

# Oklahoma Indian Education Tribal Guide: The Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma

## Tribal Seal/Flag/Website

Tribal Seal:



Tribal Flag:



Tribal Website: <http://www.c-a-tribes.org/>



## Migration/Movement/Forced Removal

The Cheyenne and Arapaho people formed an alliance together around 1811 which helped them expand their territories and strengthen their presence on the plains. Like the Cheyenne, the Arapaho language is part of the Algonquian group, although the two languages are not mutually intelligible. The Arapaho remained strong allies with the Cheyenne and helped them fight alongside the Sioux during Red Cloud's War and the Great Sioux War of 1876, also known commonly as the Black Hills War. On the southern plains the Arapaho and Cheyenne allied with the Comanche, Kiowa, and Plains Apache to fight invading settlers and U.S. soldiers. The Arapaho were present with the Cheyenne at the Sand Creek Massacre when a peaceful encampment of mostly women, children, and the elderly were attacked and massacred by US soldiers.

Both major divisions of the Cheyenne, the Northern Cheyenne and Southern Cheyenne were allies to the Arapaho, who like the Cheyenne, are split into northern and southern divisions. The Southern Cheyenne and Southern Arapaho were assigned to the same reservation in Oklahoma Indian Territory and remained together as the federally recognized Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes after the reservation was opened to American settlement and into modern times. The Northern Arapaho were to be assigned a reservation of their own or share one with the Cheyenne however the government failed to provide them with either and placed them on the already established Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming with their former enemies the Shoshone.

### Arapaho

According to the tradition of the Arapaho, they were once a sedentary, agricultural people, living far to the northeast of their more recent habitat, apparently about the Red River Valley of northern Minnesota. From this point they moved southwest across the Missouri, apparently about the same time that the Cheyenne moved out from Minnesota, although the date of the formation of the permanent alliance between the two tribes is uncertain.

The Atsina (q. v.), afterward associated with the Siksika, appear to have separated from the parent tribe and moved off toward the north after their emergence into the plains. The division into Northern and Southern Arapaho is largely geographic, originating within the last century, and made permanent by the placing of the two bands on different reservations. The Northern Arapaho, in Wyoming, are considered the nucleus or mother tribe and retain the sacred tribal articles, viz, a tubular pipe, one ear of corn, and a turtle figurine, all of stone.

Since they crossed the Missouri the drift of the Arapaho, as of the Cheyenne and Sioux, has been west and south, the Northern Arapaho making lodges on the edge of the mountains about the head of the North



Platte, while the Southern Arapaho continued down toward the Arkansas. About the year 1840 they made peace with the Sioux, Kiowa, and Comanche, but were always at war with the Shoshoni, Ute, and Pawnee until they were confined upon reservations, while generally maintaining a friendly attitude toward the whites. By the treaty of Medicine Lodge in 1867 the southern Arapaho, together with the Southern Cheyenne, were placed upon a reservation in Oklahoma, which was thrown open to white settlement in 1892, the Indians at the same time receiving allotments in severalty, with the rights of American citizenship. The Northern Arapaho were assigned to their present reservation on Wind River in Wyoming in 1876, after having made peace with their hereditary enemies, the Shoshoni, living upon the same reservation. The Atsina division, usually regarded as a distinct tribe, is associated with the Assiniboin on Fort Belknap Reservation in Montana. They numbered, respectively, 889, 859, and 535 in 1904, a total of 2,283, as against a total of 2,038 ten years earlier.

As a people the Arapaho are brave, but kindly and accommodating, and much given to ceremonial observances. The annual sun dance is their greatest tribal ceremony, and they were active propagators of the ghost-dance religion a few years ago. In arts and home life, until within a few years past, they were a typical plains tribe. They bury their dead in the ground, unlike the Cheyenne and Sioux, who deposit them upon scaffolds or on the surface of the ground in boxes. They have the military organization common to most of the Plains tribes and have no trace of the clan system.

## **Cheyenne**

The Cheyenne Indians were far-ranging people, especially once they acquired horses. By the time the Americans met them they were living on the Great Plains in what is now South Dakota, Wyoming, Nebraska, Colorado, and Kansas. The Cheyenne have been really historically known to be coming from the Great Lakes Region area. That was their traditional ancestral homelands. As at the beginnings we were known to be farmers - horticultural people. We planted squash and beans and lived on different plants in the Great Lakes regional area. There are some accounts that are different or similar in regards to scholarly written materials, but most of our Cheyenne history, our oral historical accounts, are related through oral stories. The U.S. government forced the Cheyennes to move to Oklahoma during the 1800's, but some escaped and fled north into Montana. Today there are two Cheyenne tribes, one in Oklahoma and the other in Montana.

Oklahoma Historical Society source to consider for Indian Removal information:  
<http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/i/in015.html>



The Library of Congress documents:

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/Indian.html>

Oklahoma Indian Country Guide, Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department, pg 8

[http://s3.amazonaws.com/content.newsok.com/newsok/images/NIE/nie\\_docs/Indian%20Country%20Tab,%2036%20page.pdf](http://s3.amazonaws.com/content.newsok.com/newsok/images/NIE/nie_docs/Indian%20Country%20Tab,%2036%20page.pdf)

## Maps

### Original Homelands

The original Arapahoe homeland is to the northeast/central region: Colorado; Wyoming; Minnesota; Nebraska; Kansas.

The Arapahoe are considered to be buffalo hunters of the plains but also have traditions of a time when they lived in the east and planted corn. The Arapaho, numbering in all about 1800, live in two divisions. The larger body lives with the Cheyenne in Oklahoma, while the northern division resides with the Shoshoni on a reservation in Wyoming. The Grosventres of Montana, formerly associated with the Blackfeet and numbering now about 700, are a detached band of Arapaho.

The homeland for the Cheyenne occupied the Dakotas, Wyoming, Nebraska, Colorado, and Kansas. The Cheyenne followed the buffalo herds throughout the Great Plains. Living in teepees allowed the tribe to pack quickly and move from place to place using sleds, called *travois*, pulled by dogs or horses. The Cheyenne relied primarily on buffalo and traded with other tribes using Plains Sign Language.



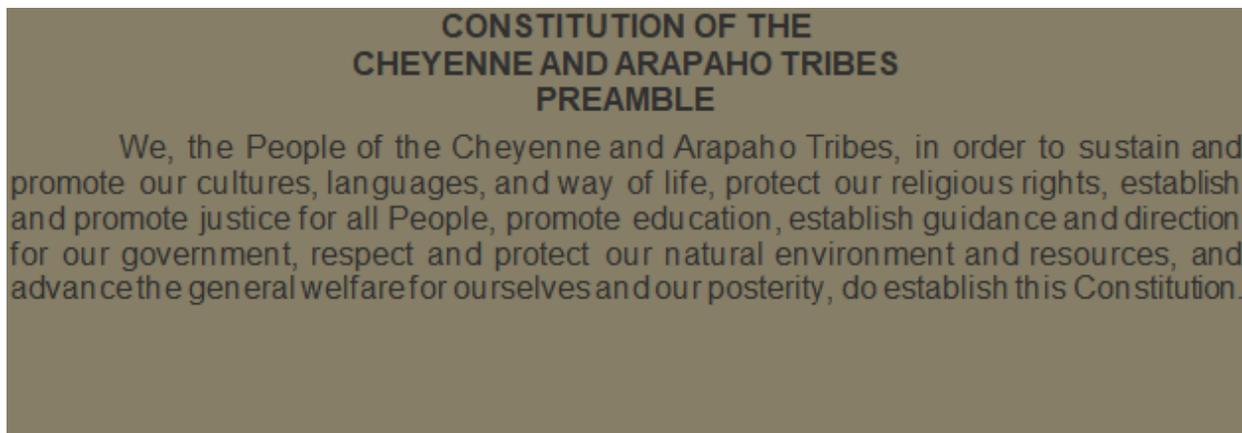
## Location in Oklahoma



## Population Past/Present

- Total tribal enrollment – 12, 000 approximate enrolled members
- Membership criteria- ¼ blood quantum required.
- Membership criteria: <http://www.c-a-tribes.org/enrollment>

## Government: Chiefs vs Chairman, Elected or Paternal



The tribal government has three branches: legislative, judicial and executive. The Governor is head of the Government.



## Language Group

The Cheyenne of Montana and Oklahoma speak the Cheyenne language, known as *Tséhésenéststótse* (common spelling: Tsisinstsistots). Approximately 800 people speak Cheyenne in Oklahoma.<sup>[3]</sup> Only a handful of vocabulary differs between the two locations. The Cheyenne alphabet contains 14 letters. The Cheyenne language is one of the larger **Algonquian-language** group.

The Arapaho language (also spelled Arapahoe or Arrapahoe) is an Algonquian language spoken by 1000 people, most of them in Wyoming. It is a polysynthetic language with long, complex verbs and fairly free word order. [Gros Ventre](#) is considered an Arapaho dialect by most linguists--though the two tribes maintain distinct identities, the languages are primarily mutually comprehensible. Most Arapaho and Gros Ventre speakers are elderly, but the Arapaho tribe is working to revitalize the language by teaching it to younger Arapahos.

## Traditional Lifeways

**History:** Though the Sioux, Shoshone, and Pawnee knew them as formidable warriors, history tends to label the Arapaho Indians a "peaceful people" because they did not fight the Americans. Unfortunately, their strategy of making treaties with the invaders rather than fighting them did not bring them to any better end. The increasing influx of settlers into areas promised to the Arapaho by treaty forced them away from their traditional lands, disrupted the buffalo routes, and ultimately split the Arapaho tribe in half, a split that still exists today. The Southern Arapaho joined the Cheyenne, where they together became victims of the most egregious massacre in American history, the Sand Creek massacre of 1864 (in which one Colonel Chivington deliberately attacked a reservation of peaceable Cheyenne and Arapaho people under US protection and killed more than 150 men, women, and children despite their repeated attempts to surrender. "Nits," he famously proclaimed, "breed lice.") Meanwhile, the Northern Arapaho fled to what is now Wyoming and petitioned their old foes the Shoshone for a home there. Finally, the Arapaho had made a treaty which would be honored: the land granted to them by the Shoshone remains theirs to this day.

Oklahoma Historical Society source to consider for Boarding Schools:  
<http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/a/am012.html>



## Fine Arts

Painting of Chief Killer, a Southern Cheyenne war chief wearing society headdress. Painted by E.A Burbank, 1899.



## Significant Events

### *Timeline*

- 1700: Living in Minnesota River valley
- 1700's: During the 1700's, migrated to the Cheyenne River valley in North Dakota.
- 1800's: Pressures forced them to the Missouri River, North and South Dakota. 1820's: Formed an alliance with the Oglala Sioux and fought the Crow Indians.
- 1825: "Friendship Treaty of 1825" – Fifteen Cheyenne leaders received a medal which bore the design of clasped hands .
- 1825: Tribe division of the Cheyenne into northern and southern bands.
- 1830: Bent's Fort established.
- 1850: Migrated to North Platte River in eastern Wyoming.
- 1851: Treaty at Fort Laramie gave the Cheyenne and other tribes land between the Platte and Arkansas Rivers, in what became Wyoming, Nebraska, Colorado, and western Kansas.
- 1857-1879: The Cheyenne fought an ongoing war with the U.S. Army.



- 1864: Sand Creek Massacre; 400-500 Southern Cheyenne under leadership of Black Kettle and Arapaho were killed by U.S. Soldiers.
- 1864-65: Southern Cheyenne, and allies Arapaho and Sioux angered by the Sand Creek Massacre raided the South Platte area, and wagon trains.
- 1866-1868: **Northern Cheyenne**, Sioux (Miniconjous, Oglala, Sans Arcs, Brules), and Northern Arapaho were opposed to the construction of the Bozeman Trail. At the battle of Massacre Ridge (December 1866) 2,000 warriors killed eighty-one soldiers under the command of Captain William J. Fetterman. Three forts were built to protect the developing trail and workers -- Fort Reno, Fort Phil Kearny and Fort C.F. Smith. The Bozeman Trail was abandoned as the Union Pacific Railroad would make the trail obsolete.
- 1868: May 10<sup>th</sup> – Treaty at Fort Laramie with the **Northern Cheyenne** and Northern Arapaho.
- 1875: The Indian Homestead Act precluded the need for a reservation. By this land law, Indians were free to file claims of 160 acres.
- 1875-76: There were approximately 15,000 gold seekers in the Black Hills
- 1876: Battle of Powder River -- U.S. Army under command of Colonel Mackenzie
- 1,100 soldiers attacked and burned the Northern Cheyenne village on Powder River.
- 1876: the **Northern Cheyenne** participated in the Battle of the Little Big Horn
- 1876: Battle of Wolf Mountain
- 1877: In April the **Northern Cheyenne** divided into four groups: The first group, Two Moon's group, went to Fort Keogh where they surrendered to Colonel Miles, and the warriors became scouts, later fighting against Sioux and Nez Perce Indians. The second group, the largest group, moved east and joined other Cheyenne bands, who surrendered at Red Cloud Agency in Nebraska. The third group went to Oklahoma and joined the Southern Cheyenne. The fourth group joined the Northern Arapaho at Wind River Agency in Wyoming.
- 1877 May 28: Northern Cheyenne tribe left Red Cloud Agency for the Cheyenne- Arapaho Agency at Darlington, Oklahoma. The Fourth Cavalry under Lieutenant Henry W. Lawton escorted them and two days later they arrived at the Cheyenne-Arapaho Agency. Some of the Northern tribesmen not welcomed.
- 1877: Cheyenne surrendered and were removed to the Southern Cheyenne Reservation in Indian Territory



- 1878: A part of the **Northern Cheyenne** was allowed to go back north.
- 1880-1891: the tribe gathered to southeastern Montana
- 1884: The Tongue River Reservation was established for the **Northern Cheyenne** on 16 November by executive order of President Chester A. Arthur.
- 1884: **Northern Cheyenne** Reservation is established
- 1884: [St. Labre Catholic Indian Boarding School](#) was established at site of Ashland, Montana
- 1900: The Tongue River Reservation was enlarged by executive order on 19 March 1900 to include from the west bank of the Tongue River to the eastern boundary of the Crow Reservation
- 1935: Constitution and bylaws of the Northern Cheyenne was approved on 23 November 1935, under the Indian Reorganization Act.

## Treaties by Year

- Treaty of Fort Laramie with Sioux – 1851
- Treaty with the Apache, Cheyenne, and Arapaho – 1865
- Treaty with the Arapaho and Cheyenne – 1861
- Treaty with the Cheyenne and Arapah – 1865
- Treaty with the Cheyenne and Arapaho – 1867
- Treaty with the Cheyenne Tribe – 1825
- Treaty with the Northern Cheyenne and the Northern Arapaho – 1868

## Indian Battles

- First Conflict – 1854
- Sand Creek Massacre – November 29, 1864
- Roman Nose's Fight – 1865
- Colorado War – 1863-1865
- Battle of Platte Ridge – July 24-26, 1865
- Battle of Tongue River – August 1865 Grand Council of 6000 Tribes @ Bearbutte – 1867
- Red Cloud's War – 1866-1868
- Battle of Washita – November 27, 1868
- Sand Hill Battle – 1868



- Red River War – 1874-1875
- Battle of Little Big Horn – June 25, 1876

Oklahoma Historical Society source to consider:  
<http://www.okhistory.org/research/indianrecs>

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## Current Tribal Information

