

Google Custom Search

Search Our Site

Find [Native American ancestors](#) in your family tree

Chickasaw Indian Fact Sheet

Native American Facts For Kids was written for young people learning about the Chickasaws for school or home-schooling reports. We encourage students and teachers to visit our main [Chickasaw Indian](#) website for more in-depth information about the tribe, but here are our answers to the questions we are most often asked by children, with Chickasaw pictures and links we believe are suitable for all ages.

Sponsored Links

Native American Facts For Kids

●●● Chickasaw Tribe ●●●

● ***How do you pronounce the word "Chickasaw"? What does it mean?***

Chickasaw is pronounced "CHICK-a-saw." It comes from their own tribal name, *Chikasha*, which was the name of a legendary Chickasaw leader.

● ***Where do the Chickasaws live?***

The Chickasaws are original people of the American southeast, particularly [Mississippi](#), [Alabama](#), [Tennessee](#), [Kentucky](#) and [Missouri](#). Most Chickasaws were forced to move to Oklahoma in the 1800's, and their descendants live in Oklahoma today. Some Chickasaws escaped by hiding or pretending to be white, and the descendants of these people are still living in the original Chickasaw homelands.

● ***How is the Chickasaw Indian nation organized?***

The Chickasaw tribe has its own government, laws, police, and services, just like a small country. However, the Chickasaws are also US citizens and must obey American law. In the past, the Chickasaw tribe was ruled by a council of hereditary clan chiefs, led by a *minko*, or war chief, who made military and political decisions for the whole tribe. Today, the Chickasaw councilmembers and governor are popularly elected.

● ***What language do the Chickasaws speak?***

Most Chickasaw people speak English today. Some people, especially elders, also speak their native ***Chickasaw language***. Chickasaw is a rhythmic language that is very similar to [Choctaw](#). Speakers of the two languages can understand each other without much difficulty. If you'd like to know a few easy Chickasaw words, "chokma" (pronounced choke-mah) is a friendly greeting, and "ayali" (pronounced ah-yah-lee) means 'goodbye.' You can also read a Chickasaw picture glossary [here](#).

● ***What was Chickasaw culture like in the past? What is it like now?***

Here is a link to the [Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma](#), where you can learn about the Chickasaw people past and present.

Sponsored Links

● ***How do Chickasaw Indian children live, and what did they do in the past?***

They do the same things all children do--play with each other, go to school and help around the house. Many Chickasaw children like to go hunting and fishing with their fathers. In the past, Indian kids had more chores and less time to play, just like colonial children. But they did have [beaded dolls](#), toys and games to play with. [Toli](#), a stickball game related to the Iroquois game of [lacrosse](#), was also a popular sport among teenage boys as it was among adult men. Chickasaw mothers, like many Native Americans, traditionally carried their babies in [cradle board](#) carriers on their backs--a custom which many American parents have [adopted](#) now.

● ***What were men and women's roles in the Chickasaw tribe?***

Chickasaw men were hunters and sometimes went to war to protect their families. Chickasaw women were farmers and also did most of the child care and cooking. Both genders could succeed at storytelling, artwork and music, and traditional medicine. In the past, Chickasaw chiefs were always men, but today a Chickasaw woman can be chief too.

● ***What were Chickasaw homes like in the past?***

The Chickasaw people lived in settled villages of houses and small farms. Chickasaw houses were made of plaster and rivercane walls with thatched roofs. Here are some [pictures](#) of the kind of housing used by the Chickasaw Indians. Most towns also had a ball field with benches for spectators. Chickasaw villages were often surrounded by **palisades** (reinforced walls made of tree trunks) to guard against attack. Today, no one uses an old-fashioned Chickasaw home for shelter, any more than white Americans live in a log cabin. Chickasaws live in modern houses and apartment buildings, just like you.

● ***What was Chickasaw clothing like? Did they wear feather headdresses and face paint?***

Chickasaw men wore a [breechcloth](#), sometimes with leather leggings to protect their legs. Chickasaw women wore wraparound skirts made of woven fiber or deerskin. The Chickasaws also wore [moccasins](#) on their feet. Shirts were not necessary in Chickasaw culture, but men and women both wore poncho-style blouses in cooler weather. In colonial times, the Chickasaws adapted European costume into their own characteristic style, including long colorful tunics for men and full skirts decorated with ribbon applique for women. Here are some photographs and links about [Indian clothes](#) in general.

The Chickasaws didn't wear long headdresses like the [Sioux](#). Chickasaw men usually shaved their heads except for a single [scalplock](#), and sometimes they would also wear a [hair roach](#). (These headdresses were made of porcupine hair, not their sharp quills!) Chickasaw women often tied their hair up on top of their heads with strings of beads. Important Chickasaw men [tattooed](#) themselves with special patterns in honor of their accomplishments, and the Chickasaws often painted their faces and bodies bright colors during battles and festivals.

Today, some Chickasaw people still wear moccasins or a ribbon shirt, but they wear modern clothes like jeans instead of breechcloths... and they only wear roaches in their hair on special occasions like a dance.

● ***What was Chickasaw transportation like in the days before cars? Did they paddle canoes?***

Yes--the Chickasaw Indians made long dugout canoes from hollowed-out logs. Here is an article with pictures of [Indian canoes](#). Over land, the Chickasaws used dogs as pack animals. There were no horses in North America until colonists brought them over from Europe. Today, of course, Chickasaw people also use cars... and non-native people also use canoes.

● ***What was Chickasaw food like in the days before supermarkets?***

The Chickasaw Indians were farming people. Chickasaw women did most of the farming, harvesting crops of corn, beans, squash, and sunflowers. They also gathered wild plants such as nuts, berries, plums, and herbs. Chickasaw men did most of the hunting, shooting deer, wild turkeys, and small game and fishing in the rivers and along the coast. Chickasaw dishes included cornbread, soups, and stews cooked on stone hearths. The Chickasaws also enjoyed sassafras tea. Here is a website with more information about [American Indians' food](#).

● ***What were Chickasaw weapons and tools like in the past?***

Chickasaw hunters primarily used bows and arrows. Fishermen generally used fishing spears. In war, Chickasaw men fired their bows or fought with tomahawks and lances. Chickasaw warriors used hide shields to defend themselves, and sometimes set arrows on fire before shooting them at their enemies. Here is a website with pictures and more information about [American Indian weapons](#).

● ***What are Chickasaw arts and crafts like?***

The Chickasaws were known for their [rivercane baskets](#) and other containers, [woodcarvings](#), mulberry-bark textiles, and [pottery](#). When they were forced to move to Oklahoma, the Chickasaws couldn't get the materials they used to use for some of their traditional crafts, so they concentrated more on other crafts such as [Native American beading](#).

● ***What other Native Americans did the Chickasaw tribe interact with?***

The Chickasaws traded regularly with all the other Southeast Native Americans. These tribes communicated using a simplified trade language called [Mobilian Trade Jargon](#). The most important Chickasaw neighbors were the [Choctaws](#). Long in the past, the Choctaws and Chickasaws used to be the same tribe, but then they split. After that, the two tribes sometimes fought each other, and other times were allies.

● ***I read that the Chickasaw were part of the Five Civilized Tribes. Was that an***

alliance like the Iroquois Confederacy?

No. Many people guess this, but it isn't true. "The Five Civilized Tribes" was just a name that the white settlers used to refer to the [Creek](#), [Choctaw](#), [Cherokee](#), [Seminole](#), and Chickasaw tribes of the Southeast. These five tribes were never part of an alliance together, and they did not call themselves the Civilized Tribes in their own languages. Originally, the white settlers probably called them this because these five tribes were early converts to Christianity. They were also farmers who lived in settled towns under sophisticated government systems, which Europeans and early Americans considered a higher level of civilization than independent bands of hunters who moved from place to place. However, there were dozens of other Native American tribes who also led farming lifestyles, not just these five.

What kinds of stories do the Chickasaws tell?

There are lots of traditional Chickasaw legends and fairy tales. Storytelling is very important to the Chickasaw Indian culture. Here is a story about the [origin of the Chickasaw Nation](#).

What about Chickasaw religion?

Religions are too complicated and culturally sensitive to describe appropriately in only a few simple sentences, and we strongly want to avoid misleading anybody. You can visit this site to learn more about [Chickasaw religious customs](#) or this site about [Native American religion](#) in general.

Can you recommend a good book for me to read?

You may enjoy [The Chickasaw Adventures](#), a series of four comic-book style adventure stories from Chickasaw history. If you'd like to read more traditional stories, [Chickasha Stories](#) is a nice collection of legends and folktales by a Chickasaw storyteller. Two good books for kids on Chickasaw culture and history are for kids are [Chickasaw Native Americans](#) and [The Chickasaw Nation](#). You can also browse through our reading list of recommended [American Indian books](#) in general.

How do I cite your website in my bibliography?

You will need to ask your teacher for the format he or she wants you to use. The authors' names are Laura Redish and Orrin Lewis and the title of our site is Native Languages of the Americas. We are a nonprofit educational organization working to preserve and protect Native American languages and culture. You can learn more about our organization [here](#). Our website was first created in 1998 and last updated in 2015.

Thanks for your interest in the Chickasaw Indian people and their language!

Sponsored Links



Learn More About The Chickasaw Native American Tribe

[Chickasaw Indian Tribe](#)

An overview of the Chickasaw people, their language and history.

[Chickasaw Language Resources](#)


Chickasaw language samples, articles, and indexed links.

[Chickasaw Culture and History Directory](#)

History and news about the Chickasaw Native Americans past and present.

[Chickasaw Word List](#)

Chickasaw Indian vocabulary lists.



Return to our [Native American websites](#) for kids
Return to our main menu of [Native American cultures](#)



Would you like to help [support our organization's work with endangered American Indian languages?](#)

[Make A Donation](#)

Native Languages of the Americas website © 1998-2015 ❖ [Contact us](#) ❖ [Follow our blog](#)