



The Chickasaw Nation

Secondary Student Curriculum

Unit 1: Lesson 2

Piominko, Payamataha and Tishominko

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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.

**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 9-12

- ✓ **Oklahoma History and Government: *The Foundation, Formation, and Transformation of Oklahoma* Content Standard 1.3:** Compare and contrast the goals and significance of early Spanish, French, and American expeditions including the impact of disease, interactions with Native Americans, and the arrival of the horse and new technologies.
- ✓ **Oklahoma History and Government: *The Foundation, Formation, and Transformation of Oklahoma* Content Standard 1.4:** Compare and contrast cultural perspectives of Native Americans and European Americans regarding land ownership and trading practices.
- ✓ **United States History, *The United States: The American Nation in Transformation, 1878 to the Present* Content Standard 1, Item 2.C:** Compare the contrasting viewpoints of Native American leadership's resistance to United States Indian policies as evidenced by Red Cloud and his Cooper Union Speech, Seattle, Quanah Parker, and Chief Joseph as expressed in his *I Will Fight No More Forever* speech.

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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:

- ✓ **Oklahoma History and Government: *The Foundation, Formation, and Transformation of Oklahoma*, Content Standard 1, Items 3 and 4.**
- ✓ **United States History: *The United States: The American Nation in Transformation, 1878 to the Present*, Content Standard 1, Item 2.C.**

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 revered 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 people like them that 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 Chickasaws, and each of them left their mark as statesmen and

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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 analyze the reading by answering discussion questions.
2. The students will defend his/her answers by answering follow-up questions.
3. The students will complete the student activity.

READING PROCEDURE (20 min)

- a. The teacher will hand out the included text to students and read the first two paragraphs aloud. The students will then read the rest of the text aloud.
- b. The teacher will lead the students in a discussion of some or all of the included questions, asking the students follow-ups as appropriate. The students will answer the questions, and are encouraged to pose questions of their own.

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

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teacher's discretion.

ACTIVITY PROCEDURE (20 min.)

- a. The teacher will introduce the activity to the students: "Now, one thing you may remember from the lesson is that Chickasaws were buried with the things that meant the most to them. *Piominko*, for instance, was buried with his George Washington Peace Medal. Knowing a person's burial items can tell us a lot about what they thought was important, and how they would like to be remembered. What I'd like you to do is to prepare a list of your possessions that mean a great deal to you. Illustrate it too, if you'd like. Then we can talk about your lists."
- b. The teacher will supervise the students as they prepare their lists and drawings.
- c. At the end of the period, the teacher will select one to three students and have them present their lists. [*They should not have to show their drawings unless they wish to.*]

MATERIALS

1. Notebook paper
2. Pens/pencils
3. Crayons and/or markers

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 the virtues that they should strive to

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emulate. Sadly, even as they wrote their names into history, these men were forced to witness the disintegration of the world they knew. *Tishominko* perished on or soon after the journey to Indian Territory, during an historical event that would alter Chickasaw life forever—Chickasaw Removal. Next time, we'll learn about this terrible time in Chickasaw history.”

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Reference Material

Long ago, Chickasaws listened to their clan *minko'*, or leader, and were guided by their respected elders. Traditionally *minko'* is the Chickasaw word for leader. Over time this word was spoken and written by Europeans and later Americans as *mingo*. Although



Figure 1: Piominko statue.

the spelling is not consistent with the Chickasaw language, the word still mirrors 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). Although the names use the letter g instead of k, the meaning and translation are still the same in Chickasaw. 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 the *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 as ***Piominko***.

Piominko was born at Chokkilissa', also known as Old Town (Tupelo, Mississippi) prior to 1750. Previous to his title-name *Piominko*, his name is believed to have been *Tushatohoa*. This name is comprised of two Chickasaw words “*Tashka Aalhtoka*,” meaning “selected warrior.” A dispute over the death of a brother perhaps led young *Piominko* to remove to the Cherokees for his teenage years. Upon his return, he had received the nickname “Mountain Leader” from the Cherokees. The name *Piominko*

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was a title he achieved comprised of two Chickasaw words, “*Hopayi' Minko*’.” This would have been a title for a leader translating to “prophet leader.” This meant 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 18th 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 town consisted of warriors who fought in battle; clans in the white town were warriors but promoted peace through non-violence.

Piominko lived during a time in Chickasaw history when the tribe was undergoing great change. The former European colonies 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* tried to preserve Chickasaw ceremonies and cultural practices. However, he also felt it was important for Chickasaws to learn English, especially his own children, so they could better

communicate, and thus negotiate, with the United States. Upon request, President George Washington agreed to help *Piominko*’s daughter receive a formal education.

Piominko is most noted for his role as leader of the Chickasaw faction who 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 young United States. The treaty forged three main connections between the two nations: 1) established the official name “the

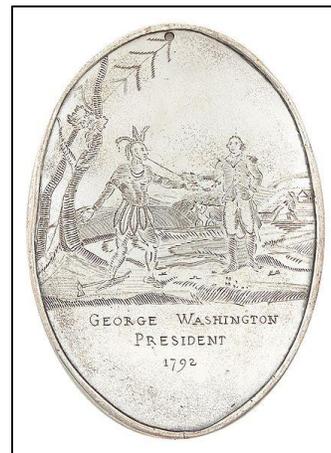


Figure 2: George Washington Peace Medal.

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Chickasaw Nation;” 2) marked American recognition of the boundaries of the Chickasaw homeland (located in what is now southwest Kentucky, western Tennessee, northwest Alabama and northern Mississippi) and; 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, even staying at Washington’s personal home in Mount Vernon.

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 Tupelo’s City Hall and the Chickasaw Nation Capitol in Tishomingo, Oklahoma. *Piominko* 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 he also rose as a leader due to his bravery and exploits as a warrior. His later name, *Payamataha*, is a shortening of Chickasaw words “*Hopayi’ Imalhtaha*” meaning “prepared prophet.”

As a young man in March of 1736, he warned the Chickasaws of the approach of French invasion forces from the Chickasaw Bluffs, or Memphis area, led by Major Pierre D’Artaguette. 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 the Miamia, Iroquois, Kaskaskia, Michigamea, Cahokia and

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Arkansas (Quapaw) 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 alongside men and children, ultimately sent all but the 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 European powers and tribes, rather than choose a side. Sometimes an appearance of neutrality was the best course of action, which proved to be the successful path they followed during the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783). *Payamataha* and *Minko' Homma'* died at an advanced age 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 our 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 during the 1790s. Historical records indicate *Tishominko* may have been known as *Okoye* (“*Oka' Hoyo*” said to mean “water seeker”), or *Tishumustubbe* (“*Tisho imisht abi*” said to mean “he seized an Assistant for them and killed him”), during this time prior to earning the title of



Figure 3: Tishominko statue.

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Tishominko whose role was the speaker for the leader or the assistant leader. During the War of 1812, he served with several hundred other Chickasaws in action against the Red Stick Creeks with the U.S. 39th regiment in General Andrew Jackson's Army of the South. Another notable member of this group was the young Tennessean David Crockett.

In 1815, *Tishominko* became a district leader of one of four newly created districts in the Chickasaw homeland centered in Mississippi, a title he would maintain through Chickasaw Removal. Tishominko's district was the northeast district, where Tishomingo County, Mississippi was later organized in 1836 commemorating him. *Tishominko* operated a large farm in the southwestern tip of his district, which is now 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 encroach on Chickasaw land. The states of Mississippi and Alabama passed laws abolishing tribal sovereignty within their boundaries. This created confusion and 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. Bound to the responsibility of upholding tribal law, *Tishominko* seized the traders' goods. The traders brought charges against the elder under the new Mississippi law. *Tishominko* was thrown in jail, and a Mississippi court rendered a judgment against him for more than \$500.

After the Treaty of Pontotoc Creek was signed in 1832, *Tishominko* was among those Chickasaws who traveled to Washington, D.C. to negotiate the 1834 amendments to the removal treaty that made it 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.

The importance of *Tishominko's* legacy is such that there is a stream, town and

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county in Mississippi and a town in Oklahoma bearing his name. In addition, the Oklahoma state seal features his likeness, as does the Great Seal of the Chickasaw Nation. *Tishominko*'s memory and exemplary life would serve as a rallying point for Chickasaws during difficult times ahead in the mid-1800s in Indian Territory.



Figure 4: The Great Seal of the Chickasaw Nation.

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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 political and cultural change in the Chickasaw Nation. What steps did he take to deal with this great change?
3. What is a Peace Medal? Why were they so important?
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 rights and laws designed to protect the Chickasaw people?

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Student Quiz

1. Due to a dispute over the death of a brother, what is the tribe that *Piominko* removed to for his teenage years?
 - a. Chickasaw
 - b. Choctaw
 - c. Cherokee
 - d. Seminole
2. What treaty did *Piominko* and other leaders sign with the United States 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. Chickasaw women who helped the warriors protect their land and way of life by wielding iron hatchets 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

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- b. Tennessee
 - c. Mississippi
 - d. Oregon
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

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Reference List

For more information, see the following sources:

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