

The Aftermath

In the Indian Territory problems quickly developed among the new arrivals and Cherokees who had already settled, especially as reprisals were taken against the contingent who had signed the Treaty of New Echota. As these problems were resolved, the Cherokees proceeded to adapt to their new homeland, and they reestablished their own system of government, which was modeled on that of the United States.

Tribal government was headquartered in Tahlequah and adhered to a constitution that divided responsibilities among an elected principal chief, an elected legislature known as the National Council, and a supreme court with lesser courts. Local districts with elected officials, similar to counties, formed the basis of the nation. The Cherokees maintained a bilingual school system, and missionaries from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions were active in the nation.

This autonomy remained reasonably strong until the Civil War, when a faction of the Cherokees sided with the Confederacy. During Reconstruction they suffered a loss of self-government and, more importantly, their land base. Government annuities were reduced, and lands were sold to newly arrived tribes. Cessions of land continued during the later 19th century, and the federal government emerged as the major force for land cession under the Dawes Act of 1887, which divided up tribal lands. The establishment of the state of Oklahoma in 1907 increased pressure for land cessions. Many people of questionable Cherokee ancestry managed to get on the tribal rolls and participate in the allotment of these lands to individuals. By the early 1970s the western Cherokees had lost title to over 19 million acres of land.

Difficult times continued because of the effects of the 1930s depression and the government policy to relocate Indians from tribal areas to urban America. Many Cherokees found themselves in urban slums with a lack of basic needs. Differences also emerged between traditionalists and those who adapted to mainstream society. During the 1970s and after, however, the Cherokees' situation improved because of self rule and economic programs.

Throughout the years, the Cherokees have sought to maintain much of their cultural identity. To increase public awareness of their heritage, many of them have advocated the designation of the Trail of Tears as a national historic trail.

<https://nationaltota.com/trail#History>

CONSTITUTION OF THE CHEROKEE NATION 1999

We, the People of the Cherokee Nation, in order to preserve our sovereignty, enrich our culture, achieve and maintain a desirable measure of prosperity and the blessings of freedom, acknowledging with humility and gratitude the goodness, aid and guidance of the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe in permitting us to do so, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the government of the Cherokee Nation.