

# Muscogee or Mvskoke Tribe

## English name: Creek Tribe

<http://www.muscogeenation-nsn.gov/Pages/History/history.html>

### **Background**

- The Mvskoke have always been in the Traditional Homelands in the Southeast for thousands of years. Spanish explorers traveling in the region were impressed by the good looking people, large towns, and prosperous country sides.
- Archeological time periods: Swift Creek through Mississippian Period: 100AD – mid/late 1500's AD.
- Swift Creek/Woodland Period: moundbuilding begins; complicated stamped pottery/ceramics.
- Mississippian Moundbuilders: shell gorgets, shell-tempered ceramic-ware, copperware, and complex sedentary villages.
- Coosa Chiefdom

### **The Creek Confederacy**

- From chiefdoms to *tv/wv*
- Mother towns/Daughter towns
- Red towns/white towns
- In the 1700's Europeans started calling the Mvskoke , Creeks, because they resided near rivers, streams, and creeks.

### **Features of a Historic Creek Town:**

- A town square that consisted of an open area surrounded by terraces or banks was representative of the Creek's ability to incorporate culture into the design.
- A circular mound topped with a rotunda.
- A square terrace upon which a public square stood.

Residential buildings in Creek towns mirrored the organization of the public square. Family plots consisted of small compounds of up to four houses enclosing a courtyard, with the number of houses depending upon the size of the family. The Creeks had large fields of corn, beans, squash and other vegetables

### **Locations of Mvskoke Towns**

- Upper Creeks: Lived along rivers in Alabama. Many Ft. Toulouse and supported the Coosa and Tallapoosa Upper Towns were close to the French.
- Lower Creeks: Lived along rivers in Georgia. Many Florida and were friendly to the Flint and Chattahoochee Lower Towns were close to the Spanish.

### **Social Structure: Matrilineality and Clans**

- Women were considered heads of the household. Within Creek society women held a most prominent place.
- Females as the head of household owned the houses and land.
- The towns consisted of groups of houses owned by women. Their daughters built houses on family land or nearby after they were married. Creek clans were dispersed through several communities, with each town containing members of several clans. Clan identity influenced where members lived, as clan members' houses were generally located together in a household group. (See Appendix for a list of Clans.)

### **Creek Trading**

- 1540 Hernando de Soto invaded Muscogee lands and was followed by numerous other explorers, traders, and settlers. Europeans brought deadly diseases such as small pox, measles, and plague.
- 1600's the Muscogees adopted horses, guns, metal utensils, and cloth.
- Trade with the English began around 1670 with the settlers at Charles Town. Creeks traded captives and deerskins for European goods.
- When the slave trade was outlawed in the colonies, focus shifted to deerskins.
- Trade soon developed between the Creek and English, French, and Spanish.
- To promote diplomacy, the Creeks agreed to friendly relations with all three of their trading partners: England, France, and Spain. Creek tribal leaders established commerce with their neighbors to build the tribe's economy.

### **Treaty Land Cessions**

- 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 as possible.
- Other nation's 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 doth by ancient right belong to the Creek Nation.
- A Treaty is a binding instrument by parties with treaty making powers governed by international law.
- 3 assumptions for Indian Treaties
  - Both parties to treaties were sovereign powers
  - Indian tribes have some form of transferable title to the land quite often referred to as aboriginal title

- Acquisition of Indian lands was solely a governmental matter
- The Federal Government in its first Treaty with the Creeks—the Treaty of New York 1790 guaranteed Creek claim to their land—promised protection against Georgian encroachment (See Appendix for facsimile of the 1790 Treaty). Land cessions of 1783, 1785, and 1786 were approved in this Treaty (See Appendix for Land Cessions by 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. To effect this change, however, required that the towns relinquish their control over the political and cultural life.

#### **Outside Influences**

- Treaty of 1796 allowed the U.S. to establish trading or military posts in set boundary lines with Choctaws and Chickasaws. All total during an 81 year period, 18 Treaties were ratified between the U.S. and the Creek Nation.
- Treaty of 1802 allowed for Garrisons to be established on Creek lands and the Treaty of Washington 1805 established boundaries, a military post and a road from Ocmulgee to Mobile. Lands were ceded under both Treaties.
- To preserve their Traditional existence, Creeks emulated their white neighbors 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 Muscogeans. Individualism, cash crops, and the steel plow were introduced to Creek families in the 1790's.
- 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 was a precursor to the conflict between the Creeks and Andrew Jackson.

#### **The Effects of War**

- Red Stick War 1813-14. The more traditional Creeks were against the new life that was being introduced. Encroachment of the Whites 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). In defending their homelands Creek warrior patriots exhibited great bravery.
- Red Sticks battle General Andrew Jackson at Horseshoe Bend (Alabama). The outnumbered force of Red Sticks unsuccessfully defended their encampment against the Tennessee Militia and Cherokees. That day over 1000 Red Sticks were lost to the battle defending their homeland. As a matter of vengeance 22 million acres of land, what was determined to be equivalent to the expenses of the war, was ceded to the U.S. under the Treaty of Ft. Jackson in 1814.
- Some early Treaties dealt primarily with land cessions such as, the Treaties of 1818 and 1821.
- The Muscogeans 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 Muscogean lands in Georgia and 2/3 of their Alabama lands in return for new land in what is now Oklahoma. McIntosh was executed under N.C. laws. A new Treaty of Washington-1826 declared the 1825 Treaty null and void and ceded Georgia lands. The remaining lands in the Creek Nation were ceded in the Treaty of 1827.

#### **Forced Removal**

- 1830 U.S. Congress passed the Indian Removal Act. A 2<sup>nd</sup> Treaty of Washington ceded AL lands and dividing the remaining lands between Creeks who did not want to join McIntosh's group in I.T.
- Forbidden by Georgia state law for Indians to testify in court, the Muscogeans were legally powerless to protect their lands.
- In 1827-38 approximately 23,000 tribal members were forcibly marched on the 1,200-mile painful journey to Indian Territory—an estimated 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 final removal took place in the winter of 1838 when 500 Creek families were forced to leave their homes.

#### **Forced Removal cont'd.**

- 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.
- Even though each and every Creek encountered great tragedy and trauma during the Removal to Indian Territory, they remained courageous and hopeful that the new land would bring peace for them. The Creek identity remained strong through this ordeal that brought enormous personal loss—the Creek spirit was not broken.

#### **Tribal Constitution**

- 1979—The Nation adopted a new constitution under the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act.
- The New Muscogean (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 Muscogean Creek Nation since 1867.
- The Principal Chief has the authority to appoint an Election Board, Supreme Court members, College of the Muscogean 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, Article V, Section 4., Principal Chiefs are required to present a State of the Nation Address each year. For an example of an entire State of the

Nation Address see Appendix. Excerpts are included in the section on the Principal Chief Bill Fife Administration. In addition, an audio clip of Chief Tiger's State of the Nation Address are included in the section related to his Administration.

- 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 Operations**

- In the year 2012, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation operated a \$200 plus million dollar budget, with over 3,500 employees, has tribal facilities and programs in all eight districts of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and has a service population exceeding 74,500 enrolled tribal citizens.
- The Administrative support office allows the Principal Chief to spend his time in a leadership role versus a day to day administrative role.
- The National Council, in its role as the legislative body holds regularly scheduled committee meetings and meets as a full council on a monthly basis.