

What tribes comprised the ‘western Indians?’

Besides the Five Civilized Tribes, other nations lived in Indian Territory. At the Civil War’s end, the Five Civilized Tribes lived in the eastern half of the Territory, along with several small tribes from other regions. Some were from the “Old Northwest,” a territory that became five states in today’s Midwest. Others were from the Far West — such as California and Montana — and the Northern Plains. This chapter looks at these tribes and how they came to live on reservations in Oklahoma.

From where did the Senecas and Shawnees come? Indian removal began in the Old Northwest in 1787. Tribes there resisted white *intrusion*, but their efforts only reduced their own populations. Eventually those tribes ceded their lands and agreed to move. Many moved several times before their final settlement in Indian Territory. Each time the land hunger of the white population forced the Indians farther west. The Senecas endured their first removal around the time the Cherokees endured the Trail of Tears.

The Sandusky Senecas were actually remnants of the original Iroquois Confederacy — the Mohawks, Senecas, Onondagas, Oneidas, and Cayugas. They had moved to the Sandusky River area in Ohio in the 1700s. In Ohio they were joined by members of the Erie, Conestoga, and Tuscarora tribes.

In 1831, the U.S. Government signed a removal treaty with the Sandusky Senecas and the Mixed Seneca and Shawnee tribe. Their removal took eight months. Winter storms, floods, illness, and death plagued them. When the Sandusky Senecas reached Indian Territory on July 4, 1832, they learned the Cherokees already owned much of their new area.

Likewise, the Mixed Senecas and Shawnees dealt with cholera and other deadly obstacles on their trip west. They arrived in December 1832 and found that Cherokees held the land they thought was their own.

What was the Stokes Commission? Shortly after the Sandusky Senecas arrived in the west, President Jackson formed the Stokes Commission. He appointed Governor Montfort Stokes of North Carolina to

solve these land *assignments*. The Commission also dealt with the problems of the Mixed Senecas and Shawnees when they arrived. Stokes built a confederacy between the two groups and settled them in present-day Ottawa County.

Who were the Quapaws? In 1833, after several moves and a *devastating* experience in Louisiana, the Quapaws agreed to go to Indian Territory. The government assigned former Quapaw agent Wharton Rector, a man intensely disliked by the Quapaws, to conduct the removal from Louisiana to Indian Territory. Rector reserved land for them, land that was not being used. Four years later a federal survey revealed that Rector had moved them mistakenly to land already reserved for the Senecas. This time the Senecas stayed. The Quapaws were forced to leave the homes and farms they had built during those four years.

What was the Omnibus Treaty? The *Reconstruction* treaties at the end of the Civil War reduced the land of the Five Civilized Tribes by about half. The treaties affected the Senecas and Quapaws the same way. These confederated bands of Indians gave up large tracts of their land in the northeastern section of Indian Territory so that the government could “reserve” the area for other tribes. Their agreement was named for a type of bus that carried large numbers of people: the omnibus.

The Omnibus Treaty of 1867 assigned remnants of Old Northwest tribes to sections in northeast Indian Territory. These were the Confederated Peorias, the Ottawas and the Wyandottes. The Peoria Confederacy consisted of groups from the Peorias, Miamis, Cahokias, Tamaroas, Michigameas, Moingwenas, Piankashaws, Weas, Eel River Indians, and Kaskaskias. The Kaskaskias were themselves a confederacy of Cahokias, Tamaroas, Michigameas, and Kaskaskias. The Ottawas had united with the Chippewas long before this. The Omnibus Treaty required tribes who once hunted across one-third of the eastern U. S. to occupy just a few thousand acres of land.

What other tribes “removed” to Indian Territory? Other Old Northwest tribes removed to northeastern Indian Territory were the Delawares, the Munsees, the Stockbridges, the Kansa Shawnees, and the Pottawatomies. Most of the tribes had moved more than once. The Delawares had been moved four times prior to 1867.

The Sac and Fox tribe, another confederacy, moved to Indian Territory in 1869, after losing lands in several other territories and states. In 1883, authorities granted the Iowa Indians a reservation in the Territory.

Yet most Indians who moved to the Territory after the Civil War

Do You Know?

Clinton Riggs designed the YIELD sign. It was first used on a trial basis in Tulsa.

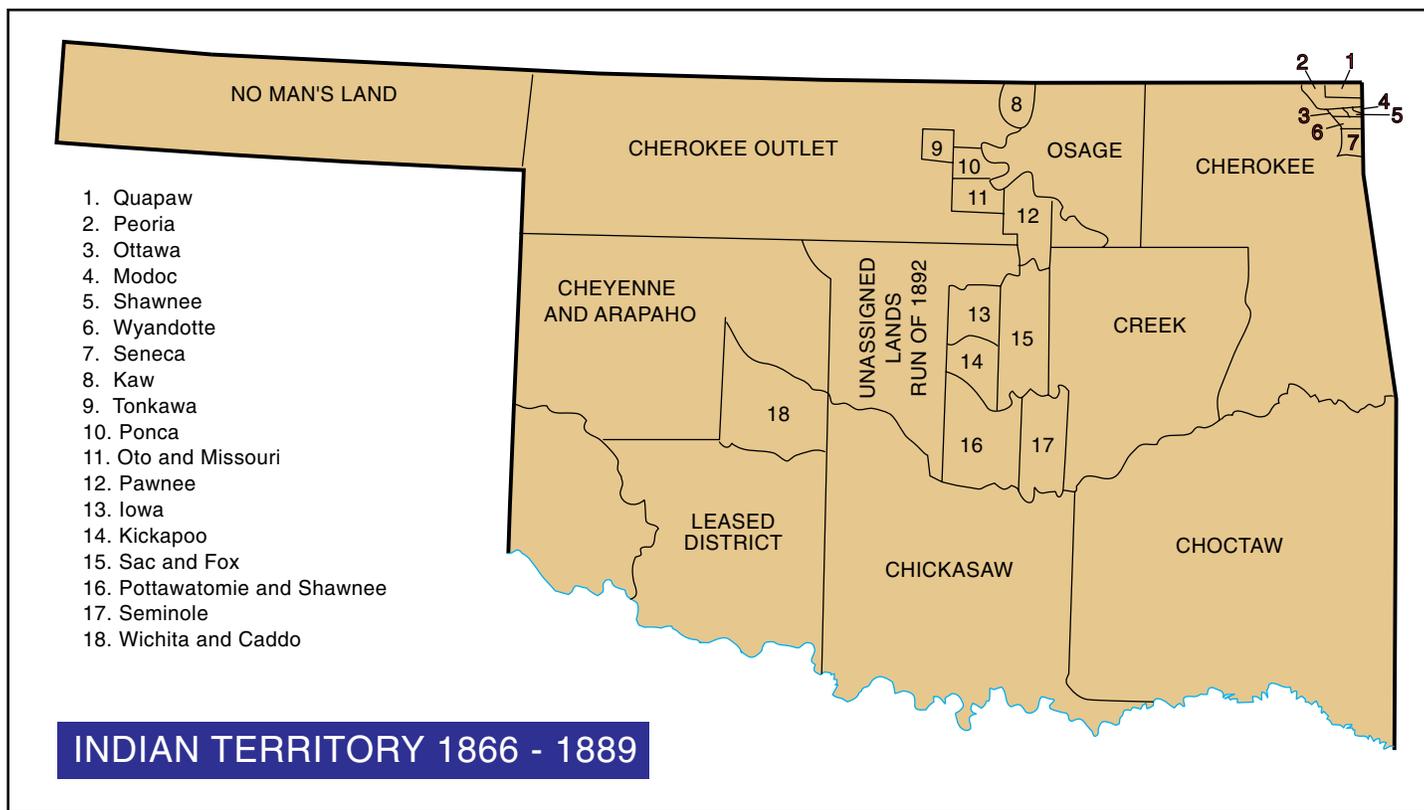
came from Kansas. They had suffered many indignities there. People who had already endured other removals were pushed off their lands by white squatters who cut tribal timber and stole tribal horses.

Other Indian groups living in Oklahoma by the end of the 1880s included the Otos and Missouris, the Pawnees, the Osages, the Poncas, the Kaws (also known as the Kansa Indians), the Kickapoos, the Illinois, and the Tonkawas, some of whom had lived in the area since before the war. All these people, from different climates and with different customs, settled on reservations in the northeastern and north-central part of the territory.

Who were the Modocs and the Nez Percé? The government also assigned two peoples from the Far West to this area. They were the Modocs and the Nez Percé Indians.

For several years, whites in California tried to gain Indian land. In 1864, the Modocs, the Klamaths, and the Yahooshin Snake Indians ceded their California lands in exchange for lands in Oregon. But the Modoc chief, Captain Jack, soon complained that the Klamaths mistreated his people. The government ignored his complaints, so he took his followers back to California. He requested a separate reservation there.

The federal authorities sent the military to move Captain Jack's



group back to Oregon. This turned into the Modoc War of 1872-1873. After six months of warfare, several Modoc warriors surrendered. The army captured Captain Jack and a number of others and took them to Fort Klamath, Oregon. Six of the leaders, without attorneys and without knowing English, were tried, convicted, and sentenced to hang.

By 1873 the government considered the Modocs prisoners of war. Conductors *shackled* them together and moved them in cattle cars for part of the trip. They did not know their destination. They were underfed and poorly clothed. Despite these hardships, when they arrived in Indian Territory, they were complimented on their good behavior and cooperation during the trip. They settled in the northeastern corner of the Shawnee reservation.

Where did the Nez Percé originally live? The Nez Percé occupied the Wallowaw Valley in the Snake River country. (Today this area belongs to Oregon, Idaho, and Montana). In 1855, they signed a federal treaty guaranteeing them ownership of their lands forever. By 1863, however, the mining industry and pioneers were clamoring for Indian lands. So the government made a treaty with selected tribal leaders to give up the valley in exchange for a reservation in Idaho.

Part of the tribe moved to Idaho. Those actually living in the valley had not agreed to the removal and refused to leave. Chief Joseph was the group's leader. War broke out in 1877 and the Nez Percé killed thirteen whites. Chief Joseph gathered together his men, women, and children and tried to escape into Canada. For three months, they fought and evaded the U.S. Army, traveling more than a thousand miles through Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana.

That October, less than one day's journey from the border, the chief surrendered to the Army. Winter was starting and his people were in danger of freezing. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs sent them to Indian Territory. "This will be no hardship on them," he said, "as the difference in temperatures between that *latitude* and their old home is inconsiderable."

The Army placed 431 Nez Percé in *exile* at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and more joined them later, while Congress decided their fate. From October to July, more than 100 Nez Percé died of malaria and other diseases. In July, 1878, the 410 survivors were moved to the Quapaw agency in Indian Territory. By August, twenty more died. The following June, the government transferred the Nez Percé to the Ponca agency.

No one had informed the Ponca agent they were coming. He had no

instructions for settling them and no supplies to give them. With very little help, the Nez Percé found places for themselves and began setting up farming operations. For six years, they tried farming, raising and training horses, and conducting business. They fought white poachers through proper government channels but made very little headway against them. Members continued to die at an alarming rate. By the end of 1884, of those who had come to the Indian Territory, only 287 of the tribe still lived.

Chief Joseph made several trips to Washington to plead for the return of his people to the Northwest. His pleas went largely unheeded until an outraged public took up the cause and *bombarded* Congress with complaints. Finally officials agreed to move the tribe back to the Northwest.

The 268 survivors left their Ponca reservation in 1885. They did not return to Wallowaw Valley, however. Part of the tribe went to their relatives on the Lapwai Reservation in Idaho. Officials transferred the rest to the Colville Reservation in Washington Territory. Chief Joseph was among the 150 *exiled* there. He considered this punishment for the war he had fought.

What is a reservation? The term “Indian Territory” may be misleading. Other territories, such as the Old Northwest, had governments that functioned under the federal system. They were a part of the United States, both geographically and politically.

Indian Territory did not actually belong to the U.S. and was not a part of its political make-up. Only lands not assigned to Indian tribes were under the direct *jurisdiction* of the federal government.

When the U.S. reserved lands, called “reservations”, for a tribe, it actually exchanged them for traditional tribal lands. Usually the new area was smaller than the area the tribe had previously occupied, so the government also gave goods and services to the Indians. It set up Indian agencies to distribute those goods and services.

For example, with less land, the tribes could not earn a living as well as before. Farming equipment and foodstuffs (like flour and raw foods) added to their income. They received money, both one-time payments and annual payments. They left behind schools, so agencies provided services such as medical care and education. “Modern” medicine replaced their traditional methods.

Each tribe or confederacy of tribes governed itself. The tribes made their own laws and set the penalties for breaking those laws. They pro-

vided their own police forces and patrolled their own boundaries. Basically, each assigned tribal area was a separate nation, in much the same way that the U.S. and Mexico are separate nations. Still, the federal government exercised a certain amount of control through its distribution of goods and services. Though they were not citizens, the Indians depended on the U.S., regardless of whether they wanted to. The greater a tribe's need, the greater control the United States had.

This system was how the government first dealt with the Indians and moved the early tribes to reservations. *Reconstruction* treaties not only reduced Indian lands but also reduced Indian power. The nations of the Five Civilized Tribes were occupied by United States military, whose officers acted as administrators.

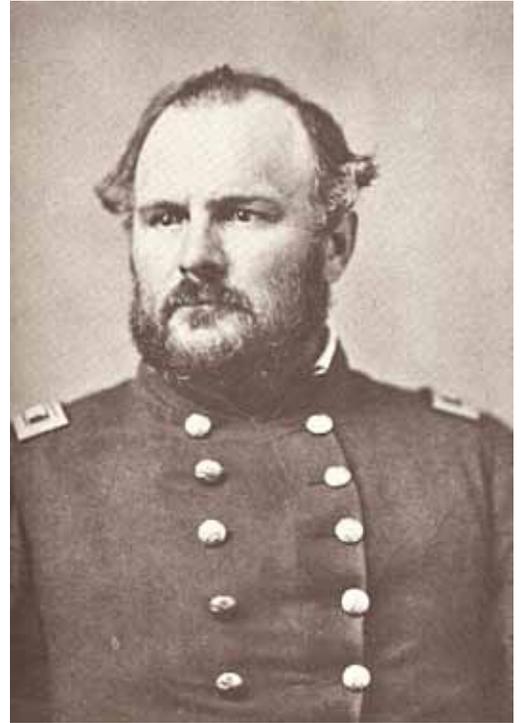
What was the Leased District? The U.S. had once leased a small portion of Indian Territory for settling certain local and western tribes. The Leased District housed the Wichitas, Caddoes, Delawares, Keechies, Anadarkoes, Ionies, and Wacoos, many of whom were from Texas. After the Civil War, the U.S. reserved the entire western half of Indian Territory for western tribes. It planned to remove them from the Western Plains and resettle them in the Leased District.

What happened at Sand Creek and how did the tribes retaliate? Two of these tribes were the Cheyenne and Arapaho. Five hundred of their members were camped at Sand Creek, Colorado, in 1864. Their chief, Black Kettle, kept an American flag from an official in Washington, D.C., who had said the flag would protect him.

At Sand Creek, Colonel John Chivington and seven hundred mounted, well-armed troops attacked the camp of sleeping Indians. Black Kettle hoisted his American flag, gathered his people under it, and told them to be unafraid. In addition, he hoisted the white flag of surrender.

But soldiers shot and killed Black Kettle's friend, White Antelope, and several others under the flag. Survivors fled to the Cheyenne camp at Smoky Hill, about fifty miles away. There they mourned their dead and held a war council.

These Indians lived far enough north that they rarely went to war in the winter. Yet in January of 1865, 1,600 Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Sioux attacked the supply depot at Julesburg, Colorado. Historian Angie Debo



Colonel John Chivington

described the troop as “the greatest mounted fighting men the world has ever seen.” They defeated the troops, gathered supplies, and returned to camp.

They then decided to go north to the Powder River country and make another raid. Black Kettle, though, was done with war. He took his people south to Indian Territory. There the Kiowas, Kiowa-Apaches, and Comanches received them warmly and gave them furnished lodges, horses, and equipment.

These southern tribesmen related their own problems. In November, at about the same time as the Sand Creek Massacre, Kit Carson had attacked the Plains tribes on the Canadian River in the Texas Panhandle. The Indians pushed the military back and moved to a new location in Indian Territory rather than continuing the war. There was some discussion of resuming the war in the spring, but Colonel Leavenworth, a reasonable leader, sent messages to the tribes urging them to keep the peace.

How did white officials react to the events at Sand Creek? In Washington, D.C., officials of the Department of the Interior were also urging peace. Meanwhile, officials of the Department of War still wanted to “punish” the Indians.

The public, for once outraged at atrocities against the Indians, protested the Sand Creek Massacre vigorously. Even Kit Carson was appalled. He warned of the possible *disastrous* results if a punishment policy continued. As a result, the Department of the Interior won the argument. In fact, the United States admitted war crimes against the Cheyenne and Arapaho.

What was the Medicine Lodge Peace Council? In October 1867, a peace council met at Medicine Lodge Creek in Kansas. Among the well-known Indian representatives were Satanta of the Kiowas, Wolf’s Sleeve of the Apaches, Ten Bears of the Comanches, and Black Kettle of the Southern Cheyenne. Among the federal dignitaries were Commissioner of Indian Affairs N.G. Taylor, Senator J.B. Sanborn, and General Alfred Terry. Several newspaper reporters were there as well as seven thousand Indians.

The commission warned that the buffalo were disappearing and that for survival the chiefs should take their people to reservations to learn to farm. Ten Bears replied, “I was born where there were no enclosures and where everything drew a free breath. I want to die there and not within walls.” Another time, Ten Bears said, “There has been trouble...

between us, and my young men have danced the war dance. But it was not begun by us. It was you who sent out the first soldier and we who sent out the second.”

Other chiefs expressed similar opinions, but their words fell on deaf ears. The commissioners had left Washington with instructions to accomplish three things:

1. Prevent Indian attacks on white emigrants and settlers;
2. Stop Indian wars by removing their causes; and
3. Convince Indians to become farmers and stockmen.

The peace commission was relentless, and finally the chiefs signed treaties agreeing to settle their people on reservations. It is likely that the Indians didn't fully understand the agreements. It is certain not all the young warriors were ready to become farmers.

What happened to the promises made by the Medicine Lodge treaties? The *Reconstruction* treaties of 1865 had already reduced tribal lands. The Medicine Lodge treaties of 1867 reduced them further in exchange for goods and services. Although the government was trying to keep peace with the Indians, the military stood in the background, ready to use force.

Unfortunately, the government did not deliver the goods and services it had promised. Some were merely delayed. Others were probably used by dishonest contractors and agents. Regardless of the cause, young warriors believed that the United States had broken the treaty and, therefore, the Indians were no longer bound by it. Many of them left the reservations and made their way north, looting and raiding on the way.

What kind of prejudice did Plains tribes face? By now tribes on the Plains were encountering the same kind of prejudice which had caused the removal of the southeastern tribes. A Topeka, Kansas, newspaper editor published a column in 1867 describing Kansas Indians as “a set of miserable, dirty, lousy, blanketed, thieving, lying, sneaking, murdering, graceless, faithless, gut-eating skunks...whose immediate and final extermination all men except Indian agents and traders should pray for.”

White buffalo hunters began to prowl the plains, killing buffaloes but taking only the hides and leaving the carcasses to rot. This angered many buffalo-hunting tribes, who depended on the animal for their

Do You Know?

The slogan, “Buckle of the Wheat Belt,” designates Kingfisher, Oklahoma. Kingfisher was the largest wheat market in America and is still perceived as such today.



The original site of the Battle of the Washita has now been reclaimed. A trail around the area starts at the visitors' center. The site is now under the supervision of the National Park Service.

livelihood and who used almost every part of the buffalo. The waste was shameful and buffalo herds grew smaller and smaller.

What happened when treaties were violated? White settlers pressed into tribal lands. Authorities would not or could not stop them. Almost before the ink was dry on some treaties, they wanted more tribal land reductions to satisfy its ever-moving frontier.

Angry Indians, who could not depend on government agents to protect their territories, *retaliated* against poachers. This brought the military to control “marauding Indians.” The summer of 1867 saw constant warring between the Army and the Kiowas, Comanches, Cheyennes, Arapahoes, and Apaches.

What was the Battle of the Washita? Chief Black Kettle of the Cheyenne and Arapaho had settled in Indian Territory in 1865. Three years later, Colonel George Armstrong Custer and the Seventh Cavalry attacked Black Kettle’s peaceful camp on the Washita River. Early on November 27, 1868, the troops virtually annihilated the unsuspecting Indians. They killed 102 warriors, many women and children, and a herd of 800 horses. Black Kettle was shot and killed as he fled on horseback across the Washita River.

As the 1860s closed, skirmishes between the army and the Indians continued. The army patrolled the reservations in western Indian Territory. Young Indian warriors slipped away to raid Texas and Kansas farms and ranches.

Plains? After relentless military pursuit and destruction of their economic base, the Northern Plains tribes were mostly quiet by the end of 1876. Northern Sioux and Cheyenne tribes were defeated. Sitting Bull and his followers had escaped to Canada, and Crazy Horse was killed in a supposed escape attempt.

The army had defeated the Modocs and Nez Percé. It had literally driven the Utes and Navajos from their homes to reservations outside Indian Territory. The Western Apaches, under Geronimo, were the last of the western tribes to be controlled.

Who was Geronimo? Geronimo, or He-Who-Yawns, was a peaceful man until he returned from a hunting trip to find that his wife and children had been murdered by white men. He vowed to kill ten white people for each of his children. He was joined by many young Apache warriors. They raided and destroyed white settlements in Arizona, New Mexico, and Mexico for ten years. Geronimo surrendered once and was sent to the Apache reservation. In a short time, however, he left the reservation, his followers with him. They resumed their raids and General Miles was sent to stop them in 1886.

Upon their capture, Geronimo's band was sent to prison in Florida, where many died. They were transferred then to Alabama, but the high death rate continued. Finally, in 1894, they were sent to Fort Sill. They remained there as prisoners of war until 1913, when the army released them from that status. At that time they were released from prisoner-of-war status. Some returned to the West. Others, including Geronimo, remained in Oklahoma.

What was "Americanization" and how was it accomplished? During the conquest of the Western and Plains tribes as well as the constant removal of the tribes of the Old Northwest, some tribes suffered great wrongs. Others were glad to leave the constant harassment from white neighbors. Some recovered well while others continued to suffer disease, poverty, and death. Some of those were allowed to return to their homelands, while others were forced to remain in Indian Territory. There seemed to be no particular method for government decisions.

One policy, though, seemed constant. The United States wanted the Indians to "Americanize." From the earliest colonial times all the way through the reservation era, it was the primary goal of the Anglo-Americans to make Christians and farmers of the Native Americans. Most whites did not see that inflicting cultural changes was humiliating and, in many ways, harmful.

The reservation Indians accepted their rations and learned to farm and raise livestock. If they resisted Americanization, agents withheld supplies. Schools punished Indian children who spoke native languages. Ministers and teachers criticized customs in tribal dress and hairstyles. Authorities tried to erase most, if not all, signs of native culture.

The Indians resisted *assimilation* for many reasons. They felt fond of their traditions. Their new lands did not always make good farms. The natives resented their captivity and distrusted white officials. They did not understand the white culture but had to accept it. Whites did not understand or accept Indian culture.

On the reservations, their resistance was quiet. Like the slaves of the pre-Civil War era, they resisted in subtle, nonviolent ways. They conformed only as much as they needed to survive. This did not result in military violence against them, but it frustrated federal officials.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the attempts of the Nez Percé to avoid removal.
2. What did the United States Government do to compensate the tribes for the large parcels of land ceded to the government?
3. What was the “Leased District” and how was it used?
4. How did the buffalo play a role in the hostilities between the Indians and the white men?
5. Who were the signing parties to the Treaty of Medicine Lodge Creek and what was the treaty to accomplish?
6. Describe the Sand Creek Massacre. Give the names of the leaders in the event.
7. Why did the government move the Nez Percé back to the Northwest?
8. Tell about the Battle of the Washita; be sure to include the names of the leaders in the event.
9. In your own words, summarize the efforts of the U.S. government to Americanize the native peoples.
10. In your own words, summarize reasons the native peoples resisted these efforts.

Do You Know?

Oklahoma’s state wildflower, the Indian Blanket, is red with yellow tips. It symbolizes the state’s scenic beauty as well as its Indian heritage. The wildflower blooms in June and July.