

Native American Tribes of the Southeast: The Cherokee

Introduction

The Cherokee Nation is a **sovereign** tribe who are governed under their own constitution that was adopted in 1839. They are currently the largest tribe in the United States with more than 450,000 tribal citizens. They have a rich history and culture that has been kept alive through the continuous efforts of the Cherokee Nation.

Where did they live?

Before the arrival of the European settlers, the Cherokee people lived in **the Southeastern United States**. Today, this area includes the states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee.

What were their homes like?

The Cherokee lived in homes made from **wattle and daub**. The walls of the homes were made with tree logs covered in mud and grass, and the roofs were made of thatch or bark.

What did they eat?

The Cherokee farmed, hunted, and gathered for their food. They farmed corn, **squash**, beans, and other vegetables, and hunted game such as deer, rabbits, turkeys, and even bears. They cooked a variety of food, such as stews and cornbread.

How did they travel?

The Cherokee used trails to travel by land and **canoes** to travel by river between villages. They made these canoes by hollowing out large tree logs.

What did they believe?

The Cherokee were religious and believed in **spirits**, and often performed ceremonies to ask these spirits for guidance. They would hold ceremonies before going to battle, leaving on a hunt, and when trying to heal the sick. **The Green Corn Ceremony** was their largest celebration, and was held to thank the spirits for their harvest of corn.

What were their villages like?

Thirty to fifty families typically made up a single village. Each village would be part of a larger Cherokee clan. These clans were **matrilineal**, meaning you attained clanship through your mother. The women were responsible for the house, farming, and the family, while the men were responsible for hunting and **war**. Each Cherokee village had **two** chiefs. The "White Chief" would lead during times of peace and the "Red Chief" would lead during times of war.

Directions: Use the bold words in the reading passage to answer the following questions.

1. What were Cherokee homes made from? _____
2. Three vegetables that the Cherokee farmed were corn, _____, and beans.
3. In which area did the Cherokee people live before the Europeans arrived? _____
4. What was the largest ceremony in that the Cherokee held? _____
5. The Cherokee believed in _____ and would perform ceremonies to ask them for guidance.
6. The Cherokee Nation is a _____ tribe who are governed under their own constitution.
7. What did the Cherokee use to travel the rivers in the area? _____
8. The Cherokee men were responsible for hunting and _____.
9. The Cherokee clans were _____, which means they attained clanship through their mother.
10. How many chiefs did each Cherokee village have? _____