
Texas Cherokees

Tsalagiya Nvdagi (ᏄᏍᏏᏉ ᏌᏉᏍᏏ) is the Cherokee Language term for **Texas Cherokees**. Prior to the Trail of Tears, some bands of Cherokees fled west to avoid white encroachment.

History

In 1807 an early band of Cherokees, most likely migrating south from the Arkansaw area of the Louisiana Territory, founded a village along the Red River. That same year, an inter-tribal delegation, including Cherokees, petitioned the Spanish officials at Nacogdoches for permission to settle there, which was granted. Cherokee immigration into Texas increased between 1812 and 1819. The Republic of Texas, following Sam Houston's recommendations, established a reservation for Cherokees, but the negotiated Treaty of 1836 was never formally ratified.^[1]

The Bowl, a former Chickamauga chief, led many Cherokee families into Texas in 1820. They settled near present-day Dallas but were forced by local tribes to move south into what is now Rusk County, Texas. By 1822, an estimated 800 Cherokees lived in Texas.^[1]

When Texas passed from Spanish to Mexican governance, Cherokees petitioned the new Mexican authorities for formal land grants but were denied. In 1830, an estimated 800 Cherokees lived in three to seven settlements in Texas. When the Texas Revolution came, Cherokees tried to remain neutral.^[1]

While Sam Houston, previously married into the Cherokee tribe, sought an alliance with Cherokees while he served as President of Texas, his successor, Mirabeau Lamar forcibly removed the Cherokees from their Texas lands in the Cherokee War of 1839. Almost 600 hundred Cherokees, mostly women and children, led by Chief Bowl, fought the Texans, were defeated and the Bowl was killed in the battle. Most of the remaining Texas Cherokees were driven north into Indian Territory. Houston once again was elected President of Texas and negotiated peace treaties with the remaining Texas Cherokees in 1843 and 1844.^[1]

During the American Civil War, many Cherokees fled the fighting in Indian Territory by moving south to Texas.^[1]

From the 1840s on, the original Cherokee Nation sought compensation for the lands they lost in Texas. William Penn Adair was a staunch advocate for the claims of Texas Cherokees.^[1]

Legal Status

Several groups of self-identified Cherokee descent have organized but are not recognized by the state of Texas or the federal government of the US, though Tsalagiya Nvdagi is recognized by three states in Mexico^[2] and have a longstanding relationship with The Cherokee Nation of Mexico,^[3] which is recognized by The Republic of Mexico.

The Texas Cherokees and Associate Bands (TCAB) have a longstanding relationship to the current Cherokee Nation. Prior to 1975, they were considered a part of the Cherokee Nation, as reflected in briefs filed before the Indian Claims Commission. At one time W.W. Keeler served not only as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, but at the same time held the position as Chairman of the TCAB Executive Committee.

Following the adoption of the Cherokee constitution in 1976, TCAB descendants whose ancestors had remained a part of the physical Mount Tabor Community in Rusk County, Texas were excluded from citizenship. Their ancestors did not appear on the Final Rolls of the Five Civilized Tribes, registered under the Dawes Commission. However, most if not all TCAB descendants did have an ancestor listed on the Guion-Miller or Old Settler rolls.

While most Mount Tabor residents returned to the Cherokee Nation following the death of John Ross in 1866, today there is a sizable group that is well documented but outside that body. It is not actively seeking a status clarification. They do have treaty rights going back to the Treaty of Bird's Fort. From the end of the Civil War until 1975, they were associated with the Cherokee Nation. The TCAB formed as a political organization in 1871 led by William Penn Adair and Clement Neely Vann. Descendants of the Texas Cherokees and the Mount Tabor Community joined

together to try to gain redress from treaty violations, stemming from the Treaty of Bowles Village in 1836. Today, most Mount Tabor descendants are in fact members of the Cherokee Nation. Only approximately 800 are not enrolled members of a Cherokee tribe. Many of them still reside in Rusk and Smith counties of east Texas.

Each Texas Cherokee organization claims only they are legitimate and others fraudulent. For instance, The Sovereign Cherokee Nation Tejas (SCNT), led by William M. Fry Jr. a.k.a. Chief Bear-who-walks-softly accused Tsalagiysi Nvdagi chief Chief D. L. "Pappy" Hicks^[4] of being a con artist, yet, the SCNT has been indicted for fraudulence on several fronts.^{[5][6][7]}

Still, many Texas Cherokee today are not part of any organization, and the number of Texas Cherokee individuals is difficult to trace since many hid in the deep Piney Woods as Black Dutch or Black Irish to escape prejudice, death, and persecution. A few moved back into Arkansas territory as well. In many ways their situation is analogous to that of Melungeons.

Notable Texas Cherokees

- The Bowl (d. 1813), Cherokee chief and military leader
- Jesse Bartley Milam (1884–1949), Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation from 1941–1949
- W. W. Keeler (1908–1987), Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation from 1949–1975

Notes

- [1] Lipscomb, Carol A. "The Cherokee Indians." (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/CC/bmc51.html>) *Handbook of Texas History*. (retrieved 26 March 2010)
- [2] Hicks, D. L. "Tsalagi Tsunalugi." (http://www.texascherokees.org/TSALAGI_TSUNALUGI_News.pdf) *Tsalagiysi Nvdagi Newsletter* (retrieved 22 June 2010)
- [3] Rogers, Jahtlohi "Recognition of the Cherokee Nation of Mexico." (<http://www.cherokeediscovery.com/cnmrecognition.html>) (retrieved 22 June 2010)
- [4] Cox, John H. "Patriotism runs deep within Troupe's D.L. Hicks." (http://www.tricountyleader.com/news/2006-07-06/front_page/005.html) *TriCounty Leader July 6, 2006* (retrieved 22 June 2010)
- [5] Garrouette, Eva Marie. 2003. "Real Indians: identity and the survival of Native America." (http://books.google.com/books?id=TLAJCMI8KNUC&pg=PA26&dq=cherokee+nation+tejas&hl=en&ei=ankgTL-LNIL78Aa9jMFp&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCsQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=cherokee+nation+tejas&f=false) University of California Press, pages 26-27
- [6] Reeves, Phil "Briton held over 33m pounds fictitious tribe plot." (<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/briton-held-over-33m-pounds-fictitious-tribe-plot-1479241.html>) *The Independent Jan 18 1993* (retrieved 22 June 2010)
- [7] Lipscomb, Abshire "No payoff in plan for Indian casino in Kaufman County." (http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/localnews/stories/DN-cherokeecasino_18met.ART1.North.Edition1.36b523c.html) *Dallas News Nov 18 2007* (retrieved 22 June 2010)

Further reading

- Everett, Dianna (1995). *The Texas Cherokees: A people between two fires, 1819-1840*. University of Oklahoma Press. ISBN 0-8061-2720-1.
- Clark, Mary Whatley (2001). *Chief Bowles and Texas Cherokees*. University of Oklahoma Press. ISBN 0-8061-3436-4.
- Mooney, James (2005). *Historical Sketch of the Cherokee*. Aldine Transaction. ISBN 0-202-30817-0.

External links

- Article from Chronicles of Oklahoma 1923, Volume 1, No. 3 (<http://digital.library.okstate.edu/chronicles/v001/v001p179.html>)
 - A Brief History: The Texas Cherokee (<http://www.texfiles.com/features/chokeee.htm>), by Ira Kennedy
 - The Cherokee Cultural Society of Houston (<http://www.texascherokees.org>), a cultural organization
 - TCAB (<http://www.nationoftexas.com/exhibits/ex-46a.html>), page explaining the policy of the Texas Cherokee and Associated Bands
 - Tsalagiyi Nvdagi (<http://www.texascherokees.org/>), Tsalagiyi Nvdagi Home Page
 - NW Tsalagiyi Nvdagi (<http://www.nwtsalagiyinvdagi.com/>), Northwest Tsalagiyi Nvdagi (affiliated with Tsalagiyi Nvdagi)
 - SCNT (<http://www.texascherokeenation.org/>), Sovereign Cherokee Nation Tejas Home Page
 - Cherokee Nation Mexico (<http://www.cherokeediscovery.com/>), Cherokee Nation of Mexico Home Page
 - Ethnohistory of the Western Cherokees in Texas by Dianna Everett (Ph.D. Dissertation) PDF (<http://etd.lib.ttu.edu/theses/available/etd-03252009-31295003904892/unrestricted/31295003904892.pdf>)
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