



**The Chickasaw Nation  
Elementary Student Curriculum**

**Unit 1: Lesson 2**

*Piominko, Payamataha and Tishominko*

## Table of Contents

<b>Lesson 2</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Overview .....	4
Lesson Plan .....	6
Reference Material .....	9
Discussion Questions .....	15
Student Quiz.....	16
Children’s Activity.....	18
Reference List .....	19

# **Lesson 2**

## **Piominko, Payamataha and Tishominko**

# The Chickasaw Nation

## Elementary Student Curriculum

### Unit 1 Lesson 2

#### Piominko, Payamataha and Tishominko

#### Overview

Chokma (Hello),

Thank you for your interest in the Chickasaw Nation Student Curriculum. We are pleased to offer this curriculum that explores our deep history, culture and traditions. Started in 2010 with the development of the Chickasaw Cultural Center, the curricula are designed to inform and educate individuals about the dynamic history of our Chickasaw leaders, monumental events and culture. Chickasaw historians, researchers, archaeologists and other educators, as well as tribal elders, have worked tirelessly to develop this curriculum to share our story.

We are excited to offer Unit 1. Each lesson focuses on a specific event and/or individual throughout the Chickasaw Nation's history and is complete with its own lesson plan, reading material, discussion questions, student activity and reference list for convenience. The timespan of Unit 1 ranges from the Chickasaws' first European encounter in 1540 to the creation of the Chickasaw Nation Capitol in 1898. All provided materials have been reviewed and approved by the Chickasaw Nation Department of Culture & Humanities and the Chickasaw Nation Department of Communications & Community Development.

The Chickasaw Nation would like to thank you for your commitment and support. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Joe Thomas, special assistant to the secretary of the Chickasaw Nation Department of Culture and Humanities, at (580) 436-7258 or [joe.thomas@chickasaw.net](mailto:joe.thomas@chickasaw.net).

*\*The following Oklahoma Academic Standards, as outlined in the Oklahoma State Department of Education's 2012 Social Studies guide, are to be used only as a basic guide. Other standards may be applicable that could be based on a teacher's own interpretation of the lesson material or ability/need to make a conceptual connection:*

#### Grade 3

- ✓ **Social Studies Oklahoma Studies, Citizenship Literacy Content Standard 1.2:** Examine and determine the main purpose of Oklahoma's state government and identify representative leaders of the state of Oklahoma and the three branches of government. (CCRIT 2)
- ✓ **Social Studies Oklahoma Studies, History Literacy Content Standard 4.1:** Understand and describe the relationship between historic events and chronology through the creation of basic timelines. (CCRIT 3)
- ✓ **United States Studies Regional Geography and History Content Standard 2.1:** Identify the major Native American groups and their ways of life in each region including traditional housing and economic activities, customs and storytelling, viewpoints on land usage and ownership, and their contributions to American culture and history.

#### Grade 4

- ✓ **United States Studies Regional Geography and History Content Standard 2.4:** Identify and evaluate instances of both cooperation and conflict between Native

# The Chickasaw Nation

## Elementary Student Curriculum

### Unit 1 Lesson 2

#### Piominko, Payamataha and Tishominko

American groups and European settlers arising from the Columbian Exchange including, agriculture, trade, cultural exchange, military alliances, wars and control of territory.

# The Chickasaw Nation

## Elementary Student Curriculum

### Unit 1 Lesson 2

#### Piominko, Payamataha and Tishominko

#### Lesson Plan

#### BENCHMARKS

The following Oklahoma Academic Standards, as outlined in the Oklahoma State Department of Education’s 2012 Social Studies guide, are to be used only as a basic guide. Other standards may be applicable that could be based on a teacher’s own interpretation of the lesson material or ability/need to make a conceptual connection:

- ✓ **Social Studies *Oklahoma Studies* Content Standard 1, Item 2**
- ✓ **Social Studies *Oklahoma Studies* Content Standard 4, Item 1**
- ✓ **United States Studies *Regional Geography and History* Content Standard 2, Items 1 and 4**

Set (5 min.)

*Note: The following is a suggested script for you, the teacher, to reference while discussing this lesson plan. Based on a number of factors, such as your students’ ages or maturity level, you may choose to deviate from the script as you see fit.*

“There are some people whose names we remember long after they are no longer alive, because they did something that affected many people and changed their world. We still know the names of inventors, pioneers, artists—even sports stars! However, there is a specific type of person we want to talk about today. Can you name any men or women that we remember because they set good examples for the rest of us? What sort of example did they set, exactly? *[Take a couple of minutes to talk about the question. Answers will vary.]*

“When it comes to remembering famous people, the Chickasaws are no different than anyone else. They, too, have their heroes—men and women who are honored because they acted in the best interests of the Chickasaw people, and who preserved and protected their nation and their heritage. It is because of leaders like them that the Chickasaws have a surviving culture today.

“In this lesson, we will be talking about three of the great pre-removal Chickasaws: *Piominko, Payamataha* and *Tishominko*. These men lived during the most challenging time for the Chickasaws, and each of them left their mark as statesmen and

# The Chickasaw Nation

## Elementary Student Curriculum

### Unit 1 Lesson 2

#### Piominko, Payamataha and Tishominko

warriors—on both Chickasaw and American history. By the end of the lesson, you’re going to know much more about them.”

#### OBJECTIVES

1. The students will practice reading out loud.
2. The students will interact with the reading by answering discussion questions.
3. The students will color the picture of the Chickasaw Nation Seal.

#### READING PROCEDURE (20 min.)

- a. The teacher will read the first two paragraphs of text to the students, and then ask the first discussion question. The students will answer.
- b. The students will continue the reading, with the teacher stopping them at appropriate points to ask the remaining questions.

*If the students are uncomfortable with oral reading, the teacher may wish to consider reading the entire passage to model good reading habits. For students who already display great comfort with oral reading, the teacher may wish to have the students read the entire passage. Teachers should feel free to stop the reading and pose knowledge questions about the text—e.g., asking students to define words or explain more. Similarly, the discussion questions may be answered in discussion, as intended, or the teacher may use them to make a free response worksheet for the students.*

#### MATERIALS

1. Reading text (provided)
2. Discussion questions (provided)

#### EVALUATION

The teacher will grade students based on some combination of the following: oral reading, participation in discussion and any comments made that the teacher considers particularly insightful. These grades may be evaluative or for completion, at the teacher’s discretion.

# The Chickasaw Nation

## Elementary Student Curriculum

### Unit 1 Lesson 2

#### Piominko, Payamataha and Tishominko

#### ACTIVITY PROCEDURE (20 min.)

- a. The teacher will introduce the activity to the students: “Even today, *Tishominko* is remembered for his leadership to his fellow people. I’m passing out a coloring page of the Great Seal of the Chickasaw Nation that features the likeness of *Tishominko*. Please color in the page to make the leader look good!”
- b. The teacher will supervise the students as they color in their *Tishominko* drawings.
- c. At the end of the period, the teacher will select several students and have them present their colorings to the class, explaining why they chose to decorate their picture the way they did. [*They should not have to show their drawings unless they wish to.*]

#### MATERIALS

1. Pens/pencils
2. Crayons and/or markers
3. Chickasaw Nation Seal coloring page (provided)

#### EVALUATION

The teacher will grade students based on their creativity, artistry and participation. These grades may be evaluative or for completion, at the teacher’s discretion.

#### CLOSURE (5 min.)

“So, what have we learned today? Did you have a favorite *Chickasaw* leader among the ones we discussed today? Why was he your favorite? [*Pause for brief answers to questions.*] Good! Chickasaws today still are taught about *Piominko*, *Payamataha* and *Tishominko*. Through learning about these men and their deeds, Chickasaws come to appreciate not only the history of their people, but learn the ways they should act. These men lived at a time of great change for the Chickasaws. Next time, we’ll learn about what Chickasaws did during another time of great change—Oklahoma statehood.”

# The Chickasaw Nation

## Elementary Student Curriculum

### Unit 1 Lesson 2

#### Piominko, Payamataha and Tishominko

#### Reference Material

Today, we're going to learn about three important Chickasaws and how they made a difference to the Chickasaw people. But first, we have to talk a little bit about the way the Chickasaw Nation was led. Long ago, Chickasaws listened to their clan *minko'*, or leader, and were guided by their respected elders. Traditionally *minko'* is the



Figure 1: Piominko statue.

Chickasaw word for leader. Over time this word was spoken and written by Europeans and later Americans as *mingo*. Although the spelling is not consistent with the Chickasaw language, the Anglicized word reflects the Chickasaw word *minko'*. [More times than not, one will see the word written using a “g” instead of “k” (e.g., Tishomingo, Oklahoma; the Piomingo Statue located in Tupelo, Mississippi). Though the names use the letter g instead of k, the meaning and translation are still the same.] The Europeans called the Chickasaw High *Minko'* “king,” because the rank was passed down

by blood, and they wanted one leading person to deal with, not a council or group. The *minko'* received his rank because of his mother, not his father, and the title was passed to either the mother's brother or sisterly nephew. However, he was not a king in the European sense. Although a *minko'* inherited his rank, he had to earn his power and influence. It was never given to him at birth.

One Chickasaw leader who definitely earned his power and influence was so important and influential that he is now referred to primarily as ***Piominko***.

*Piominko* was born at Chokkilissa', also known as Old Town (near modern-day Tupelo, Mississippi), before 1750. Prior to the title of *Piominko*, his name is believed to have been *Tushatohoa*. This name is derived from two Chickasaw words “*Tashka Aalhtoka'*,” meaning “selected warrior.” A dispute over the death of a brother perhaps led young *Piominko* to live among the Cherokees during his teenage years. Upon his return,

# The Chickasaw Nation

## Elementary Student Curriculum

### Unit 1 Lesson 2

#### Piominko, Payamataha and Tishominko

he had received the nickname “Mountain Leader.” The name *Piominko* was a title he achieved comprised of two Chickasaw words, “*Hopayi' Minko'*,” which roughly means “prophet leader.” This meant that he was a medicine man for the leaders and warriors.

However, *Piominko* was not destined to remain a medicine man. He would soon gain influence as a political leader. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, all of the traditional roles for these titles were turned upside down. This is why people who were supposed to be from White Towns or Peace Towns became war leaders, such as *Tishominko* and *Payamataha*, another prominent Chickasaw leader. Chickasaws were divided into red and white towns. *Homma* (red) was the traditional color representing war and *tohbi* (white) represented peace. Clans in the red towns consisted of warriors who fought in battle; clans in the white towns were warriors but promoted peace through non-violence.

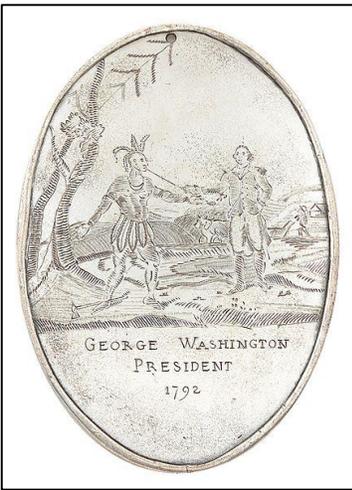


Figure 2: George Washington Peace Medal.

*Piominko* lived during a time in Chickasaw history when the tribe was undergoing great change. The former European countries the Chickasaws were familiar with were losing influence in North America, and the newly-established United States was becoming more important. With the help of co-leader *Payamataha*, *Piominko* fought to preserve Chickasaw ceremonies and cultural practices. However, he also felt it was important for Chickasaws to learn English, especially his own children. Upon his request, President George Washington agreed to help *Piominko*'s daughter receive a formal education.

*Piominko* is most noted for his role as the leader of the Chickasaw faction that believed embracing the new United States of America was the best course of action for the Chickasaw people. On January 10, 1786, *Piominko* and other leaders signed the Treaty of Hopewell with the United States. This treaty marked the beginning of official relations between the Chickasaw Nation and the United States. The treaty forged three main connections between the two nations: 1) established the official name “the Chickasaw Nation;” 2) marked American recognition of the boundaries of the Chickasaw

# The Chickasaw Nation

## Elementary Student Curriculum

### Unit 1 Lesson 2

#### Piominko, Payamataha and Tishominko

homeland (located in what is now southwest Kentucky, western Tennessee, northwest Alabama and northern Mississippi) and; 3) established peaceful relations between the United States and the Chickasaw Nation as two sovereign, political nations.

Because of his leadership, loyalty and trust to the United States, *Piominko* received the George Washington Peace Medal in 1792. *Piominko* met and visited with George Washington several times during diplomatic contacts with the United States. He even stayed at Mount Vernon, Washington’s personal home.

*Piominko* is believed to have died in the village of *Chukafala* about 1799. He was buried in the traditional way with his most valued belongings, including his saddle and the George Washington Peace Medal. He is commemorated today with a life-size bronze statue on the grounds of Tupelo’s City Hall and the Chickasaw Nation Capitol in Tishomingo, Oklahoma. He led the Chickasaw Nation to the dawn of a new century, one that would witness enormous change in Chickasaw politics, sovereignty and culture. Still the Chickasaw Nation endured, due to his leadership and the perseverance of the Chickasaw leaders and people who were inspired by him.

Another prominent Chickasaw leader from the Mississippian homelands was *Payamataha*. As a youth he first earned the name “*Nuholubbe*,” said to mean “he killed a white man.” He was described as being from a “beloved family” with a high rank in the tribe, but also rose as a leader due to his bravery and exploits as a warrior. His later name, *Payamataha*, is a shortening of “*Hopayi’ Imalhtaha*,” meaning “prepared prophet.”

As a young man in March of 1736, he warned the Chickasaws of the approach of French invasion forces led by Major Pierre D’Artaguet from the Chickasaw Bluffs area (now Memphis, Tennessee). During the ensuing battle of *Ougoula Tchetoka*, a French-spelling of the Choctaw pronunciation of *Okla Chitoka* (also known as *Chokkilissa’*), *Payamataha* fought with distinction. The French force, totaling almost 400 French regular troops, militia and warriors from several other tribes, was routed by the Chickasaw warriors and accompanied by singing hatchet women. The singing hatchet women were Chickasaw women who protected their land and way of life from the French by wielding iron hatchets along with men and children, and ultimately sending all but the

# The Chickasaw Nation

## Elementary Student Curriculum

### Unit 1 Lesson 2

#### Piominko, Payamataha and Tishominko

French army officers into retreat. Only a rainstorm saved many of the invaders from being killed as they fled the battlefield to escape the enraged Chickasaws.

Even in old age, *Payamataha* maintained his reputation as a valiant war leader and respected elder. During the violent power struggles between colonial France and Great Britain in which almost all of the tribes were caught up, *Payamataha* and his co-leader *Minko' Homma'* (also referred to as *Mingo Houma*), or Red Leader, kept the Chickasaws safe by staying neutral. They chose to maintain diplomatic relations with a variety of tribes and European powers, rather than choose a side. They would follow this same successful path during the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783). *Payamataha* and *Minko' Homma'* died as old men in the devastating 1784 measles epidemic, which sadly affected nearly half of Long Town, the main Chickasaw town at that time.

One of the most beloved leaders of the Chickasaw Nation was *Tishominko*. Born near the Chickasaw Old Fields in Mississippi prior to 1750, Tishominko is remembered as one of the last great “traditional” leaders of the Chickasaws and a noted orator in the Chickasaw language. As a younger man, he served with General Anthony Wayne against the Shawnee-Miamia Indian confederacy in the Old Northwest country of Ohio and Indiana in the 1790s.

Historical records indicate Tishominko may have been known as *Okoye* (“*Oka' Hoyo'*” translating to mean “water source”), or *Tishumustubbe* (“*Tisho imisht abi'*” meaning “he seized an Assistant for them and killed him”) during this time prior to earning the title of *Tishominko* whose role was the speaker for the leader or assistant leader. During the War of 1812, he and several hundred other Chickasaws served with the U.S. 39<sup>th</sup> Regiment in General Andrew Jackson’s Army of the South, and fought against the Red Stick Creeks. Another notable member of this group was the young Tennessean Davy Crockett.



Figure 3: Tishominko statue.

# The Chickasaw Nation

## Elementary Student Curriculum

### Unit 1 Lesson 2

#### Piominko, Payamataha and Tishominko

In 1815, *Tishominko* became a leader of one of four newly created districts in the Chickasaw homelands centered in Mississippi. He would keep his title through Chickasaw Removal. His was the northeast district leader, part of which was later organized into Tishomingo County in 1836. *Tishominko* operated a large farm in the southwestern tip of his district, which is now in Lee County (organized 1866), on what is still named Tishomingo Creek.

The world *Tishominko* had built in the Chickasaw territory began to crumble late in his life when American settlers began to trespass on Chickasaw land. The states of Mississippi and Alabama passed laws saying that tribal citizens within their state boundaries had to answer to them, not their tribal leaders. This created conflict between the Chickasaws and non-Indian traders. Eventually, two white men opened a store within the Chickasaw Nation boundaries in defiance of federal and tribal law. Because he had a responsibility to uphold tribal law, *Tishominko* seized the white traders' goods. The traders brought charges against him under the new Mississippi law. *Tishominko* was thrown in jail, and a Mississippi court fined him more than \$500. After the Treaty of Pontotoc Creek was signed in 1832, *Tishominko* was among the Chickasaws who traveled to Washington, D.C. to negotiate the 1834 amendments to the removal treaty. These amendments made the treaty more favorable to Chickasaws.

There is an account that *Tishominko*, then roughly 100 years old, died in 1839 during the Chickasaw Removal near Ft. Coffee in the Arkansas Territory. However, contemporary newspaper accounts document that he died at his new home in Eagle Town, Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) on May 5, 1841. He likely lies buried there in an unmarked grave. *Tishominko* was so important that there is a stream, town and county in Mississippi and a town in Oklahoma bearing his name. In addition, the



Figure 4: The Great Seal of the Chickasaw Nation.

# The Chickasaw Nation

## Elementary Student Curriculum

### Unit 1 Lesson 2

#### Piominko, Payamataha and Tishominko

Oklahoma state seal features his likeness, as does the Great Seal of the Chickasaw Nation. *Tishominko's* memory and life would serve as a rallying point for Chickasaws during difficult times ahead in Indian Territory.

# The Chickasaw Nation

## Elementary Student Curriculum

### Unit 1 Lesson 2

#### Piominko, Payamataha and Tishominko

#### Discussion Questions

1. When Europeans came in contact with the Chickasaws, why did they call the Chickasaw High *Minko* 'king'?
2. *Piominko* lived during a time of great change in the Chickasaw Nation. What steps did he take to deal with this change?
3. Why did *Piominko* receive a peace medal?
4. *Payamataha* was a great warrior and leader of the Chickasaws. What did he do during his lifetime that made him so great?
5. *Tishominko* was considered a man of great honor and dignity. What specific action did he take to stand up for the Chickasaw people?

# The Chickasaw Nation

## Elementary Student Curriculum

### Unit 1 Lesson 2

#### Piominko, Payamataha and Tishominko

#### Student Quiz

1. What tribe did *Piominko* remove to for his teenage years?
  - a. Chickasaw
  - b. Choctaw
  - c. Cherokee
  - d. Seminole
2. What treaty did *Piominko* and other leaders sign on January 10, 1786?
  - a. Treaty of Hopewell
  - b. Treaty of Pontotoc Creek
  - c. Treaty of Doaksville
  - d. Treaty of 1805
3. What nickname did *Piominko* receive from the Cherokees?
  - a. Mountain Hunter
  - b. Mountain Traveler
  - c. Mountain Leader
  - d. Mountain Man
4. The Chickasaw women who helped their male warriors protect their land and way of life were called what?
  - a. Singing knives women
  - b. Screaming racket women
  - c. Singing hatchet women
  - d. Singing iron women
5. *Payamataha* is remembered for warning the Chickasaws about an invasion from which people?
  - a. Spanish
  - b. Germans
  - c. French
  - d. Americans
6. *Piominko* received what kind of medal from President George Washington?
  - a. Peace
  - b. Silver
  - c. Gold
  - d. Purple
7. What state does not form the homeland boundaries of the Chickasaw Nation?
  - a. Kentucky
  - b. Tennessee
  - c. Mississippi

# The Chickasaw Nation

## Elementary Student Curriculum

### Unit 1 Lesson 2

#### Piominko, Payamataha and Tishominko

- d. California
8. Warriors who promoted non-violence lived in which towns?
- a. Red
  - b. White
  - c. Black
  - d. Blue
9. Warriors who fought in battles resided in what towns?
- a. Red
  - b. White
  - c. Black
  - d. Blue
10. What two states began passing laws onto the Chickasaw Nation during the 1800s?
- a. Oklahoma and Texas
  - b. California and Mississippi
  - c. Mississippi and Alabama
  - d. Mississippi and Florida

The Chickasaw Nation  
Elementary Student Curriculum  
Unit 1 Lesson 2  
Piominko, Payamataha and Tishominko

Children's Activity

1. Color the Great Seal of the Chickasaw Nation.



# The Chickasaw Nation

## Elementary Student Curriculum

### Unit 1 Lesson 2

#### Piominko, Payamataha and Tishominko

#### Reference List

**For more information, see the following sources:**

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