrant whom he found still intoxicated but *“not dangerously wounded.”* Indeed, Deas complained that *“there are almost always persons at every small town or settlement who are base enough to persist in selling [alcohol] to [the Creeks] even after the evil consequences have been fully explained.”* Alcohol was, according to the agent, *“the cause of more disturbances [and] difficulties in the camp, than all others put together.”* A few days later, a number of Creeks became intoxicated and *“some fighting took place.”* No Creeks were killed although *“several were wounded.”* R.B. Screven, who oversaw **Detachment Two**, estimated that the sale of whiskey on the roadside accounted for *“more than one half”* of all the problems they encountered along the route. But, it was not just white residents and traders selling alcohol to the Creeks. As **Detachment One** passed through the Chickasaw Nation and encamped on Yellow Creek in Mississippi, Mathew Bateman reported that the *“Indians generally drunk got their liquor from the Chickasaw Indians.”*

But, many of the problems the Creeks faced along their journey were far beyond their control. A combination of bad roads, inclement weather, and the lack of potable water compounded the difficulty of their travels west. The roads the Creeks traveled on through Alabama, the Chickasaw Nation in Mississippi, and Tennessee to Memphis varied between *“very good”* and *“horridly bad.”* As the Creeks of **Detachment One** left Alabama and entered the Chickasaw Nation in Mississippi, agents observed that *“the Indians and the ponies lame. Their feet being worn out traveling over the gravel roads.”* A few days later, it was reported that *“Roads bad. Indians feet sore. Ponies giving out. Chiefs cross.”* The Creeks of **Detachment Three** traveled along stretches of road along the south side of the Tennessee River that were *“dusty”* and *“consequently extremely unpleasant to travel.”*

Complicating matters was the mountainous terrain the Creeks passed over in the northern portions of Alabama, the weather, and the lack of potable water. The conditions the Creeks experienced oscillated between *“very warm”* days and being bombarded by *“torrents”* of rainfall. And, despite the rain, potable water was exceedingly scarce. These factors compounded the fatigue of the parties. The scarcity of water forced many of the detachments, at times, to travel several miles farther per day along those same bad roads in search of a clean spring or stream. For instance, after a long ten hours of walking over *“very hilly and rough”* roads in the Chickasaw Nation, the Creeks of **Detachment Five** encamped for the evening after traveling seventeen miles. John T. Sprague, the military agent who oversaw the party, remarked that the distance that day *“was accomplished with great difficulty and with much fatigue to the Indians; but the scarcity of water compelled the party to go much farther than was proper for the comfort and convenience of the Indians.”* Travel



over the bad roads with little water to drink stretched the Creeks to their limits, and many did not arrive in camp until nine o'clock at night—about four hours after the main party had stopped for the evening. Some days later, a portion of the detachment did not arrive in camp until the following morning. Indeed, as they approached Memphis, the Creeks and the wagons of **Detachment Five** were “*strewn for twelve or fifteen miles*” along the road.

The Creeks of **Detachments One** and **Five** complained bitterly about how far they had to march each day. Bateman entered in his journal that the Creeks were “*discontented*” and they “*complain of the distance travelled per day.*” In **Detachment Five**, the Creek headmen did more than just complain, they took matters into their own hands. While encamped in Morgan County, Alabama, the Cusseta headman Tuckabatchee Harjo and other principal chiefs met with the contractors in their tent and demanded a day of rest for their people. To make his point, Tuckabatchee Harjo refused to accept the rations issued to him and “*advised his people not to take them*” either. The contractors refused the headman’s request and Tuckabatchee Harjo “*evinced much anger and left the tent saying the ‘word is out’.*” Sprague tried to convince the headman to continue until they found a location with more provisions. Tuckabatchee Harjo eventually consented and continued on, but the following day, after a fourteen mile march, he reiterated his demands and his people “*commenced throwing out their baggage from the wagons.*” About two hundred Creeks remained behind as **Detachment Five** broke camp and continued toward Memphis. Tuckabatchee Harjo and his people rejoined the party two days later.

The Creeks of **Detachment Five** also had problems with the contractors assigned to conduct them. Sprague observed that there was “*great dissatisfaction in camp arising from the fatigue of the party and the disregard paid to their comfort*” by the contractors. Many Creeks were left along the road by the contractors or for other reasons. For instance, a wagon driver refused to pick up a “*lame man*” who was “*seated by the side of the road.*” Instead, the driver “*declined doing it and drove off.*” Sprague noted that “*the wagons and agents are always ahead and no one remains to provide for them*” and that the Creeks were “*subject to the insolence and indifference of the [contractors].*” In some cases, the wagons were too full to carry ailing Creeks. Sprague observed, “*One blind man and one in the most perfect state of decrepitude*” who were forced to walk because there was no room on the wagons. Sprague could do little but assure these Creeks that “*tomorrow they should ride*” on a wagon. Some Creeks had their possessions thrown out of the wagons and left along the road by the contractors. So many Creeks needed transportation that Sprague purchased wagons himself “*for the purpose of bring[ing] up the lame and blind and sick which had been left through the negligence of the Agents.*” When the contractors refused to pay for the wagon, the agent became so angry he told them that “*the disregard to the comfortable conveyance of the Indians I could not endure any longer.*” The neglect of the contractors in tending to the Creeks who fell to the rear of the party meant that many emigrants came “*into camp late at night, losing their rations, and totally unfit to proceed the following day.*” In fact, the morning after a particularly long march, agents counted approximately 190 Creeks who “*were unable to get up, among these were many sick, feeble and the poorer class of Indians.*” When Sprague confronted one of the contractors about limiting the party’s travels to no more than twelve miles per day, the contractor glibly noted that “*he should not obey it.*” The poor treatment by the contractors and the long distances traveled per day created a deep sense of resentment and anger among the Creeks of **Detachment Five**. While traveling through Tennessee, four Creeks attacked the party’s interpreter “*with the determination to kill him*” and claimed that he was “*engaged with the white men in*

*driving them on like dogs.*” Fortunately for the Creeks, the most negligent contractor quit the Alabama Emigrating Company under pressure while near Memphis.

The Creeks were granted days of rest, however. The Creeks of **Detachment One** spent a day in camp two miles west of Tuscaloosa in order to shoe horses, repair wagons, and to give the emigrants *“an opportunity to wash their clothes”* and relax. Before reaching Memphis, **Detachment One** had three more rest days spaced approximately a week or two apart. The Creeks of **Detachment Three** remained in camp to rest once between Somerville and Decatur, Alabama and again three miles west of Purdy, Tennessee. The Creeks also remained in Tusculumbia for about twenty-four hours in order to trade with local merchants. And, two days after Tuckabatchee Harjo and two hundred of his people elected to remain behind after complaining about the lack of a rest day, **Detachment Five** spent a day of rest at Town Creek near Decatur, Alabama.

Even with periodic days of rest, sickness and death plagued all detachments as the Creeks moved toward Memphis. Much of this was a combination of fatigue, malnutrition, and the weather. Many Creeks were undernourished prior to leaving Alabama because they could not gather the year’s crops. This was exacerbated, at times, by the scarcity of provisions along the route. As **Detachment Five** passed through the Chickasaw Nation, the agent noted that corn and provisions were *“scarce.”* In other instances, the contractors did not supply full rations to the emigrations. For instance, Mathew Bateman sent a written request to the contractors to *“apply a remedy”* to the low quantities of meat issued to the Creeks. The Cussetas and Cowetas were supplied fresh beef from *“a large herd of cattle [that] were driven ahead of the train.”* But, gathering corn was more difficult and time consuming and *“the Indians were often obliged to take their rations after dark. This caused great confusion and many were deprived of their just share.”* The lack of provision depots along the road caused *“great inconvenience”* for **Detachment Five**.

The weather and conditions along the road was also a factor. The Creeks traveled through intense heat interspersed with heavy rainfall. On Wednesday, September 21, as **Detachment One** traveled toward Russellville, Bateman noted that the day was *“hot”* and the *“Thermometer 96°.”* Dehydration, no doubt, afflicted many Creeks. While traveling through the Chickasaw Nation, Bateman, wrote in his journal that the *“number of deaths increasing, old men [and] women [and] children dropping off.”* Indeed, a few days earlier, a frustrated Bateman noted that *“the Indians very discontented. Everything appears to go wrong. I am disgusted with Indian emigration.”* Indeed, Opothle Yoholo and other Creek headmen noted that there was *“much sickness among our people”* on the way to Memphis and a list of Tuckabatchees who died shows that many were children. For instance, Oche Yoholo’s son, described as *“a little boy,”* died along the road as did a number of the other Creeks sons and daughters. Opothle Yoholo and other headmen noted below the list that *“some have died absent from their friends and we are sorry. Their friends will be sorry when they hear it, but we must all die some time, we must listen to all talks, sometimes they bring good news and sometimes bad news.”* Indeed, the agents in charge of the detachments issued a number of receipts for the construction of coffins and the digging of graves. One receipt was issued for the purchase of one thousand feet of board for the construction of eleven coffins. A receipt was also issued for the construction of a coffin and *“furnishing grave”* for the Cusseta chief Okfuskee Yoholo, who died on October 19 while in Memphis. Accidents also occurred although not all were fatal. For instance, Billy Spillen, a Creek Indian who traveled with **Detachment Five**, was *“accidentally burned”* on his way to Memphis and left at the home of a local resident because he was *“unable to travel.”* The scarcity of water and provisions was compounded as the once-

staggered detachments began catching up to the rear of the party ahead of them. This occurred first at the end of September in the Chickasaw Nation, when **Detachment Five** ran up against the rear of **Detachment Two** which was only a few days behind **Detachment One**. Sprague observed that having caught **Detachment Two** “*makes our situation still more unpleasant and Opothle Yoholo’s party having camped here a few days previous has been the means of draining the country of its resources.*” The military agents of **Detachments Two** and **Five** met and made arrangements to separate the parties. The agent of **Detachment Five** agreed to take the right fork and **Detachment Two** the left fork when the roads divided seven miles westward. **Detachment Five** then moved north and traveled through the towns of Purdy, Bolivar, Somerville, and Raleigh in Tennessee. **Detachment Two** took the southern road and followed Opothle Yoholo’s detachment through La Grange, Tennessee. This required the Creeks of **Detachment Two** to walk fifteen to twenty miles extra. The roads converged again twenty miles east of Memphis. While near Bolivar, **Detachment Four** moved close enough to the rear of **Detachment Five** that Sprague sent a communiqué eastward ordering that party of Creeks not to pass them on the road.

Despite trying to separate the detachments, all the parties bottlenecked at the Mississippi River. Only one detachment could ford the river at a time. Moreover, due to the nearly impassible condition of the swamps that lay west of the Mississippi River, the Creeks were forced to wait even longer until steamboats were procured to transport them around the swamp to Rock Row. Still, the Creeks were required to cross the Mississippi River and embark on steamboats on the west bank. Those Creeks and contractors accompanying the horses traveled through the swamp by land. But, each detachment would have to wait its turn. Subsequently, by early October all five detachments—approximately 12,800 Creeks—were lined up in a train that extended for over one hundred miles from Memphis. For instance, on October 9, 1836 **Detachment One** was encamped two miles east of Memphis, **Detachment Five** was two miles west of Raleigh, Tennessee and seven miles from Memphis; **Detachment Four** was a few miles behind **Detachment Five** near Raleigh; **Detachment Two** was encamped on the banks of the Wolf River, sixteen miles east of Memphis; and **Detachment Three** was encamped three miles west of Purdy, Tennessee and approximately one hundred miles east of Memphis.

**Detachment One** began crossing the Mississippi River on October 12, 1836. All the detachments used a steamboat as a ferry, with a small flatboat attached to its side to transport the horses across the river. Once on the west bank of the river, the Creeks used another steamboat to transport them to Rock Row. After crossing the Mississippi River, **Detachment One** was divided into two. Approximately five hundred Creeks accompanied the horses through the Mississippi Swamp, while the balance boarded the steamboat *Farmer* for their trip to Rock Row. Because the wagons could not make it through the swamp they did not accompany the horses and instead were dismantled and placed on board the steamboats. They were then reassembled at Rock Row. Opothle Yoholo and the water party of **Detachment One** reached Rock Row on Monday, October 17, four days after leaving Memphis. The *Farmer* then returned to conduct the next party. As soon as **Detachment One** left Memphis, **Detachment Two** took up the old position of Opothle Yoholo’s party. Like **Detachment One**, they crossed the Mississippi River and, once on the west bank, waited for steamboats. In addition to the *Farmer*, two other steamboats were used in service—the *John Nelson*, and *Lady Byron*. Keelboats were also used and towed behind some of the boats. **Detachment Two** finished crossing the Mississippi River on October 21, the following day the party was broken into thirds. A portion of the party, along with the remainder of **Detachment One** boarded the *Farmer* while the balance of the water party, about thirteen hundred

Creeks, boarded the *John Nelson*. The remainder of the party accompanied the horses by land through the swamps. This process was repeated until all five detachments left Memphis. Four of the five detachments used steamboats to transport them to Rock Row. **Detachment Five**, which was the third party to cross the Mississippi River at Memphis, was determined to avoid the congestion caused by the encampment of **Detachments One** and **Two** at Rock Row. Instead, most of the Cowetas and Cussetas boarded the *John Nelson*, after its return from conducting **Detachment Two** to Rock Row, and traveled to Little Rock by water. The land party, consisting of approximately five to six hundred Creeks, accompanied the horses through the swamps.

Despite the convenience of steam boats the Creeks were generally opposed to water travel. The fear of sickness was one objection to steamboat travel but a *“greater dread was being thrown overboard when dead”* and denied a proper Creek burial. Indeed, Opothle Yoholo and his people initially objected to traveling by water but later agreed to do so. Similarly, Tuckabatchee Harjo, in **Detachment Five**, requested to travel by land to Fort Gibson. While the rest of their detachment waited for their turn to cross the Mississippi River, an exploratory party of four Creeks, led by Sprague, crossed the river to explore the condition of the swamps. The first fifteen miles of road to the west of the Mississippi River was considered good but soon afterward the land became wet and the party determined that *“it was impossible to pass through with loaded wagons.”* The swamp got worse as the Creeks continued westward and within five miles the party discovered that the land was *“almost impassible on horseback.”* The Creeks who went by land faced dozens of miles of road inundated with water. Even the swamps beyond the St. Francis River toward Rock Row were in terrible shape. Those who traveled by land through this section reported that the roads were *“as bad as possible [and] almost impassible.”* Between the Cache and St. Francis rivers the land was described as *“one continued bog.”* Because the soil was composed of red clay that was two or more feet thick, the water did not drain easily and there were long stretches where the Creeks trudged through standing water. Much of the road running through this section of the swamp was created by digging *“two parallel ditches, and throwing up [and] forming the Earth between them.”* The trenches on either side of the road were used to drain away the water, and where the water did drain the road was generally good and dry. However, in the fall of 1836 there was not *“more than a mile or two”* of dry road. The roads were worse the closer one was to the St. Francis River where *“in addition to the mud, the water was nearly up to a horse’s back.”* The route through the swamp also contained the occasional pothole, which were large enough that *“it is with some difficulty that a horse can pass.”*

Despite these conditions, many Creeks were determined to travel solely by land. For instance, the Fish Pond chief Tuscoona Harjo and the Okfuskee headman Menawa, *“refused to go by water as many of the Indians have a strong prejudice against steam boats.”* These headmen took with them approximately five hundred of their followers. Their journey through these swamps was incredibly laborious. The Creeks of the land party were constantly delayed due to the difficulty of travel and sickness. Moreover, the contractors were negligent. For instance, the contractors charged with accompanying the land party through the swamps did not accompany the party the entire way but abandoned the Creeks near the St. Francis River. Moreover, only two provision stands were established between Memphis and the Cache River. One provisional stand was located seventeen miles from Memphis while the other was located at Strong’s Stand, two miles west of the St. Francis River and twenty-two miles beyond the first provisional stand. This meant that the Creeks traveling by land still had a fifty-six mile stretch without any place to receive food. Without regular issuance of provisions, the Creeks were forced to halt their westward progress to hunt in the

swamplands in order to supply their immediate needs. The Creeks also hunted so they could prepare skins to protect them from the cold. In fact, the Cowetas and Cussetas of **Detachment Five** who traveled by land through the swamp, sent out word that they would rejoin the party *“when they had got bear skins enough to cover them they would come on.”* The Creeks were scattered along the road in intervals of a half mile or more, and many, like Tuscoona Harjo, were delayed due to the bad roads and sickness in their family. Other Creeks traveled by land determined to take their time. For instance, Narticker Tustunnuggee, the brother of Tuckabatchee Harjo, along with one hundred others, remained in the Mississippi Swamp into the third week of November and *“were determined to take their own time in coming.”* But, some of the agents were fully aware of the symbolic nature these swamps had for the Creeks. Because of its isolation from people, it was *“here, they felt independent”* and *“were almost out of the reach of the white-men.”*

Despite the hardships of travel through the swamps, it is not difficult to understand why the Creeks were reluctant to travel by steamboat. In fact, the steamboats themselves could be very uncomfortable. The boats were at the mercy of the weather or the conditions of the river and were detained often. For instance, while on the Arkansas River, **Detachment Five** on board the *John Nelson* was delayed three hours in a dense fog-bank. They were again delayed almost a month later when members of the crew squabbled amongst themselves. The Creeks remained on board the *John Nelson* for three hours before the issue was resolved. A portion of the Creeks of **Detachment Three**, on board the *Lady Byron*, were also detained after the boat ran aground sometime after leaving Memphis. And, when the weather did improve, the Creeks found steamboat travel could be exhausting and unpredictable. For instance, concerned with the rising water on the Arkansas River the day before, Sprague discovered the waters suddenly dropping in the middle of the night. With *“no time to be lost,”* the Creeks were awakened and forced to break camp at two-thirty in the morning, and within an hour, were again ascending the Arkansas River. The Creeks were also not guaranteed an uninterrupted passage to their destination. For instance, rising waters on the Arkansas River created a strong current that slowed the progress of the *John Nelson* and **Detachment Five** was forced to jettison the two large flatboats that carried the Creeks. Half the Creeks onboard the flatboats were forced to wait along the riverbank near Arkansas Post until they could be transported to Little Rock, while the other half of the party had to squeeze onboard the *John Nelson*. Consequently, their steamboat journey, which began as being *“very comfortable nor much crowded,”* soon became *“very much crowded.”* Moreover, the overcrowding of the steamboats created sanitation problems. As the *John Nelson* moved closer toward Little Rock, the agent overseeing the detachment noted that *“the boat for the last three days very dirty and exceeding[ly] offensive.”* It is not surprising then, that after camping on shore for the evening the Creeks boarded the boat the next morning *“with great reluctance.”* There was also an element of danger on board the boats. While on board the *Lady Byron*, a Creek emigrant *“was killed by falling into the fly-wheel of the engine, whilst in a state of intoxication.”*

The four detachments, landed at Rock Row by the steamboats, remained in camp until the land party arrived to reconnoiter with them from the swamps. While in camp, rain fell in *“torrents”* and the weather was becoming increasingly cold. Bateman observed that camp at Rock Row was *“very disagreeable”* and noted that although the Creeks were relatively healthy, there were two cases of sickness that *“smack of Cholera.”* On November 1, **Detachment One** broke camp and traveled by land over the *“most horrid”* road toward the prairie. Thirty wagons were *“bogged down”* within two miles of setting out from Rock Row. Soon, the party was scattered along the road and many Creeks and wagons fell a number of miles behind the main party. The three other

detachments arrived at Rock Row on the heels of **Detachment One**, encamped until the land party arrived, and then commenced their journey over the same bad roads in heavy rain and cold weather. In fact, in places *“the wagons cut through in many places nearly up to the hubs of the wheels.”* Another agent lamented that, while traveling through the Arkansas prairie, the Creeks *“suffered exceedingly from cold.”* Despite having broken camp, the detachments were not able to wait for all of the Creeks who had gone by land. In fact, there were still between three and four hundred Creeks, composed of many different detachments, still in the swamps and without provisions or the means to ford the rivers.

Leaving the stragglers behind, the detachments continued west toward Little Rock. The water party of **Detachment Five**, traveling on the *John Nelson*, arrived there first on November 3, 1836. The Creeks disembarked the steamboat and commenced walking westward. The *John Nelson* was sent eastward to pick up the Creeks who were forced to ditch their flatboat near Arkansas Post. Both the land and water parties reconnoitered near Dardanelle. Despite pleas from the agents, Tuckabatchee Harjo refused to board the boat for their final leg to Fort Gibson and this caused many of the Cussetas to refuse going by water as well. Only three hundred emigrants agreed to continue west by steamboat. The following day the agents and contractors again tried to coax the Creeks on board the *John Nelson*, but rather than convincing any more to go by water, many of the three hundred already on board changed their minds and took their baggage off the boat. Their stated reason for going by land was that *“they had been told that they were to be taken into a distant country where they were to be placed under soldiers and their men placed in irons.”* The agent convinced many of them that the report was untrue and 395 Creeks and their possessions continued on the *John Nelson* to Fort Gibson. The sick, feeble, and elderly of **Detachment Five** arrived at the garrison on November 22. Most of the Creeks of **Detachment Five**, however, chose to brave the cold weather and *“violent rain”* and walk overland. Sprague noted that the party struggled as *“four, five and six wagons were down in the mud at once.”* The weather was *“extremely cold”* and unfavorable enough that when the Creeks of **Detachment Five** stumbled upon the *John Nelson* at the mouth of Spadra Creek, after its return from Fort Gibson, there was little hesitation among most of the party to board and continue west by water. Approximately one thousand Creeks traveled on the river, the balance mounted their horses and continued by land. But, the comfort of the steamboat was short-lived. The *John Nelson* ran aground at Fort Smith and the Creeks had to walk the rest of the way to Fort Gibson.

The other detachments either arrived in Little Rock or passed to the north of Little Rock between November 6 and November 27, 1836. **Detachment Three** spent a number of weeks encamped near Little Rock waiting for the Creeks who had traveled by land from Memphis, to arrive from the swamps. Among those was Menawa and *“a considerable number”* of Creeks from different towns, who reportedly, were *“still two or three days journey behind the party.”* Wagons and provisions were sent eastward from near Little Rock to collect these Creeks. Into the first week of December, *“several”* hundred Creeks remained on the eastern bank of the White River *“without the means of crossing”* due to the neglect of the contractors. The land party eventually arrived near Little Rock but Tuscoona Harjo, Menawa, and four hundred of their people, refused to travel much farther beyond that. Tuscoona Harjo *“evinced a stubborn obstinate disposition and everything that could be said to persuade him to travel was in vain.”* Most of these Creeks rejoined **Detachment Three** by the last week of December. Tuscoona Harjo, who had *“a considerable sum of money [and] good Pony’s”* demanded to walk the rest of the way *“at his leisure.”* He was accompanied by between one hundred and 150 of his followers.

While encamped near Little Rock and even after continuing westward, a number of Arkansans accused the Creeks of depredations against their property. Many reported that the Creeks had killed their hogs and cattle, burned their fence rails (for firewood), and steal their corn and vegetables. The military agents overseeing the detachments denied these claims and argued that there was little proof the Creeks had done anything to the property of local settlers. Edward Deas, overseeing **Detachment Three**, noted that the Creeks were regularly furnished with provisions during this portion of their journey and the Creeks had hunted “*a great deal of game*” to supplement their diet. Moreover, Deas “*examined the fences in the neighborhood, and find that they are in as good a condition now as they were upon our arrival at the present encampment.*” The reason the settlers were fabricating stories about the Creeks, Deas believed, was because “*the presence of so many Indians raises the price of corn [and] other supplies and that the above charges are made a pretext for having the Indians removed from the neighborhood.*” Despite the lack of proof, Arkansas governor James Conway rejected the request of Opothle Yoholo to stop for an extended period within the state and he demanded that the Creeks hastily continue to the Indian Territory. Opothle Yoholo consented to take care of his business at Fort Gibson. The Creeks faced even more problems with weather, bad roads, and swampy land as they moved beyond Little Rock. The land to the west of Little Rock was hilly and the roads varied from “*good*” to “*horrid.*” Moreover, the region was littered with several small streams, bayous, and swamps. Opothle Yoholo and the Creeks of **Detachment One** passed over roads in western Arkansas that were “*very boggy and covered with water,*” and there were days when the rear of the party did not make it to camp for the evening. Even as the parties traveled into the Indian Territory the roads and rivers were just as treacherous. As Opothle Yoholo’s party traveled through the Western Cherokee Nation in the Indian Territory, agent Bateman cryptically wrote in his journal, “*Roads bad. Night cold. Indians suffer.*” Similarly, **Detachment Two** tried a number of times to cross the Illinois River, eighteen miles to the east of Fort Gibson, without much success. During one attempt, a mess wagon overturned in the water and a horse drowned.

The weather, as the Creeks passed through western Arkansas into the Indian Territory, was worse than at any point during their journey. Temperatures dropped well below freezing and the “*torrents*” of rain turned into snow. Lieutenant Bateman lamented that “*the ground is covered with snow and ice, the thermometer stands at zero. The winter has set in with great severity. The Indians must suffer much.*” In fact, some estimated that the Creeks marched through up to eight inches of snow during the last leg of their journey. Compounding the problem was that the Creeks traveled overland in the snow and ice, and in temperatures near zero, in their summer clothing. The Creeks, who had left the former Creek Nation in the Alabama heat of August and September, arrived in the Indian Territory in the middle of winter. Much of their winter clothing, unnecessary at the beginning of their journey, was packed deeply in the baggage wagons or, in some cases, on board steamboats. For instance, prior to leaving Alabama, the contractors were able to convince Opothle Yoholo and his people to pack all items deemed “*not necessary on the march*” into steamboats which would then travel ahead of the party and be waiting for the Creeks upon their arrival at Fort Gibson. Most of these items were farming utensils such as ploughs and chains, bedding, and cookware such as pots. But agents noted that the baggage also included the Creeks “*blankets, clothing and other articles necessary for protection from the severity of the season.*” Subsequently, upwards of twenty tons of Creek property was placed in a storehouse at Wetumpka prior to being shipped west. But, these items were unavailable to the Creeks as they traveled west in the cold, nor was it waiting for them when they arrived at Fort Gibson. Subsequently, Opothle Yoholo and

approximately six thousand of his followers were huddled at Fort Gibson in want of blankets and clothing *“to protect them from the cold.”*

The Creeks of the other detachments also suffered from extreme cold. Many of the Creeks of **Detachment Three** were *“without shoes [and] badly clothed.”* In fact, oral narratives described the Creeks leaving bloody footprints in the snow. Sprague observed that *“The Indians suffer greatly from being in their bare feet and thinly clad.”* The Cowetas and Cussetas of **Detachment Five** struggled to make it to Fort Gibson. The military agent overseeing the party observed, *“The sufferings of the Indians at this period were intense. With nothing more than a cotton garment thrown over them, their feet bare, they were compelled to encounter cold sleeting storms and to travel over hard frozen ground. Frequent appeals were made to me to clothe their nakedness and to protect their lacerated feet.”* The contractors *“could sympathize with them,”* the agent noted, *“but could not relieve them.”* The contract only stipulated the company provide provisions and transportation, not clothing. On December 25, 1836 a witness to the arrival of the Creeks in the Indian Territory wrote a letter that was later published in the Arkansas Gazette. The author, who was likely working for the government, observed that,

*Thousands of [Creeks] are entirely destitute of shoes or covering of any kind for the feet; many of them are almost naked; and but few of them have anything more on their persons than a light dress, calculated only for the summer, or for a very warm climate; and the weather being warm when they left Alabama, many of them left their heavier articles of clothing, expecting them to be brought on in steam-boats; which has yet been only partially done. In this destitute condition, they are wading the cold mud, or are hurried on over the frozen road, as the case may be. Many of them have in this way had their feet frost-bitten; and being unable to travel, fall in the rear of the main party, and in this way are left on the road to await the ability or convenience of the contractors to assist them. Many of them, not being able to endure this unexampled state of human suffering, die, and it is said are thrown by the side of the road, and are covered only with brush & where they remain, until devoured by the wolves.*

Others witnessed the Creeks’ arrival at Fort Gibson. One officer of the government noted that *“the condition of the Creeks yet on the road to Fort Gibson is most terrible. It is said that they are strewed along the road for a great distance . . . many of them are almost naked, and are without shoes—the snow for five days, has been from 4 to 8 inches deep—and during the first and second days of the storm, women and children were seen bending their way onward, with most Piteous and heart rending cries, from cold.”*

Indeed, the physical remains of removal could be seen years after the Creeks and other Indians arrived in the west. In 1839, a government agent addressing the Creeks in council, noted that *“almost every hollow tree had become a grave for some of them, and that their path was now become white with the bleached bones of the Muscogees.”* In 1841, Friedrich Gerstäcker, a German adventurer, visited Arkansas and reported seeing *“numerous square holes cut in the fallen trees showed where the squaws had pounded their maize to make bread. More melancholy traces were visible in the bones of human beings and animals which were strewed about. Many a warrior and squaw died on the road from exhaustion, and the maladies engendered by their treatment; and their relations and friends could do nothing more for them than fold them in their blankets, and cover them with boughs and bushes, to keep off the vultures, which followed their route by thousands, and soared over their heads; for their drivers would not give them time to dig a grave*



*and bury their dead. The wolves, which also followed at no great distance, soon tore away so frail a covering, and scattered the bones in all directions.”*

Many Creeks themselves wrote to the government complaining about their treatment at the hands of contractors and the harsh conditions. A number of Cussetas of **Detachment Three** wrote to their military agent John T. Sprague and noted that *“you have heard the cries of our women and children . . . our road has been a long one . . . and on it we have laid the bones of our men, women, and children. When we left our homes the great General Jesup told us that we could get to our country as we wanted to. We wanted to gather our crops, and we wanted to go in peace and friendship. Did we? No! We were drove off like wolves . . . lost our crops . . . and our peoples feet were bleeding with long marches. . . We are men . . . we have women and children, and why should we come like wild horses?”*

The Creeks arrived at their destination at Fort Gibson between November 1836 and January 1837. Opothle Yoholo’s detachment arrived first, followed by **Detachment Five**, **Detachment Four**, and **Detachment Two**. **Detachment Three** arrived last on January 23, 1837. The Creeks were turned over to the federal government and placed on provisions. The Alabama Emigrating Company tallied up the arrivals, the deaths, and the pro-rated cost of transporting Creeks who died along the way. In their account submitted to the government, the contractors reported that they emigrated 2,318 Creeks and their slaves of **Detachment One** with seventy-eight deaths; 3,095 Creeks and slaves of **Detachment Two** with thirty-seven deaths and eighteen births along the way; 2,818 Creeks and slaves of **Detachment Three** with twelve deaths; 2,330 Creeks and slaves of **Detachment Four** with thirty-six deaths; and 2,087 Creeks and their slaves of **Detachment Five** with twenty-five deaths.

Once arriving at Fort Gibson, the leading Creek headmen faced an emotional reunion with Roley McIntosh the principal chief of the Western Creeks. There was still considerable hostility between the parties. William McIntosh and his followers were traitors for selling the Creeks’ Georgia land and were solely responsible for the forced removal of the entire Creek Nation. Still, many of the McIntosh party had not forgiven the Creeks for executing William McIntosh over a decade earlier. Moreover, neither side was quite sure what to expect once Roley McIntosh and Creek headmen such as Opothle Yoholo finally met again face to face. In fact, there was considerable speculation and misinformation regarding potential hostilities between these two parties. For instance, the New York Journal of Commerce reported that Chilly McIntosh had vowed to kill all Creek headmen who did not show fealty to him and his party. For their part, government agents anticipated bloodshed. But, none of this happened. Despite the fact that there was *“much feeling between the McIntosh party and those who have lately emigrated with their chief Opothle Yahola”* the representatives of both parties met on relatively friendly terms and smoked the peace pipe and drank *“a glass of old rye, (perhaps new corn).”* The presence of the United States Army, no doubt, contributed to the peacefulness of their reunion. This was not a lasting peace, however, only a temporary truce. There was no reconciliation between the two parties and the government believed Opothle Yoholo and his people needed to *“be removed from Roley McIntosh and his people some distance.”* They established their new settlement near the Canadian River, some seventy miles from the Choctaw Agency.

\* \* \*The forced removal of the Creek Nation to the west would have been inconceivable prior to 1825. Even after the signing of the Treaty of Indian Springs, the Creeks worked diligently to counter the federal and state Indian policies at almost every turn. But, 1836 was a watershed year

in the history of the Creeks. Unable or unwilling to put up any longer with white encroachment, starvation, and the land frauds, a small band of Lower Creeks commenced hostilities against white settlements in 1836. At that point the Creeks "*fate was sealed.*" These Lower Creeks did not cause forced removal, they only hastened it. White squatters would not have stopped streaming onto Creek land and it is unlikely that the federal or state governments would have done much more in the future to stop it.

# **Muscogee Customs & Traditions**

### Families/Clans

Clans are the basis of a family within the traditional Muscogee society. Unlike the Europeans, clan members are considered family instead of members of “blood relation.” Clans are composed of all people who are descendants of the same ancestral clan grouping. Each person belongs to the clan of his or her mother, who belongs to the clan of her mother; this is called matrilineal descent. Fathers are important within the family system, but within the clan, it is the mother’s brother (the mother’s nearest blood relation) who functions as the primary disciplinarian and role model. The same titles are used for both family and clan relations. For example, clan members of approximately the same age consider each other as brother and sister, even if they have never met before. Elder clan members are considered the grandparents to the younger clan members.

When a marriage took place, the man would leave his parents to live with his wife’s family. When a home was built for them, all the property and contents belonged to the wife. A man’s home was not usually where he spent most of his adult life, but the home of his mother and the other women of his clan. In case, a stranger visited the town and made known to what clan he belonged, it was the duty of a man married into that clan to invite him to his house. In case of separation, the woman would gather all of her husband’s belongings and set them outside their home. That was a sign she wanted him to leave and go back to his mother’s home.

Traditionally, the father had no care of his own child. The invariable custom was, for the women to keep and rear all the children; having the entire control over them until they were able to provide for themselves except for the disciplinarian role. The women appeared to have sufficient natural affection for them: they never struck or whipped a child for its faults.

Cultural values were essential in raising children to become respected clan members. Elders observed them during their childhood so when the time came to choose a leader, the elders would know who would be best suited for the position of their clan or tribal town. Children were taught respect for the elders from an early age in the following ways.

Children:

- left the room or went outside when elders were talking.
- never interrupted a conversation.
- spoke only when spoken to.
- never looked into the eyes of an elder when being spoken to.
- shook hands with an elder only when the elder extended their hand.
- did chores when told to do so without asking questions.
- were always last to eat during feast or gatherings.

Clan names were orally passed down to the next generation. It was important to know one’s own clan. During the ceremonial dances, the men and boys were seated according to their clan. At one time, there were more than fifty known clan names although some may not be true clans. The elders would randomly ask the children their clan name to make certain they knew. Sometimes, a family would have a picture or sketch of their clan on pottery or a tattoo on their body to represent their clan.

Clan ties were strong; they served as a traditional bond. The clan system added structure to Muscogee society by influencing marriage choices, personal friendship and partnerships with other

tribal towns in tribal affairs. For instance, if a clan family needed assistance to build a home, the clan members would come together and help build his home or if food was needed, clan members would provide food for them. Clan families looked after one another.

It was traditionally considered a serious offense to kill or eat one's own clan animal or to marry into one's own clan. Clan members would discipline a member if he/she committed any one of these offenses. To marry into one's own clan was the most serious offense which had severe consequences.

### Tribal Towns

Tribal towns were actually villages of the Muscogee people, but the Europeans viewed them as towns because of their structural lay-out. A family dwelling consisted of little squares, or rather of four dwelling-houses inclosing a square area, exactly on the plan of the public square. Every family, however, did not have four houses; some had three, others had two and some but one, each built according to the number of his family. For those who were wealthy had four buildings, one was used as a place to cook food and used as a winter house also known as a "hot house," another was a summer house and hall for receiving visitors, the third house was the storage for food and other provisions. The last house was two stories high and was divided into two apartments; the lower story of one end being the potato house, where roots and fruits were stored. At the other end of this building, both upper and lower stories were open on three sides. The lower story served as a shed for their saddles, pack-saddles, gears and other lumber. The loft overhead was a very spacious, airy, and a pleasant pavilion where the chief of the family relaxed during the summer and received his guests. The fourth part of the apartment was a storage place for deer-skins, furs, and other merchandise for his customers especially if he was quite wealthy. Sometimes a porch was built in front of the house. Smaller families and the less wealthy built one, two or three houses which suffice their purposes.

Each of these groups of buildings was occupied by one family and the "houses of daughters" were those adjoining in the same block or district. Every home had a garden and a parcel of land according to the number in his family. The boundary between each group of houses or property was a strip of grass, erection of poles or any other natural or artificial means to show a boundary. The houses were in a more elaborate pattern with several families living just several hundred feet from each other.

This organized pattern of dwellings surrounded a public square with four arbors, a council house, *cukofv rakko (jo-go-fuh thock-go)*, which consisted of a mound and a chunky yard. Within the square was the sacred fire or *poca (bow-jah)*, grandfather, and the ceremonial ring, *paskofv (bas-go-fuh)*; both were considered sacred. This was the sacred ground where dances, songs and prayers were held. The council house or mound was the meeting place for the chief, *Mekko* and his advisors or warriors. The ground that contained the square and mound was considered the men's domain. Women were not allowed within the square or in the mound unless given permission by the *Mekko*. The chunky yard was the playing field for the stick ball and other games.

Each tribal town had a name and was organized by membership in a specific tribal town or *etvlwv (e-dull-wuh)*. Each *etvlwv (dull-wuh)* acted as both an independent community and a member of the larger "Confederacy" of the Creek Nation. When some of the towns became crowded or overpopulated, another town was built by the same *etvlwv (e-dull-wuh)* but gave it a different

name. In the mid-1700s, there were sixty to seventy towns, besides the many *etvlwv (e-dull-wuh)* not counted and on average about two hundred inhabitants to each town, giving approximately eleven thousand inhabitants.

It was very important to know one's own tribal town and clan. This served as identification when visiting another town or area. Although, later Europeans labeled the towns, Upper and Lower, geographically, the only distinction was their tribal town. Upper towns were located in the upper portion of Alabama near the Tallapoosa and Coosa rivers. They were considered as the traditionalist because of their resistance to European lifestyles and ways. The lower towns were located in Georgia near the Chattahoochee and Flint rivers. They accepted the European lifestyle and allowed European men to marry their women.

### Beliefs

The *Mvskokvlke (moss-go-gull-key)*, Muscogee people, were spiritual people who believed in a higher power or deity, *Epofvnka (e-book-fun-gah)*, "the one who is above us," whose power was considered above all. They also believed that every living thing had a spirit including water, earth, wind and fire. It is believed that the knowledge and wisdom of the *kerrv (kith-tha)*, prophet, and the healing knowledge of the *helis haya (he-list hi-yah)*, medicine men, were given to them by *Epofvnka (e-book-fun-gah)*. The following are other beliefs that tribal traditionalist still considered their own.

- Tribal elders believe children are aware of the spiritual world, thereby, can see spiritual beings around them. They also believe children can sense the good and evil in a person. This is the reason a child might cry when a stranger approached.
- The *Mvskokvlke (moss-go-gull-key)* anciently considered the younger of twins more likely to make an efficient *Kerrv (kith-tha)*, prophet. Sometimes the child was kept from nursing for four days and was made to swallow certain small roots to make him live longer. The same effect was produced by keeping him indoors for four months so no one would see him.
- The number four is a sacred number among the Muscogee people; not considered a "lucky" number. Everything is done according to this number whether a domestic activity, events, or dwellings. Ceremonies last four days, house posts are used in multiples of fours and burials are conducted on the fourth day.
- The *Mvskokvlke (moss-go-gull-key)* came from the earth, the soil, and hence the earth is man's mother and therefore sacred, and man cannot sell his own mother.

### The Cosmos

- The old ones believed that the stars were stuck upon the underside of the sky, some of them, along with the sun and moon, revolving around the earth.
- Master of Breath created Brother Moon and Sister Sun, as well as the four directions to hold up the world.
- Comets were thought to be a warning of war.
- When the sun or moon was eclipsed, it is said that a great toad, *sapaktv (sah-bach-duh)*, was about to swallow it. In order to help drive it away, they discharged their guns at it and shot at it with arrows until they "hit" it.

- The constellation of the Great Dipper was called Perro Hake (*bith-tho haw-key*), “the image of a canoe.”
- The North Star was known as Kolas-Nekeyeko (*go-las knee-key-yee-go*), “the stationary star.”
- The Morning Star as called Hiyayvkeciv (*high-ya-yuh-key-jack-guh*), “the bringer of daylight.”
- The Milky Way was known as Poyvfekev en nene (*boy-yuh-fek-juh in-knee-knee*), “spirit’s path or road.”

#### Supernatural Beings

- The Mvskokvlke (*moss-go-gull-key*) also venerated the Horned Serpent, Sint Holo, who appeared to suitably wise young men. The shaman was called Vlekev (*uh-leak-juh*).
- Hacko-cvpko (*hodge-go jump-go*), “long ears,” is supposed to be an animal that is about the size of a mule, has immense ears and a very hideous appearance generally. It has a disagreeable odor and causes a dangerous disease, but fortunately it is rarely seen.
- Nokos-oma (*no-gos oh-mah*), “like a bear,” a creature that is the size of a black bear but carries its head near the earth. It has immense tusks which cross each other and when seen, it is going along a trail with the gait of a pacer. The males make a noise that sounds something like “Ka kap kap kap.”
- Hacko-fuske (*hodge-go fuss-key*), “Sharp Ears,” are creatures that seem to go in pairs and never travel east or west but always north or south. They are observed especially near the sources of small streams. They have sharp noses, bushy tails, and globular feet.
- Sutvcvkvla (*sue-tah jah-kah-la*), “Sky Woodpecker,” is a bird that always look straight up into the sky, never looks toward the earth.

#### Weather

- Tenetke (*dee-neat-key*), Thunder, was a person who possessed missiles and would dart them out toward earth with great noise.
- Vtokyehatte (*ah-dok-ye-hot-de*), Lightning, was a little man that rides a yellow horse, and when he shoots his arrows, it thunders. Sometimes he shoots at trees.
- Hotvle-rakko (*hoe-duh-lee thock-go*), Tornado or strong wind, was either male or female; the female being very destructive and the male not so.

### Nature

All Southeastern tribes possess a rich and complex tradition of looking to nature for guidance and inspiration. The Creeks have long been recognized as astute observers of the natural world. Every aspect of their environment, from basic botany to astronomy, was at some point studied and explained. All of creation was in some way inter-related with other creations.

Like other living beings, animals were viewed as having unique abilities and characteristics, which determined their purposes in life. Some animals, such as wolves and owls, were believed to possess extraordinary powers which could be used to benefit or punish human beings depending on how they had been treated. Other animals, such as the turtle, were used as ceremonial symbols because of their special abilities.

The cycle of life could also be observed in all plants and animals. By noticing changes in their environments, the Creeks learned when to hunt, when to plant, and when to begin building

shelters for the winter. By studying the world around them, they learned where to find water, how to forecast the weather, and what plants were good to eat. Nature was, and still is, a great teacher. Traditionalists say that most people have simply forgotten how to observe nature.

The ability to forecast the weather was a great asset to the Creek people, as they lived so closely with the land. Only by preparing for inclement weather could they ensure the community's food supply, shelter and safety. Creek men and women observed many signs and omens, which they believed could help them in predicting the coming weather. Some examples of their observations are:

- Geese flying southward indicated the coming of winter, while geese flying northward indicated the return of spring.
- The budding of plants and trees signaled the proper time for planting.
- A flock of sparrows eating off the ground was a sign of cold weather.
- Water could be found near trees whose branches grew toward the ground.
- Rain was most likely to occur when the moon was only  $\frac{1}{4}$  full.

### Time

The Muscogee people did not traditionally recognize a week of seven days. Time was measured according to natural phenomena, with each "day" meaning the time from one sunrise to another. The next unit of time, similar to a week but not exactly like it, was measured by phases of the moon. Approximately 7-8 days pass between each of the four moon phases.

In studying the Muscogee terms for months and seasons, we are reminded that long before there were words to describe the cycles of nature, such cycles were constantly observed. Among the Muscogee, changes in climate influenced many aspects of life including what they wore, what foods were available to eat, which animals could be hunted, and what types of community activities should take place. The appearance and movements of stellar objects generally determined the scheduling of ceremonies.

Months were designated by the completion of the moon phases, each complete cycle lasting 28-30 days. The Muscogee term for each of these months describes a natural event that occurs during that time of the year. During Ke Hvse (*key-huh-see*), May, the mulberries ripen while the first frost is usually during Ehole (*e-hole-lee*), November.

Sometimes, only two seasons were acknowledged: the cold season and the warm season. More often however, a reference is made to four seasons generally corresponding to spring, summer, fall and winter. There are two primary differences between the Muscogee and European concepts. Traditionally, the Muscogee year begins with Hiyuce (*hay-u-gee*), July, the completion of the harvest, and is marked by the Green Corn Ceremony. Seasons did not begin and end on specific calendar days. Example, tash'ce (*dah-such-gee*), spring, began when the days became warmer, the birds began to sing, flowers started growing, and trees became green again. It ended when days became even hotter and berries and fruit began to ripe. Compare this to current calendars, which designate March 20 to June 21 as "spring."



## Ceremonial Grounds and Dances



The dance is a ceremony that contains both religious and social meaning to the Muscogee people. It is a demonstrative way of worshiping the Creator. The songs, chants and dance around the fire is of prayer and worship. This dance expresses emotions of joy, happiness and gratitude thus soothing all ill-feelings or animosity toward others. The dance begins before or at midnight and lasts until the light of day.

A traditional ceremonial ground is often headed by the Mekko or “chief.” The Mekko is assisted by his second in charge called a Hennehv (*Heniha*), the chief medicine man is called a Heles Hayv (*Hillis Hiya*) and the speaker is called Mekko’s Tvlvswv (*dah-las-wah*), or Mekko's tongue/speaker. It is important to note that Mekko is not supposed to publicly address the entire ground. His speaker or tvlvswv (*dah-las-wah*) speaks for him. A traditional Mvskoke ground also has four Tvstvnvkes (*dust-duh-nah-key*), warriors, four head ladies and four alternate head ladies. These are the traditional headmen of the ancient tribal towns of the Mvskokvlke (*moss-go-gull-key*).

The term “stomp dance” is an English term which refers to the “shuffle and stomp” movements of the dance. In the Mvskoke language, one of the dances is called Opvnkv Haco (*oh-bun-guh ha-jo*), which can mean “drunken,” “crazy,” or “inspired” dance. This usually refers to the exciting, yet meditative affect the dance and the medicine have on the participants.

While the men sing, the women set the rhythm by shaking turtle shells worn on their legs. The shakers are made of turtle shells or small milk cans. Shakers develop their own style of shaking in speed and rhythm which coincides with the leader or singer. Young girls are taught to shake turtle shells or milk cans at an early age by the older women in their clan.

### Green Corn Ceremony

The name of the ceremony refers to its connection with the annual harvest of the New (Green) Corn. The harvest usually occurs during July or August and no new corn is eaten before this time. Such thanksgiving and celebration of a single crop is not unusual considering its traditional importance. Corn was by far the most dependable food source as it produced even when other crops failed or hunting was unsuccessful.

The ceremony is also referred to as the posketv (*bush-key-duh*) or “busk” which means “to fast” which takes place mostly in the month of July. Fasting occurs in two ways; first as the people abstain from eating new corn until the harvest celebrations marked by the Green Corn and second as the participants abstain from all food and consume only a traditional herbal drink on the day of the fast. The drink is a powerful emetic that serves to cleanse the body both physically and spiritually. The men are mainly the participants of the drink but women are allowed only to wash with it. According to traditionalists, the purpose of this medicine is to purify the people, so that they will be in an acceptable mental and physical state to receive the blessing of the New Year. Each ground will have at least four dances throughout the season, one of them being the Green Corn ceremony. Although all of the five tribes from the southeastern United States performed these

dances before the removal, the Muscogee people continue to dance as their ancestors danced for thousands of years.

Today, the tribal towns that have an active fire are known as ceremonial grounds. The dances take place at 16 different ceremonial (stomp) grounds beginning in late April to mid-October. Each ceremonial ground maintains a sacred fire, which was brought from the east during “removal” and each ground is set up structurally as the ancient towns in Alabama and Georgia before the removal except for the mound or *cukofv rakko (jo-go-fuh thock-go)*. The only exception now is tribal members only come to the ground, camping for two or three days preparing for the feast and dance. Each of the traditional grounds areas are located on private land or allotment of their ancestor. Few are still on the same area of land as the time of arrival from the trail of removal. The location is known only to the dancers but not to the public or non-natives.

Before the removal, the stickball game was the traditional game for all of the tribes in the southeastern United States. Although, the game was played by all, the Muscogee people continue to play the game every fall as the last event before closing out the ceremonial dances. It was once called “little brother of war” by the Choctaws because the game was played to end a feud between the tribes.

It was a game with no rules; the player being a good “sport,” even when he was beaten. The game consisted of male players who only used sticks (*dō-gōn-hee*) made from hickory wood. Participants of the game were not allowed to use their hands to pick up the ball. A player had to be a swift runner and have the ability to move with such quickness to avoid being hit by his opponent.

The stick was carved out and curved on the end to form a netted scoop in which to catch the ball. The scoop was drilled with small holes. A thin string of leather was strung through the holes to form a net. Ball sticks were made only by the men to play in a social game with the women or the *dee-guh-bau-kee* (stick ball game with the men). These sticks were the men’s personal possession and only the men were allowed to touch them.

The ball was made by an elder man or the medicine man of the town using animal hair rolled up tightly and wrapped in deerskin and sewn onto the ball. A short string of leather was left hanging which was the “huh-chee,” tail. The average size of the ball was smaller than a tennis ball which made it very difficult to see when it landed on the ground.

The game was scored by points. A score counted one point. Points were kept account by sticking pegs in the ground: the first team to reach a certain number of scored points was declared the winner. But here enters another original arrangement. The exact number of points needed to win, the exact size of the playing field, number of players involved, and whether betting and/or wrestling was to be permitted depended entirely upon the importance of the game.

### **Traditional Foods**

The Muscogee people as a community were responsible for providing food for their families in such ways as hunting, fishing, farming and gathering of berries, nuts and other native vegetables or fruit. This way, food belonged to the entire community and everyone was fed. If for some reason a family did not have sufficient food, the clan members would share a portion of their food or provide for them in some way.

By 200 AD, the Creeks were cultivating a variety of wild seed crops. After 800 AD, “modern” domesticated corn and beans were common throughout the Southeast. Wild gourds, sunflowers, and corn, or maize arrived from Mexico around 200 AD. It quickly became the most important vegetable food in the Creek diet, as they learned to prepare it in many ways and utilize it in dozens of unique dishes.

### Safke

*Safke* or *osafke*, is a hominy dish which can be cooked as soup or drink and enjoyed by the Muscogee people. The drink is more watery and sweetened or seasoned to taste. It is best when fresh and still warm. The soup is cooked thicker with meat, pork or beef and seasoned to taste. As a drink, some of the elders in years past preferred it fermented before drinking it. Whichever way, it is considered an acquired taste.

Safke is made by cooking white cracked corn in a large supply of water, flavored with lye made from wood ash. No other seasoning is used. The mixture is cooked over moderate heat for three to four hours.



A Creek woman using a *kecvpe* (key-cha-be) to pound safke.

### Wild Onion Dinners

From February to April, wild onions are gathered for a major spring event of all of the Five Civilized Tribes of eastern Oklahoma. Wild onion dinners are held privately in homes and publicly, often in churches, to raise funds. Prayer and singing in the native language sometimes accompanies dinners held in churches. The onions are usually, but not always, fried with scrambled eggs. Poke salad might be added to the onions, or it could be served alone. Corn breads of various kinds are present; some are sour, prepared with fermented meal (*dug-lake dōk-see*) and some are flavored with parched purple pea hulls, (catto-haga or blue bread). Both sweet (unfermented) and sour hominy is common and often contains pork. In recent times, fry bread made from wheat flour, has become popular. Red beans are a part of every dinner served. Common meats are fried pork (salt meat) and stewed beef. Hickory nut soup is sometimes added to various dishes. Other foods might include fried chicken, rice, potatoes, cabbage, and crayfish. Grape dumplings are the preferred “dessert.”



## Songs/Hymns

Muscogee Creek people today still sing the Muscogee hymns in the traditional churches which the elders believe their ancestors sang on the “Trail of Tears.” Most of the hymns speak of encouragement and perseverance. The hymns are sung in the Muscogee language with its own style and tune, sounding sad and lonesome while other hymns have a joyful tune.

Today, some hymns are converted from the English version into the Muscogee language (ex: Amazing Grace) for the younger generation. This makes it easier for them to sing the hymns with the tune already in place. Although, the tune is the same, the words are not translated in the exact context as the English version but in similar words.

The songs for the ceremonial dances were quite different from the hymns. The men composed their own songs and only the men sing the songs during the dances. The songs were of joyful tunes and others were lonely tunes. Sometimes, it was a story of life’s experience; a lover who has left, being away too long and longing to be back or just enjoying the fellowship of being around his clan members of his tribal town. Today, chants are heard and not the stories but the rhythm of the shell shakers brings back memories of the old songs or stories

## Traditional Churches



Muscogee churches have ties that link back to the creation story. The direction east is considered sacred in the Christian setting. Hesaketvmese (*he-saw-key-duh-me-see*) came or blew from the east in the Muscogee creation. Muscogee churches face the east, meaning that the entrance of the church faces the east. A deacon of the church will blow a horn four times “calling the spirit into the church” and signaling the beginning of the time of worship. This is similar to respecting the four elements of the creation story and calling upon them for help in the time of darkness. All night services and sunrise services are not uncommon for the dedicated Muscogee Christians

The traditional ceremonies have been a part of the Muscogee culture for centuries. The Muscogee Christian values have been a part of the culture for decades. Both ways of life are a testimony to the endurance and adaptability of the people of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation.

Christianity was introduced to the Muscogee people at the arrival of the first Europeans, but missionaries targeted them heavily after their removal to Indian Territory in Oklahoma. Missionaries looked upon the Muscogee people as hostile and uncivilized. It was thought that they could be tamed and civilized through conversion to Christianity. Most Muscogee traditional churches share some practices with the ceremonial grounds. In traditional churches the number four is noticeable; for example, the call to worship involves ringing the bell or blowing a horn four times. Also, as in the ceremonial grounds, all things are done facing east, and almost all older traditional churches face east. This traditional practice is done because the sun rises in the east; bringing in a new day. This concept of east as the spiritual direction goes back to the creation story of the Muscogee people. The transition to Christianity was facilitated by the original beliefs of the Muscogee people. The Christian religious concepts brought were not altogether different from the Indian people’s traditional belief system. Some strikingly similar concepts occur between both of the belief systems.

The leaders in the traditional churches hold responsibilities similar to the leaders at the ceremonial grounds. The Pastor of the traditional church is equal in position to the Mekko, or chief, of the ceremonial ground. The Deacon has many of the same responsibilities and duties as at the ceremonial grounds. Women leaders are found in the traditional churches just as they are at the ceremonial grounds. The Pastor and the Mekko both direct the people in their respected communities in matters of prayers and rededication of their lives to the Creator and to the people of the communities. The Deacons and the Stickmen uphold the order of the communities and also both positions choose song leaders during their respected ceremonies. The women leaders in both communities contribute to the well-being of the people in the community when they feel it is necessary or when called upon.

Traditional church members and ceremonial grounds members also have similar views about their worship. Members of both churches and ceremonial grounds believe in one God or Creator. In both communities, it is God or the Creator that gives the blessing of life. Without God or the Creator, there would be nothing. Along with the similarities of worship between the ceremonial grounds and the traditional churches, there was also the overwhelming presence of the Muscogee spiritualism in these two domains. The Muscogee people have a distinct creation story which tells about the Creator, the people and how they came to be on this earth and how we are to maintain ourselves as told in the Muscogee language and possessed in the culture.

Muscogee traditional churches today have ties that link back to the creation story through language and culture. Hesaketvmese (*he-saw-key-duh-me-see*), the Master of breath, is the name for God, and is the one being prayed to by the Muscogee Christians. Church hymns are predominately sung in the Muscogee language, but occasionally English hymns are sung during the service.

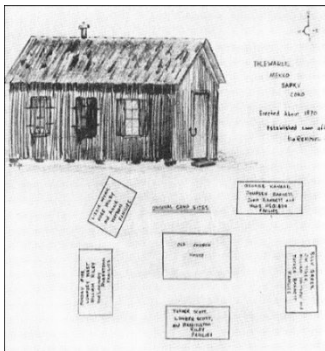


Illustration of Thewarle Indian Baptist Church built around 1870.



Thewarle Indian Baptist Church today.

# **Branches of Government**

***BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT***

---

**The Muscogee Nation has three (3) branches of Government:**

- Executive Branch
- Judicial Branch
- Legislative Branch

**The Executive Branch consists of:**

- Principal Chief – David W. Hill
  - Second Chief – Del Beaver
  - The Cabinet
- The term of office for the Principal Chief is four (4) years. The term of office for the Second Chief is four (4) years.
- Cabinet members are appointed by the Principal Chief and confirmed by the National Council.

**The Judicial Branch consists of:**

- Four (4) District Court Judges
  - Seven (7) Supreme Court Judges
- The term of office for the Supreme Court Judges are six (6) years. The term of office for the District Court Judges are four (4) years.
- The District Court Judges and Supreme Court Judges are nominated by the Principal Chief and confirmed by the National Council.
- The court is vested with exclusive jurisdiction over all civil and criminal matters that are under Muscogee Nation jurisdiction and serves as the final authority on Muscogee law.

**The Legislative Branch consists of:**

- Sixteen (16) members of the National Council
  - Speaker – Randall Hicks
  - Second Speaker – Thomasene Yahola-Osborn
  - Sergeant at Arms – Darrell Proctor
- The National Council representatives currently serve four (4) year terms.
- The National Council is elected by Muscogee citizens in an open election.
- The National Council representatives are elected by districts within the boundaries of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation.
- The current National Council is in their 23<sup>rd</sup> session. (Pale-Hokkolen Tutcenohkakt).

**PRINCIPAL CHIEF**

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**Name:** David W. Hill

**Clan:** Beaver (Echaswvlke)

**Tribal Town:** New Tulsa

**Ceremonial Ground:** Okfuskee/New Tulsa

**Church:** Depew Church of God

**Family:** Married to Monica (Watson) Hill for 39 years. Children are daughters ShaRee, ShaLae and ShaVon. Grandchildren are Blaine, ShaLyn, Mason, Tagon and Mary Annabelle.

**Work experience:** Depew High School Board of Education (Member and President), Tulsa Airpark, Spartan School of Aeronautics and Technology (College Program Advisory Committee), Muscogee Nation National Council 2008-2011, 2012-2015, 2016-2019 (Tribal Affairs Committee, Business Finance and Justice Committee, Facts Finding Committee, Internal Affairs Committee, Casino/Hotel Expansion Oversight Committee), National Council Sergeant at Arms (2 terms), National Council Second Speaker (2 terms), 30 years in aerospace (repair, manufacturing and military programs industry). Time Magazine named Principal Chief Hill one of the 100 most influential people of 2020.



***SECOND CHIEF***

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**Name:** Del Beaver

**Clan:** Aktvyahcvlke

**Tribal Town:** New Tulsa

**Church:** Associate Pastor at Native Stone Baptist Church, Sapulpa

**Family:** Father, R. Perry Beaver, mother, Mariam (Bruner) Beaver. Married to Rhonda (Lowe) Beaver, children, Isaiah, Olivia and Adele.

**Education:** Jenks High School graduate, Northeastern State University, BS in Environmental Management, MS in Operations Management.

**Work experience:** Muscogee Nation Environmental Specialist, 2005-2012; director of Environmental Services, 2012-2016; National Council Representative for Okmulgee district, Seat A, 2016-2019.

**FORMER CHIEFS**

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**Roley McIntosh**  
1828 to 1859



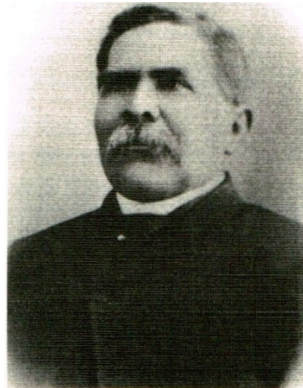
**Samuel Checote**  
1867 to 1875  
1879 to 1883



**Locher Harjo**  
1875 to 1876



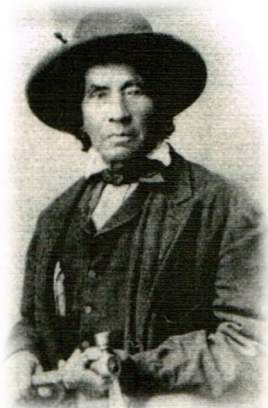
**Ward Coachman**  
1876 to 1879



**Joseph M. Perryman**  
1883 to 1887



**Legus C. Perryman**  
1887 to 1895



**Edward Bullett**  
1895



**Isparhecher**  
1895 to 1899



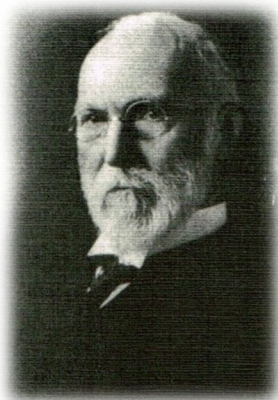
**Pleasant Porter**  
1899 to 1907

**FORMER CHIEFS**

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**Motey Tiger**  
1907 to 1917



**G. W. Grayson**  
1917 to 1920



**Washington Grayson**  
1921 to 1923



**George Hill**  
1923 to 1928



**Peter Ewing**  
1931



**Alex Noon**  
1939 to 1943



**Roley Canard**  
1935 to 1939  
1942 to 1950



**John F. Davis**  
1951 to 1955



**Roley Buck**  
1955 to 1957

**FORMER CHIEFS**

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**Turner Bear**  
1957 to 1961



**W.E. 'Dode' McIntosh**  
1961 to 1971



**Claude A. Cox**  
1971 to 1991



**Bill S. Fife**  
1992 to 1996



**R. Perry Beaver**  
1996 to 2004



**A.D. Ellis**  
2004 to 2012



**George Tiger**  
2012 to 2016



**James Floyd**  
2016 to 2020

Photographs are not available for:  
**Motey Canard** (Lower Creek chief) –  
1859 to 1863

**Echo Harjo** (Upper Creek chief) –  
1859 to 1867

**Henry Harjo** - 1930

**SUPREME COURT JUSTICES**

**Chief Justice Andrew Adams III** is a citizen of the Muscogee Nation of Oklahoma and is a member of the Tallahassee Wvkokaye Ceremonial Grounds. He earned a law degree from the University of Wisconsin Law School and is a founding member of law firm in St. Paul, Minnesota that specializes in Indian Law.



**Vice-Justice Richard Lerblance**, from Hartshorne, OK, earned his law degree from Oklahoma City University School of Law. He served as a member of the Oklahoma State Senate and the House of Representatives. He was admitted to practice before the Oklahoma State Supreme Court, U.S. District Court for Eastern Oklahoma and the Supreme Courts for Muscogee Nation, Choctaw Nation and Chickasaw Nation.

**Justice Amos McNac** is a resident of Bristow, OK. He attended Olive Public School, technical school in Amarillo, TX and Washburn University in Topeka, KS. The courts of the Muscogee Nation are required to apply the tradition and customs of the Muscogee people. Justice McNac, who reads, writes and speaks the Muscogee language, brings an understanding of traditional customary laws. He was an active participant in the Harjo vs. Kleppe (kleppie) lawsuit and in the development of the 1979 Constitution.



**Justice George Thompson Jr.** lives in Henryetta, Oklahoma. He attended Haskell Institute, the University of Tulsa and Oklahoma State University. He is a veteran of the U.S. Air Force and served for twenty-eight years with the City of Tulsa Engineering Services. He was raised in Mvskoke tradition all his life and is the Mekko of Hickory Ground Ceremonial Ground and is of the Bird Clan.

**Justice Leah Harjo-Ware** was raised on her grandmother's allotment in southern Muscogee Nation. She is Deer clan and a member of New Tulsa Ceremonial Grounds. She attended Holdenville High School, the University of Oklahoma, and Creighton University School of Law. She was admitted to practice law for the U.S. Supreme Court and the Oklahoma State Supreme Court.



**Justice Kathleen Supernaw** graduated from the University of Oklahoma College of Law. While attending University of Oklahoma, she was editor-in-chief of the *American Indian Law Review*, on the Dean's Honor Roll, and a research assistant for the *Handbook of Federal Indian Law*.

**Justice Montie Deer** graduated from high school in Kansas. He earned a law degree at Washburn University School of Law and served as chairman of the National Indian Gaming Commission where he was responsible for the protection of Indian gaming. He also served as Attorney General for the Muscogee Nation and as Associate Professor of Law at the University of Tulsa Law School.



### Supreme Court Trivia

The first case filed with the re-established MCN Supreme Court was McIntosh vs. MCN in 1985.

The MCN Supreme Court is located in the Mound Building at the tribal complex in Okmulgee.

Every year the Supreme Court selects amongst themselves a Chief Justice and Vice-Chief Justice.

Originally, there were only 6 Supreme Court Justices until citizens voted to increase the seats by one in 2013.

There are no term limits, a Justice may be re-appointed. Michael Flud served the longest with 4 terms.

The first appointed Justice was Elliot Howe in 1980, the first female Justice was Wilma Berryhill the same year.

The first Chief Justice was Elliot Howe, the first female Chief Justice was Denette Mouser.

There have been a total of 4 females to serve as a Justice, with 2 serving as Chief Justice.

### DISTRICT COURT JUDGES

**Chief Judge Roger Wiley** received his Doctor of Law from the University of New Mexico School of Law. He was a member and served on the board of directors for the National American Indian Court Judges Association. In his career, he served as the Attorney General for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, a Supreme Court Justice for the Quapaw Nation and Seminole Nation of Ok., a Municipal Court Judge for the city of Krebs, a city prosecutor for McAlester, Assistant District Attorney for Taos, NM and a CFR (Courts of Indian Offenses) court judge for the Chickasaw Nation.

**Judge Lisa Otipoby** is the Criminal Court judge. She received her degree to become a lawyer from the university of Kansas Law School. Her judicial education continued at the National Judicial College in Reno, NV. She has been active with the Oklahoma Municipal Judges Association, where she also served as a board member. Judge Otipoby is a member of the Comanche Nation.

**Judge Alexandra Masters** serves as the Family Court judge. She graduated from University of Tulsa College of Law. She has primarily worked in family law in private practice and with an undergraduate degree in psychology, she is an aggressive advocate for children as she understands the psychological impact of custody cases.

**Judge Dennie Mouser** received her Juris Doctor from the University of Oklahoma College of Law and Bachelor of Arts from University of Central Oklahoma. She was an Adjunct Professor at the University of Arkansas.

**Judge Alyssa Campbell** is the judge over traffic, civil and domestic matters.

**NATIONAL COUNCIL MEMBERS**



**RANDALL HICKS**  
Okfuskee District - Seat A  
Speaker



**THOMASENE YAHOLA-OSBORN**  
Tukvptce District - Seat B  
Second Speaker



**DARRELL PROCTOR**  
McIntosh District - Seat B  
Sergeant-at-Arms



**DODE BARNETT**  
Creek District - Seat A



**GALEN CLOUD**  
McIntosh District - Seat B



**MARY CRAWFORD**  
Muskogee District - Seat A



**JOYCE C. DEERE**  
Muskogee District - Seat B



**PATRICK FREEMAN JR.**  
Creek District - Seat B



**SANDRA GOLDEN**  
Okfuskee District - Seat B

**NATIONAL COUNCIL MEMBERS**



**LEONARD GOUGE**  
Tulsa District - Seat B



**NELSON HARJO SR.**  
Okmulgee District - Seat B



**ROBERT HUFFT**  
Tulsa District - Seat A



**ANNA MARSHALL**  
Tukvptce District - Seat A



**CHARLES MCHENRY**  
Wagoner/Roger/Mayes  
District - Seat A



**MARK RANDOLPH**  
Wagoner/Roger/Mayes  
District - Seat B



**ROBYN WHITECLOUD**  
Okmulgee District - Seat A



**NATIONAL COUNCIL COMMITTEES**

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**Health, Education & Welfare**

Meeting: 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday at 2:00 PM

Joyce C. Deere – Chairperson  
Mary Crawford – Vice Chairperson  
Leonard Gouge  
Anna Marshall  
Thomasene Yahola-Osborn

**Land, Natural Resources & Cultural Preservation**

Meeting: 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday at 6:30 PM

Darrell Proctor – Chairperson  
Charles McHenry – Vice Chairperson  
Galen Cloud  
Mark Randolph  
Robyn Whitecloud

**Business, Finance & Justice**

Meeting: Thursday prior to Planning Session at 5:00 PM

Robert Hufft – Chairperson  
Sandra Golden – Vice Chairperson  
Dode Barnett  
Patrick Freeman Jr.  
Nelson Harjo Sr.

**NATIONAL COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEES**

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**Internal Affairs Committee**

Creek District – Patrick Freeman Jr.      Okmulgee District – Nelson Harjo Sr.  
McIntosh District – Galen Cloud          Tukvptce District – Thomasene Yahola-Osborn  
Muskogee District – Joyce C. Deere      Tulsa District – Robert Hufft  
Okfuskee District – Sandra Golden        Wagoner/Rogers/Mayes District – Mark Randolph

**Fact Finding Committee**

Creek District – Dode Barnett              Okmulgee District – Robyn Whitecloud  
McIntosh District – Darrell Proctor        Tukvptce District – Anna Marshall  
Muskogee District – Mary Crawford        Tulsa District – Leonard Gouge  
Okfuskee District – Randall Hicks          Wagoner/Rogers/Mayes District – Charles McHenry

## ***MUSCOGEE (CREEK) NATION CONSTITUTION***

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- Article I**     **Name, Organization and Jurisdiction**  
**Section 1:** Official name of tribe.  
**Section 2:** Geographical jurisdiction of tribe.  
**Section 3:** Official seal of tribe.
- Article II**     **Rights and Privileges**  
**Section 1:** Creeks by blood shall have opportunity for tribal citizenship.  
**Section 2:** Tribal citizens shall have same rights as U.S. citizens.  
**Section 3:** Not reduce the rights of Creeks for purposes of claims against the U.S.  
**Section 4:** Not affect a Creek’s rights in relationship with U.S. as a member of a federally recognized tribe.  
**Section 5:** Protect rights of citizens to organize tribal towns and practice traditions.
- Article III**     **Citizenship**  
**Section 1:** Citizenship board appointment and duties.  
**Section 2:** Citizenship eligibility rules.  
**Section 3:** Citizenship application procedures.  
**Section 4:** Full-citizenship and citizenship definition.
- Article IV**     **Elections**  
**Section 1:** Election board appointment and duties.  
**Section 2:** Voting rules.  
**Section 3:** Secret ballot rule.  
**Section 4:** Election rules for candidates.  
**Section 5:** Run-off election rule for candidates.  
**Section 6:** Election dates.  
**Section 7:** Citizen’s right to vote for officials.  
**Section 8:** This section cancelled by citizens in 2009.  
**Section 9:** Voting rule for citizens residing outside the jurisdiction.
- Article V**     **Executive Branch**  
**Section 1:** Powers of Principal Chief, term rules, eligibility for Principal Chief/Second Chief, vacancy rule, compensation, oath, felony conviction rule.  
**Section 2:** Organization of Executive Office.  
**Section 3:** Budget rules.  
**Section 4:** Annual state of the tribe rule.
- Article VI**     **Legislative Branch**  
**Section 1:** Geographical districts of tribe.  
**Section 2:** Legislative power vested to National Council with 2 representatives from each district elected, 16 representatives shall be elected.  
**Section 3:** Term length and oath.  
**Section 4:** Quorum rule and expelling disorderly member from meeting.  
**Section 5:** Compensation, council secretary, National Council representative cannot be a tribal employee.  
**Section 6:** Rule to override a veto.  
**Section 7:** National Council legislative powers.

- Section 8:** Citizens have power to propose laws, enact or reject laws by vote, right to circulate petition (initiative) to propose legislative matter, petition rules.
- Article VII** **Judicial Branch**  
**Section 1:** Judicial power of tribe vested in one Supreme Court limited to tribal matters.  
**Section 2:** Seven members of Supreme Court appointed by Principal Chief subject to approval by Nation Council and with 6-year term.  
**Section 3:** Rule to establish court procedures with approval by National Council.  
**Section 4:** Chief Justice to be chosen amongst themselves.  
**Section 5:** Supreme Court decisions shall be final.  
**Section 6:** All litigations to begin in District Court with right to appeal to Supreme Court.
- Article VIII** **Removal of Officers**  
**Section 1:** National Council shall have procedures for removal of officers.  
**Section 2:** Petition for removal must have 20% of voter signatures.  
**Section 3:** Petition for removal of Principal Chief, Second Chief, Justices must have 20% of voter signatures and  $\frac{3}{4}$  vote of National Council.
- Article IX** **Amendment of Constitution**  
**Section 1:** Constitutional amendment requires  $\frac{2}{3}$  vote of National Council approval and  $\frac{2}{3}$  of affirmative vote of the citizens.
- Article X** **Ratification of Constitution; First Election**  
**Section 1:** Ratified by eligible voters.  
**Section 2:** Eligible voter rules.
- Article XI** **Burials and Cemeteries**  
**Section 1:** Protection rules for burials and cemeteries of Muscogee people.
- Article XII** **Initiative and Referendum**  
**Section 1:** Citizens may enact laws by initiative (petition) or reject acts by referendum (public vote on specific issue).  
**Section 2:** Initiative or referendum sponsor's rule.  
**Section 3:** After certification, a petition is prepared for circulation by sponsors, petition must be signed by at least 15% of the electorate before it may be filed.  
**Section 4:** Petition may be filed any time, proposed law will be voted on at first election following legislative session.  
**Section 5:** Referendum petition filing date rule.  
**Section 6:** If majority of votes favor a proposition-it passes, if a majority of votes rejects an act, it's rejected and both ways are certified by authorized person, new law goes into effect 90 days and rejected act is voided 30 days after certification.  
**Section 7:** Rules initiative cannot be used for; rules referendums cannot be used for.  
**Section 8:** All officials are subject to recall by voters, grounds for recall of an officer, petition rules.
- Article XIII** **College of the Muscogee Nation Board of Regents**  
**Section 1:** Board of Regents rules.

*HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW*

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**STEP  
ONE**

- Proposed bill is given to Speaker

**STEP  
TWO**

- Speaker assigns bill to appropriate committee

**STEP  
THREE**

- Committee writes report on bill and forwards to National Council
- If bill has budget items it must be considered by the Business and Government Committee

**STEP  
FOUR**

- National Council Approves Bill
- National Council forwards proposed bill to Principal Chief

**STEP  
FIVE**

- Principal Chief approves bill
- Proposed Bill becomes law

***HOW A BILL MAY BE VETOED***

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**STEP  
ONE**

- Principal Chief sends veto message on proposed bill to the National Council

**STEP  
TWO**

- At next official meeting, a motion must be made and a majority approval to read veto message aloud

**STEP  
THREE**

- Any Representative, except the Speaker, may make a motion to override a veto (2/3 vote required) and adopt the legislation as law

**STEP  
FOUR**

- If a motion is not made to override a veto, the vetoed legislation may not be reconsidered

**STEP  
FIVE**

- Vetoed legislation may be amended and the amended legislation resent to the Principal Chief

# Muscogee Royalty

**MISS MUSCOGEE (CREEK) NATION**

**Name:** Janaya McIntosh

**Age:** 23 years old

**Clan:** Katcvlke

**Tribal Town:** Ceyahv

**School:** Northeastern State University

**Church:** West Eufaula Indian Baptist Church

**Parent:** John and Juana McIntosh

**Platform:** Bridging Generations & Strengthening  
Community Bonds



Janaya is of the Katcvlke clan, lives in Eufaula, OK, and is a member of the West Eufaula Indian Baptist church, where she finds solace and community.

She is currently pursuing a master's degree in speech-language pathology at Northeastern State University's Muskogee campus, driven by a deep passion to make a difference in the lives of those around her within and outside the Mvskoke community.

This year, she aims to create opportunities for meaningful intergenerational relationships where the wisdom and experiences of our elders can be shared and celebrated, and the energy and enthusiasm of the younger generation can be harnessed to drive positive change.

Miss Muscogee (Creek) Nation serves as a Goodwill Ambassador by promoting the Nation through educational, social, cultural and public appearances as well as speaking engagements. Contestants are judged on an introduction letter, essay, interview, self-introduction, traditional dress, social interaction, cultural talent/presentation and the ability to answer an impromptu question. Prizes include \$2,500 cash and a \$2,500 scholarship.

**JR. MISS MUSCOGEE (CREEK) NATION**

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**Name:** Olivia Beaver

**Age:** 16 years old

**Clan:** Daughter of Sweet Potato

**Tribal Town:** Tukvptce

**School:** Preston High School

**Parent:** Del and Rhonda Beaver

**Platform:** Cultural Preservation



Olivia Beaver is a proud Mvskoke citizen and is of Cherokee and Seminole descent. Olivia is active in the Mvskoke Nation Youth Council and is currently the treasurer. She is also a member in the Light Horse Explorers Program. She plays softball with Preston High school while also playing competitively. Olivia enjoys learning the Muscogee language and attends the Muscogee Language Camp every year.

She hopes to be able to graduate from Preston High School and continue her academic studies at Emory University. Olivia also enjoys making yarn belts and sharing the knowledge with others. She wants to help people find their identity in the Mvskoke ways no matter how old.

Through the MCN Scholarship Pageant, the Jr. Miss Muscogee (Creek) Nation will develop her sense of self-confidence, poise, public speaking skills, social skills, and further her cultural knowledge of Mvskoke history, customs and traditions. Prizes include \$1500, a beaded crown, cedar crown box, woven basket purse, Mvskoke traditional clothing, plaque, Pendleton blanket, two matching sashes, personalized luggage, flower bouquet, professional photo shoot and traveling opportunities. Jr. Miss contestants must be between the ages of 14-17 years of age and enrolled in school.



# **Muscogee (Creek) Nation Seal**



The Muscogee (Creek) Nation is a confederacy of Muscogean towns originally from the southeastern region of the United States. “Muscogee” refers to the predominant language spoken among these towns. The initials “I.T.” on the circular border stand for Indian Territory, the land that was promised to the Muscogee Nation and other tribal nations for “as long as the grass grows and the rivers flow.” On that promise the Muscogee (Creek) Nation was forced to leave the southeast in the early 1800’s on what has come to be known as the “Trail of Tears.”

The Muscogee people had been agriculturists since 900 A.D. Using tools hand-made from natural resources, they grew corn, beans and squash. After arriving in I.T., they resumed this practice. The center of the seal signifies the Muscogee’s agricultural background and the influence of Christianity. The sheaf of wheat refers to Joseph’s dream (Genesis 37:7), “For behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright...” The plow depicts a prophecy (Amos 9:13), “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper...”

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation National Council adopted this seal following the Civil War.

# **Belvin Hill Scholarship**



Belvin Hill  
1952-2006

Belvin Hill was born and raised in the Eufaula, Oklahoma area. He was the son of Belvin Jesse Hill and Medella Hill and of the Deer Clan. He graduated from Eufaula high school in 1970 and went on to receive his bachelor degree in education from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, OK. He received his master's degree in Divinity/Religious Education from Mid-Western Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.

In 2000, Belvin became the Muscogee Nation JOM Program's Field Specialist and one of the original founding members of the Muscogee Nation Challenge Bowl. He gave workshop presentations at the Statewide JOM Conferences and National JOM Conferences. It was not unusual for him to assist a JOM program from a different tribe in a different state. He shared his knowledge and his training materials with all who were in need.

He was part of establishing the MCN JOM reputation of excellence in technical training for JOM programs on a national level. His love for children showed through each and every day. He was in charge of the meals for Challenge Bowl, making sure that each child was ready for the competition. At times you could find him serving breakfast and lunch out under a tent pitched behind the Mound building at the Creek Complex in Okmulgee. He went out of his way and made sure that the students and sponsors felt welcomed to the Challenge Bowl competition. He always had a smile and a handshake for all. He was a loving man who always took the time to talk to the students and throw in a life lesson while he was at it.

In 2006, the Challenge Bowl Committee honored Belvin by setting up a \$500 scholarship in his name, the amount was increased to \$1000 in 2018 and is funded by team registration fees. The award is given to one female and one male, of any tribal affiliation or non-Indian, who participates in the Challenge Bowl their senior year. Students are judged on their essay entitled "Why the Challenge Bowl is Important to Me." Our hope is to keep Belvin's spirit of learning alive by providing this small scholarship to students who understand the true meaning behind the Muscogee (Creek) Nation's Challenge Bowl.

**Wilbur Chebon  
Gouge  
Honors Team**



Wilbur Chebon Gouge  
1951-2008

Wilbur Gouge was born and raised in Hanna, Oklahoma and the son of the late Albert and Sally (Spaniard) Gouge. He graduated from Capitol Hill high school in 1969 and went on to Haskell Indian Junior College. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps and received an Honorable Discharge in 1974. He is a member of the Deer Clan and a member of the Weogufkee (Muddy Waters) Ceremonial Ground and attended Arbeka Ceremonial Ground.

Wilbur Gouge served on the Muscogee Nation's National Council for five sessions, serving in the offices of Speaker and Second Speaker along with chairing the Human Development Committee.

While on the National Council, he would greet everyone in the Muscogee language and interpret for the elders what actions were being taken. He also became a founding member of the Challenge Bowl committee. He was the traditional advisor for the games and made sure that the competition didn't over-ride the

true spirit of the games – the spirit of learning. His love for the games showed in his commitment to teach the volunteers and students that if you know where you come from, you will know where you are going.

In 2007, the Challenge Bowl committee officially named the sportsmanship award the “Wilbur Chebon Gouge Honors Team Award” to honor him for his contribution to the betterment of this Nation. For generations to come, children will know his name, benefit from his knowledge and credit him for teaching them what it truly means to be a noble Muscogee citizen.

In 2008, the Muscogee Nation honored him as a Living Legend to acknowledge his years of work and dedication to the Muscogee people. Chebon has been recognized as one of the leading forces behind making the Muscogee Nation more accessible to our youth, parents, community members and employees. On every committee that Mr. Gouge participated in, he kept them grounded by making the Muscogee culture the focal point of the program or events.

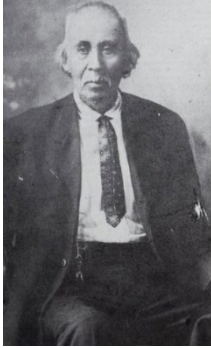
The true meaning of the Challenge Bowl games is to teach our children the Muscogee culture, history, government and language using traditional values of brotherhood as the foundation. The Challenge Bowl was never set up to teach our children how to win in competitions but how to learn, share and be grateful to those willing to teach them. The Challenge Bowl committee made a commitment to set by example positive role models in good citizenship and tribal pride that would carry on throughout the years.

The “Wilbur Gouge Honors Team Award” is given in each of the three divisions. This award is presented to the one team who best exemplifies the true spirit of the games; knowing how to greet their tribal leadership, acknowledge their elders, show respect to their peers, showing honor in defeat, playing for the love of learning and not just to win a trophy or medal.

# **Chronicles of Oklahoma**

**The Chronicles of Oklahoma**  
**Volume 41, No. 1**  
**1963**

**JACKSON LEWIS OF THE CONFEDERATE CREEK REGIMENT**  
**By Jerlena King**



Jackson Lewis was born in Alabama in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and was a fullblood Creek Indian being part Hitchiti. He was six years of age when he came with members of the family to their new home west of the Mississippi River during removal of the Creek Indians from Alabama and Georgia. His father was killed by a white man in Alabama. During the removal trip Jackson Lewis rode a pony on the journey for a long distance. He almost lost his life when the pony was swept from under him in crossing the Mississippi River. The shoes he was wearing wore out from walking and he suffered from the cold and hunger before reaching Indian Territory.

As he grew to manhood he received three titles or names which entitled him to a change of seat in the Eufaula Square ground. An old tradition of the Creek Indians during the time of which all Creek Towns for centuries had their square grounds. He was schooled in the old Indian arts of medicine of which he became well known and respected by the Indians as well as the white people as a doctor and considered one of the best throughout the Creek Nation during his lifetime.

He was married to Hannah Proctor, the daughter of *Cenvnewv*, and to this marriage seven children were born. His second wife was Nancy Walton and to this marriage one child was born.

Jackson Lewis was a member of the West Eufaula Church, an Indian Baptist church, having joined the church in 1861, and was baptized in 1856. He was a deacon in the church for many years.

During the years of the Civil War he served as a doctor on Co. K of the Second Regiment Creek Indian Volunteers, having entered the service of the Confederate States, September, 1861, as 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant and when discharged held the rank of Second Lieutenant. He had the name Lahta Yahola, probably a Creek war name. He was also known as 'Cakoce', a Creek word meaning 'Little Jack'.

Jackson Lewis was a member of the Creek National Council, and was also a representative of the Eufaula-Canadian Town of Creeks in the branch of the Council known as the House of Warriors. Jackson Lewis was made a Mason August 11, 1863. He was made Honorary member June 30, 1902 and was still an active member in 1905 of Lodge No. 1, Eufaula, Indian Territory. He was a member of the Masonic order in good standing up to the time of his passing away, December 21, 1910.

He was buried in the West Eufaula burying grounds southwest of Eufaula. (The cemetery is now known as Loster Williams cemetery, once the allotment of Loster or Luster Williams.)



**Chronicles of Oklahoma**  
**Volume 4, No. 4**  
**December, 1926**  
**SAPULPA**  
**By William A. Sapulpa**



The life of Sapulpa, for whom the City of Sapulpa was named, reads much like the lives of other active, virile men, whose lives have merited the confidence, honor and respect of their fellowmen. He was born in Alabama. Both his parents were full-blood Creeks. His father was O-M-I-Y-A, but his mother's name and the date of his birth are unknown to his posterity. Both his parents died in Alabama when he was but two or three years old and he and his three sisters were raised by his two uncles, brothers of his father. His boyhood and early youth were spent on the hunting grounds of their then Indian country, which extended from Florida to Mississippi and the encroachment of white settlers into that country brought him into conflict with the governmental authorities and the soldiers, so he was, for a time, what may be termed a wild Indian. It seems that the white settlers of those days (very much like some of the white settlers of later days), would not recognize the rights of Indians to any property whatsoever and proceeded to help themselves to stock belonging to the Indians. The Indians proceeded to retake as much of their stock as they could find and, perhaps, taking other stock in place of the stock not found. The white settlers, of course, chose to treat the Indians as cattle thieves and shot some of them. This conduct on the part of the white settlers so aroused the manly and racial instincts of young Sapulpa to action that brought the soldiers in pursuit of him; but he was too wily and fleet of foot for the soldier boys, so they never caught him. One incident of his experience with the soldiers that he often told to his children was this: While out hunting with some other men, in Florida, they saw the soldiers with blood hounds—and the pursuit was on. Young Sapulpa ran into a swamp, with the blood hounds and soldiers on his trail. Coming to a creek that ran into a lake, he saw a big alligator in the creek. If he stopped or turned back, the hounds and soldiers would get him, so he made a desperate jump over both the alligator and the creek. But the hounds and soldiers were not so fortunate—for when they arrived at the creek, the alligator put up such a hard fight that they gave up the chase. And so the native of the swamps saved the native of the woods from his enemies.

The Creek Indians of those days often visited St. Augustine, Florida, where they did most of their trading. Here did also young Sapulpa go quite frequently and met and made many friends among the white people. His last trip to Ste. Augustine was his last trip from the old hunting grounds; for at Ste. Augustine some of his white friends induced him to go with them to Charleston, S. C. The trip was made by boat, and Mr. Sapulpa was treated to the sights of whales, etc., to be seen in the briny deep. Leaving Charleston, he continued by boat to New Orleans and then continued on to what later became the eastern part of the Creek Nation in what is now Oklahoma—thus becoming one of its pioneers and one of the leaders of his people. Soon after his arrival in the new country, he assumed the duties of a husband by marrying NaKitty, an Indian maiden, and, moving to what is now Creek County, he built his home and commenced farming on Rock Creek, about one mile southeast of Sapulpa. Sometime later, in about 1850, he started a store at his home, where he sold coffee, sugar, tobacco, dry goods, flour, spices and other articles too numerous to mention and hauling his goods in by team and pack horses from Ft. Smith and the old agency about 7 or 8 miles northwest of Muskogee. At the end of about two years he gave up merchandising on account of

the difficulties of getting in his goods. There were no other stores in the neighborhood—the nearest stores being at the old agency, near Muskogee and at Council Hill. There may be some old timers who remember when we had no railroads, no automobiles, no trucks, no interurban lines, no bridges over our streams—and no wagon roads fit to travel, but I think that the most of you would consider the traffic in merchandise, under such conditions, as unthinkable.

Three children were born of his marriage to NaKitty—James, Hanna and Sarah. Of these three, James and Sarah are still living. James Sapulpa lives about one mile south of Sapulpa, and Sarah is now the wife of Timmie Fife and lives within the city.

Sapulpa was married again to Cho-pok-sa, a sister of his first wife and by whom he had seven children—Moses, Yarna, Samuel, William, Rhoda, Becca and Nicey. All of these children are now dead, excepting William, who now is a farmer, and lives about two miles west of Sapulpa.

When the Civil War broke out, Sapulpa loaned \$1,000.00 in gold to the Confederate cause, receiving a note as evidence thereof, which note is still in existence and held for safe keeping. He joined the Creek Regiment of the Confederate Army, in which he served for three years and rose to the rank of first lieutenant, and was wounded in the battle of Elk Creek, near what is now Checotah, Oklahoma.

During the years 1871-73, about two or three hundred Osages used to come down here and camp, staying about two weeks at a time and traded with the Creeks, buying corn, sweet potatoes, peas, beans, peanuts, bacon, hogs and so forth. They put up their tepees on the land where the court house now stands and extending in a southeasterly direction about one-half mile.

In 1872, Mr. Sapulpa opened another store at his home on the hill southeast of what is now Sapulpa, buying and hauling his merchandise this time from Coffeyville, Kansas. But about a year later he closed out the business again, because of the difficulties of transportation. However, he had taken a deep interest in farming and stock raising and devoted his time, energy and talents to those industries with such success that, in due time, all the land within ten miles of his home was embraced in his ranch, and for several years he shipped cattle and hogs to the St. Louis market.

In about 1875, Mr. Sapulpa joined the Methodist Church South, and was an active member thereof from then until the time of his death and donated liberally with cattle, flour, coffee and sugar to feed the people at Camp Meetings, which always lasted several days.

In the early days, big game, consisting of antelopes, panthers, deer, buffalo, elk and bear was plentiful, and Mr. Sapulpa indulged his passionate fondness for hunting and exercised his great skill in the hunting of such game.

In about 1884 or 1885, the Frisco railroad completed the extension from Tulsa to Sapulpa and Mr. Sapulpa was invited by the Frisco officials to ride to Sapulpa on the first passenger train from Tulsa to Sapulpa.

I am pretty reliably informed that there was one store and one blacksmith shop at the end of what is now South Maple Street for several years before the Civil War, and that business was kept up there until the war broke out and that during the war all the buildings were burned.

The Okmulgee District Court of the Creek Nation was held about the year 1890 on or near the place where J. E. Rice now has his business at Park Street and Lee Avenue, and was presided over by William Anderson, as Judge, with Stand Watie as Prosecuting Attorney and myself, William Sapulpa, as Clerk of the Court.

Mr. Sapulpa was a member of the Coon Clan and his wives were members of the Fox Clan. He was a member of Osocheetown and in 1868 was elected by his town as a member of the House of Kings, which position of honor and trust he held until the date of his death, March 17, 1887.

Mr. Sapulpa was fond of the Indian ball game and was considered the best all round ball player on the Arkansas River.

### **Chronicles of Oklahoma**

**Volume 11, No. 3**

**September, 1933**

#### **THE CREEK INDIAN COUNCIL IN SESSION**

**By Alice Robertson**



Although the Capitol of the Creek Nation was established at Okmulgee in the year 1868, I had never been there when the Council was in session in the log Council House. In 1878 I was in Indian Territory on leave of absence from the Indian Department in Washington, where at that time I was employed as a clerk, and was visiting my parents at Tullahassee Mission when I had an opportunity to see the council in session.

Early one beautiful October morning my father and I left Tullahassee with the hack and a pair of Indian ponies,—in the vernacular of that time a hack was a strong, light spring wagon without cover. We crossed the Arkansas River at Henry Texas' ferry, superseded in recent years by what is known as Spaulding Bridge. The drive was one of great charm. We did not mind the open vehicle and our ponies made six miles an hour.

The tall prairie grass waved its russet sprays above golden rod and white and purple asters. At noon we stopped for dinner and to feed our ponies on Cane Creek, where Isaac Smith an enterprising Creek Freedman had built a cluster of log cabins which were the rooms of his hotel. He catered only to white and Indian travelers and patrons usually had a whole cabin to themselves. The cabins were fairly clean though sometimes the small pests, colloquially known as "chinchies", were annoying. Father and I spread blankets on the grass out under the trees, and while our noon day meal was prepared we indulged in a siesta in the warm October sunshine. Isaac's was notable for fried chicken with cream gravy, butter milk biscuits, fresh butter, preserves and of course plenty of coffee. After the ponies had finished their eight ears of corn apiece and all the hay they could eat, we paid two bits each for our dinner and two bits each for the ponies' dinner and went happily on our way, leaving Cane Creek bottom and driving west across the big prairie.

The first evidence that we were coming to Okmulgee as the sun began to drop toward the horizon, was the sight of Severs' pasture. This pasture was three miles square, with a split rail fence, nine rails high. In trading with the Indians Fred B. Severs bought small bunches of their surplus stock for which they took exchange in "store goods." These cattle then had the Severs' brand placed upon them and were turned into the pasture until a sufficiently large herd was ready for market. We forded Okmulgee Creek and went up the road past camps and camp houses to, Smiths' Hotel.

Smiths' Hotel was a rather large frame building a block from the Council house. A front room upstairs was assigned to me. It looked out on an upper porch and its windows were curtainless. Its furnishings comprised a low springless bedstead with a feather bed and pillows, one sheet, and a clean patchwork quilt; no mirror, no chair nor wash basin. Guests of the hotel were expected to perform their ablutions on the front porch, below, where there was a long shelf with buckets of water, gourd dippers, tin wash basins with one roller towel. I had prepared for such an emergency with a plentiful supply of soap and towels, so neither father nor I had to patronize the roller towel and I borrowed a basin so I got along very well. Out in front of the hotel, swinging from its iron frame on a high post was an iron plantation bell. A vigorous pulling of the attached rope was the signal to the town that it was meal time.

Meals at Smiths' Hotel were two bits but there were boarding places at which meals could be had for fifteen and twenty cents and not bad meals either. Each breakfast and supper at Smiths' was a replica of the others, everything that could be fried was fried, bacon, eggs, ham, potatoes, corn, etc. At dinner most foods were boiled but there was often barbecued pork or beef, and chicken appeared with dumplings and gravy. For anyone who asked there were Indian dishes, sofkey, tuklike, tooksey, ahpuskey etc. There was always coffee to drink and water if you asked for it, but it was customary to patronize the dippers in the water buckets on the front porch after each meal.

At early candlelight the Council House bell rang and in the dimly lighted hall I went with my father up the steps of the new Council House, recently completed, and used for the first time at this meeting of the Council. Hymns in their own language were being sung as a congregation gathered in the Hall of the lower house of the Warriors, the "Tustenukkulkee". Men, women and children drifted in during the singing, then a man began to pray and everybody knelt down. The service was entirely in Creek, and the Preacher was the President of the House of Kings, The "Mekkulkee", always addressed as "Liketuh Ohliketuh". The Reverend James McHenry, a notably outstanding character, was the son of a Scotch father and Indian mother. During the bloody Creek war which led to the conquering of the Creek people and their exile to Indian Territory, McHenry was a fearless fighter. He foiled all attempts to entrap him and even a standing reward of \$1500.00 for him, dead or alive, failed to bring results. Finally taken however he was carried with his exiled brethren to Indian Territory where he began a new life. He was converted and went into the Methodist Church and was duly licensed and ordained as a minister. He had received a rudimentary education in English. No longer an outlaw, he was a leader of his people, a zealous Christian soldier. The service he conducted was not long, for the village kept early hours.

At six the next morning when Smiths' bell told that breakfast was ready; I got up and joined my father downstairs in time for bacon and eggs, hot biscuit, fried chicken and all the rest. Then we walked around awhile exchanging greetings with our Indian friends. At a quarter of nine the Council House bell rang. We had gone a little earlier to pay our respects to the Principal Chief, the

"Mekko Hlakko", in the executive office. Ward Coachman was a man of much ability who was born in the "Old Nation" in Alabama and educated there before following his people west. He was a member of the Alabama Creeks and spoke English, Creek and Alabaman with equal fluency and our interview was a pleasant one. From the executive office we went across the hall to the office of the committee on schools where father placed on file his reports of Tullahassee Mission and left his books for financial audit and approval that the treasurer might issue a warrant for funds. The Contract under which Tullahassee was operated provided a division of expense between the Mission Board and the Creek Nation.

Then we went upstairs to the House of Kings. The "Light Horse" who acted as doorkeeper admitted us and gave us seats to the left of the dais, on which was the desk of Mekko McHenry. We watched the routine business of the morning hour. Then Mekko McHenry with great dignity and eloquence of voice and gesture made a personal address which brought a smile of gratification to father's face and embarrassed blushes to mine. With the musical style of Creek oratory he was describing to the Mekkulkee the good works of the Robertson family and their accomplishments for the welfare of the Creek people. The young woman present with her father, he said, was a great friend to the Muskogee people in Washington where she worked for Wuhins Mokko, the Government, and had done many things helping them. Especially he enlarged upon the recent contest among themselves in the election for chief where the papers seemed to have been laid aside and forgotten.

All the public life was at a standstill. Their treasury was empty, their Courts and schools were without funds; even the community blacksmiths had no funds till there should be legal recognition of their government and officials through whom the funds should be paid. Though as they saw she was just a girl, she had interceded, and had been allowed, upon examination of their papers, to write a report which had been adopted, the rightful government had been recognized, and peace came to their people. Then his gavel called all to their feet and as father and daughter stood he led the stately stepping band of Indian Kings through their ceremony of presentation and hand shaking, all returning to their places and remaining standing until the fall of the gavel permitted them to be seated. This was an honor never bestowed upon a woman before.

**Chronicles of Oklahoma**  
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**1962**  
**THOMAS GILCREASE**  
**By Martin Wenger**



Thomas Gilcrease, a well-known oilman of Creek Indian descent and the founder of the Gilcrease Museum at Tulsa, keenly appreciated his American heritage. Early in life he commenced to assemble the remarkable collection of paintings, sculpture, books, manuscripts and artifacts pertaining to the American Indian and the American frontier which has come to be recognized as the Nation's most outstanding collection of its kind. Thomas Gilcrease was born in Robilene, Louisiana, on February 8, 1890, one of the large family of children of William and Elizabeth (Nee Vowell) Gilcrease. When Thomas was a few months old, the family moved to Eufaula, Indian Territory, for Mrs. Gilcrease was of Creek Indian descent which gave her and her children land rights in the Creek Nation. A year later, they settled on a farm just south of Ball Mountain where they were neighbors to the Posey family. Thomas Gilcrease attended his first school in this community, taught by Alexander Posey, later the noted Creek poet in Oklahoma history. In about 1898, the Gilcrease family moved farther west to the Twin Mounds, in present Creek County, where they took their allotments of land at the time the tribal rolls and allotments in severalty were made in the Creek Nation. William Gilcrease opened a little grocery store at the Twin Mounds, and later owned two cotton gins and a grist mill in the vicinity. In 1904, he moved his family to Wealaka, an old post office in the Creek Nation where he laid out a townsite and became postmaster and opened a general merchandise store. His son Thomas as a boy picked cotton and drove a wagon and team on the farms; later he worked in the cotton gins and in the store and post office at Wealaka. Oil was struck four miles from the 160 acre allotment of Thomas Gilcrease in 1905, and his land was soon in the famous Glen Pool of the great Mid-Continent Oil Field that pushed Tulsa on its way to become the "Oil Capital of the World." Young Gilcrease had thirty-two producing oil wells on his 160 acre allotment by 1917. He attended Bacone College at Muskogee, Indian Territory in 1907-08, soon after oil was struck on his land. A few years later, he attended the State Teachers College at Emporia, Kansas. He moved to Tulsa in 1908, which was really his home throughout his lifetime though he lived in California a short time; he also lived in San Antonio for a period of years, and traveled abroad for many years. Thomas Gilcrease carried on his own business interests at an early age-farming, ranching and dealing in real estate. He purchased land two and one half miles northwest of Tulsa in Blackdog Township, of Osage County in 1912, where he built a large home and bought his first oil painting, *Rural Courtship* by Ridgway Knight.

Young Gilcrease had started his own oil business and entered the field of banking at the age of twenty-one. He soon owned a large interest in the bank now known as the Fourth National Bank at Tulsa, also owned outright the Bank of Bixby, the State Bank of Wagoner, the State Bank of Coweta and also, at one time, the largest bank in Stillwater.

Mr. Gilcrease formed the Gilcrease Oil Company at Tulsa in 1922. The Company brought in the first oil producer in South Central Oklahoma soon afterward, and it was during these oil omrations

that Mr. Gilcrease discovered a new oil producing strata which is known today as the Gilcrease sand. This spurred the development of the oil pools in this part of Oklahoma such as the Papoose, Sasakwa, Wewoka and others. The Gilcrease Oil Company established an office in San Antonio in 1936, and operated in the East Texas Field. South to the Rio Grande River, west to New Mexico as well as in North Texas, Southern Oklahoma and Kansas. Later, Mr. Gilcrease also established an office in Europe. He started his extensive traveling abroad in 1925. It was in this that his interest in American culture intensified, and he accelerated his activities in collecting rare objects of art, paintings, books and manuscripts. His visits in Europe taught him that knowledge of civilizations is established by the things that remain from them. It was in Paris that he determined to assemble a record of the American Indian including the pre-historic period which could be obtained only by archaeological explorations. Much of his time during the last years of his life was spent personally excavating remains of ancient Indian cultures.

The Thomas Gilcrease Foundation was established in 1942, "to maintain an art gallery, museum and library devoted to the permanent preservation for free and public use and enjoyment of the artistic, cultural and historical records of the American Indian." A building was constructed of native sandstone by Indian artisans on land near the Gilcrease home, and the museum was opened by a formal dedication ceremony May 3, 1949. Mr. Gilcrease presented the museum collections to the City of Tulsa in 1955. He also deeded the building and thirteen acres of land surrounding it to the city three years later. Since then, the fame of the Gilcrease Collection has grown rapidly. Visitors have come from all parts of the world to see this great museum, now officially known as the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art of Tulsa. Thomas Gilcrease passed away in the morning of Sunday, May 6, 1962, from the effects of a stroke suffered a few hours earlier. Memorial services were held on the lawn in front of his home overlooking the skyline of Tulsa on the following Wednesday. The Reverend Guy Tetrick of the Methodist Church officiated at the services which were highlighted by a eulogy written and delivered by David R. Milsten. Indian burial rites were conducted by Chief Dode McIntosh of the Creeks, Wolfrobe Hunt and other Indian friends. Burial will be in a mausoleum to be constructed nearby. Mr. Gilcrease was married twice, and is survived by two sons, Thomas, Jr., and Barton of San Antonio, Texas; and a daughter, Des Cygne Gilcrease Denney of Palos Verdes Estates, California. A friend tells that Mr. Gilcrease once said that of all the things he had ever done, the most useful to the most people - something that will bring pleasure and knowledge - had been the founding of the library and art gallery of the museum. "It is my aim always to leave something more beautiful than I found it," he remarked. Thomas Gilcrease enjoyed a rich and happy life that started from humble beginnings. He gave to Oklahoma and America a gift of immeasurable value. He appreciated the ideals and the spirit of the American tradition. He appreciated them so much that he has left for posterity a marvelous and vital presentation of our American heritage that will continue to instill a greater understanding and respect for these ideals in all time to come.

# Legends & Stories



## HOW THE CLANS CAME TO BE

In the beginning, the Muscogee people were born out of the earth itself. They crawled up out of the ground through a hole like ants. In those days, they lived in a far western land beside tan mountains that reached the sky. They called the mountains the backbone of the earth. Then a thick fog descended upon the earth, sent by the Master of Breath, Esakituummesee.

The Muscogee people could not see. They wandered around blindly, calling out to one another in fear. They drifted apart and became lost. The whole people were separated into small groups, and these groups stayed close to one another in fear of being entirely alone. Finally, the Master had mercy on them. From the eastern edge of the world, where the sun rises, he began to blow away the fog. He blew and blew until the fog was completely gone.

The people were joyful and sang a hymn of thanksgiving to the Master of Breath. And in each of the groups, the people turned to one another and swore eternal brotherhood. They said that from then on these groups would be like large families. The members of each group would be as close to each other as brother and sister, father and son. The group that was farthest east and first to see the sun, praised the wind that had blown the fog away.

They called themselves the Wind Family, or Wind Clan. As the fog moved away from the other groups, they, too, gave themselves names. Each group chose the name of the first animal it saw. So they became the Bear, Deer, Alligator, Raccoon and Bird Clans. However, the Wind Clan was always considered the first clan and the aristocracy of all the clans. The Master of Breath spoke to them:

*“You are the beginning of each one of your families and clans. Live up to your name. Never eat of your clan, for it is your brother. You must never marry into your own clan. This will destroy your clan if you do. When an Indian brave marries, he must always move with his wife to her clan. There he must live and raise his family. The children will become members of their mother’s clan. Follow these ways and the Muskhogean will always be a powerful force. When you forget, your clans will die as people.”*

## HOW THE EARTH WAS MADE

At last the excitement had died down. The news that Crawfish had brought back to the Council from the new lands below was important. Birds, he explained, could live on the new lands; Animals could find their food for their survival.

The mighty Eagle walked to the center of the fire and began to speak: “We are all filled with joy in our hearts to find that we cannot only send Fish, but also Birds and Animals. Now we must prepare the lands for the coming of the new creatures, for they cannot live on the lands as they are now. I have an idea; I will ask permission from the Great Council to help create better land below.”

“Yes, yes,” the Council cried, “It is our wish that the lands be a good place to live.” The Eagle walked to the Crawfish and took the wet soil from between his claws. Round and round he rolled the soil between his claws. Round and round he rolled the soil between his powerful legs. Then, with a mighty flapping of his huge wings, he soared high above the Council.

“What is he doing with the earth in his legs? Does he intend to steal it?” they cried. Then, with a mighty swish, he hurled the red ball of soil earthward. The soil traveled so fast that it looked like a shooting star falling from the sky. A mighty roar sounded when the ball hit the oceans, making a large wave that parted the water. The red soil spread out and flattened so much that the earth was made in one move.

At first, the lands were very wet; so the Eagle flew over them and dried them with his mighty wings. Soon the lands were dry enough to let the Animal migration begin.

### STORY OF THE RAINBOW

Once there was a great rain which threatened to destroy all of earth’s creatures. Bear called for a council to determine a way of stopping the steady downpour, and all of the animals attended. Raccoon, who could be very wise, said, “All of this rain is falling from the dark clouds above. If we can break the clouds the rain will stop, and the sun will shine through and dry the land.”

The council agreed, and directed the Birds to break the clouds above. First, the small flyers – Sparrow and Meadowlark – rose into the sky. They flew quick and straight, but were unable to cut the clouds. Crow tried, and then Hawk, but they were not successful either. Finally, Eagle rose high into the air, and with his wings spread wide, soared through the dark and rainy clouds. All the animals were certain that Eagle would succeed; but he did not.

Rabbit belittled the efforts of the birds. He declared, “Not only can I run fast, but I can jump higher than anyone. I will run and leap into the clouds, and that will surely break them.” Rabbit ran and jumped but only rose a few inches above the ground. He tried again but could do no better than before. On his third attempt, Rabbit jumped so high that he lost his balance, tumbled to earth, and landed with an awful thud.

Katcv (got-cha), the Panther, had been dozing under a tree, and woke to find Rabbit sprawled on the ground before him. After hearing Rabbit’s plan, Katcv (*got-cha*) said “I have been known to leap high and far. I will leap through these rain clouds and cut them in half.” Katcv (*got-cha*) stood, and slowly stretched his back legs. Then with a swift running start, he sprang into the sky and tore through the clouds above. Sunrays burst into color, as they shined through the watery arc of Katcv’s (got-cha’s) magnificent trail. Seven rainbow colors reflected through the sky, as clouds broke away and the last raindrop fell.

Katcv (got-cha) had cut the clouds to stop the rain, and his shimmering trail across the sky became the first rainbow. Even today, Mvskoke people call the rainbow Oske Entacv, meaning Rainbow Cutter. Whenever the rainbow appears, it splits the clouds and lightens all the sky in front of it.

### WHY THE POSSUM HAS NO HAIR ON ITS TAIL

When this world was very young, there was a little island in a river. The Indians called it Opossum Island. They called it Opossum Island because there were hundreds of opossums on the island. There was another island close by, called Polecat Island.

The polecats and the opossums were proud of themselves. It was the season in which they had their dances. The polecats were shedding their hair, and they were ashamed to go to the dances. The possums had thick hair on their tails, and they swung their tails back and forth like fans.

As the possums were going to the dance, they stopped and asked the polecats if they were going. The polecats said they were not going, and told the possums their trouble. The possums laughed and went on to the dance.

On Saturday, the polecats saw their old friend the lizard. So they made a plan to punish the opossums. That night, while all the possums were asleep, the little lizard shaved off every bit of hair that was on the opossums' tails. He took it back to the polecats, and somehow they fixed it on themselves. They had more hair than they needed, so they put the rest on their tails.

The next day they went to see the opossums, but they could not find a single opossum anywhere. They did not give up, but searched until they found them hidden in stumps, hollow trees, and in rotten logs. This is why the opossum is ashamed, because he has no hair on his tail. If you play with him or feel his tail, he will always try to bite you.

### HOW THE INDIAN GOT THE MEDICINE

Now it came to pass that the first Indian who became ill did so after he had killed the Deer. The spirit of the Deer was angry. The Deer Spirit told the Indian, "I gave you the first sickness for killing me. I also have the cure for this disease. Bring your wisest brave to me, and I will tell him how to cure the Deer Sickness."

A search was made of all the Indians. They sought the Indian with the greatest mind. The Council took the chosen one to the place in the dark forest where the Deer Spirit spoke; "Only the man selected to receive the secret of the medicine may stay."

The Deer told the brave that he would have to go deep into the forests and must remain alone. He must not eat for many moons. He must not speak to any man. "When this is done," the Spirit ordered, "return to me."

After the days of starvation in the forests, the man heard a voice speaking to him. "You have been chosen to keep the medicine for all your brothers. You will be their Medicine Man."

The Spirit spoke the following words: "For each animal will give man a disease and each animal has a cure for that disease. You must find those cures. Take these secrets that you find and keep them together. This will be most powerful and valuable. You must guard it. Many will try to steal it. Bundle it up. Each time there is a new sickness, I will give you a sign at the new fire. This sign will help you cure the new sickness. The animals will bring the cures."

"Each year bring this wonderful medicine back to the Green Corn Dance and open all magical cures to your people. When you grow old, you must take a young brave and teach him how to know the cures to help his brother. Give him the tests to make sure that he will make a good medicine man. Many false men will want to get the medicine," the Deep Spirit said.

"I will give you part of my breath. Go and blow on the sick. Give them the medicine of the herbs and roots that I tell you. This will make them well."

The first medicine man returned to the Deer and cut the tip of his antler. This was the first magic object in the sacred medicine bundle of the Muskhogean.

## ORIGIN OF THE BEAR CLAN

At first, the Indians had no horses and when they hunted they traveled in canoes, carrying their wives and children.

One day they went up a stream and landed in a wide bottom or valley. They cut a trail through the woods with their knives. Then they sent the women and children to drive the bears towards this trail, and they took their stand near it so that they could see the bears when they ran across.

One of the little girls while driving the bears was lost in the woods. The people hunted everywhere, but could not find her. An old she-bear met her and said "Come and live with me." She took the little girl home with her and kept her four years, treating her as her child.

One day the old bear said to the little girl "The hunters are coming again with fire. They will kill me, but you must run to Deer Mountain. After the hunters have passed us a little shaggy dog will run to the place where we are standing and bark at us. Then all the other dogs will come. I will run away, but they will pursue me and kill me. You must escape and when the hunters have gone, you must return. You will find a coal of fire which the hunters have left. Take this fire and return to your people. They will receive you and you will become the mother of the Bear clan. Name your first son "Bear."

It happened as she had said. The hunters came and the old bear was killed. The little girl did as she was directed and escaped. She found the fire, started to return to her people, and on her arrival they gladly welcomed her and she became the mother of the Bear clan.

## HOW DAY AND NIGHT WERE DIVIDED

After the world was made, some of the animals wanted the day to last all the time. Others preferred that it be night all the time. They quarreled about this and could come to no agreement. After a while they decided to hold a meeting, and they asked Nokosi the Bear to preside.

Nokosi proposed that they vote to have night all the time, but Chew-thlock-chew, the Ground Squirrel, said: "I see that Wotko the Raccoon has rings on his tail divided equally, first a dark color then a light color, I think day and night ought to be divided like the rings on Wotko's tail."

The animals were surprised at the wisdom of Chew-thlock-chew. They voted for his plan and divided day and night like the dark and light rings on Wotko the Raccoon's tail, succeeding each other in regular order.

But Nokosi the Bear was so angry at Chew-thlock-chew for rejecting his advice that he thrust out a paw and scratched the Squirrel's back with his sharp claws. This is what caused the thirteen stripes on the backs of all his descendants, the Ground Squirrels.

## THE LANGUAGE OF ANIMALS

It is said long time ago, men and animals talked to one another and later they lost the ability to do so, but the great medicine men had the gift. One time an old woman was much frightened at the sight of a yearling Bull coming toward her bellowing and she tried to escape. The Bull reassured her, however, in language she could understand, saying "Don't be afraid of me. I am just enjoying myself singing." He added that she must not tell of her experience or she would die.

After that the old woman knew the language of the animals and listened to them as they talked together. She was blind in one eye, and once when she was shelling corn she heard the Chickens say to one another,

“Get around on her blind side and steal some of the corn.” She was so much tickled at this that she laughed out loud. Just then her husband, who was a very jealous man, came in and believed she must be thinking of some other man, so he said, “Why do you get so happy all by yourself?” Then she related her adventure with the Bull and told him what the Chickens had just been saying, but the moment she finished her story she fell over dead.

### **STORY OF THE BAT**

The birds challenged the four-footed animals to a great ball play. It was agreed that all creatures which had teeth should be on one side and all those which had feathers should go on the other side with the birds. The day was fixed and all the arrangements were made; the ground was prepared, the poles erected, and the balls conjured by the medicine men. When the animals came, all that had teeth went on one side and the birds on the other. At last, the Bat came. He went with the animals having teeth, but they said, “No, you have wings, you must go with the birds.” He went to the birds and they said, “No, you have teeth, you must go with the animals.” So they drove him away, saying “You are so little you could do no good.”

He went to the animals and begged that they would permit him to play with them. They finally said, “You are too small to help us, but as you have teeth we will let you remain on our side.”

The play began and it soon appeared that the birds were winning, as they could catch the ball in the air, where the four-footed animals could not reach it. The Crane was the best player. The animals were in despair, as none of them could fly. The little Bat now flew into the air and caught the ball as the Crane was flapping slowly along. Again and again, the Bat caught the ball, and he won the game for the four-footed animals. They agreed that though he was so small, he should always be classed with the animals having teeth.

### **HOW THE ALLIGATOR’S NOSE WAS BROKEN**

In the old days, said Fixico, the Seminole, all the animals determined upon a big ball play. The four-footed animals, with the Alligator for their chief, challenged the fowls, with the Eagle at their head, for a game. Sides were chosen, the poles put up. The ground measured off, and the medicine men conjured the balls.

The day came and they all met on the ground. The animals ran around their poles, all painted and dressed up, while the birds flew and screamed around their poles. At last the ball was tossed into the air and the game began. The Alligator caught the ball as it came down and, grasping it in his teeth, ran towards the poles. The birds in vain attempted to snatch it from him and at last, gave it up in utter despair. The Eagle, however, soared aloft and circled in the air till almost out of sight, and then like an arrow he swooped to the earth and struck the Alligator on the nose and broke it. The Alligator’s wife had run along with her old man and was shouting at the top of her voice: “Look at the little striped alligator’s daddy, just look at him,” while all the animals shouted in triumph.

But when the Eagle struck the Alligator all was changed. The Alligator's teeth opened on the ball and the Turkey poked his head in among the teeth, pulled out the ball and ran to the poles of the birds and threw the ball between them. The fowls won the game and ever since that time the Alligator has had a sunken place on his nose where the Eagle broke it.

### **HOW THE TERRAPIN'S BACK CAME TO BE IN CHECKS**

A woman was beating sofkey in a mortar out in her yard when she heard someone calling to her and making fun of her. She stopped and looked around, but saw no one. She began beating the corn again, and again heard the voice ridiculing her. She stopped and searched but in vain. Again she heard the voice, which seemed to come from under the wooden mortar, so she lifted the mortar and there found a Terrapin. As he was the guilty one, she took the pestle and beat him on the back until she broke his shell into little pieces and left him as dead. After she left, the Terrapin began to sing in a faint voice, "I come together. I come together. I come together. I come together." The pieces came together as he sang, but his back always looked scarred, and terrapins have ever since then had checkered backs.

### **THE MONSTER TURTLE**

One summer, seven men set out on a hunting expedition. It was hot and they became very thirsty before they reached their camping place. While they were traveling along, longing more and more for water all the time, they came upon a monster bull turtle. They said to one another, "This is a creature certain to make for water," so they followed him. After a while one of the hunters said, "Let us get on his back," and he proceeded to do so. Five of the others followed him, but the seventh said, "It might not be good to do that," so he walked along behind.

Presently, they came in sight of a big lake and when the turtle reached its shore the men on his back wanted to get off, but they found that they had stuck to him and could not get away. So they remained standing on the turtle with their guns by their sides and were carried into the lake. The man on foot watched the turtle until it got out into the middle of the lake, but there, it disappeared, leaving only numerous bubbles. He remained looking at the lake for some time and then returned home.

When the man who had escaped reached town, he told the people that in spite of his warning his companions had climbed upon the back of a turtle and had been carried by him straight into the water, so that he had to return to town without them. The men who had been carried away had numerous relatives, who quickly assembled at the square ground. There, they sang a song to the accompaniment of a kettle drum and a gourd rattle and then made one step toward the lake. They did the same thing that night and made another step toward the lake. In this way, they approached the lake a step at a time until they reached it, and on the edge of the water they continued their song with the same accompaniment. Finally, there was a disturbance in the middle of the waters and a snake came out. He approached them and laid his head very humbly in front of them, but they told him he was not the one they wanted and he went back. They continued their singing, and presently another snake came out. "You are not the one," they said, and he went back. By and by, a third snake came out, which they also sent back under water.

The fourth time, however, there was a great swashing of the water and out came the monster turtle, which also laid his head humbly before them. Then they debated what he might be good for. "He

might be good for some purpose,” they said, and they divided him up, entrails and all, leaving only the shell. The other parts they took to use as medicine and all returned with them to the town rejoicing. The medicine they got was used with the song of the waters as a kind of revenge.

### THE ORPHAN

An orphan was walking about shooting arrows. One day he came to the lower end of a creek where the water was deep and heard a noise like thunder. Looking closely, he discovered a Tie-snake and the Thunder-being fighting, and when they saw him, both asked him to help them. The Tie-snake spoke first, saying, “My friend, help me, and I will tell you what I have learned.” The boy was about to aim at his antagonist when the Thunder said, “Don’t shoot me. Kill the Tie-snake. There is a spot under his throat and it is there that his heart is. If you shoot him there you will kill him.” Upon hearing this, the boy aimed at the white spot and killed the Tie-snake. In this way he obtained all of the Thunder’s power, but the Thunder told him not to tell anyone where he was getting it.

Sometime after this, some people went bear hunting, taking the orphan with them. It was in winter when the bears were hibernating. Two camps were formed, one consisting of the boy’s uncles. While they were there, an owl was heard to hoot and the orphan said, “the hooting of that owl is the sign of a bear.” His uncles said they did not believe it. “He doesn’t know anything,” said one of them, but the boy declared, “I am right.” His brother-in-law believed him, so he said that they two would go out after it. They set out next morning and, sure enough, discovered a bear in a hole in the ground. They killed it and brought it back to camp. The Thunder gave this orphan such power that all he foretold came to pass. If he told the hunters a certain kind of game animal was in a tree, it was actually there and they got it.

Sometime later, war broke out. The orphan said he could fight without help from anyone, and they told him to go ahead by himself. “I will certainly do so,” he answered. The brother-in-law, who had confidence in him, also went along in the party. When they got close to the hostile camp, the boy went on ahead while the others sheltered themselves behind trees. Then, the orphan caused thunder and lightning all over the camp of the enemy. Some were killed and the rest ran about in helpless terror, so that the boy’s followers ran up and killed all of them.

Later, there was another war and those who know the orphan wanted him to lead. When they got close to the enemy, he told his companions to remain at some distance. Then, he went nearer and began to circle round a tree. As he did so lightning played all about and struck all over the camp of the enemy, killing everyone in it. The orphan was never seen afterwards, and so they thought that he went up in the midst of the thundering to the sky. Therefore, they claimed that the Thunder was an orphan child.

### THE WATER PEOPLE

A boy carrying his bow and arrows was walking about near the water, when two women standing close to the shore said, “Follow us.” Then he leaned his bow up against a tree and followed them, and presently those women said, “We are going down into the water. Go down in with us.” So saying, they started on, and just as they had said, they presently went down into the water, that boy with them.

When all got in, the bottom was as if there were no water there, and before they had gone far they came to where there were some old water people. Those old men said, "There is a chair. Sit down." The chair they thus indicated to him was a very big water turtle. "They spoke to me," the youth said "and I sat down and they said 'Do you want to lie down? There is a bed. You must lie down. The tree-tyer [i. e., tie-snake] there is the bed,'" they said to me.

Later they said, "You can go hunting if you want to." "I cannot go hunting because I have no gun." But the old men said, "Go about hunting, and when you fall down somewhere come back." After they had said this to me I set out, and while I was walking around, there was a rumbling noise and I fell down. I lay there for a while, and then came to my senses and returned to them.

When I got back the old men said, "What did you kill?" "I killed nothing" I answered, "but I fell down and was unconscious. After I had lain there for a while I came back, but I did not kill anything." "Let us go and look at the place where you fell," said those old men. Immediately we started, and when we got there, a very big thing of some sort was lying there dead. "It is just as we said," said they, and they brought it back, then they ate.

After I had been there for a while those old men said, "If you want to go, you may," and I said, "I will go." "You take him back," they said to someone, and just as I thought, "They are going to take me along", I lost consciousness.

Next I came to my senses standing close to the water, exactly where I had been when they took me off. "My bow is standing up against a tree," I thought, and when I got to the place, there it was just as I had thought, and I took it and started off. When I got to the place where my people lived, they were there. Then they said, "The one who has been lost for such a long time is back." "The old men compounded medicine for me and after a while I got well," said the boy. They used to tell it so

### THE ANIMAL HELPERS

A man on a considerable journey stopped to eat his lunch beside a creek. Then a big black ant came out and said, "Give me a piece of bread. Sometime I may help you out of trouble." So he gave it some bread. By and by he heard some talking in the water, and some small minnows came up and said the same thing. He gave the minnows some bread also. Then a red-headed woodpecker came and asked for bread, which he again gave to it.

After this the man went on again and came to a town. There was a lot of wheat at a certain place in that town, and the people told him that he must move it and put it in barrels by morning or they would kill him. So they tied him down on the wheat and went away. By and by up came the black ant which he had fed and asked him what the matter was. The man told him, and the ant immediately went away and brought back a multitude of ants, who soon had the barrels full. Next morning the people paid him for what he had done, but said that the next night he must dig up a certain tree, root and all, or they would kill him.

This time the woodpecker came to him and asked what the matter was. "I am in trouble," he said, and he related what had been imposed upon him. Then the woodpecker flew up and told the lightning and the lightning came down and tore the tree up, roots and all, so that in the morning the people paid him for that. They told him, however, that a horse loaded with gold had been drowned in a neighboring creek and that they would spare him if he found it by the following



morning. So they tied him again and laid him on the bank of the creek. By and by the little fishes he had fed came and said, "My friend, what is the matter with you?" He told them, and they went down and brought all the money to land, but they said that they could not get the horse for the snakes alone could do that, and they were only orderlies. They made a pillow of the sack of gold under his head. The town people paid him for all the work he had done, and he went home a rich man.

### LITTLE JACK

During the journey of the removal from Alabama to Indian Territory, family members have written stories about a little boy who they say was marked by special powers. Little Jack and his family along with several families traveled many days before they came to the Mississippi river. There at the crossing, he almost lost his life.

Little Jack had walked along with his family for many days. His shoes were worn out and he suffered from the cold and hunger. Someone offered him a pony to ride.

When they came to the Mississippi crossing, the current of the river was very strong but everyone had to cross somehow. Some of the people went across in boats; others had to cross on their horses. Little Jack wanted to go on the boat but he didn't want to leave his pony.

Little Jack stood on the bank with his pony. He watched the elders at the water's edge praying for the safety of their people. The leader's horses plunged into the water. Other riders followed. Huge logs ere careening down the river. Before his very eyes, men and horses were being disastrously carried downstream, pulled under and dragged to the bottom.

"Let's go!" the lieutenant shouted. Soon it was little Jack's turn to cross the river. Riders reaching the far bank turned to watch the little boy and his pony. Jack nudged his pony into the water. Soon everyone was watching little Jack cross the river. Midway, something knocked him off the horse. He was swallowing water and gulping for air. Though concerned for the boy, the water raged so violently that no one could help the boy now. Somehow he was able to grab the pony's tail. The pony struggled through the heavy current until he was able to stand and walk to shore. Jack! Men lifted the boy in their arms. He had made it! Those who watched the boy crossing the raging river remarked about seeing a tiny man sitting on the head of that pony. That was strange but the little man was also directing the pony across the raging river with little Jack in tow.

It took a while for the ones swept the farthest to return upstream. In gratitude, everyone gathered that evening on the west bank. The tradition was to change the name of a child or man when something important happened in his life. Names were never given for a lifetime, but earned by deeds. Jack's new name was "Jock-o-gee." Their mind says "Jack" but their tongue says "Jock," "Gee" means "little." This modest name would mark a small boy who overcame a mighty river. The name had a second unspoken but more powerful meaning. All knew of the "little people" but no one had seen them for at least four generations. Yet, it was clear that the mark of the Great Spirit and the "little people" were on Jock-O-Gee. No one dare to speak the river's name. "Gee" was as close as they dared to speak the full name of the "little people." The Knowledge and protection by the "little people" reside with peace-makers. From the day the river was crossed, "they" were with Jock-O-Gee, teaching him how to heal the sick people in the new land with new herbs and plants.

**STRONGEST MAN IN THE WORLD**

Dad's brother Nathan had the best stories about "little people." Uncle Nathan told this story about a good friend.

It had rained most of the night. The big thunder would shake the house, and then lightening flashed. Sleep came in fits to the Indian man and his wife. Finally, the storm ended and both slept again. As the sun raised its face the next morning, the skies were clear. The man was awakened by the birds' wake-up songs. He put on his clothes and went outdoors. Ah, there was an early morning rainbow in the sky. Yes, today would be a good day!

His wife was still asleep. Maybe there was time to take a little walk. As he walked along, it was easy to imagine some of the good things that she would cook for his breakfast, ham and biscuits and coffee. While distracted, he heard a small voice, "Ho, man, you want to come see our place?" He was startled by three tiny men standing in his path. "They are too small to hurt me," he thought. His curiosity overcame the thoughts of food. He followed the little men, walking through the underbrush in a south and westerly direction.

Soon, the little men reached a small stream. The leader gathered them near the water. Their little voices sounded like many bumble bees. He gestured and talked, then turned and looked directly at the man. The leader spoke to him, "The rains last night has made the river too wide and deep for us to cross. We need your help to go home." The water may have been chest deep to the man. He didn't want to wade cold water, much less carry three little men. Instead, the man began the search for a felled tree. He returned with a sapling chewed to the ground by a beaver. It was just the right size, about six inches across. He dragged it to the edge of the stream, walked his hands up the trunk to make it stand erect. It toppled over, crashing down across the stream. The little men jumped up and down and shouted and cheered, "You are the strongest man in the World!" The man smiled. Their encouragement made him feel good. Next, the little men took up the line formation and led him safely across the "bridge." They looked like ants crossing the log. Reaching the other side of the stream, they again cried, "You are the strongest man in the World!"

This procession reached a big hill covered with trees. The leader stopped. He pointed to a hole in the side of the hill. "Ho, man, you want to go inside our house?" Even before an answer came, the men popped through the hole. Dropping to his knees, the man squeezed his head and shoulders through then struggled in. Once inside, he sat up. A good hunter learns to use his nose, especially when it's dark. What he smelled was danger! There was a heavy pungent, musky odor in the room.

In the rear of the dark hole, he could see light shining through another opening. Slowly his eyes began to adjust to the darkness. Snake! Big snake! His eyes locked on the snake, coiled, with its head in the air. Its tongue was flicking in and out as it peered into the man's eyes! Then he was aware of hissing. He didn't dare to move his head, but looked sideways. The room was filled with hundreds of snakes of all sizes. There were red and yellow and green and black snakes. Most of the big snakes were coiled and hissing at the man. Smaller snakes were entwined about others like little children playing.

The man was so frightened at the terrible sight of the snakes. He regretted following these little people. Maybe he could escape. Then his eye was attracted by the leader of the little men, waving his hand, "Stop, don't be afraid. We keep them here so that people won't bother us. You can see

the guard snakes with rattle tails are quiet.” Then, he gestured across the room to the second hole. He turned and walked with others following. “Come with us,” they cried out. The little men walked through the hissing snakes as if they were nothing but a field of daisies waving in the breeze.

The man backed against the wall of the cave to keep his eye on the snakes in front of him. With his fingers touching the cold damp wall, he inched his way. Reaching the opening, he turned and leaped headfirst through the hole. He fell to the floor of the second cave. The little men were standing near, looking him in the eye. One at a time, they would stick out their tongue at the big man and hiss—like one of the snakes. All laughed. They were making fun of him. After watching them walk through the snakes, he admired their courage. Lying on the floor, he no longer felt like the “Strongest man in the World.” His heart was still pounding. He had much to learn about courage.

As he was prostrate on the floor, they turned to talk to themselves in their little voices. The leader walked up close to his face, “Ho, man, you hungry? Have you eaten today?” He answered, “Well, yes, I would eat. What do you eat, acorns and berries?” They were talking again to themselves. The leader turned to a little warrior. The underling drew himself to full attention as if to salute, then picked his bow and arrows and left the room. The other two sat cross-legged on the floor and started a small fire. The flames danced and the smoke wisped from the room. “They” seemed to waiting for the hunter to return.

It wasn’t long until the hunter came back with the “kill” slung over his tiny shoulder. He entered the cave and threw it to the floor before the cooks. It was big yellow grasshopper with a small arrow sticking from its side. He said, “Man, I have killed a big turkey for you to eat. It will taste so good.” The cooks began to roast the grasshopper. When it was done “just right,” the head cook tore off a leg and passed it to the man, “Have you ever eaten grasshopper, even *roasted* grasshopper?” It took great courage for the man to take a small bite from the roasted leg. He was quite surprised to learn its taste was like wild turkey. He was hungry. It surprised him that his stomach was so full even though this grasshopper was so small—to him. The little men patiently waited and watched the man eat his fill. Then, each one ate small portions. When finished, they wiped the last trace of turkey grease from their little hands on their little bare legs. They smacked their little lips and clapped their little hands, and smiled. Once the meal was done the chattering began again. The leader stepped forward, “Man, you stay with us for a few days. We want to show you more of our ways.” The man was captivated with their courage and skills and rather disappointed with his own. Leaving meant to cross that snake pit. He was pleased to stay with them.

Three days later, he returned home. His wife remembered the rainbow she saw the morning that he had left home. He left before breakfast and returned days later, happy and so peaceful. Not hungry and not talking about where he had been. She would not have questioned the children and she wouldn’t question him either. Breakfast was served and good luck seemed to follow them. The man was right. This had turned into a good day.

### THE STORY OF THE BIRDS

Now the young man had made a pact with the plants, and he was well satisfied, but he thought about this for a long time. He thought about the voices that he had heard. He said: “They are alive just as I am. They too get tired, just like I get tired. I was given the responsibility to take care of

these plants. They too will need a rest. How do I give these plants a rest?" He thought about it a long time and he remembered the birds in the sky. "All animals that fly, that has wings will be the carriers. They will have the chore of bringing the changing weather."

So he called them all together. They were gathered, and he gave them a choice. He didn't say certain ones would migrate south; they had the choice. "You will bring in the changing of weather in order that these plants may rest. As you begin to migrate south you will sing and let the trees and other plants throughout the land know that you are bringing a change of weather and to be prepared." Then the plants' leaves begin to fall. (So that's why when you hear these geese, these birds go by, they sing. They sing as they go to let the plants know that they are bringing in the changing weather.) The birds bring in the cold weather so that the trees will go dormant, giving the plants a chance to rest. All the sap, life-sustaining minerals and substances that they have inside them will have a chance to go back to the ground, to Mother Nature, to purify itself again and come back again come spring. Just like the medicine men who always clean themselves to keep strong, the plants are no different. The young man told the birds: "You will sing as you come back and the plants will hear you. They will awaken."

The migrating birds will be responsible for bringing in the cold, and they will bring back the warmth for the plants to grow again when it is time. (You notice that it is almost four months, November, December, January, February, that the plants are dormant.)

Then, he went a little further. He told the birds that didn't leave that they were being given a choice again, which birds will stay up at night. "I need the birds of the night to watch over the people throughout the night. You will be up all night." Then he gave the other birds the chore of being the ones to relieve these birds of the night. They would rise early in order that the others can rest and they will take over from there the rest of that day. That is why they are already up before the suns up; the birds are already doing their work. So the birds are up twenty-four hours. You've got some during the day, then the night birds take over.

Everything that we do is built around plants and animals. Everything that we do, the medicine way, it's all built around Mother Nature.

### **HOW THE MVSKOKE GOT THEIR MAIN MEDICINES**

Long ago, there was a great Holy Man who lived some distance from a tribal town of our people, it is said that the people did not know where he came from, nor did they inquire. This Holy Man, they say, was very powerful for he could make people well by touching them with his hands.

It was the custom of the Mvskoke people to meet the needs of their holy men. They would bring food, till or care for his garden, repair or build his house. Whatever he needed to be done, it was the duty of the people to take care of the Holy Man. This was done out of love and great respect.

One day as he was passing through the village he noticed a young boy. The Holy Man had seen that this boy was mistreated and was kind of an outcast. He also knew that this boy was the kind of person that could learn the sacred ways that the Holy Man must pass on. So the Old Man took the boy to teach him the medicine ways and the sacred ways.

The Holy Man said: "I have seen the purity of your heart and know you will keep the sacred ways of healing and not misuse the power which I have given you. For every healing chant shown to the

chosen one, he is also shown a destructive word. There will be others selected just as I have selected you. The time is coming when you too will select a sole replacement to carry on the sacred way for your people.”

The boy said: “Will the sole replacement be a boy or a girl?”

The Holy Man responded: “You know not if it is going to be a boy or girl, but the medicine people will know by a sign if the child can be selected.”

The Young Man asked: “Why do I have to look for a sign to select my replacement?”

The Holy Man said: “So you will know the future of that child, what that person will be like until he dies. You will be shown what you need to use so the child will learn and not forget.”

The boy made a comment: “With all the power that you have, will I have the same kind of power that enabled you to heal?”

The Holy Man said: “You will be able to do the things that are provided for you. In your dreams, you will be told the type of medicine and the chants and how to use them.”

The boy had in his mind that he would have the power the Holy Man had. That is why the Holy Man had to keep telling him, bringing him back to nature. The boy was not going to have his power. He would need the help of the plants and animals.

The Holy Man just slowly turned to him and answered him: “Be patient. All things the chosen people will ever need to know to carry on after I’m gone have been laid out for all the medicine people to follow. The chosen people will have a choice of selecting their helpers (carriers), but the helpers will be limited to what the chosen ones will be willing to give and share with them. Carriers will not be given the origin of the medicine way, will not see new cures in visions but must maintain a strict disciplined way of life for the good of their people.”

The Holy Man continued: “The medicine people will not have the power to heal by touch. Only I have been given that power. The medicine people will use what is shown in their dreams and visions and what has been put on this Mother Earth for them to use. All of their words will be built around three things which will always be here: human beings, animals, and plants. The sacred words are to have a sound of nature such as the sound of the wind or the cry of an animal.”

And he said: “I have shown and taught you all the things you will need to help your people now and I will show you the new cures of the future in time. Be prepared to receive my instructions at all times, just as all medicine people must follow more instructions in the future.”

The Holy Man noticed that the young man was curious why they always went to that certain place. The Holy Man said: “You have been wondering about this place for some time so I’ll tell you why we meet here. This is a sacred ground and negative energies cannot come within the boundary of the four sacred poles in the ground. All selected medicine people will also have a sacred ground. All negative things are blocked out within that square. Within this square you will be able to communicate with me. This is where you will purify the sacred words and strengthen them. This is where you will strengthen your body and your mind in order to be prepared to receive any instruction which I might give at any time.

“There will be a time when medicine people will find their mate and this is where they will unite. All the negative things will be left out. Within this square, there will be a circle, enough space for the two to step in and once both step in, they put their medicine down and close the circle. When they close the circle, everything they have done, good or bad, is locked in the circle. Everything else is locked out. Each has the power to remove the past from the other, just these two. Each one of them will have a feather. The woman will put one in the man’s hair and she will remove all the things of yesterday. The man does the same thing. In case there’s a time when this woman cannot bear a child for him to carry on, he would have the right to choose another mate, but once they have been in that circle that woman will live with him the rest of their lives.”

The Holy Man showed and taught him about the sacred ground. The young man was told to make one. So the Holy Man told the young man he was to go fast four days at his sacred ground and then come back to him and he would tell him more things. The boy told him: “I will get sacred words that you keep holy will take care of you. When you are sleepy, the words are your sleep. Whenever you are hungry, that is your bread. Whenever you are thirsty, that is your water. This is why you keep these words sacred and they will take care of you in time of need.”

The Holy Man said to the young man: “You know the purpose of a sacred ground. You purify the sacred word, strengthen your body and mind. Keep in mind, when problems arise and there seem to be no answers, come and communicate with me and get some of your answers to your problems. There is one more thing I must ask you to do. You must go and build you a sweat house as near as possible to running water. This will be a place only chosen medicine person will be able to use. You will be shown the things that are to be used and the sacred words to use in preparing for sweat. In this sweat house you will expel impurity from within in form of water. As you sit and sweat you must also sing the sacred song you have learned. As you sing, these sacred words will be washed and purified. When you have finished what you have been instructed to do, you will quickly go to the running water and wash off the impurity that has been expelled from within in form of water. I asked you to build a sweat as near as possible to running water for an important reason. You must never let the sweat on your body dry on you. The water will carry away all your impurity of your body.”

The time came when the Old Man said that he had to go away. And so, the time came when one last time they would sit and talk like they had done many times before. The Old Man recounted many things to the boy and what he must do. The Old Man was sitting where he always sat when he would tell the boy of good things, even funny things, but most of all, very serious sacred teachings. He said that if the boy was troubled at any time, he should remember that the Old Man would always be with him and to come back to where they sat and talked, and he would find the answer there and everything would be all right. This was very sad for the Old Man, but he was happy also for he had taught the boy and had someone to take his place.

Now it was necessary for him to leave, for his work was done. As their day together came to an end, the birds and the little things that make noises seemed to sound very lonesome. The Old Man bowed his head and began to cry and as he shed great tears, they fell to the ground and became a pool of tears. The Old Man held up his hand to the east and said: “This is the Blood of Life.” The blood fell to the ground and made a small pool. His life was on the ground in tears and blood; only a great love and sadness would make this happen. Now he must leave. They said goodbye and the Holy Man left. The boy wanted to go with him so he ran after him, but could not find him. He tried to find his tracks but the Old Man left none. He disappeared.

Days went by and the boy helped the people with his powers and shared many sacred ways with them. One day the people became ill with a very bad illness. The boy tried to heal them by touching them with his hands. This did not work. The people became increasingly ill. The boy became very troubled and remembered what the Holy Man had told him, so he returned to the place where the Old Man had lived and to the place where they had sat when the Old Man went away. The old place was still familiar, recalling old times. The boy felt the Old Man was still there. But there was something different about the place where they had sat, for there were two bushes in front of the place where the Old Man had sat. The boy immediately knew that these plants were sacred medicines, for one bush grew from the place where his blood had fallen to the ground.

When placed in water, the roots of the bush that grew from the blood made the water red in color. Water remained clear or white when the roots of the bush that grew from the tears were placed in it. The boy knew that the Old Man was with him as he had said, for in his spirit he knew he was to use these sacred plants. He prepared himself and the medicines. He then took the medicines and cured the people of the great illness. To this very day these medicines remain sacred and are used by the Mvskoke people.

The name by which the Holy Man was called was because he was a great Holy Man and passed through the tribal towns of the people and lived a distance from them. His name was Mekko-hoyvnecv or “King passing through.” The bush or the roots that grew from his blood is called by the same name today and is commonly known to the Mvskoke people as “red root.”

The sacred bush and its roots that grew from the Holy Man’s tears is called Heles-hvtke or “white medicine.” This medicine is known to non-Indians as American ginseng.

### **THE STORY OF THE GATHERING**

This young man had a dream. In this dream he was told that there would be a big gathering, that he would be surrounded by many, and he was told that he would be given instructions that he would follow. The dream did not mention whether the many would be men. The young man thought it would be people.

When he woke up the next morning, he thought it was very strange dream that he had had. And he said: “Where will all these people come from? Where will the gathering take place and why are they going to gather?” Those are things that he was thinking about at that time. It was just a dream.

The time came for him to do his annual fast and sweat. When he got to his sacred ground, there was something that wasn’t just right. He sensed that there was something strange about that day. He sat down and he was hearing all the little night creatures, the birds and crickets. He was hearing these little night creatures during the day. That’s why he said: “This is strange, very strange.” Then he looked up and he saw the birds flying over, circling. That was unusual for some of the birds were too far from the water. And he thought about that a while. He said: “That’s very strange, the birds circling and these little night creatures chirping and singing during the day.”

Then it hit him. “This is the day that I had the dream about that there would be a gathering.” Then he looked up to the sky and told the Creator: “Now I know that this is the day that the gathering is to take place. I am ready for the instructions and I will obey.” When the sun was getting high, he was looking for the people but he didn’t see anybody. Then the sun was getting low and he was still thinking of people because he looked around and said: “Where are all these people? They

should be getting here.” He didn’t know where they were to come from. Then he thought maybe he was wrong. Maybe it was not the day of the gathering. Then the breeze in his face and breeze that was coming through the trees; it was almost as if it were singing. There was almost a song in the wind, in the breeze. Then he said: “It’s not people the dream was talking about.” He said: “All of these things that are around me, the plants and all, these are the things the dream was telling me when it said that I would be surrounded by many.” And then he repeated: “Whatever instruction is to be given, I am ready.”

All the medicine people that go to a sacred ground, they use medicine there and then they settle down. He had already used his medicine so he was ready for anything; he was ready for any instructions to be given and he would obey. Well, that’s when he heard the voice. He knew the voice was the trees, the plants, whispering to him. “You can go to a place a lot faster than we can. We are permanent. But in time, when you need us, you will also find us there. We’ll also be there.” (That is why the plants that were here before, next time you see the plants they’re in another place. If you ever need them the plants will begin to grow there too.) And there was a pact made then.

The whisper he heard said: “You have the power. You were given the power to heal with sacred words. We also have been given the power to heal. We are equal; we have the same power you have. The medicine people and the plants working together, we will be able to cure people. We will make a pact with you.” The young man answered that he would accept the pact. The voice gave him the words to a chant. “These words you will use and we will listen to you. These words will be used before you remove us from this mother Earth. You meet us halfway and we will meet you halfway. These are the sacred words you will say to us and when you use them, we will listen to what you say and then you have the power to remove us from this Mother Earth.” With that permission, the plant was saying that we will meet you halfway and we will listen.

And the young man answered; “I will follow your instructions. I will use these sacred words before I ever remove you from this Mother Earth. I too will meet you halfway and we will work together to cure our people.”

And so the plants answered back and said: “From this day on, all the medicine people will be known as the keepers of the plants.”

So this is how it is going to be. All the medicine people will be keepers of the plants. The actual words of the chant that they use before removing plants were given to that man. Most of the time medicine people are shown what to do through vision, but this time the plants said this. This is the only time a plant gave instructions to a human being.

It started when that Holy Man made a selection. He taught the boy about the plants. He was really prophesying about a lot of things. The prophecy was that the plants were going to be used: You will be shown what plants to use in your visions. You will watch the tree from seeding to maturity and then it will get old and die right before your eyes. You will also be shown the sickness, the symptoms of particular sicknesses. These will be the plants that you will use. Then you will be given the sacred words to use for each sickness. In other words, you will be shown the plants, the symptoms, and the chants at the last.

In books, it always says this was learned by trial and error. There was no trial and error for the old people. They already knew exactly what they were going to use.



# Muscogee Quotes

**Former Principal Chief Roley Canard –**

“There are no cuss words in any of the Indian languages. Some educated Indians of late are becoming very proficient in the use of the white man’s cuss words. What a pity.”

**Former Principal Chief Pleasant Porter –**

“My nation is about to disappear.”

**Former Principal Chief Claude Cox –**

“In any political office you expect opposition. This is healthy for any government.”

**William Weatherford, aka Red Eagle, leader of the Red Stick Warriors –**

“I am in your power: do with me what you please...If I had an army, I yet would fight, and contend to the last.” Surrendering after the Battle of Horseshoe Bend.

**Menawa, Redstick Warrior/Okfuskee tribal town headman –**

“I have always found you true to me, but great as my regard for you is... when I cross the great river, my desire is that I may never again see the face of a white man.” Last words to his white friend before he was removed from Alabama to Indian Territory.

“I desire peace, but would not turn my back on danger.”

**Opothleyahola (*oh-bith-lee ya-ho-la*) –**

“I have told you your fate if you sign that paper. I once more say, beware.” To William McIntosh regarding the treaty to sell Creek land.

“Now the wolf has come, men who are strangers tread our soil, our children are frightened and the mothers cannot sleep for fear.” Letter to President Lincoln asking for protection during the Civil War.

**Ifa Hadjo, chief of Tuckabatchee, speaker of the nation –**

“This custom of ours is a bad one, blood for blood; but I do not believe it came from E-sau-ge-tuh E-mis-see (*he-saw-key-duh e-me-see, Master of Breath*), but proceeded from ourselves.” His opinion on the death penalty.

**Unknown Tuckabatchee mekko –**

“Young people are not so orderly and obedient to the old people now as they used to be in the old nation. When we tell them to do anything, they seem to stop and think about it. Formerly, they always went at once and did as they were told; that is before they came to this country.” Reflecting on the behavior of young Creeks before the removal.

**Chitto Harjo, traditionalist Creek leader –**

“...I stood here first and Columbus first discovered me.”

“After all, we are all one blood; we have the one God and we live in the same land.”

**Alexander Posey, poet –**

“Experience never intends her lessons to be forgotten. Her precepts come like the white men into the Indian country – to stay.”

**Anonymous Creek Indian, refusing to accept allotment in 1906 –**

“The end of the Indian is near... a grave is all the allotment that I am entitled to, and all that God intended that I should have. It is enough.”

**Charles Gibson, writer in the Indian Journal –**

“The Indian is being hurried into civilization and also to his doom.”

“One hundred years from this the 1<sup>st</sup> day of January, 1902, an Indian of North America will be the grandest curiosity of the age.”

**Thomas Gilcrease, oilman, art collector, philanthropist –**

“Every man must leave a track and it might as well be a good one.”

**Phillip Deere, medicine man/activist –**

“There is no failure in life until you tried to be somebody else.”

**David Lewis Jr, tribal medicine man –**

“You and I live in two different worlds and I can come into your world but you can’t come into mine.” Speaking to a non-Indian author.

**Sam Proctor, traditional/cultural leader –**

“The creator...I give him all the credit.”

“I imagine the custom, the tradition, and way we look.” On what he loves about being a Muscogee Creek Indian.

“If I’m going to be an example for somebody, I want it to be good.”

**Joan Hill, artist –**

“If you can’t accept change, you’re doomed.”

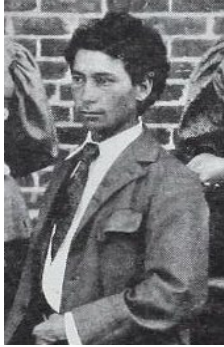
Her opinion on how to balance old Indian ways and the new modern ways.

**Eli Grayson, activist/historian –**

“The best people to celebrate Indigenous Day is Indigenous people, let them create it.”

His thoughts about not having an official U.S. Native American Day holiday.

# **Muscogee Authors & Artisans**

**ALEXANDER POSEY (1873-1908)**

**Early Life** – Alexander Posey was born on August 3, 1873, near Eufaula, Oklahoma. He was the oldest of twelve children. His parents were Lewis H. Posey, who was Scots-Irish, and Nancy Phillips Posey (her Creek name is Pohas Harjo), who was full-blood Creek. Posey and his siblings were born into his mother’s Wind clan of the tribal town of Tuskegee. They took their status from her, and property and hereditary positions were passed through her line. Although Posey’s father was born to European-American parents, he called himself Creek. Lewis H. Posey was orphaned at an early age and raised in the Creek Nation, he spoke the Muscogee language fluently. He was made a member of the Broken Arrow tribal town. Young Alexander and his siblings spoke Muscogee as their first language. When Alexander Posey was fourteen, his father only let him speak English and punished him if he spoke in his native language. From that time, Posey received a formal education, he had a private tutor and attended public school.

**Career** – Posey went to college at age sixteen, including three years at Bacone Indian University in Muskogee where he studied writing. He read books by John Burroughs and Henry David Thoreau, who inspired him to write about his childhood. Posey worked at the *Indian Journal*, where he published poems. In 1895, he became a member of the Creek National Council. He was also the director of the Okmulgee Creek Orphanage, superintendent of the school at Wetumka Mission and served as interpreter for the Dawes Commission. In 1902, Posey bought the *Eufaula Indian Journal* and served as editor, he received national recognition for founding the first Indian-published daily newspaper.

Posey created a fictional person by the name of Fus Fixico, Creek for “Heartless Bird”. The Fus Fixico letters were published in the *Eufaula Indian Journal*. Fus Fixico was a full blood Creek traditionalist. He wrote letters about his everyday life or detailed accounts that he had heard from the fictional Creek medicine man Hotgun. These stories are written in the Creek language. The Fus Fixico letters talked about Creek Nation, Indian Territory and United States politics. This was a time of big political change. The Curtis Act of 1898 destroyed tribes, paving the way for Indian Territory to become the state of Oklahoma. His Fus Fixico letters poked fun of the statehood debate. Various U.S. newspapers proposed printing the Fus Fixico letters nationwide, but Posey refused. His readers were in Indian Territory, and he didn’t believe a non-native audience would understand the humor.

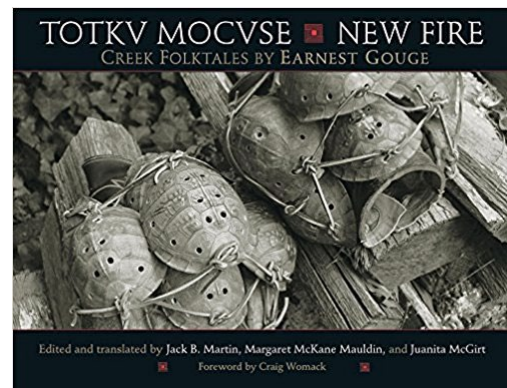
Alexander Posey and a friend tried to cross the North Canadian River on April 28, 1908. He drowned in the flooded river at the age of 34. He is buried at the Greenhill Cemetery in Muskogee, OK.

**EARNEST GOUGE (ca. 1865-1955)**

Earnest Gouge and his younger brother Jack (more commonly known as Cake Rakko [jaw-key thock-go] or Big Jack) were full-blood Creeks born in Indian Territory around the close of the U.S. Civil War. According to Felix Gouge, Earnest and Jack were abandoned or orphaned as children and taken to Arbeka tribal town in the Creek Nation, Indian Territory. Thomas Red, a preacher at Hillabee Baptist Church, adopted the boys and raised them as his own. Though the boys were raised in the church, they began going to ceremonial grounds as soon as they were old enough.

Earnest and Jack married two sisters named Nicey and Lucinda who were residents of Hanna and members of Hillabee Canadian tribal town. Earnest and Nicey had four sons. According to family history, Earnest and Jack were nephews of the famous Opothleyahola (o-bith-lee-yah-ho-la) (“Old Gouge”), leader of the northern faction of Creeks during the Civil War.

Earnest and Jack were interested in seeing that the United States lived up to the treaty signed by their uncle. This interest led them to become involved in a group known as the Four Mothers (Ecke Ostat [itch-key os-dod]), an early intertribal organization of Creeks, Cherokees, Choctaws, and Chickasaws that continued into the 1940s. Through collections raised by the Four Mothers, Earnest, Jack, and an interpreter traveled to Washington, D.C. The Creek representatives were given medallions, while the Cherokee representatives were given beaded belts. The medallions and belts had images of clasped hands on them and were thought to serve as keys to the capital. In 1915, Earnest Gouge was living on his allotment near Hanna, with a small house and barn close to his church (Hillabee Baptist) and tribal town (Hillabee Canadian). Felix Gouge remembers that his grandfather would tell stories while driving or after dinner. In the winters, he would fill his stone fireplace with green wood to last the night and sit with his back to the heat while others gathered before him. As an older man he turned to preaching, though he continued to take medicine at his ceremonial ground. A favorite activity was fish-kills, in which fish were drugged and shot with arrows. Earnest Gouge died at about the age of ninety, after his younger brother Jack. He was hit by a car while riding a horse, finally succumbing to his injuries on September 4, 1955. To the best of our knowledge, these are the only writings he left, though he also dictated three Creek texts about ball-games and his tribal town for Mary R. Haas in 1939. He is buried facing his ceremonial ground.



**LOUIS “LITTLE COON” OLIVER (1904-1991)**

Louis Oliver was born in Coweta, Indian Territory, and given his name by a drunken agent of the federal government. His mother opposed allotment and withheld her son's name because the agent wanted a part of the boy's land allotment for himself. Angry because his plans were obstructed, the agent declared if the mother remained un-cooperative, he would call the boy Louis Oliver and still get the land. Little Coon (Wotkoce) is Oliver's Creek name. He became an orphan at infancy and was raised by his mother's family in Okfuskee County. He credits the women for his connection with the invisible world and the men for his "wilderness education."

Oliver went to Euchee Boarding School through fifth grade. On his own, he finished high school and developed a fascination with writers and began to write poetry. After graduation, he put aside any thoughts of serious writing and dabbled in it as a hobby. That changed in the early 1980's when he attended a writer's workshop for beginners taught by American Indian writers. The advice he received encouraged him to write about his heritage and Creek history. Approximately two years after he attended the workshop, his writings appeared in a number of publications, like *The Horned Snake* and *Caught in a Willow Net*. His third work, *Estiyut Omayat: Creek Writings*, was printed in limited edition and his final work, *Chasers of the Sun: Creek Indian Thoughts*, contains some of his old material with new additional texts. Oliver's poetry has been included in published collections many times and translated into Dutch. Before his death, he received the first Alexander Posey Literary Award from the Este Mvskoke Arts Council and for Oklahoma Poets Day, the University of Oklahoma made him Poet of Honor.

**MARCELLUS “BEAR HEART” WILLIAMS (1918-2008)**

Muscogee Creek citizen Marcellus Williams was born in Okemah, OK, his father was of the Bear Clan and his mother of the Wind Clan. His great grandmother died on the Trail of Tears. One of the last traditionally trained "medicine persons," Bear Heart, spoke in 13 native languages, Sun Danced with both the Northern and Southern Cheyenne people, was also an American Baptist Minister and held an honorary PhD in humanities. In 1938, Bear Heart won the title of World Fancy Dance Champion at Anadarko, OK, later he performed at Madison Square Garden. After college and theology school, he went into the Army, where he served as an aerial map maker. He served for 7 years as a member of the advisory board for the Institute of Public Health - Native American and Alaskan Natives at Johns Hopkin's School of Medicine. Significant to Bear Heart are the lives he has touched. He prayed with the firefighters at Ground Zero in New York City in November 2001, gave advice to rescue workers and their families after the Oklahoma City tragedy and once met with President Truman. He is the author of *The Wind Is My Mother*, which is now published in 14 languages.

**JEAN CHAUDHURI (1937-1997)**

Ella Jean (Hill) Chaudhuri or Hiyvtke (Early Dawn) was born in Okfuskee County on her family's land allotment. She was a full-blood Creek and of the Bear clan. Rural life was not easy and she did not finish high school, but her love of knowledge drove her to be self-educated. She learned all she could about Creek history, ceremonies, language and culture from her grandfather. Creek was her first language, Cherokee her second and English her third and in the tradition of Creek orators, she mastered the art of public speaking. She became an organizer, storyteller, playwright, author and advocate for Native and under-privileged communities.

In Arizona, she was in charge of the Tuscon Indian Center. The center provided services such as tutoring, employment assistance and alcoholism counseling for Native Americans. She also founded the first off-reservation Indian Health clinic, participated in voting right marches and counseled Native Americans in prisons. During the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christopher Columbus, she wrote and produced a musical, *Indians Discover Christopher Columbus*, a comedy about his mis-adventures and the hospitality of the American Indian. Jean co-authored the book *A Sacred Path: the way of the Muscogee Creeks*. After her death, she was awarded the Outstanding Native American Leader Award, the Dr. Martin Luther King Living the Dream Award and inducted into the Arizona Women's Hall of Fame.

**EDDIE CHUCULATE**

Eddie Chuculate is enrolled with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and of Cherokee descent from Claremore, Oklahoma, but grew up in Muskogee. He worked as a newspaper sports writer and a copy editor before earning a degree in creative writing from the Institute of American Indian Arts. He also held the prestigious 2-year Walter Stegner Fellowship in creative writing at Stanford University. In 2010, he was admitted to the Iowa Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa, where he graduated with a master's degree in 2013. In 2010, *World Literature Today* featured Chuculate as the journal's "Emerging Author."

He wrote *Voices at Dawn: New Work from the Institute of American Indian Arts 1995-1996* and his stories, *Yoyo* and *Galveston Bay, 1826* won awards. His first book, *Cheyenne Madonna*, was published in 2012. It is about a young Creek/Cherokee man who writes home to his father as he wanders the Southwest pursuing a sculpting career while battling alcohol. The stories also explore history, myth, interracial relationships, racism and father-son relationships.

Chuculate has worked at *The Tulsa World*, *The Fort Worth Star-Telegram* and *The Denver Post*. He is an editor for the *Trillium Literary Journal*. Chuculate is on the faculty of Lighthouse Writers Workshop in Denver, CO.



**JEROME TIGER (1941-1967)**

A full-blood Creek-Seminole painter born in Tahlequah, Jerome Tiger attended public schools in Eufaula and Muskogee. He grew up on the campgrounds of his grandfather's Indian Baptist church near Eufaula. His maternal grandfather, Coleman Lewis, was a Baptist Missionary and would take young Jerome on his travels to churches teaching him the history of Creek people in his native Creek language. At school he would get into trouble for drawing in textbooks as a boy and in junior high he passed his Oklahoma History class when he painted a mural instead of doing a report.

The mural depicted a cowboy marrying an Indian woman to symbolize Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory becoming one state. While in high school, he and some friends were painting a scene on the back of a barn, after a few days, the owner caught them and let them continue because he liked what he saw. He eventually dropped out of high school at sixteen and joined the U.S. Navy from 1958 to 1960. Finding employment as a laborer and sometimes as a prizefighter, becoming the state's Middle Weight champion, he continued to draw and paint in his spare time.

Encouraged by a friend, Tiger submitted several paintings in 1962 to the American Indian Artists Annual at Philbrook Art Museum in Tulsa. Recognition of his talent was immediate. Over the next five years he produced a large body of work that brought critical acclaim and a number of honors, including the All-American Indian Days Grand Award in Sheridan, Wyoming and first prize in the National Exhibition of American Indian Art held in Oakland, California. In 1966, Tiger had a solo exhibition at Philbrook, a show that proved to be a sell-out with the public. The museum curator asked the artist to replace items that had been sold on opening night. He is said to have replaced many of them twice before the show closed.

Tiger was twenty-six years old when on August 13, 1967 he died as the result of an accident with a handgun. Much of Jerome Tiger's work was sold as quickly as he produced it and remains in private hands. Publicly he is represented in the collections of the Philbrook and Gilcrease museums in Tulsa, the Five Civilized Tribes Museum in Muskogee, Wolaroc Museum near Bartlesville, the Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fe, and the Museum of the American Indian and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior, in Washington, D.C.

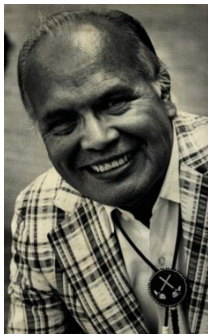
In remembrances of Tiger, he was described as a bright meteor that flashed across the art world for five short years and how he broke from the traditional style of "Indian Art". When Tiger started his career, the Flatstyle technique was the rule for artists, now Indian artists are free to paint however they please thanks to Jerome Tiger.



**FRED BEAVER (1911 - 1980)**

Fred Beaver grew up in Eufaula. His Creek name is Ekalane (Brown Head). He is the son of Willie Beaver and Annie Johnson and a descendent of Itshaus Micco, who was chief of Okfuskee tribal town in Alabama. He began drawing before he started school and at the age of sixteen, he had lost all of his family members through death, with the exception of one sister. Alone, but with the help of his tribe, he went on to gain an education. He would excel in sports and with his baritone voice, was a soloist in the glee club and once sang on a nationally broadcast radio program. He attended college on a football scholarship but only lasted a few weeks before he quit because it didn't appeal to him. In 1932, he graduated from Haskell Institute and started working for the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs office as a clerk and interpreter.

During WWII he served in the Air Force in North Africa, Sicily, Corsica, Sardinia and Italy. After the war, he returned to his job and then resigned to work full time as a painter in 1960. He has painted murals in public buildings and churches in much of eastern Oklahoma. His most prized award is the Waite Phillips Outstanding Indian Artist Trophy from the Philbrook Museum of Art. This silver and diamond studded statue was given for excellence in art and the active involvement in promoting Indian art. His paintings are in museum collections in the United States, Canada, England, France, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Germany, and Mexico. His awards are numerous, including Outstanding Indian of the Year, Outstanding Oklahoman of the Year, Five Civilized Tribes Museum master artist and the McIntosh County Historical Society distinguished citizen award. The Oklahoma Republican Committee commissioned Beaver to create artwork to be gifted to President Eisenhower and the Franklin Mint commissioned three medallions for the bicentennial celebration in 1976.

**SOLOMON MCCOMBS (1913-1980)**

Solomon McCombs was born on a farm west of Eufaula. He attended high school and junior college at Bacone College where he studied Indian painting under Acee Blue Eagle, a relative of his. He worked as a muralist for the U.S. Treasury Section of Fine Arts and as an illustrator and designer for the U.S. Department of State from 1956 to 1973 in the audio-visual services division. His paintings and murals often embraced the Flatstyle of painting with outlined shapes and natural colors. In 1954, McCombs made an extensive tour through the Near East and Africa, exhibiting his paintings and explaining American Indian contributions to our national development and culture. He was the first American Indian goodwill art ambassador.

In 1941, his work was in an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City and he illustrated a book in the 1940s. He won the Grand Award at the Five Civilized Tribes Museum in 1968 and 1972, and won the Masters division in the 1975 competition show. His works

are included in private collections and in museum collections throughout this country and Great Britain. His paintings also adorn the American Embassy buildings in Spain and Brazil and the home of Senator Robert F. Kennedy. In 1956, his work was chosen from the fifty-eight designs submitted to the Five Civilized Tribes Museum as their official seal. He was also on the Board of Directors of the American Indian Bank in Washington, D.C. He retired from the U.S. State Department in 1973 and in 1978 was elected as Second Chief of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation.



### JOAN HILL (1930-2020)



Joan Hill is one of the most awarded Native American woman artists with more than 290 awards from countries around the world. Her awards include a commemorative medal from Great Britain, the Oscar d'Italia from Italy, and the Waite Phillips Outstanding Indian Artists Trophy from the Philbrook Museum of Art. In 1974, Joan was given the title “Master Artist” by the Five Civilized Tribes Museum in Muskogee. In 2000, she was the “Honored One” of the Red Earth Festival in Oklahoma City. Over 110 of her works are in permanent collections, including the Sequoyah National Research Center in Little Rock, Arkansas, the U.S. Department of Interior Museums of the Indian Arts and Crafts.

She was born and a life-long resident of Muskogee, OK and is a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation with Cherokee ancestry. She is a descendent of a family prominent in the history of Indian Territory. She was named Che-se-quah, Creek for “Redbird,” after her great-grandfather, Redbird Harris, who was a full brother to C.J. Harris, Chief of the Cherokee tribe from 1891 to 1895. Her paternal grandfather, G.W. Hill, was Chief of the Creek tribe from 1922 to 1928.

Her dad would buy her paint and paper as a child so she wouldn't draw on the walls. He also had an interest in drawing and her mother was an accomplished piano player. After high school, she studied art at Bacone College and became friends with artist Dick West. He was the person that suggested she do Indian art and encouraged her to enter her paintings in competitions. After becoming an accomplished artist, colleges like Santa Fe Institute of Art, University of Maryland, Kentucky University, Haskell University and Bacone College offered her jobs in their art or Native Studies program. She did not accept any offers. With a degree in education, she taught art in the Tulsa Public School system for four years before becoming a full-time artist.



**DANA TIGER**

Dana Tiger is an award winning, nationally acclaimed artist. She is a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and is also of Seminole and Cherokee descent. Born in 1961 and raised in Muskogee, Dana was five years old when her father, legendary artist Jerome Tiger, passed away. She turned to his art as a way to know him and during her high school and college years won awards for her paintings. In 1985, she became a full-time painter and is best known for her watercolors and acrylic paintings depicting the strength and determination of Native American women.

Dana's paintings now hang in galleries, universities, Native American institutions and state buildings nationwide. She has won numerous awards and art competitions including the Five Tribes Masters Art Show, the Cherokee National Holiday Art Competition and the Creek Nation Artist of the Year Award. Dana was inducted into the Oklahoma Women's Hall of Fame in 2001.

While enjoying triumphs, Dana has also endured tragedies beginning with the death of her father and brother, family illness and her own diagnosis with Parkinson's disease in 1999. Life was horrible for a while but through sheer determination she continued painting and with medical treatment started feeling better than ever and it showed in her paintings. Dana is outspoken in her advocacy for the rights of women and minorities, especially Native Americans. She has donated paintings for poster projects to a number of campaigns including the AIDS Coalition for Indian Outreach, The American Cancer Society and the American Indian College Fund. In 2002, Dana founded the non-profit Legacy Cultural Learning Community, dedicated to nurturing Native youth by the celebration and sharing of tribal languages and culture through the arts.

**RICHARD WHITMAN**

Richard Ray Whitman is a member of the Yuchi tribe and enrolled with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. He grew up in Gypsy, Oklahoma, where he learned Yuchi as his first language. He was raised by his grandmother and attended high school in Bristow. While in the principal's office, he saw a Life Magazine and on the cover was a photo of an Indian with the caption "Return of the Red Man". He read the article that included a section about an art school in Santa Fe and he knew he found his direction in life, as an artist. His activism started when he was at college in New Mexico and his brother was fighting in the Vietnam War. At that time, students across America were protesting the war and Richard began to consider the role of an artist as activist, speaking out through his artwork. He has campaigned for civil rights and treaty rights and participated in the 1973 occupation at Wounded Knee, South Dakota. To this day, his activism includes opposing oil pipeline development on tribal land that contribute to water issues and climate change and he brings awareness to missing & murdered indigenous women.

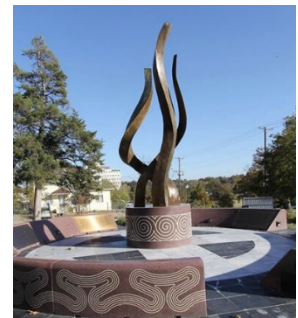
Richard has enjoyed a long career as a multi-media artist with an associate degree from the Institute of American Indian Arts at Santa Fe, studies at the California Institute of the Arts and the Oklahoma School of Photography. His work has been shown at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian and La Biennale di Venezia in Italy. His first solo exhibition was held in 2000 at Walter Philips Gallery in Banff, Alberta, Canada. Richard's artwork has been published in magazines and featured in books including the Oxford University Press college textbook on native North American art. He has also worked as an Artist in Residence with the Oklahoma Arts Council, teaching art in public and alternative schools. He taught art through the Indian Youth Council and the youth at risk program at the Native American Center in Oklahoma City, and has worked with youthful offenders, teaching art as rehabilitative therapy as a visiting artist in several state corrections institutions. He has appeared in numerous feature films and documentaries. Richard won a Best Supporting Actor Award at the American Indian Film Festival for one of his roles. In 1995, Richard and his brother, poet Joe Dale Tate Nevaquaya, worked with French filmmaker Pierre Lobstein in the short film *The Grand Circle* about two brothers and a friend on a trip through Oklahoma. The 12-minute video uses imagery and text in an abstract and experimental vision of their journey. Whitman has also read poetry in the video *Mazerunner; The Life and Art of T.C. Cannon* directed by Phillip Albert. It was screened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and presented on the Bravo Channel and the Independent Film Channel. While Whitman is a critically acclaimed painter, actor and filmmaker, his landmark *Street Chiefs* project, a 1970s and 80s photo series of Oklahoma City's homeless Indian men, might be his greatest legacy. Filmmaker Sterlin Harjo has acknowledged that the series partially inspired his 2015 film *Mekko*, about the murders of homeless Native Americans in Tulsa.



## DAN BROOK



Creek artist Dan Brook was born in the Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma. Memories of his father, a second-generation rancher and Indian cowboy, are preserved in Brook's mind and have provided a rich tapestry of images, culture and history for the artist to draw upon. The isolation of rural ranch life provided long hours of sketching, which continues to this day, in sessions in his studio. The artist attended Baylor University on a football scholarship. Upon graduation, Brook studied art in the old-world tradition of apprenticeship, with renowned portrait sculptor, Dr. B.N. Walker. It was then that the artist's God-given talents were combined with the techniques of the old masters. It seems only fitting that one of Brook's early commissions was a portrait of the Muscogee (Creek) Nations' chief, Claude A. Cox. Twenty-five years later, Brook continues his exploration of sculpture, recently completing the Trail of Tears monument in Tulsa, Oklahoma. His work has been collected in public and private sectors in the United States. His reputation has now crossed the ocean, as he has been commissioned to create works in the Middle East and Europe. Dan Brook has successfully completed 18 large scale relief sculptures for Texas Christian University's new football stadium. The artist lives and works in Dallas, Texas.



**MARY SMITH**

Mary Edwards Smith was born in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. She has a rich family history of Creek leaders with roots in Tuckabatchee (Alabama). She is known for her beautiful river cane weaving. In addition to basketry, Mary's talents lie in pottery, beading, leather work, feather work, textiles (finger weaving and twinning), and stained glass. She graciously shares her knowledge with others through demonstrations and teaching. Mary was the artist-in-residence at Moundville Archaeological Park during the Jones Museum renovation in 2009. She has received numerous awards and recognition in these art forms. Her most recent accomplishments are; 2016 Mvskoke Women's Leadership Award – Artist of the Year and the 2016 Council House Art Market – Best Mvskoke Artist. In 2005, she revived the double false braid rim technique. This rimming method is unique to Creek baskets and had not been done for 100-150 years. In 2009, Mary was elected to the Creek Council House Board of Trustees. She was chosen by the Muscogee (Creek) Nation to exhibit her art at the National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C., in 2012 and 2014.

**KENNETH JOHNSON**

Kenneth Johnson is a contemporary Native American designer and accomplished metalsmith working in copper, silver, gold, platinum and palladium. His career spans over two decades and is recognized for bold combinations of stampwork and engraving often incorporating coins and bead set gemstones. Signature techniques include original dates of coins visible in the designs, Seminole patchwork patterns, rocker arm engraving and Southeast style concentric line designs.

Johnson was raised in Oklahoma and currently resides with his wife and 2 children in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He is the son of Rowena Johnson and grandson of the late Lucinda Walking stick/Bruner of Oakhurst, Oklahoma. He attended Seneca Indian School, Sequoyah High School and the University of Oklahoma, where he studied mechanical engineering.

He began creating jewelry in 1988, when he apprenticed with Choctaw metalsmith Johnson Bobb, and has independently refined his skills to the level of expertise that he is known for today. He teamed up with Cochiti Pueblo designer Virgil Ortiz to create the unisex jewelry design RAIN. He has worked with designer Tom Ford, and he has done commissioned pieces for chiefs of several tribes as well as people like actress Jennifer Tilly and Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. He also designed the silver crowns for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation royalty.



**JIMMY ANDERSON**

Jimmy Anderson formed the native singing quartet, The Osceola Four, while attending Haskell University. His brother Richard Anderson, Mitchell Beaver and J.B. Dreadfulwater were the other members of the group. They would sing popular songs of the 1950's and spirituals as an evangelical team. They appeared on Oklahoma television shows like the Sooner Shindig and recorded a song on a Spike Jones Orchestra album. The group disbanded for a short time while one of the members was in the armed service. Plans to regroup were interrupted when one of the members was killed in a traffic accident. Jimmy later attended seminary school after graduating from the University of Oklahoma. He did missionary work for 34 years all over the world, touring with the remaining group, before retiring in the 1990's and becoming a preacher.

Jimmy grew up in Holdenville in the 1930's. When he was 13 years old, he went to the Yuchi Boarding School during WWII while his mother and aunt worked at a defense plant in California. To combat his homesickness, he drew sketches of his home and eventually developed a talent for drawing and painting. After attending Haskell college, he went to Bacone College with other students like noted painters Fred Beaver, Pablita Velarde and Dick West. They were part of the Oklahoma Flatstyle art movement, which is a minimalist design approach that uses simple design elements such as flat icons and two-dimensional shapes of Native American imagery. At the University of Oklahoma, Anderson was still unsure which career he should take, singing or painting. It was when he would see Indian children outside of Oklahoma City bars while their parents were inside drinking that he knew his calling. This sight bothered him and it moved him to serve God and to become a minister. Two of the members of the Osceola Four died and his brother can no longer sing but Jimmy can and did, in English and Creek, at the Many Springs Baptist Church in Holdenville until his retirement in 2022.

**WILL SAMPSON (1933-1987)**

Will Sampson was an American actor and artist. Sampson, a Muscogee Creek, was born in Okmulgee, Oklahoma. He was given the Creek name Kvs-Kvna, meaning left-handed. He was known to his family as Sonny Sampson. He began painting as a child and then met large success in the art world as an adult. His paintings and sketches of Western and traditional Native themes are distributed across the United States in the Smithsonian Institute, the Denver Art Gallery, the Gilcrease Institute, the Philbrook Art Museum in Tulsa, the Creek Council House in Okmulgee and in private collections. Art was his first love, he became an actor by happenstance while in Yakima, Washington, painting and sketching the local scenery.

He was cast in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* in 1975, as the mute Indian. The film won five Academy Awards and earned Sampson critical praise. Sampson's other notable roles were as "Taylor the Medicine Man" in the horror film *Poltergeist II*. He had a recurring role on the TV series *Vega\$*, as Harlon Two Leaf and starred in the movies *Fish Hawk*, *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, and *Orca*. Sampson is largely credited with becoming the first Native American actor to break out of demeaning and stereotypical Indian roles. He was nominated for "Best Performance by a Foreign Actor" Genie award for *Fish Hawk* in 1980. Sampson appeared in the production of *Black Elk Speaks* with the American Indian Theater Company in Tulsa, Oklahoma. In 1983, Sampson

became a founding member of the American Indian Registry for the Performing Arts, which helped American Indian performers and technicians get work. Will Sampson died on June 3, 1987 after a heart and lung transplant. He was 53 years old. He is buried at Grave Creek Cemetery in Hitchita, Oklahoma.

### JOY HARJO



Joy Harjo was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma and is a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and belongs to Hickory Ground tribal town. Joy's great-great grandfather was the famous Creek leader Monohwee from the Red Stick War against President Andrew Jackson in the 1800s. Her father was Muscogee Creek and her mother a mixture of Cherokee, Irish and French. She grew up around artistic people, her mother wrote songs and her grandmother and her aunt were artist. They inspired her creativity and Harjo wrote her first poem when she was in the eighth grade. Harjo recounts growing up in an abusive household with her father and later her step-father. Because of these experiences, she had difficulty speaking up, for instance, in the school classroom. At age sixteen, she left home to attend the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. While there, she joined one of the first all-native drama and dance troupe and she wrote songs for an all-native rock band. She later attended the University of New Mexico as a Pre-Med student but switched her major to art and then again to creative writing after working with fellow Native American poets. She started writing poetry at the age of twenty-two and published her first book of nine poems in 1975 called *The Last Song*. After graduating from the Master of Fine Arts program at the University of Iowa, she took film classes and taught at Arizona State University, the University of Colorado, the University of Arizona, the University of New Mexico and the Institute of American Indian Arts. In 1980, Harjo published her first full-length volume of poetry called *What Moon Drove Me to This?* She has since published nine books of poetry, two memoirs, plays, and several books for young audiences.

Her many awards include the New Mexico Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts, the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Native Writers Circle of the Americas, the William Carlos Williams Award from the Poetry Society of America, the Ruth Lilly Prize for Lifetime Achievement from the Poetry Foundation, the Academy of American Poets Wallace Stevens Award, a PEN USA Literary Award, the Poets & Writers Jackson Poetry Prize, an Oklahoma Book Award, the American Book Award, two National Endowments for the Arts fellowships, a Tulsa Artist Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Rasmuson US Artists Fellowship, and a Native American Music Award for Best Female Artist of the Year. She has been inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, the National Native American Hall of Fame, the National Women's Hall of Fame and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Living Legends.

Joy is a founding board member and chairperson of the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation and in 2019 she was elected as Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets. She has appeared on HBO's Def Poetry Jam and her one-woman show, *Wings of Night Sky, Wings of Morning Light*, premiered in Los Angeles and shows in New York City, the LoJolla Playhouse and the University of British Columbia. Harjo performs nationally and internationally, solo and with her band, The Arrow Dynamics. She has released 5 award-winning CD's of original music. She has a class on



the streaming platform Masterclass where the world's best come together so anyone, anywhere, can learn from and be inspired by their knowledge and stories. In her video lessons she shares her experiences and ancestral history to help others honor their own story, unlock their innate creativity and find confidence and joy in their writing. In June, 2019, Joy became the 23<sup>rd</sup> Poet Laureate of the United States, making her the first Native American and Oklahoman to hold the position. The Library of Congress calls the position "the Nation's official poet." She was involved in the promotion of reading and writing poetry. She served three terms from 2019 to 2022. Harjo currently lives in Tulsa where she serves as the first Artist-in-Residency of the Bob Dylan Center.

### TIMOTHY LONG



Timothy Long is a conductor and pianist with an active performing career in the United States and abroad. He is a member of Thlopthlocco Tribal Town and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Long's family were members of the Holdenville community for a number of years. His father worked at the Holdenville post office and the family were members of the Salt Creek Methodist Church and the Barnard Memorial United Methodist Church. Tim's talent was quite apparent when at the age of five he was playing for his kindergarten programs. His love for classical music was passed down to him from his mother, who preferred to listen to a classical music station over country music stations as a youth. When his mother had children, the only music she would listen to was Beethoven. While growing up in Holdenville, Tim attended the Oklahoma Summer Arts Institute for four summers. When he was 16 years old, he made his piano concerto debut with the Oklahoma Symphony Orchestra.

Long studied piano and violin at Oklahoma City University while playing in the violin section of the Oklahoma City Philharmonic. He completed his graduate work in piano performance and literature at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY. He is the founding conductor of The Coast Orchestra, an all-Native American orchestra of classically trained musicians. He has conducted the ensemble in performances at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian, the American Museum of Natural History and Rutgers University. In 2017, Tim conducted the City Opera Vancouver world premiere of *Missing*, a groundbreaking new work about the 5,000 missing Indigenous women in Canada. Later, he would conduct the Canadian tour of this opera that is sung in both English and Gitksan, which is one of Canada's First Nations language.

In the 2022-2023 season, he conducted the world premiere of *How Bright the Sunlight* by Anthony Davis and the 23<sup>rd</sup> US Poet Laureate Joy Harjo with the Eastman Philharmonia. Long is a member of the faculty at the Stony Brook University. He is music director of Stony Brook Opera, and assistant to the music director of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. For three years, Long served as assistant conductor the Brooklyn Philharmonic and was an associate conductor at the New York City Opera for two years. Tim is passionate about his role as president of The Plimpton Foundation, which promotes the work of Native American and underrepresented performing artists through scholarships, grants, and commissions. He is one half Creek and one half Choctaw and he is from the Wolf clan. He lives in New York and New Jersey with his husband, baritone Christopher Herbert, and their dog, Pumpkin.

## STERLIN HARJO



Early life and education – Harjo, a citizen of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma and who also has Muscogee heritage, was born and raised in Holdenville, OK. He attended the University of Oklahoma, where he studied art and film.

Career – In 2004, he received a fellowship from the Sundance Institute. His short film *Goodnight, Irene* premiered at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival and received a special jury award at the Aspen Shortsfest. In 2006, he received a fellowship from the newly formed organization Untied States Artists. Harjo’s first feature film, *Four Sheets to the Wind*, tells the story of a young Seminole man who travels from his small home town to Tulsa to visit his sister after the death of their father. The film premiered at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival, where it was nominated for the grand jury prize. Harjo was named best director at the 2007 American Indian Film Festival. The film’s co-star Tamara Podemski won a Sundance special jury prize for her performance in the picture, and she was later nominated for best supporting actress at the 2007 Independent Spirit Awards.

Harjo’s second feature, *Barking Water*, portrays a road trip by a dying man and his former lover across Oklahoma to see his daughter and granddaughter in Wewoka, the capital of the Seminole Nation. *Barking Water* was named best drama film at the 2009 American Indian Film Festival. Harjo’s first feature documentary, *This May Be the Last Time*, is based on the story of Harjo’s grandfather, who disappeared in 1962 in the Seminole County town of Sasakwa. It explores the subject of Creek Nation hymns and their connection to Scottish folk, gospel and rock music. The film premiered at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival and its distribution rights were subsequently acquired by AMC/Sundance Channel Global for the Sundance Channel. His third feature film, *Mekko*, a thriller set in Tulsa, premiered at the Los Angeles Film Festival I June 2015.

Harjo has also directed a number of short-form projects. His 2009 short film *Cepanvkuce Tutcenen (Three Little Boys)* was part of the Embargo Collective project commissioned by the imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival. He has directed a series of shorts for This Land Press in Tulsa, where Harjo is the staff video director. He was a member of the 2010 Sundance shorts competition jury. He is a founding member of a five-member Native American comedy group, the *1491s*. He is also one the directors of the Cherokee Nation’s monthly television news magazine, *Osiyo, Voices of the Cherokee People*.

In 2021, FX released the first season of the groundbreaking Indigenous comedy series *Reservation Dogs*. The series is executive produced, directed, and co-written by Harjo, with Taika Waititi co-writing and executive producing. On September 2, 2021, FX renewed the series for a second season. More recently, he had signed a new overall deal at FX. In 2022, *Reservation Dogs* was recognized at the 37<sup>th</sup> annual Film Independent Spirit Awards as Best New Scripted Series, and Best Ensemble Cast in a New Scripted Series. The awards were presented to series co-creator Waititi.

Awards – Harjo was awarded the 2011 Tilghman Award from the Oklahoma Film Critics Circle and the Tulsa Library Trust’s 2013 American Indian Writers Award. He was also awarded a 2021 Peabody Award for his producing the TV series *Reservation Dogs* and nominated for a 2024 Emmy as Executive Producer in Outstanding Comedy Series for the same show.

## JAMES WHITECLOUD



Born in Tulsa and raised in Preston, OK, James grew up watching his great-uncle Will Sampson gain fame on the big screen with the films *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, and *The White Buffalo*. Believing you had to be in Hollywood, California to be a part of the industry, acting never seemed like an attainable dream. In 2008, while attending an event held at a museum in Wichita, KS, James was asked if he was auditioning for a film coming to town. With almost two years of sobriety, James was trying new things and thought this would be fun to try.

With no training or experience he auditioned and was given a background role for the Wes Studi film *The Only Good Indian*. Once getting to the set, he met a producer and the director of the film and was bumped up to a speaking role that was later cut due to costume issues. He was bitten by "the bug". With his first film experience under his belt; he was anxious to try again and met a local filmmaker who was shooting a Native zombie feature called *The Dead Can't Dance*, where he had his first speaking role. After that his film work and dreams of being an actor had come to a halt.

Moving back to Oklahoma some years later James was attending the College of the Muscogee Nation and was told a film was holding auditions at the college. With nothing to lose he attended the audition and was given his first paid speaking role, working with Zahn McClarnon, Vernon Davis, and Ron Perlman. Still in awe of his first paid "gig", James was asked to audition for a film written in homage to his late great-uncle Will Sampson. He was cast as the character Chief in the film *The Pale Door*, which starred up and coming actors and veteran actors. After being on set for a couple of weeks he was ready for more and was asked by a friend to audition for an upcoming film by Gregory Allen Williams titled *Birdie* in which he played a deputy. After that he auditioned for the role of an AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) group leader and lost the role because he appeared "too young" but the director, another native Oklahoman, John Swab liked his look and offered him the role of an addict. He filmed with Michael K. Williams of *The Wire* and Jack Kilmer, son of Val Kilmer. He has gone on to work actors, Josh Hartnett, Frank Grillo (Ida Red), Martin Sensmeier, Esai Morales (Cottonmouth), Lou Diamond Phillips (Keep Quiet) and the legendary Sylvester Stallone on the first season of *Tulsa King*.

## LANE FACTOR



Lane Factor earned his SAG-AFTRA (Screen Actors Guild) membership by playing "Cheese" in FX's critically acclaimed *Reservation Dogs*. Factor was cast as one of the childhood friends of Steven Spielberg in his semi-autobiographical Oscar-nominated movie *The Fabelmans*, written and directed by Spielberg and released in November 2022. Factor also recently recorded the audiobook version of *Man Made Monsters*, a book written by Cherokee author Andrea L. Rogers. In 2022, he played the lead character Charles in the documented native boarding school story titled *Ghosts* by Jeffrey Palmer. He is also an inspirational speaker and gives keynote speeches to students at schools and youth conferences. Factor promotes positivity, kindness and stepping outside your comfort zone. Lane is of Caddo, Muscogee (Creek), and Seminole descent.

# Veterans Affairs

**VETERANS AFFAIRS**



Funding for the Veteran’s Affairs department and construction of the special building was approved in early 2006 with the construction of the building completed in 2007. Housed within the center of the Veterans Affairs building is the Memorial Courtyard. Inside the courtyard there are the memorial plaques honoring Muscogee Creek warriors Killed in Action from WWI, WWII, Korea and Vietnam. In front of the building are five statues: Muscogee Soldiers Statue, Prisoners of War Statue, Ernest Childers Statue, Muscogee Women Soldiers Statue and Fallen Soldiers Statue.



The Muscogee (Creek) Nation veterans vests are issued to citizens of the tribe who are retired from the military or left with an honorable discharge. Started in 2006 the Veterans Affairs office has issued more than 800 vests to date. These are the vest colors for each branch of the military:

- U.S. Coast Guard – White
- U.S. Navy – Gray
- U.S. Army – Green
- U.S. Air Force – Blue
- U.S. Marine Corps – Red

**VETERANS AFFAIRS SEAL**

**The Words on the seal:** “MUSKOKE SULETAWVLKE ESTOFIS EKVNV HOMVN SAPAKLEARES” meaning “Muscogee Soldiers- Always have been – Always will be.” The words represent our soldiers who have always been there to fight, not only for America but for our native people and our lands.

**The 10 stars:** Represent the different wars our veterans have fought in and continue to fight in today. Starting with the War of 1812 (also known as the Redstick War), Civil War, where many Creeks fought on both sides, World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam War, Panama, Kuwait, Afghanistan and Iraq.

**The Red Eagle and the Pentagon:** In the center of the seal there is a red eagle that symbolizes our native people, and behind the red eagle there is a pentagon that represents the Veterans Affairs building, a monument of the Creek veterans and the only pentagon shaped building west of the Mississippi River.

**The Crossed Weapons, the Cross and the Fire:** In honor of our ancestral warriors, there is the Crossed Weapons at the top center of the seal. To the left and right of the eagle is a Cross and Fire, the cross represents the native people who follow the Christian faith and the fire represents the native people who follow the traditional ways or the ceremonial way of life.

\*\*\*Note\*\*\* The four traditional war colors are blue, white, black and red (note the colors are on the top of the Veterans building). These colors represent the lifestyle of a warrior. They are as follows:

Blue: Back to the Creator  
 White: Peace  
 Black: Death  
 Red: War

**MVSKOKE NATION HONOR GUARD****MVSKOKE NATION HONOR GUARD**

The Mvskoke Nation Honor Guard is made up of honorably discharged veterans from all branches of the armed services, whose past or present members have served in times of peace and war, including World War II, Korea, Vietnam and Operation Desert Storm. The group was organized for one reason, which they consider their primary duty and that is to provide final military honors (firing of a 21 gun rifle salute, playing of taps and folding and presentation of the flag to the next of kin) for Creek veterans. Since their inception, they have been requested to post colors, march in parades, powwows, speak at schools on Veteran's Day and provide numerous other services which honor our veterans. These are duties which the group is proud to perform but they remain resolutely committed to their fellow veterans upon their passing and have presented honors under extreme conditions, year-round, without complaint and with integrity. The Mvskoke Nation Honor Guard was designated the Official Honor Guard of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation by the National Council in 1999.



Pictured left to right:  
Commander Thomas Yahola and  
Vice Commander Loy Thomas

**ESTE CATE HOKTVKE SULETAWV**

The Este Cate (*is-dee jah-dee*) Hoktvke Suletawv (*hook-duh-key soul-lee-daw-wuh*), or Native Women Warriors in English, was established in 2022 when the National Council passed legislation establishing the first all-women honor guard for the Muscogee Nation. They believe their duty to one another didn't stop when they separated or retired from the military. They pride themselves as strong Indigenous women veterans that continue to support one another and the communities by participating in parades, presenting colors at various events and soon providing services for military funerals. Requirements to join include being a female veteran with an honorable discharge, being a committed and active member by participating in meetings, making regalia, attending drills and events, and assisting with public outreach.



# **Outstanding Muscogee Veterans**

**ERNEST CHILDERS (1918-2005)**

Ernest Childers passed away on Thursday, March 17, at the age of 87. Childers was the only member of the tribe to ever receive the Congressional Medal of Honor and only one of five Native Americans to be recognized with such distinction. Childers' heroic actions came as a young soldier in World War II. "Oklahoma has lost a genuine hero with the passing of Lt. Col. Ernest Childers," said Oklahoma Governor Brad Henry. "His life was and is a true inspiration."

Ernest Childers was born on February 1, 1918, in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. He grew up on a farm that was part of his father's original Creek allotment. Childers grew up in a Christian home, attending church at Springtown Indian Church about ten miles north of Coweta. In high school, he attended

Chilocco Indian School.

Childers, as well as other Indian students, sought ways to better themselves financially and saw joining the Oklahoma National Guard as that opportunity. The Indian boys at Chilocco had their own group, Company C, or Charlie Company of the 45th Infantry division. 'The Fighting Thunderbirds' was the division's nickname. These Indian boys would become part of a unique fighting group. Upon the liberation of Sicily in WW II, General George S. Patton would pay them the ultimate honor. "Born at sea, baptized in blood, your fame will never die. You are one of the best, if not the best division in the history of American arms."



For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty in action, Second Lieutenant Ernest Childers was awarded the Medal of Honor on April 8, 1944. The young Creek boy from Oklahoma would have his life changed forever. He was sent to Washington, D.C. to meet President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Childers described the Commander-In-Chief as pleasant and a very capable leader.



As the years passed, Childers would obtain the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He would train young recruits for future events such as the Korean and Vietnam Wars. In 1965, Ernest Childers would retire from the military. A remarkable career had come to an end. "The American Indian has only one country, and when you're picked on, the American Indian never turns his back," Childers proudly proclaimed.

**PHILLIP COON (1919-2014)**

Phillip W. Coon, a full-blooded Creek, was born on May 28, 1919, in Okemah, Oklahoma. He graduated from Haskell Institution in Lawrence, Kansas on May 14, 1941. On September 19, 1941, he volunteered for overseas assignment with the U.S. Army and spent the following month traveling to his first duty station. Mr. Coon arrived in Manila on October 23, 1941 where he went through rigorous Basic Training and Jungle Warfare training. Upon completion of training, he was assigned to 4<sup>th</sup> Squad, H Company, 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment as a machine gunner.

On April 11, 1942, Mr. Coon was captured by the Japanese Army and forced on the “Bataan Death March.” He initially stayed at O’Donnell Prison Camp at Capas Tarlac for two months and went to Camp Cabantuan for nine months. In January 1943, he was transferred to Camp Lipa and then in September 1944 was transferred to Camp Murphy. His final journey as a POW was from September 1944 to January 1945 when the Japanese began a movement to take him and his unit out of the Philippines to Tokyo, Japan.

Mr. Coon was discharged as a Corporal from Fort Sam Houston, TX on June 24, 1946. After being discharged he entered the Job Training Corps where he earned a two-year apprenticeship in welding, painting, and decorating. He graduated in 1949 from the apprenticeship program and became a union worker.

Mr. Coon retired in 1981 from the local Painters and Decorators of America Union #1895. He is active in and is a life member of the national Ex-Prisoners of War, Inc. (Korea, Pacific, and Vietnam), the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor, Inc., and the 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry Association. Mr. Coon is a member of the Oklahoma Haskell Alumni Association and a member of the Little Cussetah Baptist Church in Sapulpa. He attended the annual conventions of these organizations and served as Secretary-Treasurer and Vice-Commander of the 31<sup>st</sup> Association.

Mr. Coon’s awards and decorations include the American Defense Service Ribbon with one Bronze Star, an Asiatic Pacific Campaign Ribbon with two Bronze Stars, the Philippine Defense Ribbon, with one Bronze Star, and a Distinguished Unit Award with two Oak Leaf Clusters. In 1979, he received the Cross of Valor from Oklahoma Veterans Commission, which is the highest award the State gives to its war veterans.

Mr. Coon passed away Monday, June 23, 2014. He is buried at Fort Gibson National Cemetery, he was 95 years old.



**OTHER OUTSTANDING VETERANS**



Dick B. Breeding, WWI, US Army, received Distinguished Service Cross (posthumously) for killing the enemy while searching for a missing Army member during combat in France, May 1918.



Anna King, Korea, US Army, served as surgical nurse who landed with the invasion force at Inchon, South Korea to help and heal the wounded.



Jorene Coker (left) saw active duty at Pearl Harbor during WWII in the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Services (WAVES).



Riley R. Bruner, Korea and Vietnam, US Army, was a Prisoner of War in Korea and Wounded in Action in Korea and Vietnam.



Vernon Wright, Korea, US Air Force, was shot down over North Korea and became a Prisoner of War.



John Sloan, Vietnam, US Army is a recipient of 4 Purple Hearts.



Joe R. Taylor, US Marine Corps, was awarded the Bronze Star with V (for valor).



Bennie M. Gooden, US Marine Corps, was Wounded in Action and awarded the Silver Star.



Stephanie Jefferson, US Army, was awarded the Combat Medical Badge. She is the first Creek woman to be awarded a signifier for actions in combat.

# **Outstanding Muscogee Citizens**

**(Past & Present)**

**MARGARET MCKANE MAULDIN**

Margaret McKane Mauldin of Okemah is best known for co-creating a 10,000-word dictionary of the Creek language that was published by the University of Nebraska after more than ten years of research. She also co-authored several children's books and recorded Creek hymns. She held annually the Creek Songfest at the University of Oklahoma to preserve Creek-Seminole hymns. Ms. Mauldin worked to carry on the Mvskoke language through teaching, recording hymns and creating the Mvskoke to English dictionary *A Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee*. She also co-founded the Intertribal Wordpath Society in 1997 to advocate the teaching and elevate the status of Oklahoma Indian languages in the state through classes in schools, universities, cable television, community groups and individual efforts.

She worked extensively with Jack Martin, Professor of Linguistics at the College of William and Mary, to translate and edit a collection of stories written by Creek citizens, Ernest Gouge and James Hill. The stories were written in 1915 and the 1930's. She also served as an instructor of the Creek language at the University of Oklahoma's Anthropology Department starting in 1995.

**PEGGY BERRYHILL**

Peggy Berryhill has been a broadcast journalist for over 45 years. She is known as the "First Lady of Native Radio." Ms. Berryhill began her career in broadcasting in 1973. She is the only native person to work as a full-time producer at National Public Radio (NPR).

Born in Oklahoma, Peggy's family moved to California in 1954 as part of the Indian Relocation Policy. In the early 1970's, she worked with *Indigena: News from Indian Country*, covering stories on Indians in Central and South America. It was during this time she was recruited to work on a radio program called *Native American Student's Hour* at KPFA in Berkeley. What was supposed to be only three weeks turned into five years. She changed the name of the show to *Living on Indian Time* and featured urban Indian news and interviews with poets and musicians. It became a staple for Native and non-Native communities where they could hear about events at the Friendship House in Oakland, the San Francisco Indian Center, news about the American Indian Movement (AIM) and Indian fishing rights.

She was instrumental in forming the 2001 Native Radio Summit, where discussions were held forming a group to promote and facilitate American Indian radio programming content. This summit led to the creation of The Center for Native American Public Radio. Ms. Berryhill serves on the board of the Native American Resource Center, the Native Media Resource center and the National Federation of Community Broadcasters. Peggy is the owner and general manager of public radio station KGUA in Gualala, CA, where she is host of *Peggy's Place*, a weekday morning show featuring interviews with local, regional and national personalities.

**MUSKOGEE SOPHIA THOMAS (1943-2019)**

Dr. Muscogee Sophia Thomas was born in 1943 in Long Beach, CA to the late Johnson Thomas of Broken Arrow, OK and Lillian (Freeman) Thomas of Okmulgee, OK. She was a member of the Native American United Methodist Church in Anaheim, CA. Her family, known as the Thomas Indian Family Band, traveled together playing inspirational music on tour and produced three albums. The band performed on the Ed Sullivan Show, at the Seattle World's Fair, the New York World's Fair, and at Carnegie Hall and the Grand Ole Opry.

She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Education from Azusa Pacific University, a Master's Degree in Political Science from UCLA and a Ph.D. in Political Science, also from UCLA. In 2014, she was inducted into the Youth-On-The-Move International Educators Hall of Fame. At UCLA, she served as a counselor for minority students and founded the American Indian Culture and Resource Center. At the University of California-Irvine campus, she was Associate Director of Relations with Schools and Colleges. After retirement, Kogee worked as coordinator and research specialist of American Indian Education for the Capistrano Unified School District. At Clarence Lobo Elementary School in San Clemente, CA she established two unique museums of Native American culture and history. They were aligned with curriculum workbooks designed to enhance student awareness of Native American traditions and history. Kogee was also part of a peace keeping mission to Israel for the U.S. Government.

**ALLEN HARJO (1935-2007)**

Allen Harjo devoted his life to assisting the people of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. His work led to a landmark decision in the 1978 case of *Harjo vs. Kleppe (kleppie)* that allowed Indian tribes to elect their own government officials. Allen was born in 1935 in Okemah, OK. He was raised near Okemah and he graduated from Bearden High School. After high school, Allen went on to college and graduated from the University of Tulsa with an accounting degree. While serving in the Air Force in Tripoli, he met his wife Carmela of Rome, Italy. They married in 1959 and raised their family in Tulsa, OK.

Allen was employed with Amoco for over 25 years before taking an early retirement in 1988. After retirement he served in several roles within the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, including as Administrator for the tribe's Health system and as the Director of Tribal Affairs, he was also the tribal administrator for Thlopthlocco Tribal Town.

During the early 1970's, he heard from citizens that they were losing the sovereignty and were lacking the growth and prosperity they expected. Allen learned about the Curtis Act of 1898 and the Five Civilized Tribes Act of 1906 and 1970, which were intended to sustain the role of tribal government. The Curtis Act also recognized and granted authority to the chiefs of the tribes. The Principal Chief of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation at that time was Claude Cox, who drafted a new constitution which effectively placed the sole embodiment of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation on the office of the Principal Chief. Harjo knew this was not the intention of the Curtis Act, so during the 1970's, he led a campaign to challenge the interpretation of the Curtis Act. His mission was to restore the rights of the citizens to choose their leaders so that they would have a voice in their government. His work led to the landmark decision in the case of *Harjo vs. Kleppe (kleppie)*. The

decision ensured that the so-called constitution created by then Chief Cox did not and could not replace the original Creek Constitution of 1867 and was therefore a nullity. Harjo's work was important not only for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, but for all of the five civilized tribes of Oklahoma. As a legal precedent, *Harjo vs. Kleppe (kleppie)* is a framework which tribal governance must now comply. The other four civilized tribes of Oklahoma as well as tribes nationwide used the decision as a basis.

### **R. PERRY BEAVER (1938-2014)**



R. Perry Beaver served as Principal Chief of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation from 1996 to 2004. Beaver also served two terms as Second Chief and for many years as a Representative for the National Council. He graduated from Morris High School and later attended Murray State College in Tishomingo and the University of Louisiana, earning the Bachelor of Science Degree in mathematics. Beaver was named a football All-American at Murray State College and All-Conference at the University of Louisiana. Later on, Beaver played football for the Green Bay Packers. Beaver also earned a Master's Degree in Education from the University of Central Oklahoma and later on attended Northeastern Oklahoma State University. Beaver had a successful coaching and academic career at Jenks High School where he worked his way to head coach and leading the team to its first-ever two state championships. In 1991, Beaver retired from Jenks High School where he also served as the Director of Indian Education. He earned several sports awards including the 1974 Tulsa World Coach of the Year, and inducted to the Oklahoma High School Coaches Hall of Fame, the University of Louisiana at Monroe Hall of Fame, and the American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame.

### **JACK JACOBS (1919-1974)**

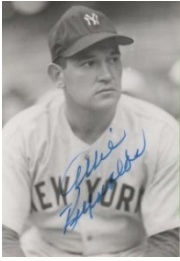


The former Sooners quarterback and kicker resides in the Oklahoma Hall of Fame and still holds passing and punting records at the University of Oklahoma set nearly 80 years ago.

Jacobs was born in Holdenville, OK, in 1919. He did not speak a word of English until he was nine years old when his father decided it was time he went to school. Before he turned 14, Central High School in Muskogee, 90 miles north of Holdenville, began recruiting him. With mixed emotions, Jacobs moved away from his mother and in 1935 helped Muskogee win the state title. In 1937, Jacobs was named outstanding high school player on Oklahoma's All-State football team. After high school, he chose to attend the University of Oklahoma, partly because coach Tom Stidham was one-sixteenth Creek and could speak their shared native language with Jack's dad.

After graduating from OU, Jacobs was drafted by the Cleveland Rams in 1942. As the U.S. involvement in World War II grew, he joined another organization — the U.S. Army Air Forces. Stationed in Santa Ana, Calif., Jacobs found himself serving on the same base with Yankee slugger Joe DiMaggio. The two loaned their athletic skills to the Seventh Army Air Forces baseball team to boost morale of American troops. After the war, Jacobs was traded to the Washington Redskins and then to the Green Bay Packers. In 1950, he joined the Canadian Football League's Winnipeg Blue Bombers. Jacobs's fierce desire, competitiveness and brilliant quarterbacking helped popularize professional football in Canada.



**ALLIE REYNOLDS (1917-1994)**

Allie Reynolds was born in Bethany, OK, in 1917. Allie was Creek Indian, descending from his Creek grandmother. Except for football in the sixth grade, Allie did not play any school sports until he entered Oklahoma City's Capitol Hill High School in the fall of 1933 for his senior year. In January of 1935, he accepted a track scholarship from Oklahoma A&M (now OSU). He majored in education and graduated with a lifetime certification to teach public school in Oklahoma.

Oklahoma A&M's athletic director, Henry Iba, asked the track and football star if he could help the baseball team by throwing batting practice. Allie agreed, and without any warm-ups, he started striking out batters. After a few batters, Iba called him in and told him to get a uniform. Coach Iba advised Reynolds to consider a career in professional baseball and set up a meeting for him with Cleveland Indians. The Indians signed Reynolds. At the end of the 1946 season, Reynolds was the subject of trade discussions between the Indians and the Yankees. During a World Series game at Fenway Park, the president of the Yankees, asked Joe DiMaggio which Cleveland pitcher would be best for the New Yorkers, Red Embree or Reynolds. The trade was made for Reynolds.

In 1947, the Yankees won the American League pennant and defeated the Brooklyn Dodgers in the World Series. Allie became the first pitcher in the American League to pitch two no-hitters in a season. After winning his seventh World Series game, it was Allie's last World Series game. In 1991, Allie was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame. He served as president of the National Hall of Fame for Famous American Indians at Anadarko, Oklahoma.

**LILAH DENTON LINDSEY (1860-1943)**

Lilah Denton Lindsey, Tulsa civic leader and women's club organizer, was born in Indian Territory. At age twelve Lilah, of Cherokee, Creek, and Scot descent, attended Tullahassee Mission, near present Muskogee. As an exceptional student, she received a scholarship to attend college in Missouri and in Ohio, which trained young women to become teachers and missionaries. She became the first Creek woman to earn a degree. After graduating in 1883, she returned to I.T. to teach at the Wealaka Mission and Coweta Mission before moving to Tulsa in 1886, where she taught at the Tulsa Mission School for three years.

During her life in Tulsa, she contributed much to the city. She organized the Tulsa chapter of the Woman's Relief Corps, which provided post-war relief for Union veterans. In 1902, she became a charter member of the Tulsa Woman's Christian Temperance Union, a group working on social reform through Christianity. She sponsored a school which taught trades to orphans. In 1917, she helped establish the Frances Willard Home for Girls. During World War I, she headed the Women's Division of the Tulsa County Council of Defense. Lilah's land allotment was approximately around 12<sup>th</sup> and Guthrie in Tulsa. She gave a portion of this land allotment to the city for a school named after her, which later became Riverview school. The school closed in 1972 and a fire station now stands on the site. Lilah was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1937.

# Living Legends



**Harry Beaver** has represented the Muscogee Nation by teaching and demonstrating his craft of shell carving, pottery making, traditional clothes and bone pipe making at Moundville Archaeological Park and Museum, Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park and the Smithsonian Institution. He was involved in Native American rights from 1965-1975 and for the last several years has taught pottery classes at the Creek Council House Museum.

Mr. Beaver's passion is working with youth and anyone wanting to learn native history and Mvskoke cultural art. His awards include the first place at the Cherokee Holiday Art Market and Best Mvskoke Artist by the Creek Council House Museum.



**Dr. Negiel Bigpond Jr.** is a certified drug/alcohol counselor and preacher. He is the host of *The Gathering Place* program on the CW12 channel in Tulsa. He has several books published and cd's of Creek and Euchee hymns. In 2006, Charisma Magazine named him one of the 10 most influential Christian leaders for his work on a resolution of apology to Native American tribes by the U.S. for its ill-conceived policies on them. Because of his works he has received various keys to the city and proclamations from governors and mayors.



**Rebecca Barnett** was born into a family of Mvskoke speakers and it is her first language. She has been a Mvskoke language instructor at Connors State College, taught elementary students at the Petake Accake Immersion school and a language instructor at the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Language department. She has done storytelling for Tvprakko Tribal Town, was the voice of Mary and Herodias in the movie *The Savior*, created the name for a character in the movie *Crooked Arrow* and helps the general public with Mvskoke translations.



**Dr. Dean Hughes** earned his teaching degree from the University of Oklahoma. He taught special education at the Cheyenne River Reservation in South Dakota, learning disabilities classes at the Winnebago Public Schools in Nebraska. He then earned his master's degree and Doctorate of Education at the University of South Dakota. Dr. Hughes became Assistant Superintendent of Okmulgee Public Schools then Superintendent of Hilldale,

Miami and Harrah Public Schools. He retired from school administration and worked for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation for six years before retiring a second time. He remains active today serving on the Board of Regents for the College of Muscogee Nation.



**Mona (Koko) Lowe** truly has a servant's heart. She volunteers at many Muscogee Nation events including the festival, pageant and Challenge Bowl. Mrs. Lowe is active with the Lady Legends charity organization, Mvskoke Women's Leadership group and Arbeka Baptist Church. A fluent Mvskoke speaker, she enjoys working with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Language department and singing a Creek hymn or starting an event with a Creek prayer

when requested. She has overcome many challenges in her life from being put up for adoption as an infant to losing her husband of 30 years in 2024. Whatever the situation, she always stays strong and wears a smile.

The Living Legends induction was created in 2005 by former MCN Principal Chief A.D. Ellis.

**Living Legends eligibility requirements:**

- Must be an enrolled Muscogee (Creek) citizen.
- Must be at least 55 years of age.
- Must have brought recognition to and/or made outstanding contributions to the quality of life and development of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation on a local, national, or international level. All industries considered including, but not limited to: ceremonial/religious leaders, arts, public affairs, business/professional, education, voluntary service.

**Living Legends past honorees:**

2005 – Hepsey (Randall) Gilroy, Rev. Harry Long, R. Perry Beaver, Amos McNac  
 2006 – Bob Arrington, Helen Coon, Phillip Coon, Edwin Moore  
 2007 – Lizzie Bruner, Jimmy Anderson  
 2008 – Wilber Gouge, Johnnie Brasuell  
 2009 – Dr. James King, Michael Berryhill  
 2010 – Patrick Moore, Dr. Pete Cosar  
 2011 – Jimmy Alexander, Monte Deer  
 2016 – Lillian Thomas, Stephen (Wotko) Long, Perry Anderson, Josephine Wildcat Bigler  
 2017 – A.D. Ellis, Ramona Mason, Jorene Coker, Fredo “Chubby” Anderson  
 2018 – Thomas Yahola, Richard Larney, Edna Belcher, Scott Roberts, Dr. Kelly Moore  
 2019 – Michael Flud, Bill Fife, Martha Jean Froman, Margaret Floyd, Rev. Patrick Freeman Sr.  
 2020 – cancelled  
 2021 – cancelled  
 2022 – Dana Tiger, Pete Beaver, Edward Mouss, Michael Coon, John Brown  
 2023 – Virginia Thomas, Mary Edwards Smith, Betty Gerber, Gary Fife, James Floyd

**Hall of Fame inductees:**

2012 – Joy Harjo, Simon Harry, Elsie Mae Martin, Allie P. Reynolds  
 2013 – Dr. Phyllis Fife, Jack Jacobs, George Thompson  
 2014 – Peggy Berryhill, Eli Grayson, William Sampson  
 2015 – Chebon Daicon, Sarah Deer, Jerome Tiger

# **Muscogee (Creek) Nation Departments**

## AG YOUTH PROGRAM

The following services are offered to Muscogee citizens, 8-19 years of age, who live within the Muscogee Reservation and are enrolled in 4-H or in their local FFA chapter.

- Livestock Assistance Program helps offset the cost of a livestock show project (cattle, sheep, goats or pigs). Each student is eligible for \$500 annually.
- Archery student is eligible for \$300 annually to help purchase archery equipment used in their 4-H or FFA program.
- Leadership Training provides \$300 annually to an eligible student to attend various leadership activities, camps, conventions and state or nationally sponsored leadership trainings.
- Poultry Program offers \$150 annually for students to purchase poultry, rabbits, feed or equipment used in poultry production.
- Ag Youth Program will purchase official 4-H and FFA jackets on an every other year basis.
- The program also hosts the MCN All-Indian Livestock Show at the beginning of each year and a speech contest in late spring.

All assistance is on a reimbursement basis. The students will make the initial purchase then turn in their receipts to the Ag Youth office for reimbursement of their expense.

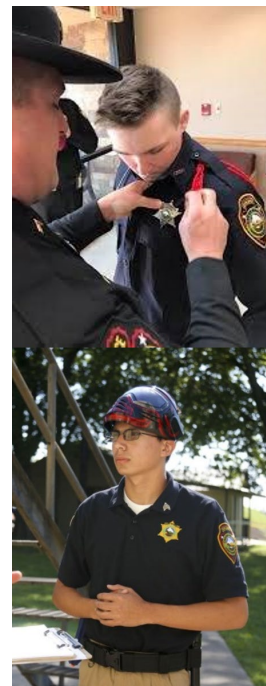
## LIGHTHORSE EXPLORER PROGRAM

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Lighthouse Tribal Police is proud to be the first tribal police Exploring Post in the state of Oklahoma, established in 2003. Law enforcement Exploring is a program created by the Boys Scouts of America, for young boys and girls, with an interest in law enforcement as a possible career.

The program is a way to get young people involved in their communities, receive hands-on experience in law enforcement and builds character by holding them to a higher standard than his/her peers. Explorers are judged by law enforcement personnel and quickly learn that only the highest standard of conduct is acceptable.

As responsible citizens of their communities, Explorers will promote good leadership skills, healthy lifestyles and strive to be positive examples to their peers, families.

Explorer email: [explorer106@muscogeenation.com](mailto:explorer106@muscogeenation.com)



## MUSCOGEE NATION REINTEGRATION

The Reintegration department provides re-entry services to tribal members who have been imprisoned. Their Youth Program serves Native at-risk youth between the ages of 14-20 who are in need of assistance or may be falling behind in school or not showing up. Support and mentorship is available for youth who may have incarcerated parents or just need guidance navigating through school. An Advocate is available for teens who are in the juvenile justice system. Youth Program offers food/clothing/backpacks, drug testing, career development, referrals, legal advocacy, speak outs/outreach presentations.

## MUSCOGEE NATION SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION

One-time scholarships ranging from \$500 to \$2000 are offered each fall and spring semester. All scholarships are competitive-based. The foundation utilizes the summer time to plan/prepare fundraisers to generate money for these scholarships that include a 5K run, golf tournament and cornhole tournament. Gifts and donations are other sources of revenue. Spring semester is open from October 1 and closing deadline is December 15. Fall semester is open March 1 and closing deadline is June 1.

### Requirements:

- Must be a member of the Muscogee Nation.
- Completed application.
- Enrolled as a full-time student.
- Attending an accredited institution of higher education.
- A one page typed personal statement including your goals, career choice, and tribal community involvement with an emphasis on how this scholarship will affect your college career.
- If you are a **HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR** or **FIRST-TIME ENTERING STUDENT**, you must submit the following:
  - A copy of your high school transcript or GED certificate.
  - College Admission letter and class schedule of the semester you are requesting funding.
- If you are a **CURRENT COLLEGE STUDENT**, you must submit the following:
  - A copy of your college transcript(s).
- Class schedule of the semester you are requesting funding.

## MVSKOKE NATION YOUTH SERVICES

The Mvskoke Nation Youth Services program was created in October 2014. Citizens of the Muscogee Nation ages 12-24 are eligible to participate in services. The mission of MNYS is to empowering Mvskoke youth by connecting to culture, community and resources.

The Mvskoke Youth Opportunity Grant is to assist Muscogee Nation citizens, up to the age of 24, to participate in activities and opportunities that are not specifically a part of the school curriculum. Examples include but are not limited to: leadership opportunities, non-school related athletic or arts competitions, rodeo, cultural activities, etc. There are three levels of assistance: in-state, out-of-state, and international. Participants can only be awarded for one level. The grant cannot exceed

half of the total cost or the maximum amount for each category. Participants are encouraged to complete volunteer hours as a pay pack for the assistance.

The Mvskoke Nation Youth Council (MNYC) was officially formed on June 20, 2015 after several months of planning by youth. The group is made up of Muscogee Nation citizens ages 12-24. The MNYC focuses on personal and peer advocacy, creating and participating in service learning projects, and keeping the Mvskoke customs and traditions alive and active. The MNYC meets the second Saturday of each month at 10:00 am at the Mound building on the Muscogee Nation complex in Okmulgee, OK.

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Department of Education and Training consists of the following department/programs: Employment and Training, Euchee Language, Eufaula Dormitory, Head Start, Higher Education, Johnson-O'Malley, Mvskoke Language Preservation, Reintegration Program, Scholarship Foundation, State/Tribal Education Partnership (STEP) and Vocational Rehabilitation.

The Special Academic/Extra Curricular Activity grant is to address the needs Muscogee Creek students who are not receiving any type of financial assistance from any other tribal education program. The one-time only grant will assist to a maximum of \$500. Acceptable needs are high school graduation items, driver's education, tutoring fees, college tuition, dorm fees, past balances, certification fees, required supplies or a laptop. Non-allowable needs are personal expenses, sports equipment/fees and school or sports trips/camps.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher Education administers grants and scholarships to enrolled citizens of the Muscogee Nation. The purpose is to provide financial assistance to Creek students pursuing a college level education. Undergraduate Grants - the Higher Education administers 3 grant programs for students pursuing an Associate's or Bachelor's Degree from an accredited college or university.

**1-Tribal Funds Grant** – Awarded to enrolled citizens of the Muscogee Nation attending an accredited college or university with no blood minimum quantity required. Funding for this grant does not require Pell-eligibility. Undergraduate students are eligible for this grant. The award amount will be determined by the number of hours in which student is enrolled up to a maximum of 18 hours. Award rate = \$125.00 per credit hour.

**2-Creek Nation of Oklahoma Scholarship Grant (BIA Grant)** – The Higher Education Program will expend funds through self-governance to award educational grants to our tribal citizens, with no minimum blood quantum required, attending accredited institutions of higher learning. Funding for this grant is limited to Pell-eligible undergraduate students only.

**3-Tribal Incentive Grant** – Awarded to citizens of the Muscogee Nation who meet the grade point requirements at an accredited school. Students attending college with a GPA of 3.0 or better during the semester are able to apply for this program.



**Post Graduate Program** – Established to provide financial aid opportunities for members of the Muscogee Nation to further their education beyond a bachelor’s degree for a first time Masters’ Degree. The award amount is determined by the number of hours in which the student is enrolled up to a maximum of 9 hours. The award rate = \$250 per credit hour.

**Doctoral Degree Program** – New students will be required to complete an application to determine eligibility. After eligibility is determined, awards will be completed upon review of the needs analysis that is finalized by the university. The awards will be sent directly to the school to use towards tuition, books, and fees as determined through the needs analysis.

## **EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING**

Employment & Training provides career and educational opportunities such as financial assistance for full-time students attending the College of the Muscogee Nation, OSUIT, or approved technical schools. Part-time students may receive assistance with tuition, books, equipment and other related fees for the following approved technical schools: Central Tech, Green Country, Gordon Cooper, Indian Capital, Kiamichi, Northeast, Tulsa Tech, Wes Watkins. Assistance also available to students enrolled in Allied Health core classes at Bacone, Carl Albert, Connors State, Seminole State and Tulsa Community College.

### **Other services include:**

- GED Test-incentive of \$300 for completion of testing, must turn in scores within 90 days of completion.
- New Employment-financial assistance for employment related expenses when obtaining new employment after having a least a 30-day break in employment.
- College Internship-for juniors, seniors and graduate students, depending on funding and employment availability.
- Tribal Grant & Incentive-for high school students enrolled concurrently at public universities or technical schools in the state of Oklahoma.
- ACT Test-assistance with one ACT test fee per year for Summer Youth participants or Muscogee Creek citizens meeting income guideline.
- Summer Youth Employment-8 weeks of employment for ages 16-21.

## **JOHNSON-O’MALLEY**

The mission of Johnson-O’Malley is to provide a program that supports academic education, cultural awareness and community involvement. Each school program is designed based on a needs assessment survey completed by the parents of JOM students. Programs may include; tutoring, school supplies, student incentives, cultural activities, senior fees, ACT/SAT fees.

**Statewide JOM Conference** – collaboration of Creek, Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw and JOM programs which provides workshop training for parent committees, coordinators and administrators.

### **JOM Incentives:**

**Academic Incentive** – Each year a \$500 incentive is awarded to 16 Muscogee Creek JOM seniors within the 52 school districts of the Muscogee Nation. Students are judged by a panel of three on their personal goals statement, recommendation letter and community/cultural involvement.

**Belvin Hill Memorial Scholarship** – A \$1000 (funded by tribal enterprises) incentive is awarded to two high school seniors (one female, one male) participating in the annual Challenge Bowl competition. Applicants judged on essay, reference letter, number of years of Challenge Bowl participation and writing skills.

**Advanced Placement Incentive** – Will pay up to five (5) advance placement exams for Muscogee Creek high school students each year. This program was established to provide motivation for high school citizens to further their education by taking AP tests in an effort to receive college credit.

## **FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION**

Teen Dating Violence Services include: assistance in locating emergency shelter, assistance with filing protective orders, court advocacy, crisis intervention, legal advocacy, safety planning, emergency transportation, support groups, counseling, limited financial assistance, referrals for additional services depending on an individual's needs.

Community outreach: presentations can be provided to your community, agency, school, or organization on the topics of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking. Specific presentations for youth are available on the topics of healthy dating relationships, teen dating violence, sexting and sexual assault and consent.

### *Warning signs of being in an abusive relationship...*

- Call or text me frequently to find out where I am, who I'm with, or what I'm doing?
- Act jealous, possessive, controlling, or bossy?
- Give me orders or make all the decisions?
- Refuse to allow me normal contact with my family and friends?
- Touch or kiss me when I don't want to? Force me to have sex? Not let me use birth control?
- Use alcohol or drugs and pressure me to do it too?

An advocate is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to speak with you and provide support.

# Independent Entities

## THE COLLEGE OF THE MUSCOGEE NATION

The College of the Muscogee Nation is the institution of higher education for the Muscogee Nation emphasizing native culture, values, language and self-determination. The College provides a positive learning environment for tribal and non-tribal students. On our campus all are free to speak Native languages, share culture and participate in traditions. The College of the Muscogee Nation (CMN) is a tribal college created September 1, 2004.

Degrees and certificates offered:

- Associate in Applied Science in Police Science
- Associate in Applied Science in Gaming
- Associate of Arts in Native American Studies
- Associate of Science in Tribal Services
- Associate of Applied Science in Gaming
- Associate of Science in Natural Resources
- Certificate in Gaming
- Certificate in Mvskoke Language Teaching
- Certificate in Mvskoke Language Teaching
- Certificate in Tribal Leadership

## CITIZINSHIP BOARD

The Citizenship Board office is governed by a Board of five members. This office provides services to citizens of the Muscogee Nation or to potential citizens in giving direction or assisting in the lineage verification process of the Muscogee Creek people. The mission of this office is to verify the lineage of descendants of persons listed on the 1906 Dawes Roll.

Citizenship criteria: you must be Muscogee Creek by blood and trace back to a direct ancestor listed on the 1906 Dawes Roll by issuance of birth and/or death certificate. Required documentation includes a completed citizenship application, state certified full image birth certificate, copy of social security card, and if 18 years old or over, a state identification or driver's license.

- New cards are issued at no cost, replacement cards are \$5.
- Cards will expire 5 years from date of print.
- Relinquishing citizenship is absolute and irrevocable (final) for anyone 18 years and over. You may be reinstated as a citizen if your citizenship was relinquished as a minor.

## ELECTION BOARD

It is the purpose of the Muscogee Nation Election Board to maintain the highest level of integrity in conducting the tribal elections according to the election codes and to enforce the codes in a responsible, impartial and unbiased manner. Their job is to inform all enrolled registered voters of elections and promote voter registration throughout the Muscogee Nation eight districts, as well as to the absentee voters outside the Muscogee Nation boundaries. The Election Board is a constitutionally independent agency made up of 5 Muscogee Creek citizens that are nominated by

the Principal Chief and confirmed by the National Council. The Election Board maintains a year around office with purpose of managing all voting records.

Voter registration requirements are you must be an enrolled citizen of the Muscogee Nation and 18 years of age or older. The two methods of voting in the election are absentee voting and in-person voting at the precinct sites. The primary elections are held on the Saturday immediately following the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday in September. The general (run-off) elections are held on the Saturday immediately following the 1<sup>st</sup> Friday in November. As of 2017, there are 18 precinct sites used during the elections. These community sites include, Hanna, Yardeka, Dustin, Eufaula, Okemah, Holdenville, Okmulgee, Dewar, Tulsa, Glenpool, Muskogee, Bristow, Koweta, Checotah, Weleetka, Sapulpa, Twin Hills and Wetumka. Each precinct has a committee composed of 3 members that is organized by the Election Board to oversee the voting procedure at a precinct site on election day.

Candidate requirements for the National Council filing are to be an enrolled citizen of the Muscogee Nation, 18 years of age, ¼ (one fourth) degree or more of Muscogee Creek blood, reside within the district for which they file for one full calendar year prior to filing, must be registered voter with Muscogee Nation at least 6 months prior to filing as a candidate, cannot be convicted of a felony with the last 10 years prior to filing and pay a fee of \$500. The requirements are the same for Principal Chief and Second Chief candidates except candidates must be 30 years of age and never have been convicted of a felony. The fee for Principal Chief is \$1500 and the fee for Second Chief is \$1000.

## **MUSCOGEE NATION DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

The present system of health for the Muscogee Nation began in 1975, with the passage of the Indian Self-Determination and Education and Assistance Act. This legislation gave tribal governments the ability to contract and to operate Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health Service programs.

The Muscogee Nation Department of Health provides comprehensive health care services to Native Americans living within the Muscogee Nation with an integrated system of six health centers, an Express Care Clinic, three hospitals, a physical rehabilitation center and nine comprehensive community health programs offering services across the lifespan including pediatrics, family medicine, nursing, dental, laboratory, radiology, pharmacy, behavioral health, emergency medical, audiology, nutrition, physical therapy and optometry. The new Okemah Creek Nation Community Hospital opened in 2018, just south of Interstate 40. The state of the art facility not only serves Native Americans with CDIB cards, it is also open to the public. In 2021, Council Oak Comprehensive Healthcare opened at the former Cancer Treatment Centers of America facility in Tulsa at 10109 E. 79<sup>th</sup> Street.

Prevention education is available to schools on suicide, substance abuse, nicotine addiction and vaping health risks by the Behavioral Health personnel.

# Muscogee Language

## **MUSCOGEE LANGUAGE**

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The Muscogee language is a part of the Muskogean language family. It consists of a 20 letter alphabet modeled after the English alphabet. The sentence structure is (subject, object, verb) and is a highly descriptive language. Affixes are used in verbs to create nouns and to conjugate sentences into future, present, and past tenses.

The Muscogee Nation maintains a language program within the Human Development Department that serves the citizens within the boundaries of the nation. The language program offers several community classes and operates in cooperation with several public schools to offer Muscogee as a foreign language credit. The language program develops the curriculum and lesson plans for the public school classes and supplies teachers for the public schools and community classes as well. The language program offers immersion summer camps, online language materials, and instructional language CDs to the citizens which help to broaden the domains of the language through exposure to the language. Additionally, the nation serves the citizens by offering language classes at the College of the Muscogee Nation designed to provide a foundation for students who wish to increase their fluency level. The language classes are set up as part of the college curriculum for students seeking an associate's degree. The Muscogee Nation has many programs in place to enhance the development of the language. However, Muscogee Creek people are the keys to the revitalization of the language. Today, the people are not using the language in all aspects of their lives.

The loss of language domains was a product of United States programs designed to assimilate Native American people by destroying their cultures by eliminating the use of their languages. Language domains were separated and dispersed by the Allotment Act, and boarding schools disconnected children from their language and culture, by allowing English only to dominate those domains. Language shifted from Creek to English/Creek bilingualism and finally, to English being the first language. The prestige of the Muscogee language diminished as economic and social hardships forced Muscogee Creek people into unfamiliar environments of the American workforce. However, Muscogee people endured through their connectedness to spiritualism by ceremonies and church services specific to Muscogee culture and customs. Language and culture have defined Muscogee Creeks through those two specific domains. These domains as well as many others are rapidly being taken over by the presence of the English language. All aspects of being Muscogee are in danger of being lost forever without a movement aimed at maintaining and reclaiming all of the domains within the Muscogee Nation.

English	Mvskoke	Phonetics
1. Quit	Wikvs	(Way-gus)
2. Purple	Pvrko Ome	(Buth-ko O-me)
3. Basketball	Pokko Rakko	(Bok-ko Thock-go)
4. Money	Toknawv	(Dok-naw-wah)
5. I want money	Toknawv Cvyaces	(Dok-naw-wah Cah-yah-chees)
6. Tomato	Tomatv	(Doe-ma-da)
7. Apple	Svtv Rakko	(Suh-duh Thock-go)
8. Stand up	Ahuervs	(Ah-whe-thus)
9. Turtle	Locv	(Loh-juh)
10. Let's sing	Yvhikvkes	(Yah-hay-kaw-keys)
11. Pink	Cate Ome	(Jaw-dee Oh-me)
12. Gray	Sopak Hvtke	(So-bock Hut-key)
13. Broom	Spaskv	(Spa-ska)
14. Bag	Sukcv	(Soak-jah)
15. Brown	Oklane	(Oak-lawn-ne)
16. Chair	Ohliketv	(Oh-lay-key-duh)
17. Jump	Taskvs	(Das-gus)
18. Run	Letkvs	(Lit-gus)
19. Cry	Hvkihke	(Ha-gay-kee)
20. Cat	Pose	(Boh-see)
21. Eat	Hompvs	(Home-bus)
22. Tree	Eto	(E-doe)
23. Tire	Sencvllv	(Sin-jul-la)
24. Cabbage	Setapho	(Se-dop-ho)
25. Corn	Vce	(Uh-gee)
26. Goat	Cowatv	(Joe-wah-dah)
27. Mailbox	Cokv Hute	(Jo-ka Who-de)
28. Newspaper	Cokv Tvlvme	(Jo-ka Da-luh-me)
29. Corn drink	Osafke	(Oh-sof-key)
30. Rabbit	Cufe	(Jo-fe)
31. Watermelon	Cvstvlv	(Jus-duh-lee)
32. Dress	Honnv	(Hon-na)
33. To eat	Hompstv	(Home-be-da)
34. Hammer	Svtokuce	(Sa-doh-koh-gee)
35. Salt	Okevnwv	(Oak-jun-wa)
36. Wild onion	Tafvmpuce	(Da-fum-bo-ge)
37. Pants	Hvtekpikv	(Huh-dik-bay-guh)
38. Peach	Pvkanv	(Ba-gaw-nuh)



39. Soap	Kvpe	(Guh-be)
40. Airplane	Perro Tvmkv	(Bith-tho Dum-guh)
41. Mad	Cvpakke	(Ja-bach-kee)
42. Bacon	Tosenv	(Doe-see-nah)
43. Bean	Tvlako	(Da-law-go)
44. Bowl	Avtehkv	(Uh-de-kuh)
45. Ball	Pokko	(Bok-go)
46. Parched corn drink	Apvske	(Ah-bus-kee)
47. The ball is red	Pokko Cate Tos	(Bok-ko Jaw-dee Dos)
48. Do you need paper?	Cokv Ceyacv	(Joe-guh Gee-yah-jah)
49. Take a bath	Aklopvs	(Ak-low-bus)
50. Open your book	Cokv Hvwecvs	(Joe-guh Hah-we-jus)
51. Say it	Makvs	(Mah-gus)
52. Do you have a question?	Vpohkv Ocet Cv	(Ah-bo-guh Oh-jet Jah)
53. Brush your teeth	Cenute Okkosvs	(Gee-no-dee Oak-go-sus)
54. Put your shoes on	Estelepikv Vtehvs	(Is-dee-lee-bay-gah Ah-dee-hus)
55. I like pumpkin	Cvse Cvyace Tos	(Juh-see Jay-ya-gee Dos)
56. Do you like corn?	Vce Cvyace Towv	(Uh-gee Gee-ya-gee Do-wah)
57. Take your bag	Sukcv Sayvs	(Soak-jah Say-yus)
58. Apple is good	Svtv Rakko Here Tos	(Suh-duh Thock-go He-thee Dos)
59. My head hurts	Cvkv Vnnokkes	(Jah-kaw Un-nok-keys)
60. Go to bed	Rawakvs	(Tha-wok-gus)
61. Wash your hands	Cenke Okkosvs	(Gin-key Oak-go-sus)
62. Time to get up	Vliketv Oret Tos	(Ah-lay-key-dah Oh-theat Dos)
63. Wear a coat	Kapv Ace Towvs	(Gah-bah Ah-chee Doe-was)
64. Clean the table	Ohompety Hvsatecv	(Oh-home-be-dah Hah-sah-dee-jus)
65. It's raining outside	Fettv Oske Tos	(Fit-dah Os-key Dos)
66. It's cold outside	Fettv Kvsappe Tos	(Fit-dah Guh-sup-be Dos)
67. Find your shoes	Estelepikv Hopoyvs	(Is-dee-lee-bay-guh Hoe-bo-yus)
68. The river is deep	Hvtce Sufke Tos	(Hut-chee Soof-key Dos)
69. The sun is hot	Hvse Hiye Tos	(Huh-se Ha-ye Dos)
70. How are you?	Estonko	(Is-stone-go)
71. The boy is happy	Cepane Afvcke Tos	(Gee-bonnie Ah-futch-key Dos)
72. Do you want to sit?	Liketv Ceyace Te?	(Lay-key-duh Ge-ya-ge De)
73. I like to jump	Taskete Cvyace Tos	(Das-key-dah Jay-ya-ge Dos)
74. I am a student	Cokv Hecv Towis	(Joe-guh He-juh Doh-as)
75. I like to eat	Hompety Cvyace Tos	(Home-be-da Ja-ya-ge Dos)
76. Let's go	Vhoyvkes	(Uh-hoy-yuh-geese)
77. Do you want a pencil?	Eshoccikv Ceyacv	(Is-hotch-jaytch-guh Gee-yah-jah)

78. You are going to be late	Ceyvpvklatkv Han Tos	(Gee-yah-bock-lut-guh Hon Dos)
79. Listen today	Mucv Nettv Mapohic Towvs	(Mo-jah Nit-duh Mah-bo-hetch Doe-wus)
80. Take out the trash	Vpalatkv Vpalatvs	(Ah-buh-lut-guh Ah-buh-lah-dus)
81. Where are you going?	Estvn Ayet Cv?	(Is-done Ah-yeat Jah)
82. The girl is mad	Hokte Cvpvkke Tos	(Hok-de Juh-bak-key Dos)
83. Very good	Here Mahe	(He-thee Ma-he)
84. Are you done?	Respoyet Cv?	(Thes-bo-yet Jah)
85. You stop	Fekhonnvs	(Fick-hone-nus)
86. This is a turtle	Heyv Locv Tos	(He-ya Loh-juh Dos)
87. You be quiet	Cvyvyvket	(Juh-ya-ya-get)
88. Have a seat	Likepvs	(Lay-key-bus)
89. I am a boy	Cepane Towis	(Gee-bonnie Doh-as)
90. I am a girl	Hokte Towis	(Hok-dee Doh-as)
91. Do you want bread?	Taklike Ceyacv?	(Dock-lay-key Gee-yah-juh)
92. The cat is running	Pose Letke Tos	(Bow-see Lit-key Dos)
93. Go and play	Ayet Akkopvnvs	(Ah-yet Ah-go-bun-nus)
94. Where are you?	Estvmin Aret Cv	(Is-duh-man Ah-theet Jah)
95. Hurry up	Lvpecievs	(Luh-be-jay-jus)
96. The girl is crying	Hokte Hvkihke Tos	(Hok-de Hah-gay-key Dos)
97. Who is your teacher?	Estit Ce Mvhayv Towa?	(Is-dat Gee Mah-ha-yah Dough-wah)
98. What is hurting you?	Naket Cen Nokka?	(Nah-get Gin Nock-kaw)
99. Who is your mother?	Estit Cecke Towa?	(Is-dat Jitch-key Dough-wah)
100. Where are you from?	Estvn Vtet Ce Towa?	(Is-done Ah-deet Gee Dough-ah)
101. I feel sick	Cv Nokkes	(Jah Nook-geese)
102. Where is dad?	Papa Estvn Ara?	(Bah-bah Is-done Ah-tha)
103. Cut the grass	Pvhe Warvs	(Buh-he Wah-thus)
104. Don't worry	Enayoricetevs	(E-nah-yo-theat-jeet-jus)