

# The Trail Where They Cried

The Cherokee Nation once spread across Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Alabama. It was home to thousands of men, women, and children. The 1830 Indian Removal Act required that the Cherokee surrender their land and move west. Most opposed giving up their land and refused to move.

In the spring of 1838, soldiers established forts and camps across the Cherokee homeland and swiftly rounded up every Cherokee they could find. The Cherokee knew this was coming, and chose to resist removal by waiting in their homes to be forcefully evicted by militias. In the camps, they suffered from exposure, disease epidemics, inadequate sanitation, and heartbreak, remaining prisoners in the camps until their final deportation to the West.

*“The soldiers came and took us from home. They first surrounded our house and they took the mare while we were at work in the fields and they drove us out of doors and did not permit us to take anything with us, not even a second change of clothes. . . They marched us to Ross’ Landing, and still on foot, even our little children, and they sent us off.”*

Oo-loo-cha, widow of Sweet Water, 1842

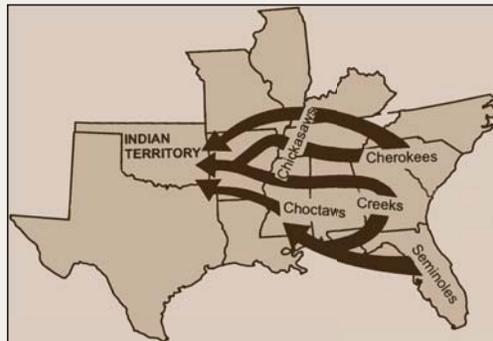


“This is My Home” by Dorothy Sullivan

## Federal Indian Removal Policy

Federal Indian removal policy aroused fierce and bitter debate. Supporters of the policy claimed it was a benevolent action to save the tribes east of the Mississippi River from being overwhelmed and lost in the onslaught of an expanding American population. Opponents decried its inhumanity and the tragic consequences it had for the Indian peoples. One thing was certain; removal freed millions of acres of desired Indian lands for use by white settlers.

The Indian Removal Act of 1830 resulted in the removal of thousands of American Indians from their ancestral lands for new homes in Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). They traveled by existing roads and rivers. Many groups left in the fall, hoping to avoid the disease and heat of summer travel, and instead faced treacherous winter weather. Many died during the ordeal of the Trail of Tears.



In the 1830s, the federal government forcibly removed approximately 16,000 Cherokee, 21,000 Muscogee (Creek), 9,000 Choctaw, 6,000 Chickasaw, and 4,000 Seminole from their ancestral homes in the southeastern United States.

## Today

Despite the hardships of the journey, members of the five removed tribes established new lives in the West. They stand as successful sovereign cultural nations, proudly preserving cultural traditions, while adapting to the challenges of the 21st century.

Cherokee who survived the Trail of Tears created a new sovereign nation in present-day Oklahoma. Some Cherokee remained in North Carolina and, due to a special exemption, formed the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

## Trail of Tears National Historic Trail



By helping to preserve historic sites and trail segments, and developing areas for public use, the story of the forced removal of the Cherokee people and other American Indian tribes is remembered and told by the National Park Service and its partners.

**You can visit more sites along the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail.**

Learn more at [www.nps.gov/trte](http://www.nps.gov/trte)