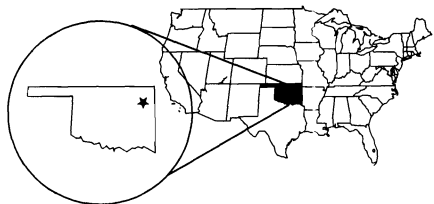


## CHEROKEE



The modern Cherokee nation has more enrolled members than any other in the United States. The term Cherokee was probably given to them by their neighbors, the Creeks, who called them *Tciloki*, meaning “people of a different speech”. They called themselves *Ani Yun Wiy* or “Real People” (ENAT, 43-48).

The Cherokee people are now located in two distinct regions reflecting their history under the United States. Most are in Oklahoma, while the small Eastern Band of Cherokee [see Cherokee—Eastern Band] remains in North Carolina and Tennessee, their traditional homeland.

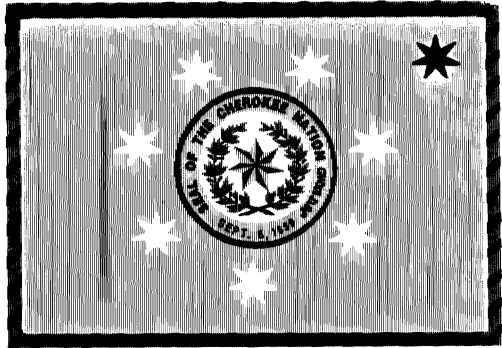
In 1830, when President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act which displaced all Indians in the Southeast to what is now Oklahoma, the Cherokee were an advanced nation living in towns and cities, having a written constitution, and printing newspapers in their own language. The great Cherokee chief, Sequoya, had invented the script which became the first Indian language in written form. While some feared the Cherokee would actually take steps to become a truly independent nation on the western boundaries of the United States, the primary motivation for their removal was to obtain Cherokee lands in Georgia, the Carolinas, Tennessee, and Alabama.

The eviction of the Cherokee people and their relocation to Oklahoma has become known as the “Trail of Tears”. The Federal government’s treatment of the Cherokee and other tribes in the 1830s bore bitter fruit thirty years later when all five of the “Civilized Tribes” (the Cherokee, the Chickasaw, the Choctaw, the Muskogee or Creek, and the Seminole) allied with the Confederate States of America and fought in the Civil War against the Union.

The western Cherokee, based in Oklahoma, use an orange flag (sample flag provided by the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma,

Tahlequah, Oklahoma) bearing the tribal seal (Annin & Co.). In the seal's center is a single seven-pointed star, each point divided in half, one side yellow, the other orange. This star recalls the seven original clans of the Cherokee people. Around it is an oak wreath in orange and green, the oak symbolizing the sacred eternal fire kindled from its wood. The star and wreath lie on a gray circle. Ringing this central circle is an orange band bearing "SEAL OF THE CHEROKEE NATION" in both English and Cherokee script. In Cherokee, it is pronounced *Tsa la gi yi A ye hli*, meaning "The Cherokee Nation" (from a postcard, *Seal of the Cherokee Nation*). At the base of the orange ring is "SEPT. 6, 1839", the date of the constitution of the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma. The seal is edged in green.

Beyond the seal is a ring of seven yellow seven-pointed stars, for the seven original clans. These stars also recall the seven holidays in the Cherokee life cycle and the seven sacred rites of the native Cherokee religion. The stars are oriented so that each has one point aiming toward the central seal. Edging the entire flag is a border of green and black diagonal stripes similar to the rope-like border frequently found around a seal. The flag was designed by Stanley John (*Cherokee Advocate*, Aug. 1978), a full-blooded Navajo and husband of a member of the Cherokee nation. It was approved by the Tribal Council on 9 October 1978 and officially raised over tribal headquarters on 30 September 1979 (*Cherokee Advocate*, Sept. 1979).

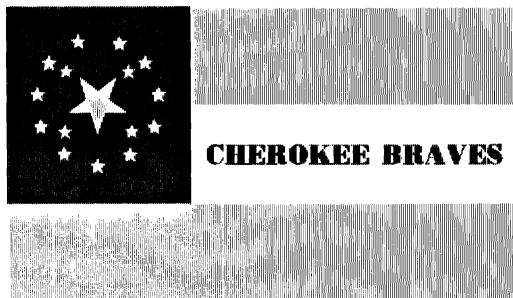


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A resolution of the Cherokee Council on 9 September 1989 added a single black seven-pointed star to the upper right corner (Cherokee Council Resolution #73-89). This star is a constant reminder of the Cherokee who lost their lives during the terrible ordeal recalled each year in *Tahlequah*, the "Trail of Tears".

The earliest documented Cherokee flag is that of the Cherokee Brigade. This flag was presented to Principal Chief John Ross on 7 October 1861, by the Confederate Indian Commissioner, Albert Pike. A similar flag has been attributed to the First Cherokee Mounted Rifles, possibly pointing to the base design as a *de facto* national flag for the Cherokee Nation (Devereaux D. Cannon Jr., *The Flags of the Confederacy, An Illustrated History* [Memphis, Tennessee: St. Luke's Press & Broadfoot Publishing, 1988], 64).

The Cherokee Brigade flag was based on the first Confederate national flag of three horizontal stripes of red-white-red and a blue canton (rectangle in the upper left) bearing a ring of eleven white stars. The Cherokee added a large red star in the center



of the ring and surrounded it with four smaller red stars. The five additional stars stood for the five “Civilized Tribes”, while the large one represented the Cherokees. “CHEROKEE BRAVES” appears in red on the white stripe.

The Cherokee are also reported to have a flag bearing seven red seven-pointed stars (FBUS, 254-255). This flag, called a “peace flag”, was used in ceremonies marking the Cherokee national holiday on 7 September 1968. The Cherokee Peace Flag is symbolic in both color and design. The red stars stand for victory and success, while the white background represents peace and happiness. The seven points of each star recall the seven clans of the Cherokee people. The stars are arranged in the pattern of the constellation *Yonegwa* (*Ursa Major*, the Big Dipper). According to Cherokee history, the peace flag was carried by the Cherokee along the “Trail of Tears”. Before that journey began, the Cherokee War Flag was buried with a hatchet. The “War Flag” is of unknown design. ☛

[Special thanks to NAVA member Devereaux Cannon for detailed