

CHEROKEE NATION

Tribal Headquarters: Tahlequah, OK



A brief history

The Cherokee had an advanced culture and a governmental structure with many democratic features that thrived for thousands of years in the southeastern United States before European contact. After contact, Cherokee society continued to evolve. In the 1830's, when gold was discovered in Georgia, the young U.S. Government and settlers wanted the Cherokee homelands and resources. Thousands of Cherokee men, women and children were rounded up and marched 1,000 miles to Indian Territory (Oklahoma), in what has become known as the *Trail of Tears*.

In Indian Territory (I.T.), the Cherokee soon rebuilt a democratic form of government, churches, built schools, several newspapers and many businesses. They adopted a new constitution in 1839. Tahlequah, the new Cherokee capital, and nearby Park Hill, became hubs of business activity and centers of cultural activity. The first newspaper in Oklahoma was printed in the Cherokee alphabet developed by Sequoyah. Today, the Cherokee Nation is the second largest tribe in the United States with more than 200,000 members. Its territory extends to 14 counties in eastern Oklahoma

About the flag

The Cherokee had a number of flags over the years, including one with seven white stars in the shape of the big dipper on a red background, which was later reversed in color and called the "Peace Flag" which is said to have traveled with them on the Trail of Tears.

In 1979 a new flag was raised over the tribal headquarters in Tahlequah. The flag features the Tribal Seal on an orange background edged by a green and black rope-like border. Seven yellow seven-pointed stars surround the seal arranged in such a way so that each star points toward the center seal. The stars recall the seven clans, the seven holidays in the Cherokee life cycle and the seven sacred religious rites.

At the center of the Seal on a grey background is a seven pointed star (each point half yellow and half orange). A green and orange oak wreath, a symbol of the eternal fire which is kindled by oak, surrounds the seal. The black lettering circling the seal is "Tsa la gi yi A ye hli" meaning "The Cherokee Nation." In 1989, a single black seven-pointed star was added to the upper right in memory of those who lost their lives during the Trail of Tears.

Educational Activity

Seven is a significant number in many cultures. Find out what other groups view the number as important. Are these reasons similar to the Cherokee? How are they different?